Canadian Alpine Journal

2011


You will never sleep with another.
Marmot
FOR LIFE
Marmot
Marmot
Marmot Tent Collection
Just one way Marmot helps you bond with nature.
Photography: Mick Follari, Brad Clement
marmot.com • facebook.com/marmotpro

PATRONS OF THE JOURNAL

— PATRON —

MOUNTAIN EQUIPMENT CO-OP®

www.mec.ca

— BENEFACTOR —

Marmot®

www.marmot.com

— PARTNER —

Arc'teryx - $1,500 - www.arcteryx.com

— SUPPORTERS —

Banff Mountain Film & Book Festivals - $1,000 - www.banffmountainfestivals.ca

Patagonia - $1,000 - www.patagonia.com

— FRIENDS —

William Buxton, Toronto Section member - $500

Paul and Willa Geddes - $400

Royalties from the novel *Extreme Edge* by Heather Kellerhals-Stewart - $300

Roger Wallis, Toronto Section member - $250

Isabelle Daigneault and Chris Nadeau - $100

Steve Traversari - $100

The Eric Brooks Memorial Fund - $2,700

— CONTRIBUTING ALPINE CLUB OF CANADA SECTIONS —

Calgary Section - $500

Edmonton Section - $500

Saskatchewan Section - $500

Toronto Section - $500

Manitoba Section - $300

Thunder Bay Section - $300

Rocky Mountain Section - $250

Vancouver Section - $250

Jasper/Hinton Section - $200

Okanagan Section - $200

Ottawa Section - $200

Whistler Section - $200

Central Alberta Section - $150

Montréal Section - $100

Outaouais Section - $100

Saint-Boniface Section - $100

Vancouver Island Section - $100

The Canadian Alpine Journal

Volume 94, 2011

Features

The Cultural Ranges

Contents

Left: Senja Pelonen leading pitch 18 during the second ascent of the West Face of Mount Bute, Coast Mountains (see page 68). Photo: Kelly Franz

Cover: Jason Kruk following three-quarters of the way up a new route on the Emperor Face, Mount Robson, Canadian Rockies (see page 34). Photo: Jon Walsh

Patrons page: Katsutaka Yokoyama acclimatizing on Mount Logan's East Ridge route before completing the first ascent of the south face of the same mountain, St. Elias Range (page 18). Photo: Yasushi Okada

Back cover: Katy Holm and Kelly Franz pose for a self-portrait while Senja Pelonen leads pitch 13 on the West Face of Mount Bute, Coast Mountains (see page 68). Photo: Kelly Franz

The Canadian Alpine Journal, Volume 94, 2011

ISSN 0068-8207 — Copyright 2011 The Alpine Club of Canada

EDITOR — Sean Isaac
COPY EDITORS — Helen Rolfe, Lynn Martel
LAYOUT & PRODUCTION — Suzan Chamney

INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS

The *Canadian Alpine Journal* welcomes contributions in either English or French.
Submissions can be made via e-mail to **caj@alpineclubofcanada.ca**
For further information on submitting text and photos, please refer to the guidelines at
www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/publications/guidelines.html

Submission deadline is February 1, 2012.

The Alpine Club of Canada
P.O. Box 8040, Canmore, Alberta T1W 2T8

PRINTED IN CANADA

Editorial

Take It for Granted

THE DANCING SASQUATCH, Banff, November 2010. The sexy nightclub is subdued: no hi-tech laser light show, no base-heavy techno tunes, no young twenty-somethings shaking on the dance floor. Instead, images flash on the screen from the rays of an LED projector. The pictures—scans of photographs and slides of an era gone by—portray wool-mitted and anorak-clad men climbing in the St. Elias, the Alps, the Himalaya and the Canadian Rockies. I recognize famous and not-so-famous peaks, like Mount Kitchner, Mount Snowdome, Mount Logan, Grant Jorasses and Ganga Purna. The common thread: all climbs done by the late John Lauchlan, all cutting-edge at the time.

The crowded room is packed with the who's who of Canadian alpinism—past, present, and up and coming—as well as members of the Lauchlan family, namely his father, Doug, and brother, Mike. Drinks toasted, appies munched, speeches delivered, everyone is gathered to pay tribute to John and his impact on our tribe.

JOHN LAUCHLAN DIED in the winter of 1982 while attempting to solo the classic ice climb Polar Circus. I was 10 years old, and scaling frozen waterfalls, or even mountains for that matter, was the farthest thought from my childhood daydreams of lightsabers, Imperial stormtroopers and the Dark Side. However, my epic imaginary adventures eventually matured into girl-chasing explorations in the teenage years before finally morphing into a full-blown climbing addiction by my early 20s.

The entire year from October 2005 to October 2006 was spent living in the back of my Subaru station wagon, sampling the delicacies of Yosemite, Zion, Red Rocks, Squamish, the Bugaboos and the Tetons. This 365-day road trip only whetted my palate for big-wall climbing, leaving me hungry for the obvious next step—Patagonia. But big steps require big wallets, and I only had a change purse. Hearing about the inaugural John Lauchlan Memorial Award (JLMA), fellow dirt-bag scallywag Guy Edwards and I decided to send in an application, not really placing much weight on it since we were merely two 24-year-old, wet-behind-the-ears, wanna-be alpinists.

Much to our chagrin, we—as well as Grant Statham and Tim Pochay—were awarded cold, hard cash for our respective proposals. Grant and Tim were off to the Kichatnas in Alaska; Guy and I to Torres del Paine in southern Chile. Grant and Tim managed to get smacked around a bunch by weather. Guy and I had our own smack-down by weather, too, but managed to sneak in a couple of ascents.

In return for the financial support, I had to write a report on the trip and a story for the *Canadian Alpine Journal*, and present a slide show. Seemed like a sweet deal to me. In fact, it was such a good deal that I began to apply for various grants for all my expeditions. Thanks to the JLMA, Mugs Stump Award, Canadian Himalayan Foundation (now defunct), Polartec Challenge and AAC Lyman-Spizter Award, I was able to afford an expedition annually for almost 10 years. There is no fathomable way that I would have been able to travel to remote regions in Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Peru, Patagonia, Alaska and Baffin Island without such generous funding.

In retrospect, winning the first JLMA back in 1996 was the catalyst that sparked my decade-long passion for seeking out first ascents around the globe. The money is still out there. Come up with a dream, form a plan, grab a partner, fill out an application. It is that easy, and the next thing you know you might be on an all-expense-paid "vacation" to a cold, desolate mountain range of your choice, as proven by Jason Kruk's feature on page 6 (JLMA recipient) and Jasmin Caton's story on page 127 (Jen Higgins Memorial Fund recipient).

Of course, I never met John, but I am indebted to him for inspiring and posthumously supporting a generation of Canadian alpinists. We all thank you. And we thank the writers who bring their dreams from mountaintop to paper in order to produce this journal.

—Sean Isaac

CERRO TORRE

Jason Kruk

Sweating hard, I took another step and plunged boot-deep in the soft snow. The rope pulled sharply at my harness. "You need to slow down, dude. I can't go as fast as you," Chris urged. He was right. We were gaining nothing by working this hard on the approach. It was 11 a.m., the sun—a rare sight in this mountain range—was shining brightly down on us. The snow was isothermal. The mighty east face of Cerro Torre leered above, taunting me. This was the culmination of a season spent biding time, waiting for conditions and weather to attempt our dream project. I was amazed we were finally getting the chance. I had an uneasy feeling in my stomach, the feeling of uncertainty • • • •

The east face of Cerro Torre, as seen from the Torre Valley with the controversial Maestri Route roughly following the southeast ridge (left skyline). Photo: Chris Geisler

Facing page: Jason Kruk (left) and Chris Geisler. Photo: Jason Kruk

ONLY 24 HOURS EARLIER, my partner Chris Geisler and I had cashed in our chips. Our trip was over. We staggered back into camp and packed our bags, defeated. Our new route attempt across the valley from the Torre ended after two punishing days. It was going to be our consolation prize of the trip since the Torre, our main objective, was still caked in unclimbable rime ice. I got sick. We were both fried. After a freezing open bivy without a stove or sleeping gear, our decision to retreat was easy.

We were punched as we walked out of basecamp. Chris had to catch the bus that afternoon to make his flight home. Midway across the glacier we stopped for a drink at a small glacial stream. Sitting on my pack, I stared up at Cerro Torre one last time, my eyes drawn immediately to the upper headwall, a stretch of overhanging stone that sits encased in unclimbable rime ice 98 per cent of the year. It seemed to have shed quite a bit of its frosty exterior in the past few days. Our route looked to be coming into climbable shape.

"What exactly is stopping us from trying what we came all the way here to try?" Chris asked.

I thought for a long time before answering. "Well, you have to catch a plane to get home to your wife, daughter and job."

Both being polite Canadians, we were avoiding saying exactly what we felt. But Chris's good nature was betrayed by the look in his eyes. We needed, at least, to try. Chris dropped his bag on the glacier, we high-fived and he howled with delight as he ran off to make the 30-kilometre round trip to town and back to change his flight.

I shuttled our packs back to basecamp and resurrected our tent. When I finished packing, all that remained was to wait. It was still light out when I retired to my sleeping bag, a futile attempt at sleep. My mind raced. More than any climb I had yet attempted, this one had the biggest build-up, the most bullshit. To understand, one must understand a little bit of the history of Cerro Torre. For the keenest reader, much has been written on the subject. Here is my abridged take.

"THE STORY OF CERRO TORRE is the story of a defeat." Or so said Dougal Haston after his attempt of the southeast ridge in 1968. Certainly, it has become the most controversial peak in the world of alpine climbing.

In 1959, Italians Cesare Maestri and Cesarino Fava, and Austrian Toni Egger attempted the north face of Cerro Torre. Fava turned back part way up, at the Col of Conquest. Egger perished at some point during the attempt. Fava found Maestri six days later lying in the snow after a fall, severely frostbitten and near death. Maestri claimed to have been successful, making what was then the greatest ascent in the history of the sport. Despite being one of the premier climbers of his generation, Maestri's claim was heavily scrutinized. It is now globally accepted that Maestri made nothing more than a monumental lie.

For reasons that can only be attributed to the inner workings of an unhinged mind, Cesare Maestri returned to Cerro Torre in 1970 with a gasoline-powered air compressor and thousands of metres of fixed rope. Maestri started up the unclimbed southeast ridge of the mountain. When he hit unclimbable rime ice part way up the ridge, he deviated from the natural line. Utilizing his 180-kilogram compressed air drill kit, he constructed a 90-metre bolt ladder across the blank, overhanging east face and continued bolting up the blank stone above. When Maestri intersected the ice tower features, he drilled up blank stone beside a WI4 *goulotte*. On the headwall, Maestri drilled continuous pitches of bolt ladders, despite many climbable features, because he had left all his pitons at the bergschrund. Between 300 and 400 bolts were placed. The resulting effort is now known as the Compressor Route.

Maestri didn't summit. He descended from the highest rock on the headwall, not even allowing his climbing partners to join him at his high point. While rappelling his last pitch, Maestri chopped a long section of the bolt ladder (which was re-drilled with rivets by Jim Bridwell when he and Steve Brewer made the third ascent of Cerro Torre in 1979). To fully fathom the insanity that Maestri left behind on Cerro Torre, one must experience it first-hand.

I remember when I was 10 years old, showing my stepfather a photo of Cerro Torre in a climbing magazine and telling him that Patagonia looked cool. Since then I've always wanted to climb the Torre. Will Stanhope and I even briefly discussed attempting the Compressor Route during our first trip to Patagonia in 2008. Lacking the skill set for any other route on the mountain however, we soon abandoned the notion, dismissing an ascent of the Compressor as invalid. This past year I applied for the John Lauchlan Memorial Award with partner Chris Geisler. "Our team hopes to climb the Torre by fair means—a new route done without using any of the Maestri bolts up the natural line of the southeast ridge," I wrote in my proposal. Never expecting to win with such a wacky objective, we were blown away when they told us we'd won the money.

Climbing the southeast ridge of Cerro Torre without utilizing any of Maestri's detritus, what is now labeled the Fair Means Project, is a difficult concept for the general public to understand. Compounding the problem was the recent hype in the media surrounding the young Austrian David Lama's attempt to free the Compressor Route.

Lama arrived in Patagonia during the 2009-10 climbing season on a Red Bull-sponsored expedition accompanied by a large crew of filmmakers and guides. Unfortunately, the team chose to add approximately 30 bolts to the route in places not even Maestri deemed necessary, as well as fix ropes along the ridge to the 90-metre bolt traverse. Here, they were thwarted by poor weather and retreated. They abandoned their ropes and haulbags on the mountain when the team returned to Austria. It would be more than a month before Red Bull paid local Argentine guides to remove the trash, but they failed to remove it all. As a keen observer who happened to be in the range at the time, I was shocked that these heavy-handed tactics were still being deployed in the mountains and wondered when the media was going to catch on to this story. News spread. The climbing world was outraged and Lama was vilified, especially in North America.

This year Lama returned to Patagonia, admitting his wrongs from the year before. Things would be different this time, they claimed. One detail that managed to leak, however, was Lama's intent on climbing the Compressor to scope the headwall section, then rappel-bolt the line of least resistance.

I was shocked. I thought this tactic would directly inhibit my planned attempt. I appealed to the power of social media and blogged about Red Bull's plan. The response was much greater than anticipated. Loving the controversy, all the magazines wanted to know my opinion. The hype became too much. Recycled garbage. Eventually I was tired of it all; the idea of comparing myself to someone else sickened me. My plan was never to promote my ascent, nor defame Lama.

STILL AWAKE, MY EYES WIDE, I stared at the yellow fabric of the inside of my tent while waiting for Chris to show up. I had a lot to think about when all I really should have been thinking about was the route.

Fuck everybody else. Cerro Torre was deeply personal. That's why I was doing this. Finally I was able to sleep.

"Yo, Kruk!" It was Chris, back from his epic round trip. He had been on the move now for a long time. Taking a long pull off a bottle of whisky, he described his odyssey: the long hike; the ordeal of changing his flights last minute; getting hopelessly lost alone on the Torre Glacier. His eyes were lit up but his body looked worked.

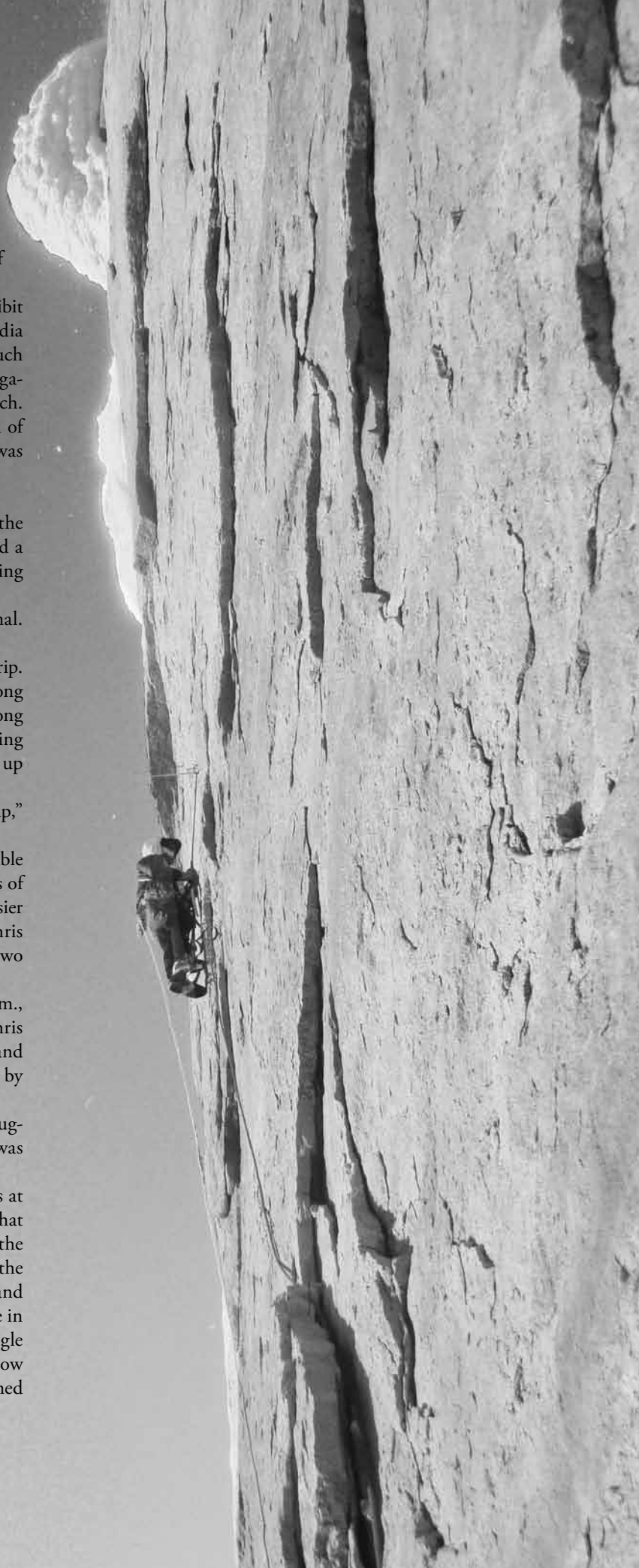
"I think we should move now, before the snow softens up," Chris said.

I thought about it. It was 3:30 a.m., a very reasonable time to go alpine climbing. Climbing the initial 300 metres of mixed terrain before the sun reached it would make for easier travel—safer too. But I also thought about how tired Chris must be, especially considering our climbing the previous two days.

We agreed to sleep for four hours. We woke at 9:30 a.m., brewed cowboy coffee and devoured a massive steak Chris had brought up from town, along with soggy French fries and a wilting salad. We started hiking towards Cerro Torre by 10 a.m.

There we were, post-holing on the glacier, playing tug-of-war on the ends of our shortened rope. I apologized. I was anxious. We were finally going to touch Cerro Torre.

We weaved our way through fresh-looking serac debris at the start of the mixed climbing. I dropped the coils of rope that were around my shoulder and we started simul-climbing up the steep snow and ice, placing infrequent pieces of rock gear in the buttress to my right. I spied the first real pitch of climbing and led towards it. Slinging a horn as my belay, I pulled the rope in for Chris, then handed him the rack. Chris, wearing our single set of steel crampons, would lead this section. I would follow with the heavy pack and aluminum crampons that threatened to fall off my boots with every front-point move.



Chris Geisler on the fourth pitch of the headwall on Cerro Torre.
Photo: Jason Kruk

Isothermic conditions required creativity to manage, but we quickly reached the Col of Patience, the broad shoulder of snow where the southeast ridge proper begins. Here, I switched from boots to rock shoes, then short-fixed my way up the ridgeline. Chris followed with the jumars, getting more and more frustrated by the tedious nature of jugging less-than-vertical terrain with a large pack.

Colin Haley and Zach Smith, who were trying the same Fair Means Project up the southeast ridge, rappelled past us as they bailed from their own attempt. They told us it was too cold and windy, and they only had lightweight sleeping bags to bivy in.

We watched our friends rappel out of sight. Chris and I chatted about the possibility of descending. We only had one lightweight sleeping bag between us. After all we had been through to get to this point, we decided to commit. We were not bailing now. We continued at a slow pace, the difference split between our tired bodies and our high psyche.

We bivied just below the 90-metre bolt traverse on the first night. I spent a long time chopping a ledge into the ice barely big enough for us to sleep on, repeatedly having to force my hand open finger by finger from its death grip on my ice tool. The night was cold but luxurious compared to the horrible bivy we had two nights previous.

On day two we encountered our first crux. The integral ridgeline above the 90-metre bolt traverse was attempted as early as 1968, and finally climbed in 1999 by Ermanno Salvaterra and Mauro Mabboni. Here I climbed bullet-hard granite at the apex of the ridge, the unrelentingly steep south face dropping away immediately to my left. I tacked my way through perfect scooped edges. Bold 5.11 climbing was protected by only a few bolts and thin gear. Salvaterra placed a handful of bolts in total, skipping hundreds of Maestri's bolts in the process.

Chris's moral was starting to dive. I was leading granite perfection, hooting with delight at the intricate climbing, while he was sentenced to the jumars—the pack mule. At the ice towers, Chris took over the leading and took off up an easy mixed pitch with a renewed vigour. Moderate ice led to the entrance of the 60-metre WI4 chimney, a perfect cleft of vertical blue ice pinching down to a width barely big enough to fit through. Bobbles of rime ice were being continuously funnelled through the chimney feature. Chris battled through, running it out between the only three screws we brought and occasionally getting his bell rung by softball-sized chunks of ice.

Topping out the chimney, we were finally at the base of the headwall—the overhanging tombstone of decomposing granite capping the mountain. Looking up, insipient edge features linked hanging flakes, a far cry from the high-quality granite we had become accustomed to. Maestri's bolt ladder went straight up; our line climbed right. Chris led on, gingerly laybacking the hollow flakes and stuffing dubious cams behind the creaking granite. The pitch devoured gear, so Chris stopped short, fixing the rope for me to jumar. Ice clung to the wide flakes above, forcing him left. Climbing mostly on aid, Chris swung into a perfect thin-hands splitter. What could have been free-climbing terrain became aided in our deteriorating physical state. Chris brought us up to a small two-foot ledge of sloping ice midway up the headwall. It was the only horizontal sanctuary on the headwall, and what would be my resting place for the next eight hours.

Above, the climbing looked tenuous. It was definitely the realm of the modern aid technician, so Chris was the man for job. He has done early repeats of El Cap terrors, and established and repeated the most serious of the Squamish big-wall aid climbs. He hadn't done this type of climbing for several years, so I was very curious to see how he would cope. I breathed easy as I watched him delicately shift his weight between his aiders and methodically work his way from hook placement to hook placement.

When it became dark Chris continued climbing. I patiently belayed. The hours ticked by and the cold darkness of a Patagonian night surrounded us. The rime ice bobbles, carried by the venturi effect, whipped around the headwall and pummelled me constantly. Every couple of minutes, a grapefruit would connect with my knee or my shoulder, awakening me from my half-sleep with sharp pain. I tied knots in the rope below my belay device, not really trusting myself to give an attentive belay.

Suddenly I heard a scream from above. Chris was airborne. The rope came tight. The edge he was hooking on had ripped, sending him for a massive whipper through the darkness. "Now we're climbing!" I yelled up. He pulled up the jumars on the tag line to re-ascend to his high point.

Our best guess at the line of weakness dead-ended just above here. Chris was on the lead for eight hours straight, climbing through the night before he came abruptly to a blank impasse. He placed a one-quarter-inch bolt, the second one placed on the pitch, and I lowered him to my stance. We were unsure about what to do. Chris was mentally fried after being strung out on the sharp end for so long. We were painfully close to the top though, our highpoint being approximately 40 metres from the top of the headwall.

Our decision was made for us when storm clouds, hidden from us at our vantage point high on the east face, blew in from the west. Instantly, our clothes, ropes and beards were coated in a white layer of frost. The wind picked up even stronger and whipped around the tower. The full fury of a Patagonian storm was unleashing around us. We were so exposed on our little perch that we felt like we were on the moon. It was time to go down.

Slowly and methodically, I led the way down in the storm. Chris was thankful for the break. The plentiful bolts quickened the pace. Many hours later we reached our starting point. Basecamp was a ghost town; ours was the last tent remaining.

Early the next morning, Chris hiked to town to catch his bus to the airport. I slept in and hiked out that afternoon with a crippling load on my back. I had plenty to contemplate to take my mind off the labour. Unsure of what the outside world's reaction to our attempt would be, I didn't care. I was proud of our climb.

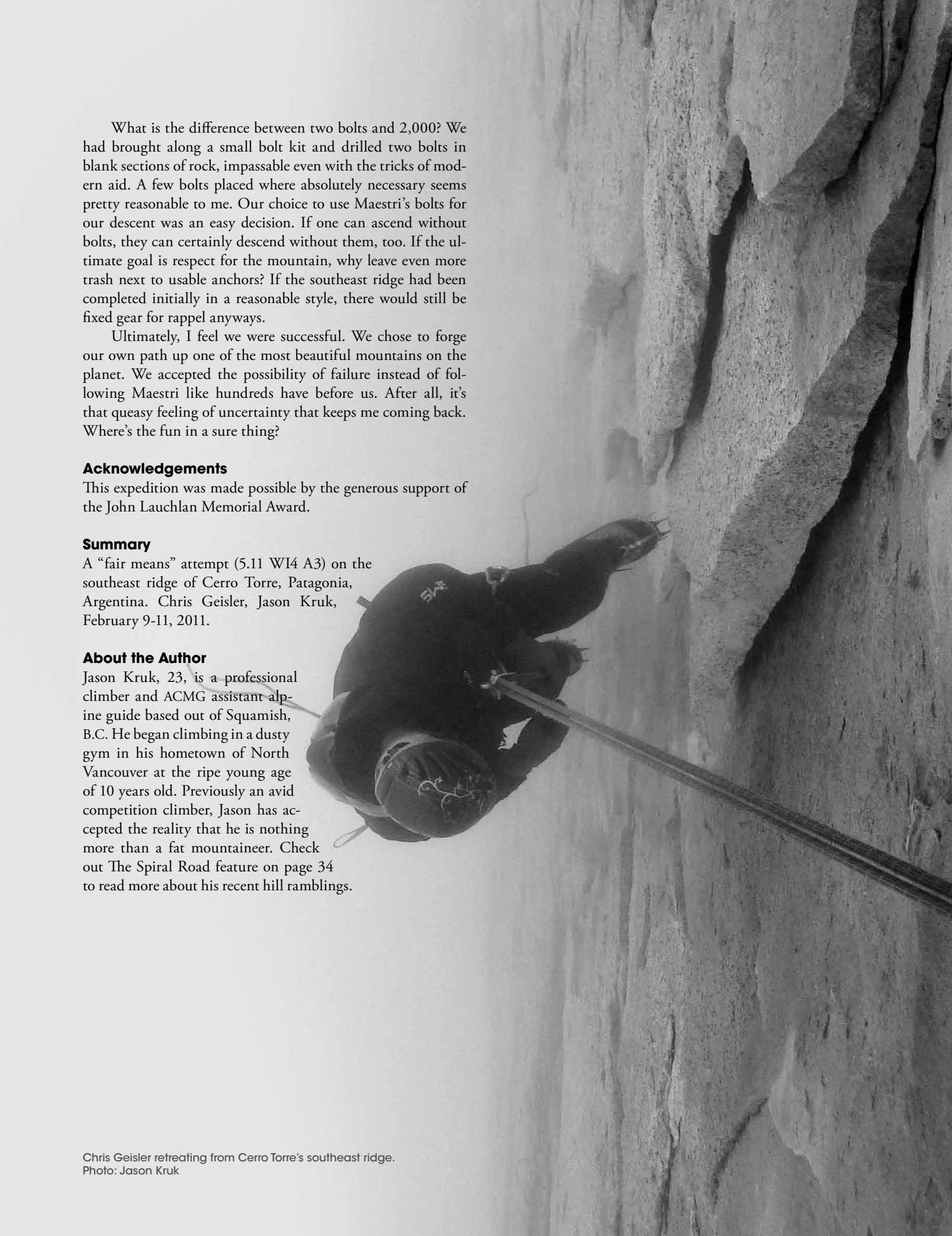
What is the difference between two bolts and 2,000? We had brought along a small bolt kit and drilled two bolts in blank sections of rock, impassable even with the tricks of modern aid. A few bolts placed where absolutely necessary seems pretty reasonable to me. Our choice to use Maestri's bolts for our descent was an easy decision. If one can ascend without bolts, they can certainly descend without them, too. If the ultimate goal is respect for the mountain, why leave even more trash next to usable anchors? If the southeast ridge had been completed initially in a reasonable style, there would still be fixed gear for rappel anyways.

Ultimately, I feel we were successful. We chose to forge our own path up one of the most beautiful mountains on the planet. We accepted the possibility of failure instead of following Maestri like hundreds have before us. After all, it's that queasy feeling of uncertainty that keeps me coming back. Where's the fun in a sure thing?

Acknowledgements
This expedition was made possible by the generous support of the John Lauchlan Memorial Award.

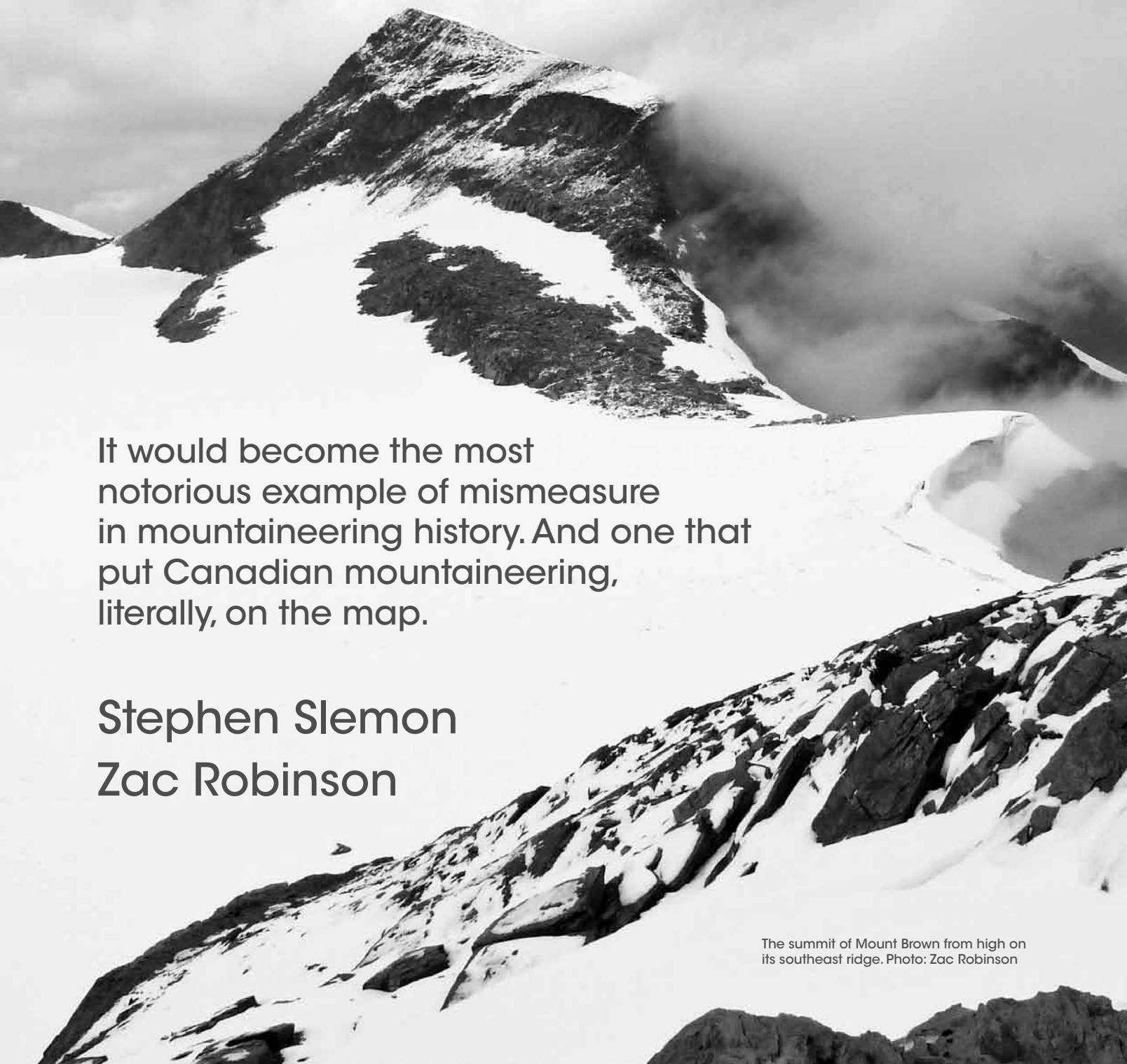
Summary
A "fair means" attempt (5.11 WI4 A3) on the southeast ridge of Cerro Torre, Patagonia, Argentina. Chris Geisler, Jason Kruk, February 9-11, 2011.

About the Author
Jason Kruk, 23, is a professional climber and ACMG assistant alpine guide based out of Squamish, B.C. He began climbing in a dusty gym in his hometown of North Vancouver at the ripe young age of 10 years old. Previously an avid competition climber, Jason has accepted the reality that he is nothing more than a fat mountaineer. Check out The Spiral Road feature on page 34 to read more about his recent hill ramblings.



Chris Geisler retreating from Cerro Torre's southeast ridge.
Photo: Jason Kruk

DECEPTION in High Places



It would become the most notorious example of mismeasure in mountaineering history. And one that put Canadian mountaineering, literally, on the map.

Stephen Slemon
Zac Robinson

The summit of Mount Brown from high on its southeast ridge. Photo: Zac Robinson

In the spring of 1827, David Douglas, a botanical collector in the employ of Horticultural Society of London, was on his way back from what he hoped would prove to have been a career-making expedition, gathering plant specimens in Western Canada and the U.S. He had already prepared and shipped seeds and specimens of many kinds: a flowering currant, a yellow lupine, a purple-and-yellow peony and, most crucially for his imagined future, some cones from a giant "sugar pine" that he had come across in Oregon. Douglas's highest hope was that at least some of his botanical finds would turn out to be "originals"—plants as yet unknown in Europe—but of this he couldn't really be sure. For although Douglas had sent many specimens back to the Horticultural Society, ones that seemed new to him, he hadn't actually analysed and classified those specimens. That kind of intellectual work belonged to professional botanists, men of the educated upper crust, and Douglas was a self-taught mason's son. Seven years earlier, while working as a gardener at Glasgow University, Douglas had been taken in hand by William Jackson Hooker, professor of botany. Hooker had discovered an aptitude in the young Scot, trained him in the art of flower pressing and drying, and sent him down to the Horticultural Society of London with a view to carrying out exploratory fieldwork. Soon after, Douglas was shipped out to Philadelphia and began his new career by collecting furiously. His botanical specimens, however, had so far met with minimal success back in London. A chance at redemption came in 1824, when the Hudson's Bay Company agreed to sponsor a botanical collection expedition along the Columbia River, and Douglas—again, with help from Hooker—secured the position. And so on May 1, 1827, Douglas found himself at Athabasca Pass, travelling east along the fur-trade trail over the Great Divide, and harbouring hopes for a very different type of upward mobility than the kind for which he was about to become so disturbingly famous.

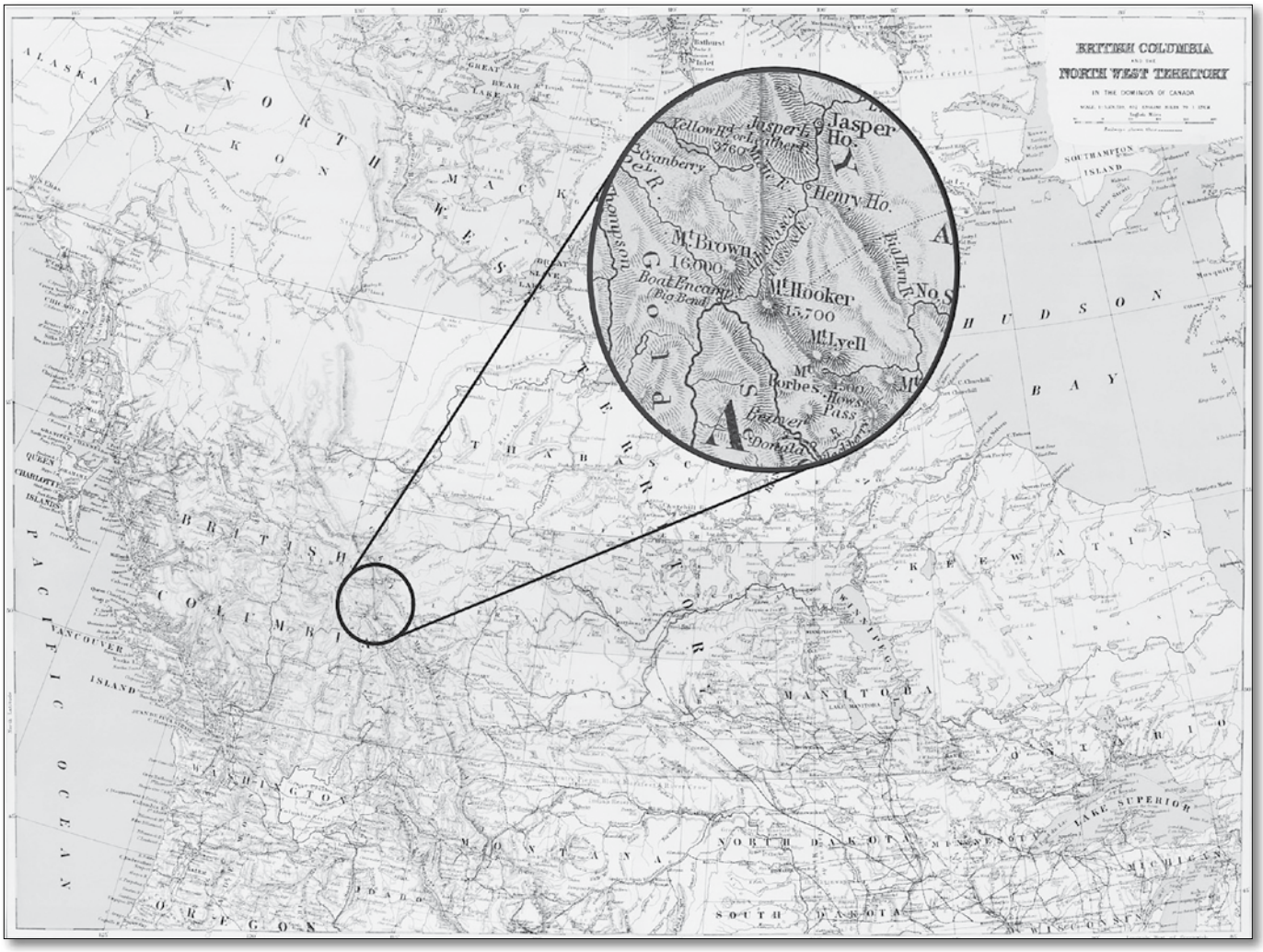
"I set out," Douglas wrote later, in his 1828 narrative titled *A Sketch of a Journey to the North-Western Parts of the Continent of America During the Years 1824, 1825, 1826, and 1827*, "with the view of ascending what appeared to be the highest peak" guarding the height of land. Why he did so remains unclear. Professionally, Douglas's interest in mountains ended at the treeline. Though in Douglas's day people did hike up mountains for exercise or leisure, mountain climbing itself, as technique and sport, was hardly a consolidated activity. The birth of alpine-club culture was still decades away in England. But Romanticism, and the Grand Tour in Europe, had made mountain viewing fashionable, in part for the capacity of mountains to evoke a sense of awe in the face of the sublime. Whatever the case, Douglas's moment of Romantic wanderlust on that May 1 would produce what some have called the first mountaineering ascent in North America.

"The height from its apparent base exceeds 6,000 feet, 17,000 feet above the level of the sea," Douglas continued. "1,200 feet of eternal ice. The view from the summit is of that cast too awful to afford pleasure—nothing as far as the eye can reach in every direction but mountains towering above each other, rugged beyond all description." And then the Romanticism in Douglas's writing surrenders to the prose of social climbing. "This peak, the highest yet known in the Northern Continent of America, I felt a sincere pleasure in naming MOUNT BROWN, in honour of R. Brown, Esq., the illustrious botanist, no less distinguished by the amiable qualities of his refined mind. A little to the south is one nearly of the same height, rising more into a sharp point, which I named MOUNT HOOKER, in honour of my early patron the enlightened and learned Professor of Botany in the University of Glasgow."

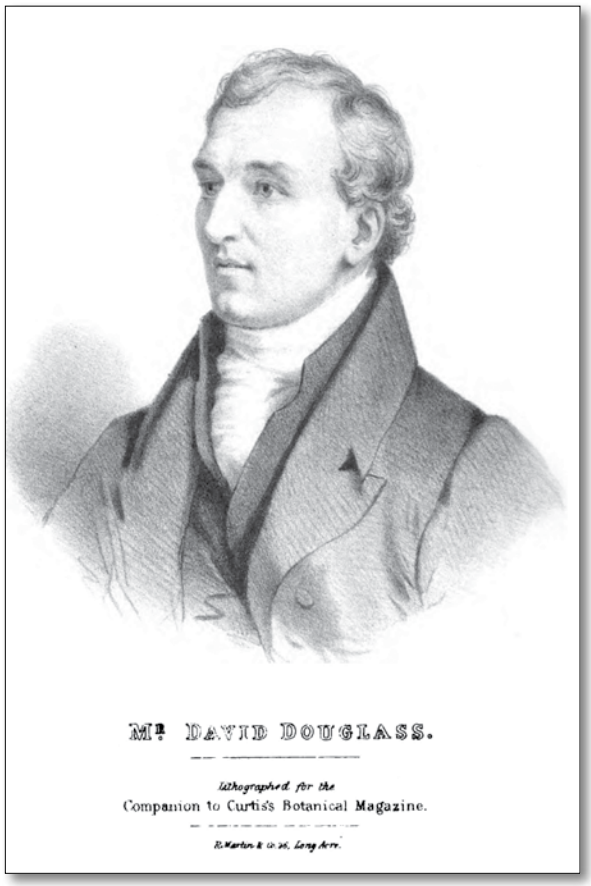
As every reader of the *Canadian Alpine Journal* (*CAJ*) knows, nothing in the Canadian Rockies rises to anywhere near 17,000 feet above sea level. The peak now named Mount Hooker—and there's good evidence to suggest that Douglas's Mount Hooker was, in fact, the nearby (and significantly lower) McGillivray's Rock—rises to a reasonably respectable 10,781 feet, 85th highest in the range. At 9,184 feet, Mount Brown looms to only about 600 feet higher than Mount Lady Macdonald, a pleasant day-hike just north of Canmore.

But it's not always the facts that make history. Hope and

Since first appearing on a map in 1829, Mount Brown and Mount Hooker remained the highest points on any map and atlas showing North America until the early years of the 20th century. *British Columbia and the North West Territory in the Dominion of Canada.* London Atlas Series. London: Edward Stanford, 1901.



pity play their own compositional part in this tale. David Douglas returned to London to discover that many of his samples *had* proven to be "originals." Within months, he was elected to membership in the Linnean Society, the Zoological Society and the Geological Society with the usual membership fees waived. John Murray, the famous publisher of Albemarle Street, awarded him a book contract—it was to be *the* book of the year—and Murray wanted a ripping yarn. It was an extraordinary honour. Murray specialized in books of travel, exploration and adventure (like, for instance, Captain John Franklin's *Narrative of a Journey to the Shore of the Polar Sea, in the Years 1819, 1820, 1821, 1822* [1823] and Charles Darwin's *The Origins of Species* [1859]), but he had never before considered a work by an ordinary botanical collector. Douglas, however, wanted to add botanical classification to his exploration memoir, and so he threw himself into scientific self-training in the Linnaean system. And here his social ascent ended. He was invited to read a paper to the Linnean Society, and would have done so himself, without the usual professional elocutionist, had he not succumbed to a paralyzing nervousness on the day. Overwhelmed by feelings of misgiving and inferiority, he delayed on the Murray book contract as the self-education continued. The manuscript stalled out at one-thirteenth the length of his field notes. It was never submitted for publication. Broken, the would-be scientist accepted a contract from Hooker to help prepare the map for the professor's forthcoming magnum opus on the plant life of North America, *Flora Boreali-Americana* (1829). He departed soon after on another specimen-collecting expedition to the west coast of North America and never returned to England. The fact that Douglas died in 1834 under bizarre circumstances—his body was found, lifeless and trampled, at the bottom of an open pit dug to trap wild bulls near Mount Mauna Kea in Hawaii—fuelled speculation of foul play, even suicide. He was 35 years of age.



Douglas, David (1798-1834). From *Curtis's botanical magazine; or flower garden displayed.* London: Samual Curtis, 1836, volume 63. Lithograph by R. Martin & Co. (sheet 156 x 253 mm).

Hooker privately wondered about Douglas's mountaintop measurements, suspecting they were "egregiously overrated." In the end, the heights were both reduced by about 1,000 feet. But he felt sufficiently grateful to his specimen collector to include Douglas's Rocky Mountain giants on the *Flora Boreali-Americana* book map; mementoes, it would seem, of a life that had not reached its professional summit. *That* map first presents two high mountains in the Canadian Rockies, each with Douglas's hopeful name, each with only a little taken off the top: Mount Brown at 16,000 feet, Mount Hooker at 15,700.

ATLAS MAKERS STEAL INFORMATION from each other—to the extent that most commercial map publishers today include a fictional "trap street" or two on their urban maps in order to catch their thieving competitors out. In the mid-19th century, physical information about western North America was scarce, and publishers had to make a living. And so it was that Douglas's mountains, first published in an 1829 botanical document written in Latin, became the dominant trap streets of 19th century cartography. They remained the highest points on any map of British North America for almost three-quarters of a century, and so became the siren call for Canadian mountaineering exploration. These giants in the Rockies *had* to exist, for by the turn of the 20th century every atlas and geography book showed them as existing… somewhere.

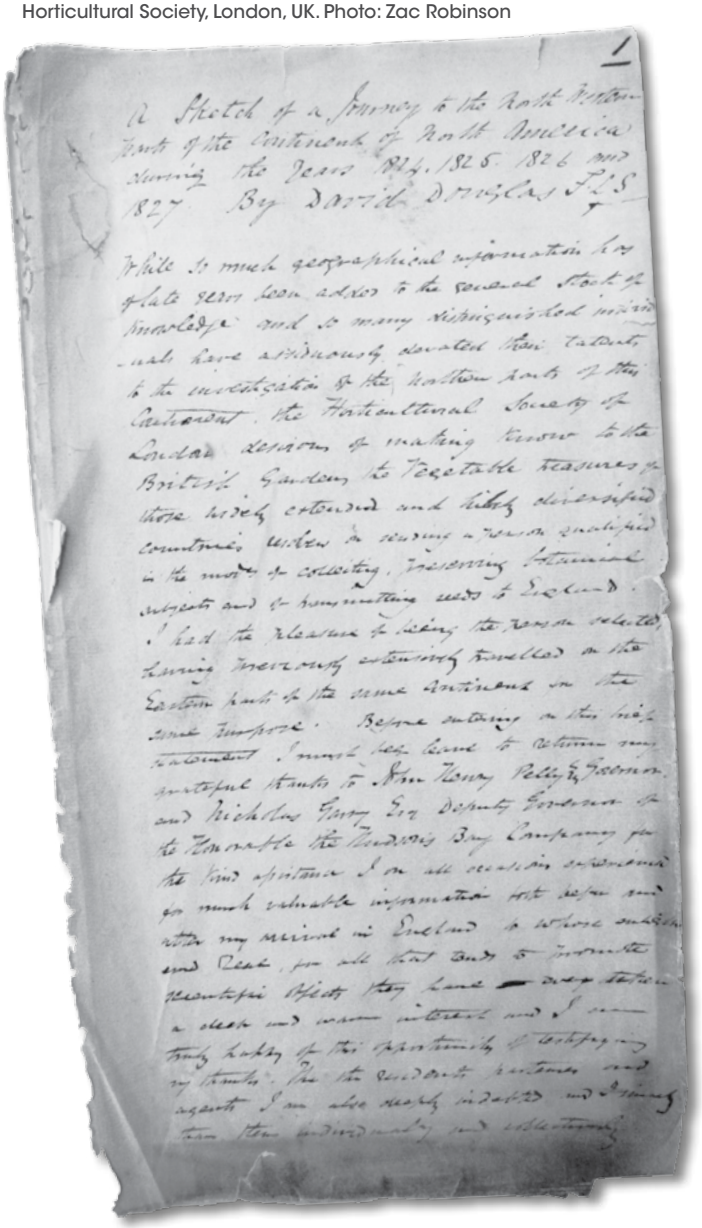
The problem was that nobody else had actually seen them. "A high mountain," wrote Arthur P. Coleman, professor of geology at the University of Toronto, "is always seductive. A mountain with a mystery is doubly so.... When I studied the atlas and saw Mount Brown and Mount Hooker, the highest points in the Rockies, standing on each side of the Athabasca Pass, I longed to [find] them.... My eyes turned to them irresistibly whenever I looked at the map, and my mind was soon made up to visit and, if possible, climb them."

And in 1893, because of a map drawn for him by Chief Jonas of the Stoney Nation, Coleman did at last find them—found them, that is, to be "frauds." "That two commonplace mountains…should masquerade for generations as the highest points in North America," he wrote, "seems absurd.… How could any one, even a botanist like Douglas, make so monumental a blunder…?" Five years later, J. Norman Collie, the British scientist and famed mountaineer, retraced Coleman's steps and agreed. "[That] Douglas climbed a peak 17,000 feet high in an afternoon," wrote Collie, "is, of course, impossible." "[T]o Prof. Coleman belongs the credit of…settled accuracy."

Charitable writers have ever since sought ways of understanding this spectacular mountain deception as being, somehow, innocent. Jerry Auld's introspective *Hooker & Brown*

(2009), which attempts to understand the story at the level of character, and through the narrative possibilities of historical fiction, is the latest in a long line of Canadian mountain-history speculation. Everyone agrees that Douglas's miscalculation probably derived from a boiling-point error reported—but never actually found in the archives—by David Thompson in 1811, when the surveyor/mapmaker calculated the height of Athabasca Pass to be 11,000 feet, rather than the 5,751 feet we know it to be. But the least charitable moment came in 1927, on the centenary of Douglas's alleged ascent of Mount Brown, and it came from the most distinguished alpine historian, writer of the region's first mountaineering guidebook, and later president of the American Alpine Club, James Monroe Thorington.

David Douglas's 1828 narrative, *A Sketch of a Journey to the North-Western Parts of the Continent of America During the Years 1824, 1825, 1826, and 1827,* prepared for, but never submitted to, publisher John Murray. Housed in the archive of the Lindley Library of the Royal Horticultural Society, London, UK. Photo: Zac Robinson



After making a trip to England with the express purpose of comparing Douglas's original field notes—a hefty ledger of 131 pages, with entries covering the entire 1824-27 expedition—with the shorter prepared, but never submitted, manuscript, Thorington questioned whether Douglas actually reached the top of Mount Brown at all. A trip up the mountain with Conrad Kain in the summer of 1924 confirmed Thorington's suspicion. The altitudes, while grossly exaggerated, were not where the deception lay, Thorington concluded. Douglas always had trouble with altitudes, he noted, and fur-trade records indicated a long-standing tradition of height in the region. Everyone believed the mountains in the area were somewhere between 16,000 and 18,000 feet high. For Thorington, the deception was Douglas's claim of an ascent.

In his field notes, Douglas didn't name or attribute elevations to Brown or Hooker. These inventions, Thorington discovered, were created later in England in the shorter manuscript prepared for John Murray. Furthermore, in his field notes, Douglas described the view by saying "[n]othing, as far as the eye could perceive, but mountains such as I was on, and *many higher* [our emphasis]." The latter part of sentence is dropped in the Murray document and replaced with "the view from the summit" and "the highest yet known in the Northern Continent of America." In fact, the only suggestion in the field notes that perhaps puts Douglas on the actual summit of Mount Brown is a sentence that reads "the ascent took me five hours; descending only one a quarter"—and this is assuming, of course, that Douglas's use of the word "ascent" implies actually getting to the top. It's a big assumption for 1827. Again, in Douglas's day, mountaineering as sport didn't exist. And so it is difficult to say with certainty where exactly Douglas was standing when, in his field notes, he wrote as follows: "I *remained* [our emphasis] 20 minutes, my Thermometer standing at 18°; and night closing fast in on me and no means of fire, I was reluctantly forced to descend."

High on Mount Brown, Douglas's field notes in hand, Thorington could make little sense of the actual terrain in relation to the notes. The steeper cliffs near the top, for instance—terrain that would challenge anyone wearing snowshoes, as Douglas was—aren't mentioned at all. Moreover, Douglas's time of five hours hardly jived with the realities of spring conditions and snow. Travel at that time of year is just not that fast during the afternoon. Lower on the mountain, Douglas complained about "sinking on many occasions to the middle."

It was these details and others that led Thorington to suggest that, if we're to take the field notes at face value, Douglas likely "reached the snow plateau on the southern shoulder"; and that "it should not be forgotten that this was a time in mountaineering history when many a man 'climbed' a mountain without attaining the very summit. It was only necessary that one should reach a considerable height." Thorington's conclusions were published in his *The Glittering Mountains of Canada* (1925) and, again, in the 1926-1927 *CAJ*. But to fully understand the real story of mounts Brown and Hooker, as fragmentary and uncertain it remained, the historian challenged the

CAJ's readership to simply "remember the man who created it a hundred years ago."

Arthur O. Wheeler, the obstinate and fiery long-time director of the Alpine Club of Canada, wanted none of it, and a heated debate ensued for years between the two titans in the journal. Looking back on the exchange, writer/climber Bruce Fairley, in his wonderful *Canadian Mountaineering Anthology* (1994), surmised that Wheeler "simply could not conceive that so famous an explorer and scientist [Douglas] could simply have fabricated the details of his historic climb out of whole cloth." If Fairley's right, Wheeler missed Thorington's point—but it also shows that Wheeler knew little about David Douglas himself. Ironically, this is no small part of the Brown-Hooker problem.

Contemporary mountaineering writers have largely disregarded or misread Thorington's thesis. And they've all imagined Douglas in contexts befitting only what now seems to be the standard stock-in-trade creation myth of North American mountaineering. For instance, in both Andy Selters' *Ways to the Sky* (2004) and Chic Scott's *Pushing the Limits* (2000), attention is given to Douglas's exaggerated heights, but his summit achievement is taken for granted. Douglas is refashioned as both a great man of science—a "botanist-explorer," writes Selters—and an actual climber. "His elation and joy upon reaching the summit," says Scott, "can still be understood by mountaineers today."

In *Climbing in North America* (1976), Chris Jones goes further to claim that Douglas "does not give us science, botany, or geography, but he has stated what makes a mountaineer: a person who, without qualification, *desires* to climb peaks. We see in him the archetypal mountaineer." Jones continued to write that "if we understand what it was about those wintery peaks at Athabasca Pass that drew him to them, we have a grasp of mountaineering." Here, Douglas has been wholly remade as not only a climber—"he was our first mountaineer"—but as one of early mountaineering's exemplary figures, a fantastical sort of George Mallory *a la coureur de bois*.

To Douglas now goes the hefty honour of establishing mountaineering culture itself in Canada, or so any keen scrambler might interpret from the summit register atop Mount Brown. A note written by Robert W. Sandford, the author of *The Canadian Alps* (1990), which was taken to the top by a group of Jasper park officials in 2002, reads: "On this, the 175th anniversary of David Douglas' ascent, our expedition aims to commemorate the importance of… the role David Douglas played in the creation of this country's mountaineering culture."

TO TAKE THORINGTON'S CHALLENGE seriously is to consider Douglas in the context of his place and time. And to do so perhaps tells us more about the exclusive class-based world of Victorian science than it does about an emergent mountain culture in North America. Douglas was not ahead of his time, but rather a sad product of it. And if May 1, 1827, was a foundational moment for Canadian mountaineering, a serious appraisal that puts geography, literature and history in direct conversation with one another is necessary. It's almost certain that Douglas did not climb to the summit of Mount Brown. It is probable, however, that he ascended to a highpoint somewhere on the mountain's long, meandering southeast ridge just above that point, perhaps, where Wheeler and his Interprovincial Boundary Survey team would build their camera station 93 years later. An old bolt and a cairn still mark the spot where Wheeler measured and Douglas mused. But "fraud" is too strong a word for that complex process of botanical, geographic and literary intermingling that put Douglas's spectacular mismeasurement into the history books.

In a sport where the false claim has occasioned a special fascination among writers and readers (consider the whole Robson saga, for example, or Fredrick Cook's mendacious account of a first ascent on Mount McKinley) the Brown-Hooker problem fails to rise to the level of fraudulent deception. Here's why. While Douglas's claim puts him squarely on the summit of the highest point on the continent, it has little to do with mountaineering achievement, and even less to do with sensationalism. Thorington was mistaken to conclude that "the creation of Mt. Brown and Mt. Hooker and their altitudes… were introduced for purposes of personal publicity." An examination of the *entirety* of Douglas's two hand-written texts—the 131-page field notes and the 56-page manuscript—tells a different story. Murray awarded Douglas the contract because he presumed the collector would confine himself to the narrative portions of his field notes: colourful, day-to-day accounts of expedition travel interlaced with descriptions of scenery, and amusing or adventurous anecdotes, dangerous encounters with wild animals, equally dangerous encounters with stereotypically wild Indians. And in fact Douglas's field notes are stuffed full of that kind of narrative material—stories of the kind that a travel publisher like Murray and his reading public yearned for. But what remains of Douglas's unhappy, and incomplete, *Sketch of a Journey…* proves that Douglas had no intention of writing that popular, sensational travel memoir that Murray thought he had commissioned. In fact, those anecdotes that could have formed the basis for the book Murray wanted—a bear shooting incident, an encounter with scary "Indians", and the like—are actually removed from Douglas's book attempt. In their place remain the sullen outlines of stories Douglas did not want to have to tell, some dry attempts at professional botanical classification and an echoing homage to his scientific betters, Brown and Hooker, lions of a community into which he could never fully ascend.

Beyond the legacy of two chimeric mountain-giants, David Douglas is best known for another taxonomic legacy: the "sugar pine" tree he found along the Columbia. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Douglas's sugar pine also resonates through history as a story of failed definition and mismeasurement. It is now known, again wrongly, as the Douglas Fir.

About the authors

Zac Robinson and Stephen Slemon are professors at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. The former is a historian, the latter a scholar of literature. Both enthusiastically flail up mountains and read too many books on the subject.

Yasushi Okada returning to basecamp after making the first ascent of the south face of Mount Logan.
Photo: Katsutaka Yokoyama

The photo was captioned “3,000-metre unclimbed south face”. It was July 2009 when Christian Beckwith showed me the picture of Mount Logan. As soon as I saw it, the immense wall captivated my imagination. I was not only drawn by such an attractive phrase, but the mountain itself was just as enticing. The fact that I had absolutely no idea where Logan was made it even more appealing.

The Sleeping Giant

Katsutaka “Jumbo” Yokoyama
translated from Japanese by Jiro Kurihara

Yasushi Okada approaching the base of the south face of Mount Logan. Photo: Katsutaka Yokoyama

MY CLIMBING PARTNERS and I had done some alpine climbing in the Alaska Range over the past several years. Those climbs and experiences were significant—and there are still many objectives that I am itching to fly in and try—but on the other hand, the mountains around Denali had been losing their appeal to me. It is getting difficult to discover something fresh. In this area, you can easily find information, route descriptions and relatively accurate weather forecasts, thus lessening the adventure. In addition to that, you have low commitment with easy escapes. It is a pure joy to climb mountains in an accessible environment, but I had started to think that real climbing for me should be done in a truly wild arena with more unreliability, uncertainty and anxiety. Christian's photo of Logan echoed in my mind.

The south face of Mount Logan has a notorious history, having turned down many attempts by strong climbers from North America in the past. Its technical difficulty was not the only reason why this wall has remained as one of the greatest unclimbed projects throughout the years. It has a fearsome reputation for unpredictable weather, serac fall, remoteness and sheer magnitude of landscape. These were difficulties that could not be described by a number or grade. Mountains are a yardstick by which to measure the amount of hardship a person can endure, as well as the physical and mental toughness they may, or may not, possess. Pure luck would be required as well. To climb Logan's south face, I would have to look inside myself to find the strength to confront such a daunting challenge.

"HUGE!" IT WAS THE FIRST WORD someone blurted when Yasushi Okada, Genki Narumi and I exited the plane onto the glacier. The hugeness was beyond our expectation and comprehension, and it created an indescribable energy. At that moment, we could not understand what this vast expanse of mountain meant for us, but, as days went by, it would be clearer and harder to ignore.

The first order of business was acclimatization. However, from the Steward Glacier, even after a thorough search, we couldn't find routes safe enough to acclimate on. As we re-examined and discussed, we decided that the East Ridge of Logan accessed from Hubbard Glacier would be the safest and quickest way to get high. Three days after flying in, we left basecamp. After walking for two hours, we were standing at a col and looked back towards our camp. The sight sent shivers down my spine. Our camp was just a tiny dot in the vast icefield, and as clouds rolled in, our basecamp became hidden from view. I wondered how we would be able to find camp after climbing the East Ridge, if snowfall or whiteout conditions occurred. We would be lost in a vast sea of white.

We understood how stupidly optimistic we were and promptly headed back to basecamp. Without a GPS, we were limited to primitive methods of marking our camp. We placed a tent pole upright and hoped that, if need be, we could locate camp with a map and compass. Not ideal, but the best we could come up with.

Yasushi Okada leading a short mixed step on day one. Photo: Katsutaka Yokoyama

On day six, the first storm passed and we began the acclimatization process at last. As we expected, acclimatizing itself turned out to be quite adventurous. Walking 30 kilometres to get to the East Ridge felt like a long voyage. The East Ridge is a beautiful route stretching nicely to the summit plateau, but it was a bit too technical for an easy acclimatization outing. To make matters worse, we had stormy weather that forced us to spend three hours digging a snow shelter every night. We needed to pitch our tent inside a cave, or else have it implode under the falling snow.

After eight tiring days we finished acclimatizing and were headed back to basecamp. Just before getting to camp, the fog rolled in and we lost all visibility. There was no trace of our path from a week ago since the recent storm snow uniformly covered all tracks. We had to go inch by inch, closely checking our compass. By 9 p.m., a slight opening in the dense fog allowed us to finally catch a glimpse of our tents. We could not help shouting for joy.

After finishing our acclimatization I found myself strangely excited. I understood the East Ridge and the foul weather might have been a bit too tough for acclimatizing, yet I was excited to have found the type of adventurous mountaineering I had been longing for. I could sense that Yasushi held the same feeling, and we agreed that it was great to be here. On the other hand, Genki seemed to lack our excitement. It was not a discord amongst the team, but a difference in how he perceived the mountain. When we finished scouting the south face, this difference finally became clear. Putting it simply, Genki had been overwhelmed by its presence. Yasushi and I understood, and his negative feelings made complete sense to all of us. But the point is, do you embrace those negativities and focus them into upwards progress, or refuse them and let them hold you back. Genki chose not to accept them. He opted to remain at basecamp, lessening the climbing team to just Yasushi and me. With only two, we needed to change our tactics and equipment—but our objective remained the same.

On May 4, we crossed the glacier under a bright moon. As day broke, we managed to navigate through seracs and reach the base of the wall. As we gazed up, Yasushi half joked, "Well, we can climb it in a day, can't we?"

We simul-climbed the initial gentle snow slope. Our progress was so quick that I almost believed we could finish this wall in just one day. Once hitting the rock wall, route-finding became less obvious and we started traversing left.

After the difficult traverse, we looked up at a distinctive chimney that was to be our planned high point for the day, but was still high above us. Snow had continued to fall on and off through the day, slowing us down and making our one-day ascent quip a foolish delusion. As night drew near and the stars began to twinkle, we carved an unexpectedly comfortable bivouac site and settled down to sleep, satisfied with our progress.

On the second day, we struggled upwards into the early afternoon towards the looming crux chimney. The unrelenting steepness, thin ice and loose rock all conspired to slow

I-TO on the 3,000-metre south face of Mount Logan.
Photo: Jack Tackle

our progress. The follower suffered with a heavy pack, and to make matters worse, delicate traverses without adequate protection only added to his challenge. By the time we managed to top out the chimney, it was dark and our second day came to an end. There was not enough space to pitch our tent, so we rigged our rope into a makeshift hammock to set the tent upon. Even in such miserable conditions, Yasushi was cheerful. If we can accept all that nature has to offer and enjoy our own presence in mountains, I believe there is no pathos, only laughter.

Day three opened with a perfect blue sky, and we were rather sceptical of this unexpected and continuing fine weather. We kept mulling over all the stories of ferocious sudden storms, "Dumping snow to neck height in just one night," and the fearsome reputation Logan had of being the "worst weather mountain." We were beset with doubts and fears. In addition to those anxieties, our planned descent of the ascent route was quickly and blatantly becoming out of the question. The traverses, rotten rock, thin ice and avalanche danger make it a one-way route—upwards retreat. Even if we loathed repeating the lengthy East Ridge, we had to admit that it was the safest and most reliable way back to basecamp.

The wall would not give up an easy path. We had already passed through the most technically demanding sections, but high altitude and heavy packs still reminded us that we were not yet finished. Finally, after navigating through the last serac barrier, we topped out the face at 11 p.m. and, luckily, found a well-protected crevasse to settle into for our third bivouac. Taking off our sturdy double boots, we found our socks were frozen in place. Throughout the night, deep penetrating cold kept me awake. To make matters worse, we dropped a brand new gas cartridge into the bottom of the crevasse. This loss reduced our supplies by one and a half days.

Despite the cold and minimal fuel, we were satisfied with our ascent of the south face in perfect alpine style. The climbing itself seemed surreal to me, yet my fatigue and the memory of miserable nights reminded me that we had climbed the wall.

Our adventure did not end there. It seemed impossible but the fourth day dawned with a beautiful blue sky. We were ecstatic with the ascent but full of anxiety about weather pinning us down on the summit plateau. The weather won't hold and a big storm will come soon, I worried.

If we were thinking rationally we should have begun our descent immediately, but both Yasushi and I agreed that despite topping out on a monstrous wall, the true goal should be the summit. So we proceeded to traverse four kilometres

Yasushi Okada following a complex mixed section on the upper wall on day three. Photo: Katsutaka Yokoyama

westward with 800 metres of elevation gain just to stand on the summit. It took three hours to get to the final col. Trail breaking and our accumulated fatigue was beyond our expectation. Physically and mentally, we were approaching our limit, but 600 metres of vertical gain still remained. Looking up at the beautiful blue sky, we were obsessed with the fear of a storm materializing. Well, to be honest, we just used our fear as an excuse to give up on the summit.

We discussed and deliberated for about 30 minutes, and decided to turn around. I was instantly regretting our retreat but tried to keep my mouth shut. It was *our* decision. The very moment we began our descent, I could not stop sighing. When Yasushi caught my sigh, words poured from his lips: "No, Jumbo. Let's go to the summit. This is not good. We should go."

Three hours later, we were standing on top of the east summit. People may say there was no meaning in our slogging, or may question why we did not go to the main summit. There was one more big dip to the main summit, and we had to admit that was beyond our limit. But being on the east summit, I felt there was neither more nor less. The summit on which we stood was our final destination and that feeling has still not changed, even now. It is hard to say that the last stretch to the summit added value to our climb of the south face, but we had promised to accept everything Mount Logan had to offer. The last half day of slogging and the accompanying mental conflict was an indispensable spice to our journey.

Now the only remaining thing left unfinished was to get back to basecamp where Genki was waiting for our safe return. Descending the East Ridge was not easy, and 30 kilometres of trail breaking without skis or snowshoes was nothing more than a cruel punishment. But, it was simply walking.

About the Author

Katsutaka Yokoyama is nicknamed Jumbo because, well, he's big—good attributes for an alpinist. He hails from Japan where he is a member of the Giri-Giri Boys, an informal group of Japanese alpinists who have been systematically ticking off impressive unclimbed routes all over the globe.

Summary

I-TO (ED+ WI5 M6, 2500m), first ascent of the south face of Mt. Logan (5957m), Kluane National Park, St. Elias Range, Yukon. FA: Yasushi Okada, Katsutaka Yokoyama, May 4-8, 2010.

Katsutaka Yokoyama (left) and Yasushi Okada on the east summit of Mount Logan after making the first ascent of the south face.
Photo: Katsutaka Yokoyama

Plain of Six Glaciers, Lake Louise, 2010

Plain of No Glaciers, Lake Louise, 2060

The State of the Mountains Report

Documenting Climate Change

Meghan J. Ward

"It's like the mountains are being undressed," Glen Boles explained, his eyes full of concern. After a long career pioneering routes in the Canadian Rockies, Boles was considering the consequence of the changes, mainly the shrinking glaciers that he has witnessed in the mountain environment over the course of his life. "They're like a woman losing her lace," he said, implying that his 60-year relationship with the mountains has been as romantic as it has been adventurous.

Images by Paul Zizka

Athabasca Glacier, Columbia Icefield, 2010

Athabasca Moraines, Columbia Rockfield, 2050

I met Boles, famed Grizzly Group member and mountain artist, at his Cochrane home to speak to him as part of a series of interviews[1] with mountaineers and guides[2] who have devoted a life of climbing in the mountains of Western Canada. The goal? To gather their anecdotal evidence of changes they had witnessed over the years in the alpine environment, and particularly with the glaciers. The next step entailed interviewing four of Canada's leading scientists and one natural historian[3] to see if they were able to explain the changes the mountaineers had observed.

More often then not, the experience of the mountaineers actually outweighed statistical or scientific findings. "In most cases, mountaineers know more than scientists," explained Shawn Marshall, glaciologist and Canada Research Chair in climate change at the University of Calgary. "We've got a bit of hard data, but not from very many places and not usually for long enough periods to put it in the context of climate change." Decades of trudging along broken moraines and climbing up steep snow slopes have turned some mountaineers into pseudo-researchers.

The resulting publication from all of these interviews, which was originally commissioned by the Alpine Club of Canada[4] back in February 2009, is titled *The State of the Mountains Report: The Impacts of Climate Change on the Alpine Environment and Glaciers of Southern Alberta and British Columbia*. This feature is a summary of findings from that research conducted intermittently over the course of two years.[5]

"We've come to think that mountain environments like the Canadian Rockies should look a certain way."

In an age where the term climate change is thrown around like an old blanket, the results of the research for *The State of the Mountains Report* are really quite impactful. The participants, whose experience in the mountains ranges from 20 to 60 years, agreed unanimously that the changes they had witnessed were more than just a cyclical part of nature. Our panel of scientists gave further proof that the changes the mountaineers have observed are, as Brian Menounos put it, "really outside of the envelope of statistical random fluctuations." Menounos, an associate professor of geography at the University of Northern British Columbia, remarked that the "magnitude of glacier recession now is concerning."

A Changing Alpine Environment: The Mountaineers

EVIDENCE OF CLIMATE CHANGE gathered from the mountaineers for *The State of the Mountains Report* included glacial recession and volume loss, changes to snowpack and precipitation, increased rockfall and warming temperatures. The first examples given by mountaineers across the board, however, were changes to the glaciers. As such, the report focuses on these artifacts of our last ice age and how they have changed in terms of length and volume.

Among many examples, *Canadian Alpine Journal* editor and ACMG guide, Sean Isaac, spoke specifically about the north face of Mount Fay:

> It was a big snow summer in 1993 and we kicked steps up the whole way at the end of August. It was a really wide route and the central ice bulge route was a big serac. But then I did it again in 2006, and there had been a loss in width. The ice bulge was no longer an ice bulge. The whole thing had changed. There was a lot more exposed rock without ice on it.

Mountain guide Jen Olson echoed Isaac's observations about Mount Fay, adding that what is happening on the North Face of Mount Fay is "really consistent amongst all mountains, which are getting drier."

Brad Harrison, ACC General Mountaineering Camp manager, and Helen Sovdat, internationally certified mountain guide, spoke of the Neptune Peak area in the Selkirk Mountains. Harrison has seen significant changes in two or three peaks. "They are still doable," Harrison said, "but now climbing involves really bad scree." Sovdat mentioned that from the years 2000 to 2009, she had observed changes on both Neptune Peak and Trident Peak that were significant enough to make the climbing harder because ice is being exposed where you could previously walk on snow.

After all the interviews had been conducted, a plethora of examples of changing glaciers had been mentioned, including Freshfield Glacier, Peyto Glacier, Bugaboo Glacier (specifically leading up to the toe of the Kain Route), Opabin Glacier in the Lake O'Hara area, Angel Glacier on the north face of Mount Edith Cavell and the Snowbird Glacier on Mount Patterson.

Naturally, the Athabasca Glacier took home the Oscar for most mentions. The accessibility of this glacier, seen from the Icefields Parkway, has allowed the retreat of the glacier to be well documented in photographs. "You used to be able to park your car at the Columbia [Icefield] where the bus tours take off from," remembered Boles. "It used to be a 50-foot hike down to the glacier and now it is more like 200 feet."

A Changing Alpine Environment: The Scientists

"GLACIAL RECESSION IS SUCH A POSTER CHILD of climate change," remarked Marshall. The changes in the shape and coverage of the glaciers over even a short time span provide us with an illustration that is hard to ignore.

Furthermore, as Menounos explained, "Glaciers are sensitive indicators of climate." Therefore, changes in the glaciers

Central Ice Bulge, Mount Fay, 2010

Central Choss Bulge, Mount Fay, 2040

are indicative of other changes in temperature and precipitation. "[Glaciers] add mass during the wintertime and they lose mass during the summer," Menounos said. The health of a glacier can be measured by its mass balance, which is essentially just a bank budget of money, or water, going in and out. Additionally, as Michael Demuth, a glaciology and cold regions research scientist with the Geological Survey of Canada, explained, "Currently, we are losing more and more of our principle," referring to the storage, or savings account, that glaciers represent.

While glaciers are never in equilibrium, Marshall explained, "This is clearly a retreat that is unusual in the context of the last 3,000 years."

According to Menounos, studies indicate that the rate of glacial thinning and frontal retreat has accelerated in the late 20th century. "In the case of some glaciers," Menounos elaborated, "they shrink to a critical size where the glaciers become several smaller ice masses. Studies show that this glacier fragmentation accelerates ice loss. This process is much like crushing an ice cube—since many more sides are now exposed, melting accelerates."

Additional factors are contributing to glacial retreat, including warming temperatures and reduced precipitation.[6] The largest changes in temperature are in the winter and spring months. The consequences of this, according to Menounos and Marshall, is that if you have a warmer spring season, then you will melt the snowpack earlier than you would otherwise, thus exposing the ice to a longer melt season. Taking into consideration the mass-balance equation, if the ice has a longer melt season and isn't fed enough to balance this, we will see the glaciers continue to shrink.

Moreover, "There is less snow in late spring and less snow blowing because the snow is wetter," explained John Pomeroy, Canada Research Chair in water resources and climate change, and director of the Centre for Hydrology at the University of Saskatchewan. Blowing is important to the health of glaciers because it needs this distribution of snow throughout the season. "Snow blows most easily when it is cold, dry and fluffy," Pomeroy said. "In warmer weather the snow is stickier and you get fewer cornices, which usually feed small glaciers."

According to Pomeroy, the blowing effect of snow on a glacier is also important because snow on a glacier will reflect over 80 per cent of the solar radiation on it and glacier ice will reflect only 30 per cent. If you lose the snow, the ice will melt faster and the earlier the ice gets exposed, the greater the melt rate on the glacier.

The good news for British Columbia is that the snowpack has not been diminishing as much. Satellite imaging is showing that between 1985 and 2005, Alberta saw a 25 per cent reduction in glaciers while there was only an 11 per cent reduction in British Columbia.

An Epidemic of Fast Changes

AS GLACIERS RETREAT and warming temperatures soften snow, the impacts of these changes on the mountaineers and guides interviewed for the report are more than just aesthetic. The visual changes translate into fairly extreme alterations in the climbing experience as routes change or disappear altogether.

"Probably the biggest difference is that you just can't plan on a route staying the same from year to year anymore when on glaciers," said Will Gadd, all-around mountain and extreme-sport athlete. "It's just an epidemic of fast changes that make even 'known' routes or places very different."

More specifically, mountaineers spoke of the impact that the changes in the alpine have had on northern aspects in the mountains. "North faces have to be done earlier in the season," explained Harrison. "Before you had to depend on ice. Now you have to depend on the winter snowpack."

> "This is clearly a retreat that is unusual in the context of the last 3,000 years."

"You need to approach things fresh every time," Sovdat responded. "In the last 10 years, the ACC's General Mountaineering Camps have been returning to the same locations," she continued. "Disappearing glaciers mean more time-consuming approaches and tedious walking on loose boulders. It's less aesthetic for people and just feels like more of a grind."

In general, as glaciers have receded, accessing routes has involved a longer hike or some difficult terrain. Retreating ice reveals sheer faces and cliffs in some areas, where it otherwise would have been covered by a ramp.

Concerns for Safety

SOME OF THE CHANGES have led to considerable safety concerns for mountaineers, including increased rockfall. "There has always been rockfall in the Rockies, but now you have to be extra careful," explained Isaac. "There are routes you just wouldn't do now because of the exposed choss. The ice is exposing this rubble that has been sitting there since the uplift, and now it's sitting there ready to come down on your head."

Scientists had equal concern for what the changing landscape means in terms of increased hazards and difficult access for mountaineers. Demuth concluded that while the mountain environment is a dynamic, ever-changing one, the rate of change has been occurring over shorter time periods—in some cases, two to five years. Demuth made a reference to the Skyladder route on Mount Andromeda in the Columbia Icefield region of the Canadian Rockies, which was once a route that people aspired to climb, but "now looks horrible."

"Your knowledge from the past may not help you," Pomeroy warned. From a scientist's perspective, the models they create are based on what they have already observed, not on what they have never encountered. So, mountaineers need to be careful not to assume that features in the terrain, such as

snow bridging on glaciers, remain the same. For guides who have clients paying them to take them out climbing, these dangers have some potentially fatal consequences they need to keep in mind.

"Because the melt-freeze cycles are mixed up, as a guide you need to give yourself lots of space," Sovdat explained. Mountaineers need to approach things with a fresh eye, not assume they know the terrain, and be prepared to do more technical climbing because there is less snow to walk on. Finally, Sovdat said, "You often have to explain to clients that certain routes aren't in condition and then offer them an alternative."

On the positive side, mountain guide and photographer Roger Laurilla said there is a lot more to talk about with the people he takes outdoors. Having evidence of change and areas where he can show these things gives guiding additional value. "There is much more satisfaction in being able to *show* people the mountains and not just take them up the mountains," Laurilla said.

Glaciers and Water Flow

WITH GLACIERS DISAPPEARING, a few mountaineers expressed their concern over what would happen to water flow coming out of the mountains. "What will happen to the river flows in the Bow, Athabasca, Fraser and other rivers that are glacially fed?" asked Gadd. "Are farmers downstream going to have irrigation water?" A few lamented about the glacier-fed lakes losing their surreal indigo blue hues.

According to Pomeroy, "A healthy glacier has no annual effect on the water supply because its input equals the output." Therefore, it is the things that *cause* deglaciation that affect the water supply, not the melting of the glaciers themselves. In this regard, glaciers are the canary in the coal mine.

As an absolute component of water supply, glaciers are not that big. They are good indicators of change, but do not affect water supply in cities such as Edmonton and Calgary by any significant rate. According to Marshall, however, the Canmore and Banff areas will receive five per cent less water if glaciers are gone. "The effect on alpine streams and water resources will be much more," Marshall explained.[7]

According to natural historian and author Robert W. Sandford, even though glacial melt-off is only a small component of water supply, water allocation has the potential to seriously exacerbate the effects of a decrease in water supply. "For instance, only one per cent of the total water supply to Calgary comes from glaciers on an annual basis," explained Sandford, "and the rest is run-off from other tributaries." But, if that water is fully allocated to irrigation, households, etc., then losing that one per cent could have a significant impact.

Overall, the glaciers may disappear, but because of snowmelt and other tributaries, the lakes will still be there. However, "They won't be nearly as beautiful because they won't have the colour that comes from the glacial silt in the water," Marshall said. The lack of colour will, no doubt, have an impact on the aesthetic appeal of the mountain landscape.

Looking Ahead

WHILE THERE IS NO DISPUTE that the alpine environment is changing, the true significance of these changes and the current state of the mountains is a question that remains to be answered.

For one, the future of scientific research in this area of study is uncertain. Since research for *The State of the Mountains Report* began in February 2009, a few key scientific research programs related to the study of climate change have been severely affected by a lack of funding. The Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences (CFCAS), Canada's main funding body for university-based research on climate, atmospheric and related oceanic work, is shutting down due to a lack of funding from the Canadian government, which adversely affects programs such as Western Canadian Cryospheric Network (WC2N)[8] and IP3, a research network devoted to improving understanding of cold regions hydrometeorology. According to Menounos, "[the Canadian] government simply doesn't see the environment or understanding the effects of climate change as their priority."

With anecdotal evidence and scientific research pointing us in the direction of accelerating changes in the alpine environment due to climate change, many readers will, no doubt, feel inclined to ask, What now? What can we do to stop the changes to the mountains of Western Canada?

> "Glacial recession is such a poster child of climate change."

We asked the mountaineers and scientists what they thought people who loved the mountains could do to protect them. This question resulted in some rather varied responses that ranged from population correction to recycling to not doing anything at all. Some respondents offered suggestions, such as taking non-mechanized trips into the mountains, consuming less fuel by making more conscious decisions when buying products, carpooling and spending less time on the road. But as Pat Morrow explained, "It's got nothing to do with being a mountaineer and everything to do with being one of the 6.1 billion people on the planet and the choices we make in our everyday lives."

The Golden Age

LOOKING BACK AT THEIR MOUNTAINEERING careers, many of the respondents spoke to how they feel fortunate to have lived in the time that they did. Harrison was particularly thankful to have lived in the "Golden Age of Access", as he called it, what with routes now becoming so hazardous and inaccessible.

To Isaac, however, we still live in a golden age. "We've just got to think of ourselves as lucky that we have these artifacts of

the ice age and we should get out and enjoy them," he offers. A glaciated mountain environment is not yet fully lost. While the state of the mountains will continue to change, we currently live in an age where we can experience these glaciers and watch them move in the landscape.

Finally, Marshall reminds us that, ultimately, humans will be the ones to deal with the state of the mountains, however that may change. "The Earth can handle it, but we aren't used to it," Marshall concluded. "We've come to think that mountain environments like the Canadian Rockies should look a certain way. But they haven't always looked like that, nor will they continue to."

Will our mountains looks like the Colorado Rockies? Will the north face of Mount Athabasca one day be climbed without stepping on snow or ice? Will Lake Louise turn grey instead of its famous turquoise hue? Only time will tell. Without a considerable intervention, however, there is a real possibility that the glacial relics that remain today may someday disappear completely.

References

Bolch, Tobias, Brian Menounos, and Roger Wheate. "Landsat-based inventory of glaciers in Western Canada, 1985-2005." Remote Sensing of Environment 114 (2010):127-137.

Boles, Glen. Personal interview with Meghan Ward. May 22, 2009.

Demuth, Michael. Personal interview with Meghan Ward. April 13, 2010.

Gadd, Will. E-mail submission. May 8, 2009.

Harrison, Brad. Phone interview with Meghan Ward. July 23, 2009.

Isaac, Sean. Personal interview with Meghan Ward. November 23, 2009.

Laurilla, Roger. Personal interview with Meghan Ward. May 23, 2009.

Marshall, Shawn. Personal interview with Meghan Ward. May 29, 2010.

Menounos, Brian. Phone interview with Meghan Ward. March 8, 2010.

Morrow, Pat. Phone interview with Kate Forbes. November 6, 2009.

Olson, Jennifer. Personal interview with Meghan Ward. September 28, 2009.

Pomeroy, John. Personal interview with Meghan Ward. March 25, 2010.

Sandford, Robert. Personal interview with Meghan Ward. October 26, 2009.

Sovdat, Helen. Personal interview with Meghan Ward. December 9, 2009.

About the Author

Meghan J. Ward is an outdoor, travel and adventure writer based in Banff. She has previously been published in *Alpinist, Skiing Magazine, Backcountry Magazine*, *Canadian Alpine Journal*, *Travel Alberta* and *Highline Magazine,* where she is also now the editor.

Endnotes

1 While I was responsible for conducting the majority of the interviews, ACC member Kate Forbes volunteered to assist and conducted interviews with two of the participants.

2 While a number of mountaineers and guides were interviewed for *The State of the Mountains Report,* not all are mentioned in this summary. The interviewees included Helen Sovdat, Chic Scott, Brad Harrison, Nancy Hansen, Pat Morrow, Will Gadd, Roger Laurilla, Barry Blanchard, Jen Olson, Don Serl, Glen Boles and Sean Isaac. In this report, this collection of people is generally referred to as "the mountaineers".

3 Scientists Brian Menounos, Michael Demuth, Shawn Marshall and John Pomeroy, as well as a natural historian and author, Robert W. Sandford, were interviewed for *The State of the Mountains Report.* I call the first four "the scientists" more generally throughout the report.

4 The ACC's VP of Access and Environment, David Foster, VP of Mountain Culture, Isabelle Daigneault, and publications manager, Suzan Chamney, were integral to supporting the research and publication process of the whole report.

5 Throughout the process of gathering data for *The State of the Mountains Report*, I received many gracious recommendations of mountaineers, guides or scientists I had to speak to. Many of these recommendations resulted in interviews, pieces of which appear in this report. At some point, however, the line had to be drawn on how much additional information would be collected. I realized at one point that additional data or information would not dramatically change the outcome of the report.

6 In some regards, scientists are not able to fully assert the impact of the changes in precipitation because, according to Menounos, they have a real lack of high-elevation stations in Western Canada to track these fluctuations on a long-term basis. Pomeroy explained that while they do not have good measurements at high elevations to say that the snowpack is going down, scientists can investigate it through modelling.

7 In terms of the aquatic ecosystem, an earlier run-off season will change the water temperature in the rivers and creeks in the Canadian Rockies. According to Menounos and Pomeroy, some species such as bull trout are sensitive to temperature change. Species dependent on cold water could be gone.

8 WC2N consists of a group of six Canadian universities, two American universities and government and private scientists who are examining links between climatic change and glacier fluctuations in Western Canada.

For a full copy of *The State of the Mountains Report: The Impacts of Climate Change on the Alpine Environment and Glaciers of Southern Alberta and British Columbia* go to www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/environment/sotm.html or contact the Alpine Club of Canada.

The Spiral Road

The emperor face on mount robson—or *Yuh-hai-has-kun*, the Mountain of the Spiral Road—is about as grand a venue as the Rockies has to offer for big mixed gully systems in the alpine. Its handful of routes average about 20 pitches in length; plus, the positions are hard to beat. In the spring of 2010, it hadn't required too many words between Jason Kruk and me to know we were both ready to clear our schedules when the conditions appeared favourable for an attempt. Despite having never before tied in together, Jason's energy was infectious, and I sensed he felt the same from me. He was hot-off successful trips to Patagonia and Yosemite, so I knew he'd be a perfect partner for Robson.

Jon Walsh

round one began during the third week of April. After an eight-hour drive from Squamish for him and a four-hour drive from Golden for me, we met in the parking lot, quickly repacked and began the approach. As the trail was practically snow-free, we chose to leave the skis in the car. Halfway up the big hill past Emperor Falls, this proved to be a mistake as the snow became deep and isothermic. By the top of the hill, we were soaked and exhausted from post-holing, and motivation plummeted quickly. It was just as well since the side-angle view of the Emperor Face revealed overly snowy conditions, making the decision easy to carefully cache everything and retreat with hopes that conditions would improve soon.

Nine days later we were back, although overnight the weather forecast had taken a serious last-minute turn for the worse during the three-hour drive from Golden to Jasper. Precipitation in the short-term forecast put the Emperor Face temporarily out of shape, so Plan B came into effect: a ski descent of the northwest face of Mount Whitehorn. After a 16-kilometre bike and hike with ski gear in tow, we retrieved our cache and retreated back down the hill to the Whitehorn picnic shelter at the 11-kilometre mark of the trail where we spent the night. It was then Jason realized he had forgotten a part of his crampons in the car and would need to go all the way back to the parking lot. He wound up sleeping in his car that night and returned early the next morning.

A beautiful tour up a gully, through moraines and across two glaciers the next day brought us to the base of the face where we strapped the skis to our packs and began kicking steps. Although whiteness appeared to go all the way to the summit, two-thirds of the way up, at the point it doglegged around a huge hanging ice cliff, the snow became too thin to hold an edge. We were too early in the season for it to stick to the 55-degree ice at 3,200 metres. Although the summit was about 200 vertical metres higher, we were more interested in skiing than peak-bagging. We searched around for thicker patches of snow, but quickly realized we had to downclimb to where it was 10 centimetres thick and provided the confidence to edge our skis. Soon we were enjoying 400 metres of steep, powdery jump turns that got deeper as we made progress down the face. The warm evening sunshine made life good as we simul-shredded perfect boot-deep turns down the glacier below.

After a short climb up and around the corner to the south and east aspects, we were pleasantly surprised to find the sun-baked snow to have frozen perfectly smooth. We effortlessly slid down the glacier and over the moraines with a full moon and alpenglow lighting the way. For a full hour we cruised across the moonlit landscape towards Robson before plunging into the sporty waterhole-strewn gully that would be the last pitch of a sensational 2,000-plus-metre run. At the Whitehorn picnic shelter, we gathered our remaining stash and continued to the parking lot. It had been a 19-hour car-to-car effort for Jason and 17 hours on the go for me. Sleep came easily in the comfort of our vehicles.

winter storms prevailed in the high country for the next six weeks, and it looked unlikely we'd get the right conditions to return to the northern Rockies before summer. Finally, it all came together for solstice. The weather window was a small one, but on June 20 we met in the parking lot at 10 a.m. In fine style, Jason had left a party he'd been deejaying at until 10 p.m. the evening before and had driven through the night to meet me. Environment Canada predicted the next day to be fair weather, but a low-pressure system would arrive by June 22. This was enough motivation to travel light and fast.

In just four and half hours, we reached Mist Lake—the perfect bivy spot below the face—with plenty of time to enjoy the evening sun and scope the route above. It seemed odd to us that recent ascents of Robson via the Emperor Face had relied on expensive helicopters flights for both the way in and out when the approach is actually pretty short and easy by Rockies standards. Taking bikes to the seven-kilometre point and then following a well-built trail almost felt like cheating as it was.

A 3 a.m. start the next morning felt late and added stress since the most intense section of the climb was actually below the face proper. Several of these "approach" pitches— including an insecure run-out M6, one of the most serious of the route—led us to the icefield below the gullies. Although the climbing here was nothing more than knee-deep 50-degree snow, and we could move together un-roped, the sun was strong and the snow was on the verge of becoming unstable. If any part of the trip felt slightly desperate, it was there. Massive cliffs and crevasses lurked below, and it felt like a firing squad was ready to shoot us into them. I hated feeling in lack of control. Speed was the key as we sprinted through the gauntlet, up and across numerous deep runnels for a sweaty hour to reach the shade of gully system we intended to climb.

The situation immediately turned from holy-crap-this-sucks to bliss. The climbing conditions suddenly became perfect and every pitch was memorable. Most of the big snow features had already cleaned out and the ice was in great shape—not really thick enough to put many screws in, but just the right density for secure tool and crampon placements. Pitches at the beginning averaged 80 to 100 metres and flowed flawlessly. We swapped leads as if we were on a trade route. The leader decided where to go with endless route-finding options that allowed us to steer to whatever looked like the most fun to climb and not necessarily the path of least resistance. If a trickle of blue ice filled a steep corner, we would aim for it. We would arrive hungry and the meal was satisfying—everything we hoped it would be. As we got higher the angle reared up, and the steady M5 terrain morphed to steady M6 to M7. In the steepest section, I used up a good part of my rock rack in a nice, vertical

Previous spread: Jason Kruk nearing the end of the crux pitch during his and Jon Walsh's ascent of a new route on the Emperor Face of Mount Robson. Photo: Jon Walsh
Previous page inset: The Emperor Face of Mount Robson showing the new Kruk-Walsh route. Photo: Jon Walsh
Right: Jason Kruk following about two-thirds of the way up the Emperor Face. Photo: Jon Walsh

Jason Kruk working through steep rock on the crux pitch of the new Kruk-Walsh route on the Emperor Face. Photos: Jon Walsh

dihedral, but was forced to belay below the route's best pitch with nearly 30 metres of rope left. The slightly overhanging splitter looked so tasty that I was bummed the gear I needed to send it had been already placed below. This next delicious section would fall on Jason's lead.

He styled it, of course, with a mix of drytooling and bare-fingered pulling on flat edges. It was enjoyable to watch someone with hardly any Rockies' experience move so calmly and confidently over the shattered limestone—but maybe not so surprising in Jason's case. The sun came out again for about an hour, and the face became way warmer than what we needed. At least it was easy to fill up on water as it flowed below the thin ice. Fortunately, the heat didn't last long; it got dark with three pitches to go before the ridge. On the second-last pitch, I watched lightning flash repeatedly to the north and the stars became obscured by clouds. Finally, after about 18 to 20 belayed pitches in a row, we gained the ridge halfway between Infinite Patience and the Stump-Logan.

It was midnight and the bad weather looked closer than we wanted. For an hour, we rested, brewed and discussed what we should do. The summit was 500 metres of easy terrain above us, yet an 800-metre traverse was also required. Continuing on through the night to the summit was what we desired, but somehow that couldn't be justified with lightning flashing in the distance, an obscured sky, a few snowflakes in the air, over 2,000 metres to descend and a deteriorating forecast. With so many factors in the equation, coming up with the right answer was challenging. I had nearly been struck by lightning several times before, once while watching an electrical storm from what I thought was a safe 30 kilometres away. That was a lesson that I didn't want to learn again. We had climbed a new route on the Emperor Face, but summitting the King would have to wait for another time.

Rappelling and downclimbing the Emperor Ridge in the dark was interesting and went smoothly enough. We found very few rappel anchors and each got a bonus pitch due to a route-finding error and stuck rope. Fortunately, there were only four hours of total darkness on June 21 or it could have been more time-consuming.

After 32 hours on the go and over 4,000 metres of up and down, we stumbled back to our tent at Mist Lake. The weather was changing quickly so minimal recovery was possible before we had to depart again to try to beat it. The wind began to blow and by noon the upper flanks of the mountain had disappeared in a whiteout. By 2 p.m. it was slashing rain as we staggered happily towards the parking lot. By the time the bikes were in the car, the rain was torrential. In hindsight, if every decision above our high point had been made and executed perfectly, we could have made it to the summit and back safely, only suffering the rain on the lower descent and hike out. But neither of us had been there before, and under the influence of darkness and deteriorating weather, it didn't feel like the odds were quite good enough to continue upwards. Any wasted time or unforeseen mishap could have resulted in a regretful ending.

Nevertheless, it felt like a hugely successful and satisfying outing. In 55 hours car to car, we climbed about 20 new pitches in one of the most incredible places I've been. Every move was free climbed by both climbers with no falls, hangs or pulling on gear, and we laughed our way in and out. Some minor sleep deprivation turned out to be the only suffering, if you could even call it that. As Robson is easily accessible, there's no doubt we'll back again soon.

AFTER NEWS OF THIS ROBSON ADVENTURE became public, some interesting feedback was directed our way. A few of the more striking comments were "It's black and white: all alpine climbs end on the summit, especially in the case of first ascents," and what Jason and I did was "one of the best failures of the year." But how important is the summit, really? Sure it counts for something as a distinct end point, but what about where a route begins? Certainly the answer is not as black and white as just saying the bergshrund. This question has been on my mind for some time now, and in my opinion, for a mountain like Robson, not starting at the base—which is Berg Lake at the very least, but actually should be the parking lot—isn't really "climbing the mountain". Would taking a helicopter halfway up the Rupal Face to start the climb on a hanging glacier be climbing Nanga Parbat? I don't think so.

Fortunately, there's no doubt that the "rules" of alpine climbing will stay as grey as the rock and ice that we alpinists hold so dear. Having fun, embracing the entire process, maintaining respect and coming back to share the experiences should always remain the most important constituents. I don't think climbing mountains can be quantified as objectively as sport routes, yet it's funny to occasionally hear so-called "professionals" try. For me, the entire process from the training, planning, approaching, risk management and especially the athletic movement of free climbing are just as important—if not more important in some cases—to the style as tagging the summit. The top will always remain a perfect place to finish, but almost never will it be the end-all key to success, or the best part of the day.

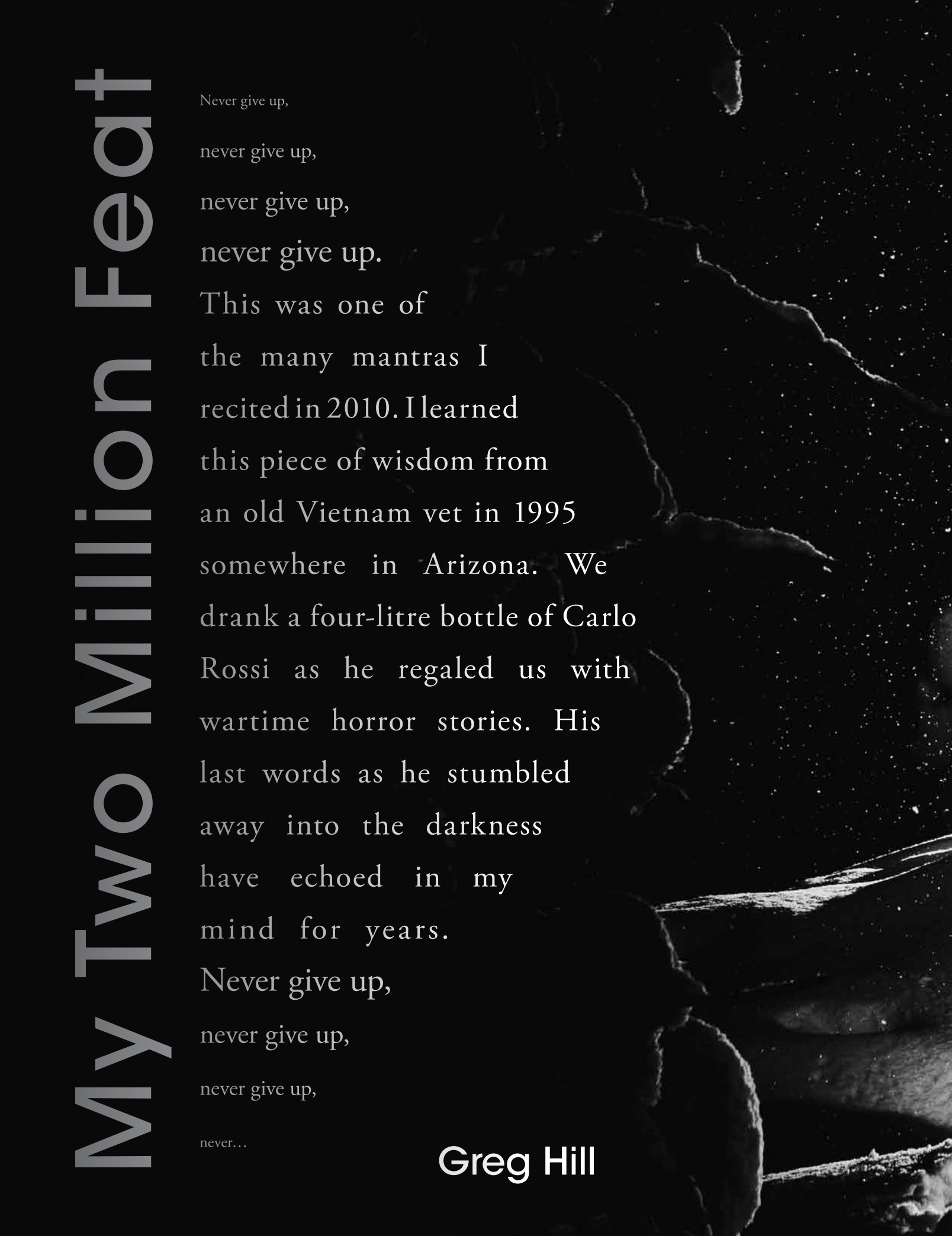
Summary

Kruk-Walsh (VI M7), Emperor Face, Mount Robson (3954m), Canadian Rockies. FA: Jason Kruk, Jon Walsh, June 20-22, 2010.

About the Author

Jon Walsh considers himself an alpine artist. His diverse skill set includes choss management, heavy cameras, light missions, single pushes, remote walls and vegetable gardening. He lives in Golden, B.C., with his partner, Jennette, and their daughter, Zoe.

My Two Million Feat



Never give up,

never give up,

never give up,

never give up.

This was one of the many mantras I recited in 2010. I learned this piece of wisdom from an old Vietnam vet in 1995 somewhere in Arizona. We drank a four-litre bottle of Carlo Rossi as he regaled us with wartime horror stories. His last words as he stumbled away into the darkness have echoed in my mind for years.

Never give up,

never give up,

never give up,

never…

Greg Hill

Photo: Brian Goldstone

MY NEW YEAR RESOLUTION for 2010 was an audacious one. I resolved to spend the entire year backcountry ski touring an average of 5,480 feet upwards per day. This would add up, should I stay devoted and dedicated, to two million feet climbed and skied.

This dream started back in 1999, when I toured my first 5,000-foot day. It was a huge day, with great skiing and big adventure. Afterwards, amped from the day, I did some simple math and realized that if I could do that every day all year it would add up to a huge number. With the millennium coming I thought how cool it would be to ski two million in the year 2000.

At the time I did not have the mountain sense or the fitness to attempt such a feat, but the seed was planted. For 10 years I skinned and climbed my way through the mountains figuring out what it would take to succeed at my mission. In 2004-05, I skinned a million feet, but over a period of seven and a half months—way too slow. In 2006-07, I skinned eighty 10,000-foot days, a total of 99,000 feet in less than six months. Finally, the math was beginning to make sense.

So on January 1, 2010, after 10 years of dreaming, I began the challenge. It started well with lots of great powder skiing and summits, in addition to balancing skiing with family life. There were many snow instabilities and avalanche cycles, but my regular partners and I were still getting after it and skiing some great lines. With so many adventurous moments from those first few months, a few special ones stand out, like finally summitting Bagheera Mountain in Rogers Pass and making the first known descent of its north face with Mark Hartley, a line that had haunted us for years. Or the northeast face of Ursus Minor linked up with the northeast face of Mount Sifton, with Aaron Chance and Conor Hurley. Or the north face of Mount Rogers linked up with Swiss Peak, also with Aaron. Or an attempt to ski Mount Robson's North Face route with Aaron, Mark, Joey Vosburgh and Jeff Volp, which was really less of an attempt and more of a recon since that line is so ridiculous and intimidating.

Near the end of the season, I headed towards the hanging east glacier on Mount Sir Donald in Rogers Pass. This line hangs above huge cliffs, tantalizing yet seemingly inaccessible. Aaron and I met up with Troy Jungen and Jamie Harris, and we worked around to the east side of Sir D. Early on May 8, we started boot packing up a 2,000-foot couloir with the glacier hanging eerily above us. The couloir ended with a 10-metre cliff, which Troy climbed effortlessly. We all followed his lead up the 5.7 corner. The couloir continued a bit further till we found a cave under a huge chockstone. Probably the coolest place I have ever found in the mountains. While we hung out in there, Jamie took over the lead and mixed climbed his way up through a chimney that gained access to the hanging glacier. We jumared the fixed rope instead of climbing the 5.9 pitch with skis on our packs. Perched precipitously above huge cliffs, we boot-packed higher up the hanging glacier but somehow the day was ending, so without getting to the top of the snow patch we turned and skied down. Wicked exposed turns had our slough funnelling down over the approaching cliff edge. Two rappels and we were back on our skis again. It was definitely one of the more wild days on my way to two million.

By May I had skied and climbed 700,000 feet, 35 summits and many, many runs. Things were going well and I felt great but the season was drawing to a close, so I headed up to the St. Elias Range with Aaron, Joey, Dave Sproule and Derek Glowiacki. This place is a must go for dedicated Canadian ski mountaineers. Immediately upon landing, we were dwarfed by the sheer size of everything, the lack of oxygen and the huge distances. With Mount Steele, Canada's fifth highest peak, as our primary objective, we adjusted to the lack of O_2. The weather was perfect, so we pushed our acclimatization and skied a few fun lines while also setting up our advanced basecamp. The east side of Steele looked awesome dropping from its 16,640-foot summit. Not wanting to be rash, we left our skis behind on our first attempt since the line looked icy blue, thus perhaps un-skiable. We climbed and summitted, the entire time realizing that we could have skied the line. Instead, the five of us rappelled down, hoping to return later with skis. Haggard feet, a partially collapsed lung, dying morale and bad weather had us pinned in our tent for four days. Eventually, we flew out and headed home without carving down the big prize.

BY NOW IT WAS MID-JUNE and the snow was shrinking in the northern hemisphere. I was still able to pound some vertical around Revelstoke, but on June 21, my family and I flew southwards to Chile. With 38 peaks and 800,000 feet skied, I was beginning to wonder about the sanity of this mission. WTF am I doing? Life is so brief and I know that it is so easy to do nothing and let it flow by, but every day we have the choice. This goal was about living life to its fullest, waking up every day and charging—climbing to the top of a mountain and shouting out, "More! Can I have some more, please?"

All I knew about ski touring in Chile was that there were mountains with snow on them; the rest I planned to learn on the fly, or in the skin track as it were. Immediately, we settled into Las Trancas, and I began checking out the local volcanoes. The winds were blowing up to 70 kilometres per hour and the weather was terrible. I was 14 days behind par and struggling to stay psyched. Never give up, never give up. I kept after it, and soon the skies cleared and the winds relaxed. It was go time. Charging around the mountains solo, the terrain made for safe travel with decent skiing. Soon enough I was on top of my first volcano, then my second, and then into some natural hot springs. A nice bath in the middle of nowhere topped with a few more thousand feet to get home was a pleasant welcome to Chile.

On July 13, I finally hit a million feet. It felt great to be halfway there. We moved to Pucon, Chile. I was 70,000 feet behind and the weather was terrible again. For seven days I battled upwards. Luckily, misery loves company and I had a young, keen lad to get out with. Dave Schein from Calgary had contacted me via my website and was as stubborn as me. Finally, the winds slowed and we managed to summit our first smoking volcano—no lava but the second worst ski descent of my life. We endured violent vibrations from our skis as they

Above: Greg Hill racking up vertical on a good day at Rogers Pass. Photo: Tommy Chandler
Right: Aaron Chance with the north face of Mount Rogers behind, Rogers Pass. Photo: Greg Hill

slid over frozen chicken heads for 5,500 feet of descent.

A brief weather window saw us bag Llaima at 10,250 feet (3,125 metres), despite 100-kilometre-per-hour winds. The gusts were so strong that we were nearly blown off the summit and would momentarily float between jump turns as the updrafts buffeted us. Frostbitten and windswept, we were psyched to hear that *el viento* was to subside the next day. With the improving forecast, we darted for Lanin, a 12,290-foot (3,747-metre) volcano with 8,500 feet of alpine terrain, to a summit that is bisected by the Argentinean-Chilean border. It was the highest summit Dave had ever skied off.

Soon after, Dave headed back to school, and the family and I were off to Bariloche in Argentina to explore the smallish-yet-aesthetic Patagonian peaks. I spent a month cruising around, solo skiing lots of fun stuff—nothing extraordinary, just great ski touring amongst spires and couloirs. However, it was time for some bigger stuff. A great week in Las Lenas had me sending my highest solo—Yaseras at 13,385 feet (4,080 metres)—and skiing a fun 4,500-foot couloir called Adrenalina. I recall one special day in particular. While at 12,000 feet, I looked down and found a perfect fossil—an ocean artifact from the seawaters that once covered the now airy landscape.

By then, September had arrived and my daughter, Charley, had to start kindergarten. I said goodbye to my family as they flew home. It was now business time for me. In the next month I skinned 255,000 feet—summitting some volcanoes I hadn't yet skied but mainly just pounding spring laps on perfect

Greg Hill with his altimeter watch displaying 2,000,015 feet on December 30, 2010, at Bonney moraines, Rogers Pass. Photo: Tommy Chandler


ARC'TER
ARC'TER
ASCENT
2000015
total ft

Above: Greg Hill racking up vertical on a not-so-good day at Rogers Pass. Photo: Bruno Long
Left: Donny Roth climbing Sierra Velluda in Chile. Photo: Greg Hill

planar slopes. Despite these little successes, one mountain continued to haunt me. On one of my first few days in Chile at the start of the trip in June, I had spotted Sierra Velluda, a wild 11,760-foot (3,585-metre) mountain. That same night I found it on Google Earth and marked it "cool peak". Teaming up with Donny Roth from Boulder, Colorado, I was finally able to explore the objective three months after first spotting it. We had discovered that there was a fantastic 2,000-foot southeast face tumbling off its summit. Steep, exposed and glaciated, this line was calling our names, but with fresh crown lines we could not spend hours climbing directly up the face—too much exposure, too much time. With a little more research we ended up climbing a west-facing couloir that delivered us to the summit ridge on September 25. We shredded back down the fantastic line under perfect spring powder—a possible first descent of a stunning line.

With that in the bag, I focused on vertical and sessioned a few volcanoes like only a *gringo loco* could—or at least this *gringo*. Ten 10,000-foot days in a row, seventeen 10,000 footers out of 20 days had the vertical racking up. I finally caught back up to par on October 10, four months after I fell behind, and I managed to get a few days ahead before flying back to Revelstoke on October 22.

AFTER SOME QUALITY FAMILY TIME, I began skiing around the Monashees and Selkirks by late October. It was the worst start to a season since I moved there in 2000. I had counted

Greg Hill celebrating at Bonney moraines. Photo: Tommy Chandler

on the fact that there is *always* decent skiing to be had after November 1—but not this year. With two months to go, things were shitty, shallow and not happening. I had to endure some terrible days just trying to not fall too far behind.

Like any race, essay or this *CAJ* article, there is always a crunch time at the end. By November 23, I hit that crunch time and began to cram. With 40 days to go I had to average seven grand per day, every day. Luckily, the snow began to arrive and the skiing became epic. It all hung on a wire though since any ankle twist or illness would end my challenge.

Near the end, I started bringing out two headlamps and a bag of commitment. This bag was filled with Clif Bar treats: the more my partners grabbed, the more they had to ski. At 3 p.m. instead of heading home, we would dip into the bag and head back up. By 5 p.m., when it was completely dark, we would turn on the lights and shred our way back to the car.

On December 30, many folks rallied for the day where I would hit two million. The day was blue bird but arctic cold. A sane person would head to the sunny slopes, but by this point I was no longer sane. Instead, I chose the Bonney moraines for my final turns. Untracked, I skinned up early to get some laps in before my friends would join me. At 1:30 p.m. I crested the moraine with my wife, mother, stepfather, a couple of brothers and some great friends. We watched together as my watch ticked over to two million feet, marking my ascent goal. So much had gone into this digital number displayed on my watch. It was an emotional moment to consider the 10 years of dreaming and training, and the 365 days of going as hard as I could. I was finally there! Tears of relief froze on my face. Some champagne was shared, and we all skied sweet powder. Without the weight of my goal, I headed back up for a free run to enjoy some more quality turns simply for the sake of it.

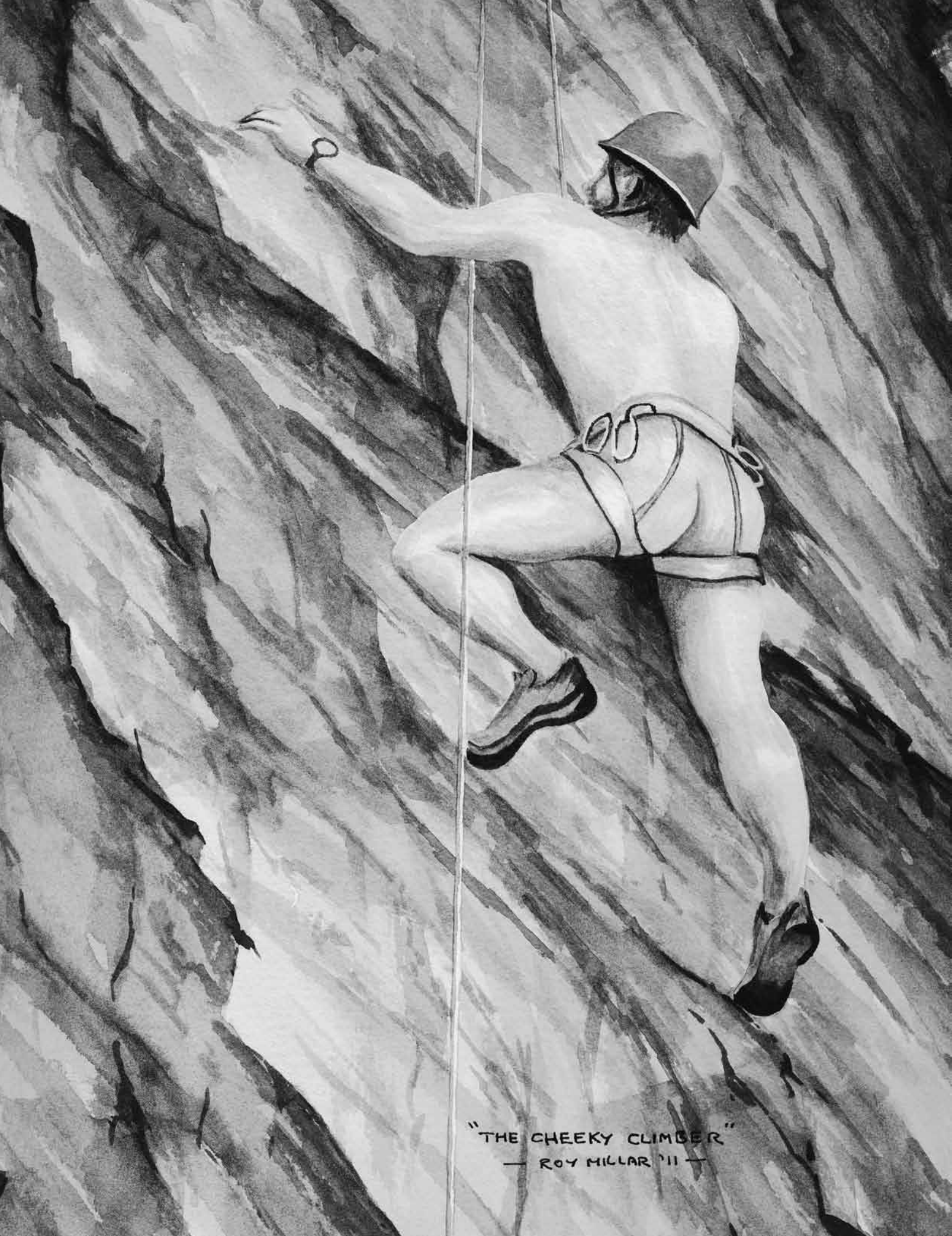
On December 31, I skied up Revelstoke Mountain Resort so that I could share my last few required vertical feet with the community of Revelstoke that supported me through this epic project. A huge crowd stood at the top and watched as I shuffled up my final vertical feet of such an incredible year: 71 different peaks in four countries spread over 266 days of ski touring on 1,039 runs added up to 2,010,020 feet.

Acknowledgements

This achievement was supported by Backcountry.com, Arc'teryx, Dynafit and Polartec. In addition, the author would like to acknowledge the incredible support of his wife, Tracey, and his children, Charley and Aiden, who are still too young to understand what their dad was up to.

About the Author

Greg Hill, 35 and father of two, is halfway through his B.Sc. in biology, which he never finished since the mountains pulled him away from university. He has been living in Revelstoke for the past 11 years, honing his ski mountaineering skills in the endless sea of mountains that surround his home. He funds his passion through sponsors, carpentry and slideshows.



"THE CHEEKY CLIMBER"
— ROY MILLAR '11 —

The Cultural Ranges

Never Solo

Kenneth Wylie

I STEER MY JETTA through the dense, heavy spring snow into a small pullout at the trailhead. This path has taken me to visit an old friend on many an occasion. A professor with whom I have had many important lessons—Professor Falls, the classic and timeless ice climb. I step out of the car at the edge of the Bow River. Air fills my lungs.

Different air. Along with the usual bits that constitute mountain air today, there is greater humidity and scents born on it, like the distinctive smell of balsam poplar, that communicate something novel. Spring. I let it fill my lungs to their bottom and my blood caries it throughout my body. I feel at one with life here as the scents are taken into my being. A Rockies' olfactory-scape.

The path follows alongside the river. My walk is full of birdsong. Robins, winter wrens, nut hatches, pine siskins and varied thrushes. The varied thrushes are my favourite. The single note trill that changes in pitch with each successive call is a welcome sound after a long winter. It harkens spring. The change in pitch mentally draws my awareness into the forest and gives the woods more depth. Several species of thrush exist in the Rockies, and they all live at different altitudes. I can roughly tell my elevation based on the species I am hearing. Its song seems to be accompanying me along the path as I amble towards the climb.

As I journey along the Bow River I notice that the water is open with some ice on the banks. Dippers and a few female mallard ducks are having their way with the river's current. The sound of the flowing water creates the backdrop for the birdsong. Knowledge of their calls, which I listen to digital versions of as I brush my teeth in order to build my repertoire, has enriched my mountain experience immeasurably. Engaging my senses in the audio-scape allows the ever-present sound of the mountains to become part of my consciousness through discernment. Birds not only converse amongst themselves, they communicate to me. What they articulate is up to me to explore—for myself. Today I feel welcomed by their presence. As if they are guiding me in the search for inner peace and tranquillity as I travel through this space.

There is new snow on the ground. It is close to being mashed potatoes in consistency, changing the feel of the path underfoot. I have never felt the trail like this before. Today's walk is different than any other trip I have had to Professors, yet I have been hiking this route in for over one-quarter of a century. Sometimes it is hard-packed, squeaky-cold snow, sometimes dirt and I can ride my bike, sometimes it is ice and I need to don my crampons, and sometimes it is muddy. Yet, it is always a beautiful trip through this Engelmann spruce forest—beauty because of the novelty.

Most of us are aware that each snowflake is a unique crystal structure. We find this intriguing, but uniqueness surrounds us all of the time. Each person. Each day. Each experience. Our minds trick us that they are similar or worse or the same. However, on more intricate inspection we clearly see that there is novelty. The mountains and their conditions are a new companion each and every day that I am in them. They never fail to present a fresh perspective.

This is why I love them. I am the same in the dynamics of my internal landscape. If I am learning, I change; I come to know myself anew each time I walk this path. The time for reflection and introspection underlines that I am a different man because I let things that happen to me change me by owning my part in them. Walking this path today reminds me that this journey has always been a kind of check-up on where I am at as a human being and as a man. Today I am in tears. Tears of joy for the person I feel myself becoming. For the first time I accept myself just the way I am. Because of this I find myself more open to things on this sojourn that I have never seen before. I find myself looking outward more because I am not busy constructing—or worse, protecting—my internal landscape. This is something new for me. We are the natural world. Though sometimes we choose to think too much. The world of thought is a form of reality; but it is too isolated and static to be able to feed our soul and explore our uniqueness.

I arrive at the base of the climb. I find myself still present with the elements around me. The preparations I need to make to become ready to climb are so nearly automatic that my attention can still be placed on what is going on around me. I notice the wind as it is flowing through the forest. The sound is like being on the ocean shore yet more arhythmical in tempo and direction. I seek to sense this more fully today. I feel this connection thus decide to go as light as possible. Fewer "things" to clutter or insulate me from the experience. I wear a light polypro and tissue-paper-thin gloves. I tag a rope up for the descent and have only one ice screw, no pack—just me relying oh-so completely on just me and my ability to communicate with the medium and negotiate a path. The ice is forgiving and soft, so climbing without a rope for protection is a natural choice. I even let my hair blow in the wind as I climb without a helmet,

something I have never done before on an ice climb. A tactile gift that heightens the beautiful random quality, which is the essence of life in the natural world. Unpredicted gusts swirl my hair around, and I even revel in the chaotic feel of it landing in my eyes from time to time. I love the unbridled quality that is a real expression of freedom.

I walk up to the base of the first pitch. There is no nervousness today despite having only climbed on one other occasion this season. I am not concerned about anything. Even though a fall would at very least lead to a broken leg and at most be fatal, I move upward as the concentration of climbing becomes automatic. I am fully engaged in what I am doing and yet there is more. I continue to sense the world around me with a deeper richness. The thrushes are still with me as I find my balance and strength to swing each tool. Their chant is music to enjoy with the vertical dance. I smell the air and how it subtly changes as each feature of the climb presents itself—open water, mist, trickles—all changing the humidity for me to breathe in. The arboreal aromas of spruce, pine and popular carry on the wind.

I hear the frozen waterfall, not only its interaction with my tools but the sounds it presents to me: water over the surface, water just under the surface, water pouring into a hole. I feel incredibly big and incredibly small all at the same time. Big in the act of climbing these tall features confidently and the perspective that each pitch rewards me with. Yet, I feel small because of the grandeur of the setting. I am tiny in this massive gully. The thought of past avalanches here summons a respect, and I intellectualize and tacitly respond with my answer to continue up and into this powerful place.

I am without any other humans on the second and third pitches. Amazing. A weekend. Perfect ice. Perfect temperature. After a long winter, cold sports lose their appeal. It is a gift to find this margin. The ebb of what is seasonally in vogue. October with its thin ice is a madhouse of people seeking the ice experience. After a winter of cold hands, they have had enough by May. So I am alone from humans on this treasure. But I am not alone from myself or the life that is all around me.

I climb. It is what I do. I climb through my life. Always moving upward to a new perspective. I have learned to meet the challenges and accept them humbly. Overtly it may feel like I am alone. But I never am. It is impossible to journey alone. It is only when we stay in one place—physically, intellectually and spiritually—that we meet with being solo.

Loneliness is a result of being personally static in a world that abhors being so. When we bravely step out of ourselves, we meet and experience a world that is so rich with companions—comrades that are moving because that is the law of nature.

I reach a difficult spot in the climb. I slow down to consider the solution to the problem. There is silence as I concentrate. There is no fear. Only respect. I craft an agreeable solution by meeting the requirements of the icefall itself. It wants me to climb over to the right, then that is where I must go even though it requires more effort on my part. When I do move over, all becomes easier again. Peaceful. The rest of the world around me floods in again. Respect has a way of leading to peace and fullness.

I reach my highpoint for the day on a ledge three pitches up. I do not question going higher. Climbing is arbitrary, or at least it should be. Kairos time answers the question of what is it time for. There have been many times I have done several laps on Professors in a single day. I was locked in the self-imposed prison of having to perform. I embrace the freedom I have today. This experience is for me because an external perspective and its associated pressures never enter my mind.

The walk down from my high point requires great care. The snow is perfect for snowmen. I roll a ball down a slope and it creates a pinwheel. The cookie-cutter crampons I have on my feet gather mounds of snow, making it impossible to grip the slopes I am walking on. The solution is patience and awareness. I am mindful of each step in this exposed place, and I take the needed time to carefully craft my descent. I clear the snow from my crampons between each and every step. This might be viewed as tedious. However, I see it as an opportunity to go slowly and take in my surroundings more deeply. I use the trees that cling to the mountain on the edges of the climb as spotters. I position myself above them as I make my way down the steeper sections. They will catch me if I make a mistake. They are my belayers, my companions that are watching over me. They do this job well and that gives me confidence.

I arrive at the bottom. I feel no sense of accomplishment—but there is richness of experience. I have climbed this route countless times over the years. Was I bored? No. Did I discover? Yes. I discovered what Professors was today, and what I am today. The first occasion I climbed this route I was filled with intensity like there was no tomorrow. I had to finish all of the pitches even though it was -25 C. So intense was it that I forgot to be in the moment. I forgot to be me. I was thinking about the report to others. Such is life when we are motivated external to our being. I remember the pain of the day, my partner fainting as his hands warmed up from being really cold. But, I do not remember anything special—something that connected me to the place. We miss the real gems when we greedily consume experiences. We are also far more alone. I was. Then.

I walk back along the path next to the river. I pause several times along the banks to take in the views of the Bow Valley. I feel such a presence, more than I could ever articulate. It is a state most all of us can experience if we take the time to engage. I physically see Cascade Mountain, the Fairholme Range, Mount Norquay and Mount Rundle. This is my home. High above me are all places that I have been so fortunate to travel and learn lessons from with great companions. What have I done to deserve such a life? A life so rich with experiences in this the best of classrooms.

At this moment I realize that my person is not what I have, or have done. My person is what I have done and will do. I am never static or solo. Knowing this brings me great joy.

Reference Point

Will Stanhope

WHEN I WAS ABOUT 14, my buddies and I were all sitting in Graeme and Sheila's driveway beside the Smoke Bluffs. We had just spent the last few days plugging gear for the first time, setting up rappels and generally doing our best not to hit the ground. Sheila passed around the tub of ice cream, and between spoonfuls we listened to Graeme deliver his final speech about trad climbing. I only remember snippets: "If you guys keep going with this, maybe one day you'll climb the Cobra Crack... It's absolutely perfect... the backside of the Chief... Peter Croft tried and failed...." My ears perked up. In a world before girls, climbing was all-important for me—the biggest thing in my life. And this sounded the ultimate prize.

It's mid-winter and the rain is pouring down hard. I'm hustling past the deserted campground, cinching down the hood on my waterproof jacket. The backside trail starts with a little rock step. The granite is soaked, and the rickety, rotten old staircase feels like it's going to fall down. Green on gray on brown. Like always. Oleson Creek rages, heading towards Shannon Falls. With every step my heart beats quicker—a little from the exertion, a little from the memories.

AGE 18. INDIAN CREEK, UTAH. Jason and I slugged back bootlegged beers in Beef Basin campground. It was mid-afternoon and we were done for the day, hands and fingers mangled. Ambling up the rutted sandy road came Samuel Anthamatten and Didier Berthod, staggering under their battered haul bags. "New route. Bridger Jacks," in their sparse English was all we could glean from the boys. Despite the late hour, they were heading to the crag, keen to make use of the dying light. Didier's eyes were sparkling, enchanted by what he had not yet seen but soon would.

During the next few days, the Swiss boys would treat us like brothers. We were two no-name Canadian kids, but it didn't matter to them. An ascetic Christian, Didier shuffled to the crag in sandals and wore a filthy Deuter jacket everywhere. He climbed by "self-experiment" and crushed every single crack he came across. When I finally climbed the Optimator, a classic 5.13a finger-stacking crack, we all had a van party and drank cases of Icehouse beer imported from Colorado. I smoked my first cigarettes and got very, very drunk.

"Yes, I think it is the very best crack in the world," said Didier, between mouthfuls of pancakes. Without fail, the Swiss boys would make pancakes every day, then drink Swiss Miss hot chocolate like one big family. Didier had spent the previous summer in Squamish working the Cobra Crack, coming achingly close to sending it. In the morning, he would change sheets at the Squamish Hostel, then head up the backside trail barefoot to better attune himself to the earth. Ever the innovator, he fashioned himself a quick-release strap for a critical cam placement. I could tell the line meant everything to him.

The next spring I was again in the Utah desert. Didier couldn't stay away either. But, in an unexpected turn of events, he broke his hand while jamming the Crackhouse, a roof boulder problem outside of Moab. I gave him a ride to the Salt Lake City airport. We picked up a meth-eyed hitchhiker outside of Green River. Didier himself had hitched in the exact same spot, and his "do unto others" philosophy necessitated we pick up the druggie. But, after the guy started rooting through our things in the back of the van, we had to ditch him. The stretch of highway from Moab to Salt Lake City is lonely and desolate with the tombstone-like formations stretching off to the east. We bivied outside the airport, and in the morning Didier bought me a coffee in the waiting lounge. We hugged. I haven't seen him since.

When the trail bends a hard right, away from the main tourist path, I relax a bit. Less people, more mystery. This is where the little hidden gems are to be found. I've explored up here a lot, but still get the feeling that if I jet off in an unknown direction, I might stumble upon something huge. I have felt the same way every time I've hiked this trail. Every single time. I hope I never lose that feeling.

BASIL AND I WERE TRADING BURNS on two different sport routes in a cave in Turkey. Basil was 22 years old with long dreadlocks. He was also from Switzerland. In between tries we would smoke cigarettes and shoot the shit. I brought up the topic of Didier. Basil had heard of him and wondered where he went.

"A monastery," I replied.

"Mmmm...."

"I guess it just sucks when your hero goes off the rails," I said between drags.

"Maybe they don't exist?" said Basil.

"What?"

"Heroes."

"Mmmm...."

The white cliff is winking through the trees. There's an old steel logging cable still on the path. Here, the trees get all raspy and thin, Blair Witch style. Then the old growth reappears. A small creek, a little footbridge. Then, the Cobra in all her glory. A bullet-hard wave of grey granite with a single sinuous crack snaking up it. I sit down on my pack. I start to shiver.

WHEN MATT SEGAL LACED UP beneath Cobra Crack in late summer 2008, you could've cut the tension with a knife. Last day, last try. A summer had passed without any luck. I had skipped work to belay him. Matt surged up the rock with a samurai's grace—powerful and strong. We were both screaming when he clipped the chains.

We ambled down the trail high as kites, revelling in the fairytale ending to an endless struggle. At the bottom of the trail near the river was Hazel, sunning herself. The British girl was difficult to ignore. She had been climbing hard all summer, quietly dispatching our long-held test pieces. I was attracted to her right away. She was heading back to university in England, but I hoped I would see her again.

I open the zipper of my battered black pack, ferreting out a Kokanee. It's fizzy from the jostling of the hike and foams up when I crack it open. Everyone always tells me I should get a new pack. There's a new model for every season with fancy words like ergonomic this, bevelled that, and gusseted whatever. But despite the sticky zipper and scuffed exterior, I love my old pack. When I was a little kid my parents got a new chesterfield. My dad bucked up the old one with a chainsaw in the backyard while I bawled my eyes out in my room. I have trouble letting go of things.

THE FOLLOWING YEAR, the Cobra would be mine during a quiet June afternoon with a couple of friends at the crag. Light rain showers interspersed throughout the day. On try number two, I got aggressive with it, ratcheting my fingers, oblivious to the pain, eyes pointed only upward. On top of the wall my head was spinning, my fingers bleeding and it was a done deal. Walking away from the cliff that day was odd. I would no longer look at the Cobra as a goal—only as a climb that once was.

Later that summer, Hazel put up a route on the far end of the cliff that none of the boys could touch. Though we were spending almost every moment together, I was still a little shocked when she led this one. It was technical and run-out on tiny RPs. We jokingly called it Hazel's Horror Show. She never came up with another name, so it stuck. She didn't clean it very well, and the tufts of moss sticking to the granite are getting bigger by the season. Without attention, the forest will reclaim the route. I consider giving it a retro-scrub. Alas, it is not my line, thus not my decision.

It's getting late. My running shoes are squishy and I'm staring at the Cobra, squinting so the rain doesn't pelt my eyes. The apparitions surface. I see Didier meditating beneath the crack, summoning the power from the heavens. I see myself, all fresh-faced and bright-eyed, craning my neck back and imagining the moves—wishing, hoping. I see her smile. The Cobra, of course, is unchanged. It stays here: bearing silent witness to the struggles we all face. Darkness is approaching. I turn around, and walk down the path. Trying, as best I can, to move on.

Stupid Torpor

Bruce Kay

LUDITTE THAT I AM, it took me a while to get around to looking on the Internet for the climbing community. At first I was, in a word, disappointed. Despite my lifelong fascination with climbing, I found most climbing forums to be profoundly parochial, immature, narcissistic and generally obnoxious. It was amusing to note the similarities with my son's Xbox chat room full of foul-mouthed bickering—no doubt something to do with the adolescent male domination of said forums. Then I stumbled upon Supertopo.com, which essentially was all of the above but just a little bit more. The "more" part was a healthy dose of "The Campfire" section. Anything under the sun is up for discussion, even that most reviled topic—politics.

As usual, the debate is often dominated by a handful of individuals who seemingly have a lot of free time on their hands, but there's also a large lurking population that chimes in whenever they see fit. Occasionally, some pathetic navel gazer self-righteously pipes up and admonishes that Supertopo is a climbing forum and politics has no place there. In no time flat the reply they generally get is if you don't like the conversation around the campfire, then kindly find another one—perhaps under that rock. The political leanings are overwhelmingly lefty, but I think all involved can say that the few brave right-wingers are much appreciated. Dissent and counterpoint is vital.

To me, the aversion to politics is a curiosity. Politics is community. The extent to which one tends to dismiss or embrace politics is proportional to how small or large one's community is. If the only community you can relate to is your own tribe, then it's easy not to care about how gas fills your car or whether or not gays can get married. Climbers often take pride in isolating themselves from the riffraff that surrounds us, and justly so for the most part. However, we do so at our peril, and I'm not just talking about access to the crag. Global warming presents more of a problem than just the survival of certain ice routes. The shit going on in Pakistan means more than your access to the Karakorum.

Back in the day (yawn) I didn't give a damn either, so who am I to complain. The trouble is that's just how the man likes it. Electoral involvement is at an all-time low and that suits the suits just fine. If the proletariat is out of the picture, the government can do as they please.

It wasn't always this way, as is evident of the youth movement of the 60s and early 70s, which was by far the greatest era of progressive civil and political reform in recent history. Despite how polarizing that youthful rebellion was, in effect, it was a great all-inclusive community mash-up that was critical to slowing the advance of the military industrial complex. Since then however, hedonistic nihilism has dominated with a vengeance under an onslaught of gross material consumption with a consequently lazy and misguided shift away from politics. Meanwhile, the enemy has not been idle. In all likelihood, I will leave this world having enjoyed the best of it.

Unfortunately, I'm not so sure I can see the same possibilities for my kids and their peers.

I have never been a huge fan of climbers' parties, or to be specific, parties where the only thing discussed, pantomimed or ingested is who bolted this or heel-hooked that. The same can be said for climbing periodicals—our cultural sounding boards. It is true that there have been many fine articles that explore the broader human experience, such as Thomasina Pidgeon's recent article in *Gripped* magazine chronicling her experiences as a single-mother climber, or Glen Payan's classic *CAJ* examination of his own case of "Scrubaholism". Such articles are political, but generally remain confined to the micro politics of the tribe. I think such critical thinkers could easily expand their writing to comment on our relationship to the greater community and the policy-makers. The publishers and editors should be more willing to provide support here. Challenging, I know, but I like to think that climbers appreciate a challenge—even if it's off the rock. Printing the typical blow-by-blow accounts is fluff and safe. The hard stuff is looking inside yourself, and then if you dare, into the future.

I'd like to advise the youth of today (if I may be so bold) to not repeat our old mistakes of disengagement from the rest of society for the sake of a rock. The climbing community does not function in a vacuum any more than any other social network. If you want no part in deciding our future, then that's your prerogative, but don't expect to have it handed to you on a platter. Consider the recent history of Squamish as an analogy.

The once thriving blue-collar industries are long gone, leaving nothing but Wal-Mart and Home Depot shit jobs for those left behind. Maybe it was inevitable, but it is also possible that if time, energy and will had been spent to ensure a sustainable supply of wood in the forest, or a viable locally run railway, then things may have turned out differently for what is a vital part of our community. Instead, pay cheques went straight into the Chieftain Hotel, and the only thing worth discussing there was the hockey game.

They saw their enemy as the long hairs and granola crunchers who had the temerity to loudly point out what their future looked like. The people they viewed as a bunch of limp-wristed fags proved to be not only correct, but far more courageous than they were in questioning the status quo. In the end, their big-business friends and the facilitating government creamed the valley and pulled out without a thought to the continued viability of the community. Awareness is the first step, followed by some sort of action. Get in the game or don't expect to win.

I'll be among the first to argue that battling one's way to the top of some nightmare of rubble or an impossible overhanging wall is hugely empowering, enriching and even enlightening. But, like any endeavour, it can also be nothing but a crutch and a refuge of the weak. All that bravery doesn't mean a hill of beans if it can't be used to enrich, enable and challenge others. Politics, distasteful as it is, is how we hash out public policy, and to that end I don't see how any forum can avoid it. Unless of course, avoiding it is all you can think of.

The "Ess"ence of Climbing

Paul Adam

WE MAY CLIMB FOR MANY REASONS, but we return to civilization for a number of reasons as well. While sitting out storms in the back of beyond, my tentmates and I engage in a variety of activities to pass the time. Since playing cards, doing crosswords and reading books can only occupy so much time between eating, drinking and defecating, we are forced to engage in a substantial amount of cerebral discussion. Our fourth favourite topic (sex, politics and religion are the first three; actually sex occupies the first million spots) is why do we climb. Due to the fact that our discussions are so cerebral (note that I have used this big word twice now) and the storm days many, we have been forced to look at this topic from a variety of angles, including why we return to civilization.

The result has been the development of a list of reasons as to why we long for the return to urban life from where we had originally sought escape. The list started with three reasons, but subsequent erudite discussions evolved while sitting out an even greater number of storms, resulting in an ever-expanding list. As the manifesto grew, we noted with our great analytical capacity that each of the reasons began with the letter "S". Upon further deliberation, we figured this explained the "ess"ence of mountaineering. (Note the use of the pronoun "we". I don't want to take all the credit, but nobody else will admit to assisting in the development of the list, or, for that matter, climbing with me!)

As the number increased, an order was developed that reflected the importance of each "S" and the need for it to be enjoyed upon reaching civilization. Even as the list expanded, the first three remained on top and in their original order. Here are the reasons, in order of importance, that we—and probably you as well—look forward to returning to civilization after a visit to the mountains:

Shit: There is nothing like a good dump on a warm, comfortable seat in a heated enclosure where you can read at your leisure while attending to business before using dry toilet paper after freezing your ass off centimetres above the glacier in the middle of a rainstorm as a cold wind blows up your backside. To add insult to injury, in the mountains you have to finish the job using cold, damp toilet paper in minimal quantities. Or wet Devil's Club leaves under a tree that drips on you, if in the woods. This "S" is the most important reason. It's always done first and never missed. The rest are optional, and the order debatable.

Shower: After any mountaineering endeavour, a shower

is necessary to remove weeks of body odour and the smell of the wilderness in order to engage in reason number six. Also, the availability of running water in unlimited amounts, in particular hot water, makes this a joy and pleasure to take part in.

Shave: For the majority of males, hacking the stubble off the face is a requirement in order to return to our handsome selves again. In addition, it helps in getting a good-looking mate of the female persuasion for reason number six. Having said that, if the trip was long enough, looks don't matter much. Hell, if the trip was really long, neither does gender. There are a few females who use the opportunity to get their legs and underarms silky smooth again to find a man with some social standing and money (read: non-climber).

Slake: After drinking substances that contain things that move (floaties) and things that crunch (glacial silt), it is a luxury to drink something that has neither been melted over a stove or contains materials not put into it wantonly. Slaking a real drink (alcohol content not important initially) rather than a powdered laboratory concoction is joy for the taste buds to cherish.

Satiate: Fresh food in separate piles that has been properly cooked and will stay warm while being eaten slowly enough to be savoured is a novel concept to the mountaineer. Large quantities as well as uncountable and unthinkable varieties make it all even better. The real McCoy is always tastier than a scientist's rendition.

Sex: The big "S" ending in "X". Theoretically possible in the outdoors, but the thought of doing it in a mummy sleeping bag on glacial ice or a sloping rocky surface is enough to make you see the joys and advantages of celibacy. Plus, your smelly climbing partner with whom you have been shacked up with and unable to get away from is usually the last person you would engage in copulation with. Since most of us tend to climb with a person of the same gender, the possibility of doing it with a gender of your choice makes the prospect even more attractive once returned to civilization.

Smoke: Some people like to smoke after sex. Personally, I don't and I usually skip reason number six with those who do; but after a long trip I'm not that picky. The substance smoked may vary.

Stoned: This depends on what you have been drinking or smoking. Of course, if you eat the wrong (or right?) sort of mushrooms, the same effect can be had. It is rumoured that smoking dried banana peels are a viable option to those left over from the 60s.

Sleep: Most people do this after sex (at least I do), or after any period of intense exercise. There are those who will do this before sex. Certain people have been known to do this right after reason number one, but nobody has ever been known to skip reason number one! The pleasure of doing this in a warm bed on a good mattress in clean, fresh-smelling PJs can make it difficult to reach total dreamland after being accustomed to a stinky, cold sleeping bag on a lumpy, frigid surface that won't adjust to your body's contours.

Snore: There are those who do this while they are sleeping. I throw water on anyone who does this near me upon my return as it prevents a good night's sleep.

In conjunction with my tentmates—long may they remain nameless—I came up with some other "esses" that can be enjoyed upon returning to civilization, albeit some are pushing the mustard, such as school, studying, slavery of work, siblings and spouses (your own, not someone else's). However, those are the reasons I go into the mountains. Of course, we all appreciate the wilderness for scenery and sport. Some go to sweat and strain as well, but me, I just go so I can enjoy the "ess"ence of the mountains and the thrill of the return.

Alpine Human Waste Management

Geoff Hill

AS PART OF MY PHD THESIS, I chose to examine public composting toilet performance and end-product quality in remote alpine and sub-alpine environments. Composting toilet systems may have the potential to convert human waste into a nutrient-rich soil amendment. They are commonly found at off-grid private dwellings or at recreational destinations, such as backcountry campgrounds. Touted as a sustainable solution to resource-intensive centralized sewerage systems, they have been installed into a small number of "green" urban buildings. Regulatory guidelines for composting toilet waste management do not exist in Canada as they do in New Zealand and Australia. Following manufacturer guidelines, some facility operators discharge blackwater effluent into leach fields and end product onto natural or public soil surfaces.

In order to determine the human and environmental risks associated with the untested and unregulated dispersal of human waste into pristine environments, we assessed end-product quality from off-grid composting toilets in mountainous national and provincial parks in British Columbia, Alberta and Washington. We found compost toilet end-product quality substandard in many categories at most sites with respect to North American product manufacturing certification standards, foreign compost toilet regulations and provincial composted biosolids legislation.

Regulations and relevant literature do not support the onsite surface dispersal of composted toilet waste without adequate testing due to low process temperatures, the uncertainty around pathogen destruction and the risk associated with drinking water contamination. Maximum pile temperatures recorded were 35 C with average summer temperatures at or below ambient temperatures (5-20 C). As per most regulations, consistent temperatures above 50 C for two to three

consecutive weeks are required to ensure adequate pathogen destruction. Pathogens of greatest concern in composting toilets are hookworms, *E.coli, Salmonella* and encysting protozoa (*Giardia* and *Cryptosporidium).*

Significant differences were detected between the top and bottom of the pile in fecal coliform bacteria and CO_2 evolution, but no significant differences were found for total solids, volatile solids, pH, NH_3-N, NO_3-N and C/N (carbon-to-nitrogen ratio). No volatile solids reduction means that no significant decomposition of organic material is taking place within the chamber. Despite a reduction in fecal coliform bacteria (measured by numbers of colonies forming on a lab petri dish (CFU/g)) from the top to the bottom of the chamber, five of six compost chambers contained solid end-product samples with >200CFU/g *E.coli*, and four of six chambers contained samples with >1000CFU/g *E.coli. E.coli* is one species in the fecal coliform group and is thus a conservative measure. The first threshold (<200CFU/g fecal coliform) is a standard used by the Australia/New Zealand regulation controlling compost toilet waste disposal. The second threshold (<1000CFU/g fecal coliform) is the Alberta/B.C. regulatory threshold for municipal compost dispersal into park environments. Blackwater from each chamber contained >200CFU/100ml *E.coli*. Banff National Park ensures effluent from its waste treatment plants is less than 200CFU/100ml fecal coliform.

The average moisture content was 75 per cent, which is five per cent higher than the allowable limit for the Australia/New Zealand regulations, and 15 per cent higher than optimal for composting. This is due to the overwhelming influence of urine on the composition of inputs to the toilets. Sites with chambers high in *E.coli* also had high ammonia concentrations (>1000mgN/kg dry solids), which likely inhibited nitrifying bacteria and resulted in minimal nitrite or nitrate formation. True compost has higher concentrations of nitrate than ammonia as the former is a key plant nutrient and the latter is toxic in high concentrations. Samples from Mount Rainer possessed much lower concentrations of ammonia and higher concentrations of nitrite and nitrate, possibly due to the absence of blackwater recirculation, moderate climate and lower urine additions.

The Solvita compost test kit was a cheaper and more reliable tool in the determination of compost toilet maturity than the C/N ratio. However, it is not a suitable replacement for *E.coli* testing or fecal coliform analysis. Much of the carbon in the C/N ratio is not bio-available for microbial decomposition in low-temperature composting toilets, especially when high-lignin bulking agents are used.

Urine diversion and the addition of readily degradable carbon could lower excessive moisture, reduce toxic ammonia concentrations and shift the process into the thermophilic zone. Urine is much lower in pathogens than blackwater (which passes through the pile of feces), is easier to decontaminate, and has been shown to enrich natural plant and microbial communities in alpine environments. These amendments and design changes have been incorporated into European composting toilet designs for the past decade and are recommended by the New Zealand Department of Conservation for protected or sensitive backcountry environments similar to those found in Western North America.

In order to minimize the costs and impacts associated with human waste management in alpine environments, we designed and tested three alternative waste treatment systems at the Conrad Kain Hut located in Bugaboo Provincial Park. By quantifying the mass of excreta deposited per toilet use with door counters and a large weigh scale, we were able to compare the performance of urine-diversion (UD), solar-dehydration (UD12V), and 110V-evaporation (UD110V) against the standard all-in-one barrel collection (BFO). UD significantly reduced human excreta by 60 per cent, potentially saving $108 per barrel when removed from Bugaboo Provincial Park with a Bell 407 helicopter. UD110V consistently raised the air temperature and reduced the relative humidity in an insulated basement chamber, dehydrating the excreta mass by a significant additional 34 per cent beyond UD (94 per cent less than BFO). More research needs to be conducted on the optimal collection container for the resulting condensed solids and on the ecological impacts of locally discharged urine. It is also likely that urine diversion could reduce pit toilet leachate while stimulating surrounding populations of natural soil microbes, further minimizing the potential for environmental contamination.

The next phase of this research project involves: 1) attempting to amend the composting toilets at Elbow Lake and Lillian Lake in Kananaskis Country, Alberta to prevent potentially harmful leachate from entering those lakes, and to increase the temperature and quality of toilet end product to reduce human health and environmental contamination hazards; and 2) assessing the impact of urine fertilization on alpine ecosystems in Garibaldi Provincial Park, British Columbia.

Conrad Kain Hut compost toilet with solar dehydration panel and solar panel driving fan. Photo: Geoff Hill

The North

Women at Work

Lorna Illingworth

EMILY STIFLER, Madaleine Sorkin and I flew by helicopter to the base of Mount Proboscis in the Cirque of the Unclimbables on July 27, 2010. We spent 25 days tenting at the base and flew out on August 21, after a 50-centimetre snowfall ended our climbing endeavours. Our objective was to free climb the full southeast face Original Route, first climbed by Jim McCarthy, Royal Robbins, Layton Kor and Richard McCracken in 1963 (VI 5.8 A4).

After a week of travel, packing and very little sleep, we said goodbye to our helicopter pilot, Warren LaFave, at the base of Proboscis, got out of the machine and waited for him to shuttle a sling load of our gear from Glacier Lake. It was sunny, and we sat in a daze for a few moments before the gear arrived and we had to set up camp. We had great weather overall, with a total of 10 climbing days and 11 rest days before completing what we thought was a free ascent of the Original Route.

We climbed the Original Route ground up to pitch six, going free at 5.10+. On pitch seven we attempted both free and aid leads. We were stymied by loose rock, a shallow seam and uncertainty about the line. We retreated and decided to free climb the Via Costa Brava (a variation from pitches five to eight)—established in 1992 by Jose Maria Cadina and Joaquin Olmo, freed on top rope in 1997 by Nancy Feagin with Barry Blanchard, and finally receiving a proper free ascent in 2001 by Jonny Copp and Josh Wharton. By climbing Via Costa Brava to the converging ledge atop pitch eight, we were able to rappel and confirm that we were indeed on the Original Route.

With knowledge about the work to be done and a good weather report, we climbed to the summit ridge of Proboscis on August 5, 2010. It was a warm, sunny day, and we reached the top of the route at 7:30 p.m. with large smiles and kind words. We brought a free climbing rack and did not haul any extra gear from pitch eight upwards. This was great in that we could climb lighter. Later though, during our seven-hour descent by rappel, we thought fondly of our bolt kit that we had left at pitch eight as we encountered a few dubious rappel anchors.

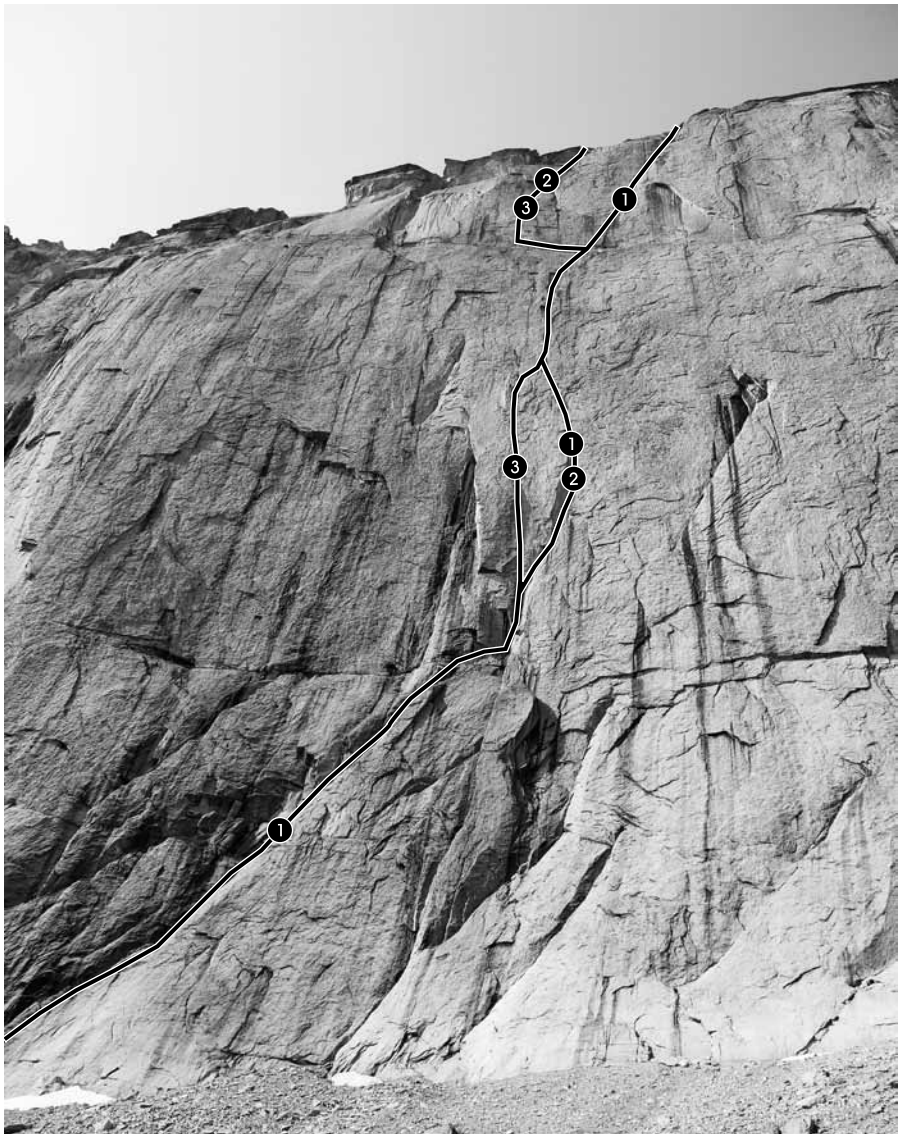
Pitches seven and eight proved to be the crux and we spent our four final climbing days setting up the line for the first free ascent. The start of pitch seven has questionable rock and follows a seam that turns into a crack higher up. Pitch eight continues up this seam/crack and then traverses left under-clinging a hollow flake feature, and then follows another crack up to the ledge at the top of the pitch. We put in two anchor stations: at the top of pitch six and pitch seven. We also put in five bolts on the route: two on pitch seven and three on pitch eight. In total, we placed nine 3/8-inch bolts. Emily placed the majority of the bolts, while Madaleine scoped and I belayed.

Madaleine led the crux pitches free on August 17. We gave pitch eight an R rating due to the hollow rock and the consequent long distance between the first and second bolts of this pitch. While a long sling pre-hung on the second bolt allowed Madaleine to avoid this risk, an on-sight lead would prove riskier. Pitch seven and eight are rated 5.11R and 5.12R respectively. They have excellent, atmospheric climbing with fun knobs, technical seam action and careful footwork. All three of us had the opportunity to free climb every pitch on the route.

If I went again to do the route we did, I would probably climb wall style. If climbing the Via Costa Brava variation to the summit ridge, I would replace the anchor at pitch 12 on our topo. Madaleine has a souvenir piton she pulled out with her hand from this two-pin anchor. Instead of rapping from this suspect anchor, Emily re-led the sideways traverse pitch on our summit-day descent as the evening light embraced our world. One idea is to add a rappel anchor station or two on the face so you can get back to the route at the top of pitch nine. This would avoid re-leading the traverse pitch as well as having to rap off two less-than-ideal anchors. The Via Costa Brava route has otherwise bomber anchor stations for rappelling, courtesy of Nancy Feagin and Barry Blanchard in 1997. We rappelled the Original Route from the ledge at the top of our pitch 11.

Figuring out the history of the line was a puzzle. We didn't solve it fully until returning to the States, despite thinking we had figured it out in the field. We even called Jim McCarthy from the base of the wall to inquire which way they'd gone above the large ledge (where they'd bivied two-thirds of the way up the wall). A very poor satellite phone connection allowed us to believe they'd traversed far left along the grassy ledge. We'd followed this traverse

Madaleine Sorkin leading pitch eight (5.12R) of Women at Work on the southeast face of Mount Proboscis, Cirque of the Unclimbables. Photo: Emily Stifler



The southeast face of Mount Proboscis: (1) Original Route, (2) Women at Work, (3) Via Costa Brava. Photo: Emily Stifler

and found many old pitons that looked to be from the correct era; however, this turned out to be Via Costa Brava.

The original line, I believe, continues straight up from the ledge at pitch 11. Jason Lanz's 1998 topo indicates he climbed this way, showing three pitches of right-leaning, right-facing A1 dihedrals, followed by moderate 5.5 to 5.8 climbing for three pitches. In a subsequent conversation Emily and Madaleine had with Jim McCarthy, he described the final pitches: "I remember it being steep but very featured and full of cracks. It didn't look that hard. I thought it was certainly a grade easier than those pitches on the traverse and the steep section."

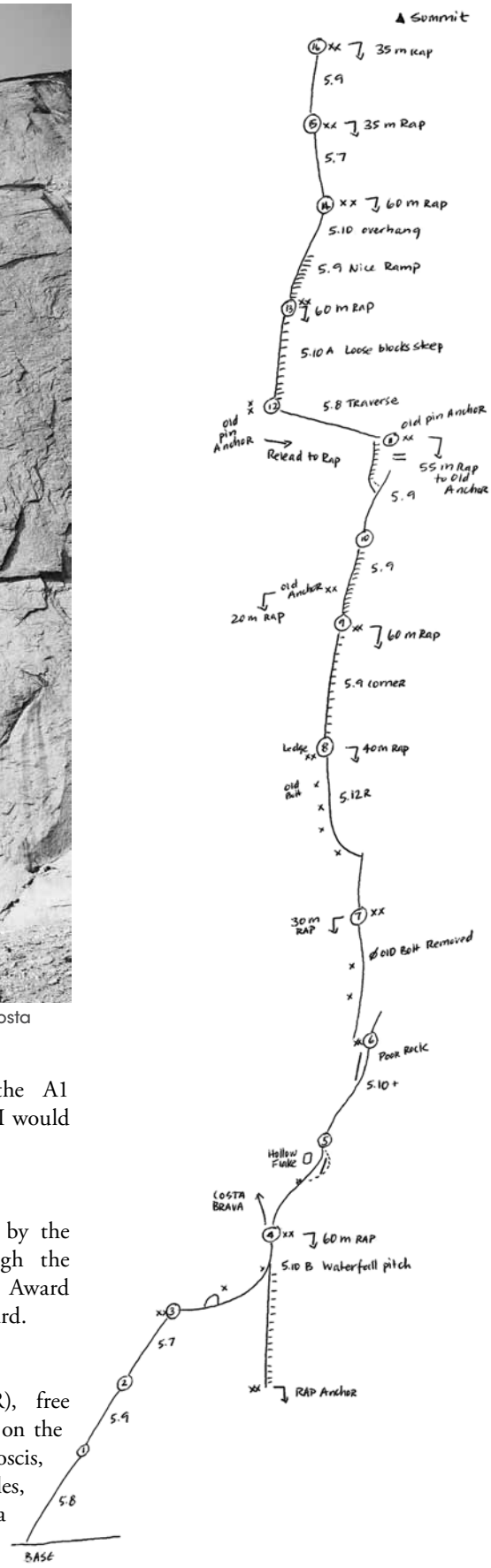
Our group remembers the A1 pitches looking steep and thin. I would love to check it out someday.

Acknowledgements

The expedition was supported by the American Alpine Club through the Lyman-Spitzer Cutting Edge Award and the Copp-Dash Inspire Award.

Summary

Women at Work (VI 5.12R), free variation to the Original Route on the southeast face of Mount Proboscis, Cirque of the Unclimbables, Northwest Territories. FFA: Lorna Illingworth, Madaleine Sorkin, Emily Stifler, August 2010.



Arctic Monkeys

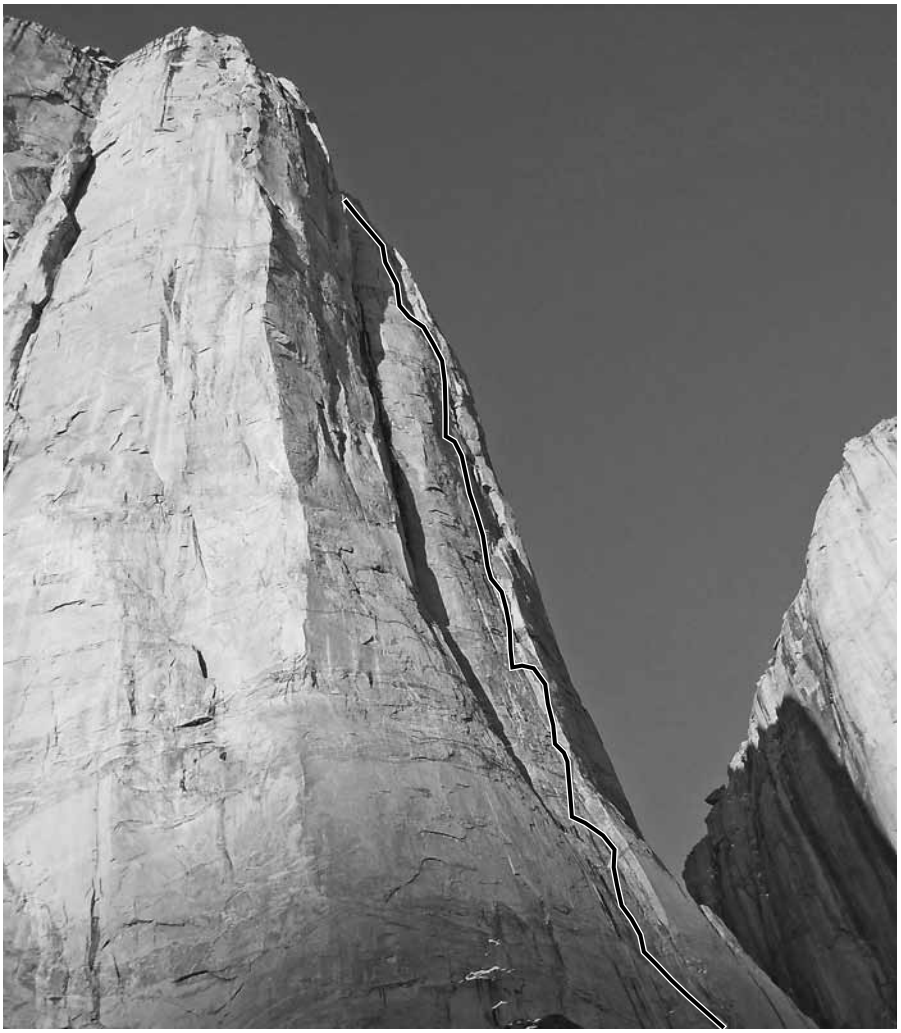
Mike Turner

STU MCALEESE, MARK THOMAS and I (from Wales, U.K.) spent three weeks completing a new big-wall aid route on an unclimbed formation in Baffin Island's Stewart Valley. I had spotted the line in 1999 when Jerry Gore, Shaun Hutson, Louise Thomas and I created The Endless Day (VI A3+, 900m, 25 pitches) on the Citadel. I have been itching to return for more than 10 years to try this route.

Climbers typically opt for late spring to tackle the eastern fjord walls because of the generally stable weather and relative ease of access by snowmobile across the frozen ocean. Any earlier and it is way colder; later and you risk an early thaw, which can make escape problematical. An early thaw proved the case on this occasion. The snowmobile was unable to reach base camp and the trio had to make a quick exit, wading through freezing slush for around 25 kilometres to meet our Inuit drivers.

Cutting into the east coast of Baffin Island, the Stewart Valley was probably connected to Sam Ford Fiord at some point in geologic time but a glacial moraine has now blocked both ends, leaving a narrow, 16-kilometre-long landlocked lake. In 1977, a 14-member Canadian expedition climbed 19 peaks in the valley. This appears to be the only recorded climbing in the area before 1998 when Americans John Catto, Greg Child, Alex Lowe, Jared Ogden, Mark Synnott and Gordon Wiltsie, on a trip sponsored by National Geographic and the North Face, climbed and filmed the northeast face of Great Sail Peak. The Americans named their 1,150-metre big-wall route Rum, Sodomy and the Lash (VI 5.10 A4+) and came back with photos of an almost-as-impressive wall to the east, which prompted my successful aforementioned 1999 expedition. The Russian Extreme Project came to the area in 2002 and established a second route on Great Sail Peak close to the American line. Rubicon (Davy-Klenov-Odintsov-Rozov-Ruchkin, VI A4 5.11, 1150m) was climbed over three weeks, then Valery Rozov made a BASE jump from the top.

Arctic Monkeys on Sail Peaks, Stewart Valley, Baffin Island. Photo: Mike Turner



Located on the prominent buttress left of Great Sail Peak, our 1,100-metre wall was guarded by 300 metres of tricky mixed terrain. The climbing on the wall proper was difficult aid with most pitches requiring pegs, hooks and beaks. We generally climbed for 12 hours a day with the two most challenging pitches taking three days each to complete.

Life on the wall at this time of the year is harsh with temperatures averaging -20 C. Warming water for hot drinks and re-hydrating meals took an hour and a half before it reached a suitable temperature. Belaying required two duvet jackets to combat the extreme cold. We ran out of fuel and food on the last day before we made the summit but decided to press on. We reached the top at 4 p.m. on May 24, having spent 18 consecutive nights on the wall. We called our new route Arctic Monkeys and dubbed the formation Welshman's Peak.

Summary

Arctic Monkeys (VI A4, 1400m, 31 pitches), Welshman's Peak, Sail Peaks, Stewart Valley, Baffin Island. FA: Stuart McAleese, Mark Thomas, Mike Turner, May 2010.

Staircase Glacier

Mark Weeding

"MIND THE DOOR. If you pull on it, it'll probably fall off," was the reassuring statement from Donjek, our pilot, as we climbed into the little Helio Courier ski plane. Pete McCombie and I were following Jenny Foister and Glenn Wilks to the Staircase Glacier in the Kluane National Park. The flight was fantastic as we wove our way between peaks, covering days of rough terrain in a matter of minutes. We hit the glacier and bounced while I still thought we were hundreds of metres up in the air. Neat trick that glacier flying.

Only 18 hours after flying into Whitehorse from the U.K., we were sitting in the harsh midday light surrounded by an ocean of snow, ice and mountains—one of the biggest subarctic icefields on the planet. I was a couple of days late arriving in Whitehorse to meet the rest of the group, so I missed the shopping. The sheer quantity of pasta, Spam and tinned fish had stopped Donjek in his tracks; it was more than the door that was likely to fall off. The harmonious team was already under stress, and all over a little shopping!

We spent three weeks on the glacier, climbed nine likely unvisited peaks and learnt how to snowshoe. The peaks varied from straightforward snow plods to technical ridges, but the constant was the most glorious views of what must be one of the great wildernesses on this planet. Glenn, who had been to these parts before, acted as the purveyor of local peculiarities and techniques, which included digging tent sites metres into the glacier, the prodigious and profligate use of bamboo wades, and, most unusual, strapping large aluminium stakes to ones rear end. Those of us tried and tested in other regions were humbled by tales of hurricane winds, murderous whiteouts and massive crevasses. We were fortunate as none of these came to pass and remained as fables from mysterious lands.

The first day of climbing dawned staggeringly bright as we set off for what was a beautiful day's snow plodding that took us over three summits ("Peak 1", 3,250 metres, 60°31.13' N, 139°04.58' W; "Peak 2", 3,345 metres, 60°32.24' N, 139°04.48' W; and "Peak 3", 3,330 metres, 60°32.14' N, 139°03.53' W). The views of Mount Logan were grand and the classic East Ridge stood out in the foreground. On the descent we crossed a set of lynx tracks. It was going to be days of trekking before that cat saw grass or caught the scent of prey. It was the only sign of life we saw the whole trip, apart from the little brown birds (type unknown to those of us not well educated in ornithology) that were blown in, exhausted by the wind. One of them resided under my tent fly for a nasty, breezy night—welcomed, apart from the whitewash he added to the wall of the inner tent.

Without further ado, we dined on pasta and fish that evening, as with nearly every other evening. Moaning was quickly followed by the threat of undisclosed quantities of Spam. I always thought we went to the mountains for the peace and tranquillity, but glacier life is much accompanied by the roar of the MSR in its tireless task of producing liquid. Surrounded by H_2O but nary a drop to drink, it's amazing just how much water one seems to need.

Two days later we climbed two more peaks ("Peak 4", 3,280 metres, 60°31.14' N, 139°05.29' W; and "Peak 5", 3,385 metres, 60°30.47' N, 139°05.01' W), one of which had a fine, slender summit ridge with spindrift pouring over its knife-edge crest. After that, three days of murk confined us to camp. I, for one, rapidly get tent fever if I spend too much time confined in one; even if at midday the temperature inside can be 20 C when it is -5 C outside. Apparently, this is the same solar radiation that rots the snow to great depths in summer and brings on glacier lassitude. I was somewhat surprised that it could also turn a tent at 3,000 metres into a good imitation of a Greek beach. It's also the same radiation that made my lips so fried that I couldn't make any impact on the bottle of Talisker that I took along for such idle moments.

After a while we had to get moving, so we set off in the cloud for our sixth peak on our sixth day ("Peak 6", 3,482 metres, 60°30.03' N, 139°04.40' W). It turned out well, the cloud lifted and it gave us our first steep and sustained ice face and ridge. Satisfyingly, this popped out onto a small summit and a great-looking ridge that stretched away across further peaks. The mighty Mount Kennedy loomed behind us.

We then moved onto an impressive peak to the east that had been looming over our camp as a fine objective for some days. The ridge to the summit looked long but doable. We climbed steadily up in fine weather, pitching once we were about two-thirds of the way. The snow worsened and the ice that we were using for screw placements disappeared. We detoured onto the open face and back to the ridge, grinding to a halt as it became increasingly exposed and unstable. Still gaining experience with the conditions and remoteness, we backed off. We would return four days later for another push, still convinced it was doable, but only got a few hundred metres further in even worse conditions and absent protection.

We moved twice on the trip using cheap kiddie toboggans as pulks. They worked fine until there was a slope, and then they either ran us over or continually tipped over. Tie four people together in deep, bottomless snow, all pulling sleds and you get a lot of tangled rope and the worst language you are ever likely to hear. Now what was that technique for getting someone and a 100-kilogram load out of a crevasse with four people on a right-angled dog leg? We do all this to escape the stress of work, apparently.

We climbed three more excellent peaks; one of these ("Peak 7", 3,250 metres, 60°32.52' N, 138°58.58' W)

by way of some great Scottish grade 2 mixed ground through tottering pinnacles and up gullies of melting snow. The hour climb along the ridge to the top was magnificent and worth the whole trip. Another ascent ("Peak 8", 3,410 metres, 60˚34.18' N, 139˚02.30' W) took us up a sustained snow slope right to the summit ridge. A thousand metres of steep snow and ice needed a steady head on the way down. By now we were climbing at night because of the condition of the snow. The rising of the ambient temperature and the effect of the radiation during the day was badly rotting the snow. Our last climb took us to a great summit ("Peak 9", 3,248 metres, 60˚34.08' N, 138˚57.06' W), but only after dealing with isothermal snow both on the glacier and during the ascent.

The experience of trying to extricate oneself from waist deep slush, which one has sunk into whilst wearing snowshoes, is exhausting. When this happens at 2 a.m., irritability becomes a bit of an issue, or so Pete told me. If this didn't set us thinking, then the sight of every route we had climbed—and just about every slope we could see—avalanching did. So we phoned Donjek to come and retrieve us.

It was a great trip blighted only by Spam, pasta and grumpy-old-man syndrome. It should be said that Andy Williams is a splendid character, and Welsh to boot, who has been flying into the range for over 30 years in a succession of ancient planes, and runs the Arctic Institute of North America at Kluane Lake. He and his plane were a bit like the old saying about people and their dogs.

Glen Wilks nearing the summit of Peak 7 with Peak 3 at the far left. Photo: Mark Weeding

Peak 3 and Peak 8, which were climbed by the prominent snow couloir. Photo: Pete McCombie

Descending Peak 4 towards Peak 5 and Peak 6. Photo: Mark Weeding

Augusta

Manu Pellissier

OUR EXPEDITION TEAM from France was hanging around Haines Junction looking for Bill Karman, our supposed helicopter pilot who was to fly us to the Seward Glacier at the base of the infamous Hummingbird Ridge on Mount Logan—the primary goal of our trip. We pushed open the door of the restaurant and a man looked at us saying, "You must be the French guys."

Two days later, thanks to Bill, and Andy Williams with his plane, all seven of us were at basecamp with our gear. Looming above us, the massive south face of Logan was so impressive that it was hard to understand the true scale of this mountain. But, 15 kilometres away across the glacier, the north face of Augusta (4,282 metres) looked very attractive, especially the unclimbed northeast pillar. It looked striking in the evening light, a natural line drawn by the sun and shadow. We decided to divide into two teams for acclimatization purposes before trying the Hummingbird: Jacques Olivier Marie, Marion Poitevin and Lionel Albrieux to climb the classic East Ridge of Logan, while the three Sebs and I tried the beautiful line on Augusta's north side.

The Yukon conjures up images of cold, snowstorms and frostbite, so we had everything to face whatever elements we encountered. However, on May 21 at 4 a.m. the temperature was 15 C, and we began to realize that our excessive warm gear was maybe not appropriate.

Despite the balmy weather, we decided to give it a go anyway, and after only 150 metres up the initial ridge, I slipped and was lucky enough to be stopped by my Seb (Moati) who had the instinct to jump off the other side.

With a torqued knee, I went back to basecamp with Seb Moati while Seb Bohin and Seb Ratel stayed to make another attempt the next day. They set off at midnight, but the temperature was still too warm. They pushed as far as they could, but when they reached the steeper section they were very disappointed to realize that the rock was similar to the snow—soft!

After 500 metres of ascent, they began their retreat. By evening we were all back at basecamp, drinking beer and wondering what we would accomplish during our time here if the localized global warming continued. We spent a few days scoping various climbing possibilities near basecamp, but most of the good lines that we saw had serious objective hazards with huge seracs threatening them. After each foray, we came back to basecamp only to be taunted by the Augusta smirking at us. We couldn't resist its bullying anymore.

On May 28, we again crossed the Seward Glacier, but this time we adjusted our equipment and our tactic. We set up our tent at the very bottom of the ridge below a big boulder, which seemed like a good spot until a rock hit the tent. Seb Moati slept with his helmet on.

We started the climb at midnight. It was still warm, but at least we could use our old tracks, so in less than three hours we had reached the previous high-point. It was a race against the sun. We knew we needed to be high enough on the ridge before 7 a.m. in order to be somewhat protected. We climbed in two teams of two sharing the effort. With a

Mount Augusta with the Northeast Pillar following the sun-shade line. Photo: Manu Pellissier

lot of simul-climbing, we were able to join the north ridge at 3,400 metres, covering 1,300 metres in 10 hours. We decided to set up the tent and stop for a break to eat and melt snow.

At 2 p.m. we were on the move again working up the final 900-metre-long snowfield, dividing the trail-breaking into four equal parts. Four hours of hard work brought us to the top of Augusta. The only cloud in the entire area that day was with us on the summit, obscuring the view of the Gulf of Alaska and all its pleasantly named beaches, like Desolation and Disenchantment Bay. Back at the brew-up spot, the decision was made to sleep in order to move early and make good use of the coldest hours.

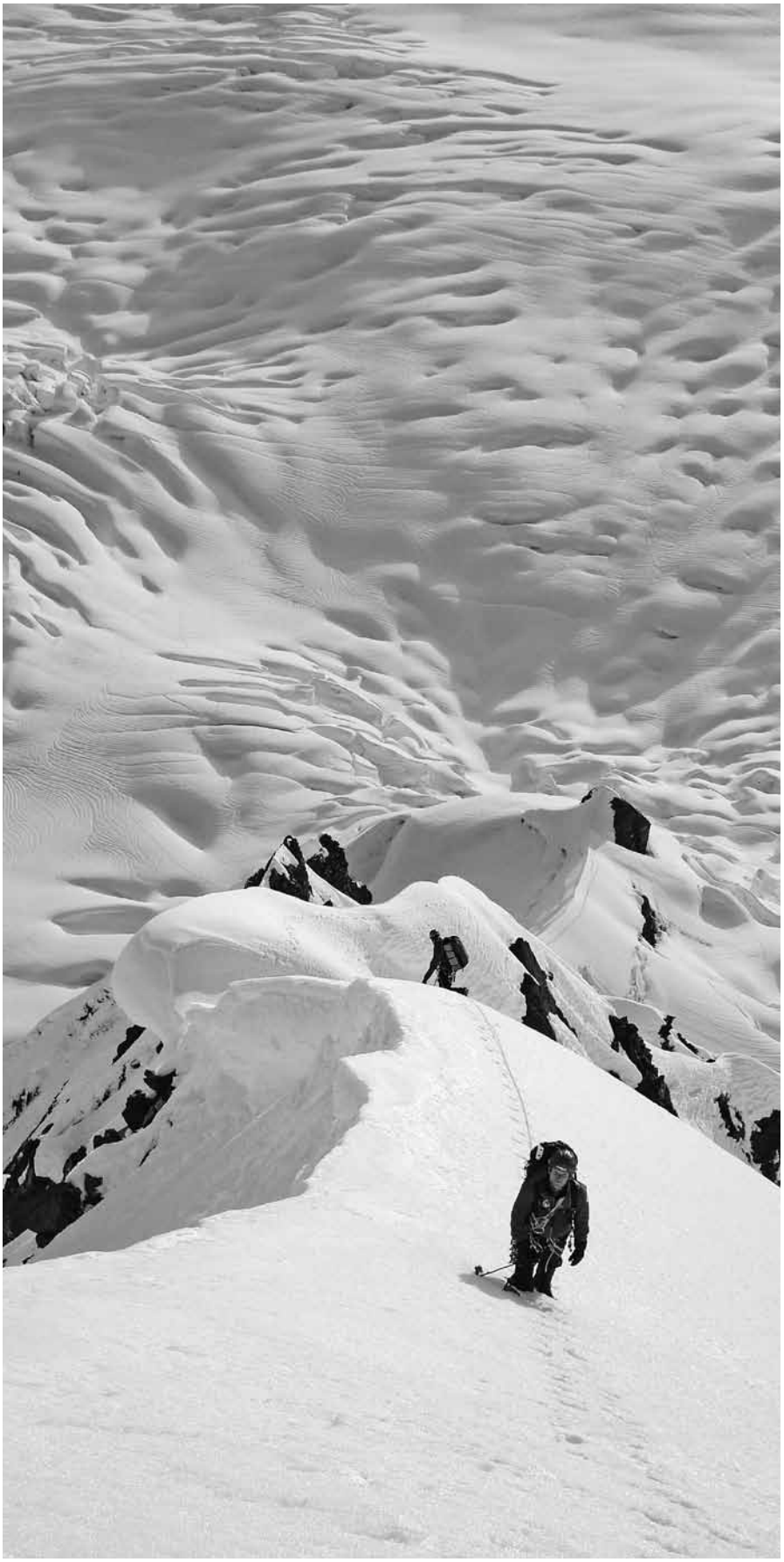
We were reunited at basecamp with our friends from the East Ridge. The high-pressure system was still holding, so we decided to move onto the main events. The three Sebs and I would go for the "sit start" to the Hummingbird by the right branch, while Marion, Lionel and Jacques would attempt the unclimbed Dragon Tail Ridge that joins Logan's East Ridge.

I had to throw in the towel early due to the pain in my knee, but the Seb trio continued for two days, reaching 3,000 metres. They negotiated some difficult sections of climbing with poor rock before the weather turned and forced them down. The Dragon Tail team made it 600 metres before retreating.

Back in France, we are already planning to return. At 3,600 metres high and 16 kilometres long, combined with the high altitude and long descent, the unrepeated Hummingbird is surely one of the most difficult ridges in the world. But it will be easier next time because now we know where to find Bill.

Summary

First ascent of the northeast pillar (TD, 2300m) of Mount Augusta (4282m) FA: Sebastien Bohin, Sebastien Moati, Manu Pellissier, Sebastien Ratel, May 29-30, 2010.



Manu Pellissier and Sebastien Moati on the Northeast Pillar of Mount Augusta.
Photo: Sebastien Ratel

The West Coast

Asperity

Nick Elson

successfully climbing in the mountains is largely a matter of having a bunch of free time. Fitness, motivation and technical skill aren't much use if you can't afford to wait around and be in the right place at the right time when conditions and weather align. Whatever else we may have lacked, Tony McLane and I certainly had open schedules. When the weather forecast looked good and we were able to co-ordinate sharing the helicopter flight with another party, we dropped everything (like climbing in Squamish) and drove to Bluff Lake. Before we knew it, we were watching seracs calve off the north faces of Mount Munday and Mount Waddington from the comfort of the Plummer Hut.

The glacier below the southwest side of Asperity may have been partly responsible for deterring prior attempts on this particular unclimbed face. However, although it always feels slightly ominous to be trudging beneath the vague predawn outlines of such towering peaks, we had relatively little difficulty weaving our way amongst the maze of slots. The exception was a single crevasse spanning the width of the glacier, but even this was fortuitously jammed with ice blocks leading directly to the single weakness in its otherwise overhanging upper wall. Some mixed climbing around a bergshrund then allowed us easy access to the toe of the buttress that forms the first one-third of Asperity's southwest face.

Squamish climbers at heart, we were now in our element. Tony started up the face, weaving up blocky and compact rock. I took over the lead after three pitches, just as the climbing got steeper and the rock became featured with more continuous crack systems. My block of pitches ended with a strenuous move over a small roof on cupped hand jams. Above loomed a 60-metre corner split by a continuous four-inch crack. Tony grabbed our only big cam and set off. Near the end of the pitch, with only a few pieces of gear between him and the belay, Tony slid the tipped out #4 Camalot in front of him and arm-barred up the gently overhanging off-width without even bothering to ditch his pack. I arrived at Tony's anchor hyperventilating and oozing blood from a knee and both ankles but was pleased to see that the angle of the face relented above us.

One pitch later we switched back into our boots and began to climb unroped up intermittent snow couloirs separated by easy rock steps. Kicking and plunging up steep snow isn't a very exhilarating form of climbing, but in spite of the exertion, we were content with our progress. The snow couloirs ended as the face steepened again below the summit. We had hoped to climb a ramp that led directly through this upper rock buttress but found that access to it was barred by a frigid waterfall. Instead, we traversed left to a parallel ramp system where decomposing rock caused us to rope up again. We soon crested the northwest ridge where a little simul-climbing brought us to the summit.

Another factor likely deterring attempts on Asperity from the Tiedemann Glacier side is the descent. After making the first ascent of the southeast ridge, Simon Richardson and Dave Hesleden opted to climb up and over Serras V, IV and III rather than risk descending the avalanche- and rockfall-prone slopes below the Asperity-Serra V col. We hoped to avoid repeating their impressive "descent", but nonetheless our sense of summit elation was dampened by the knowledge that we were genuinely only halfway.

As we downclimbed the east face, the snow became increasingly icy. We'd brought a single ice screw, but we encountered a rather stressful section where the snow was firm enough to be no fun to downclimb with a single lightweight axe, but not quite icy enough for a V-thread. Eventually, the slope turned gleaming blue, so with burning claves and a death-grip on my axe, I put in a thread. Unfortunately, we'd underestimated the size of the serac that cuts across the slope just above the col. Dangling at the lip, it was clear that we'd have to make a significant traverse before we'd be able to rappel over it with our two 60-metre ropes. This traverse was not particularly enjoyable; in fact, while cutting steps across the 50-degree ice slope, Tony swore that he'd never climb in the alpine again.

All of this took more time than perhaps it should have and when we eventually gained the col after a few diagonal rappels, it was clear that we would be sleeping there for the night. We weren't completely unprepared for a night out, but by the following morning we were quite happy to crawl out from the rocks we'd curled up in, cram our feet into our frozen boots and continue downwards.

The couloir that drops from the col towards the Tiedemann was not only icy but, as soon as the first rays of sun touched the upper southeast

The new Southwest Face route on Asperity Mountain, Waddington Range.
Photo: John Scurlock

face of Asperity, began to live up to its reputation as a bowling alley. Having had enough of the ice, we traversed to a rib of rubble that ran parallel to the couloir. At least on the rib the majority of the rockfall was self-induced. When the rib petered out, we made a rope-stretching rappel over another monstrous bergshrund.

A haze of smoke from nearby forest fires did little to filter the sun's rays as we traversed tediously on increasingly slushy, steep snow. The final section of the descent followed Carl's Couloir. At its entrance we found a nice ledge where we sat and admired the jumbled glaciers and jutting granite buttresses that surrounded us. To our pleasant surprise, the snow in the couloir turned out to be both softer and lower angled than we had expected, and for once we were able to downclimb facing out from the slope. Once again, a 60-metre free-hanging rappel was required to cross the bergshrund. I was becoming increasingly indebted to Tony for having vetoed my suggestion that we leave behind the six-millimetre tag line. A section of downclimbing on exposed glacial ice led to the Tiedemann Glacier and a particularly undignified slog back up to the Plummer Hut. We returned having discovered a renewed appreciation for food, sleep and the fact you can hike down the backside of the Chief in nothing but flip-flops.

Summary

Southwest Face (ED1 5.10+, 950m), Mount Asperity, Waddington Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Nick Elson, Tony McLane, July 30-31, 2010.

Tony McLane following a pitch low on the route with the crevassed approach below. Photo Nick Elson

Gravity Bong

Colin Moorhead

AFTER FIVE YEARS of recons, prep work and keeping my mouth shut, I was able to get after it and complete my long-term new-route nemesis. The Prow Wall is one of the last major formations to see development on the Chief in Squamish, probably due to its relatively difficult access and lack of obvious connecting natural lines. Despite this, it is certainly one of the cleanest and most aesthetic walls on the Chief.

Numerous solo missions and top-down prep work in July 2010 resulted in fixing the entire line with a 250-metre static rope. Tony Richardson and I had a blast whipping off two-hour-long micro-ascender top-rope laps of this monstrous line. Climbing for that long without racks, belaying, hauling or other such encumbrances of the traditional two-man climbing team is amazing. Transferring our micro ascenders between ropes didn't offer nearly enough rest time. Forcing one's self to take enough rest between pitches became the crux.

It wasn't long until I was climbing the entire line with very few falls on my ascender. Time to take off the training wheels. On August 23, Tony and I did the first ascent, and I redpointed every pitch first try but failed on the crux changing-corners pitch.

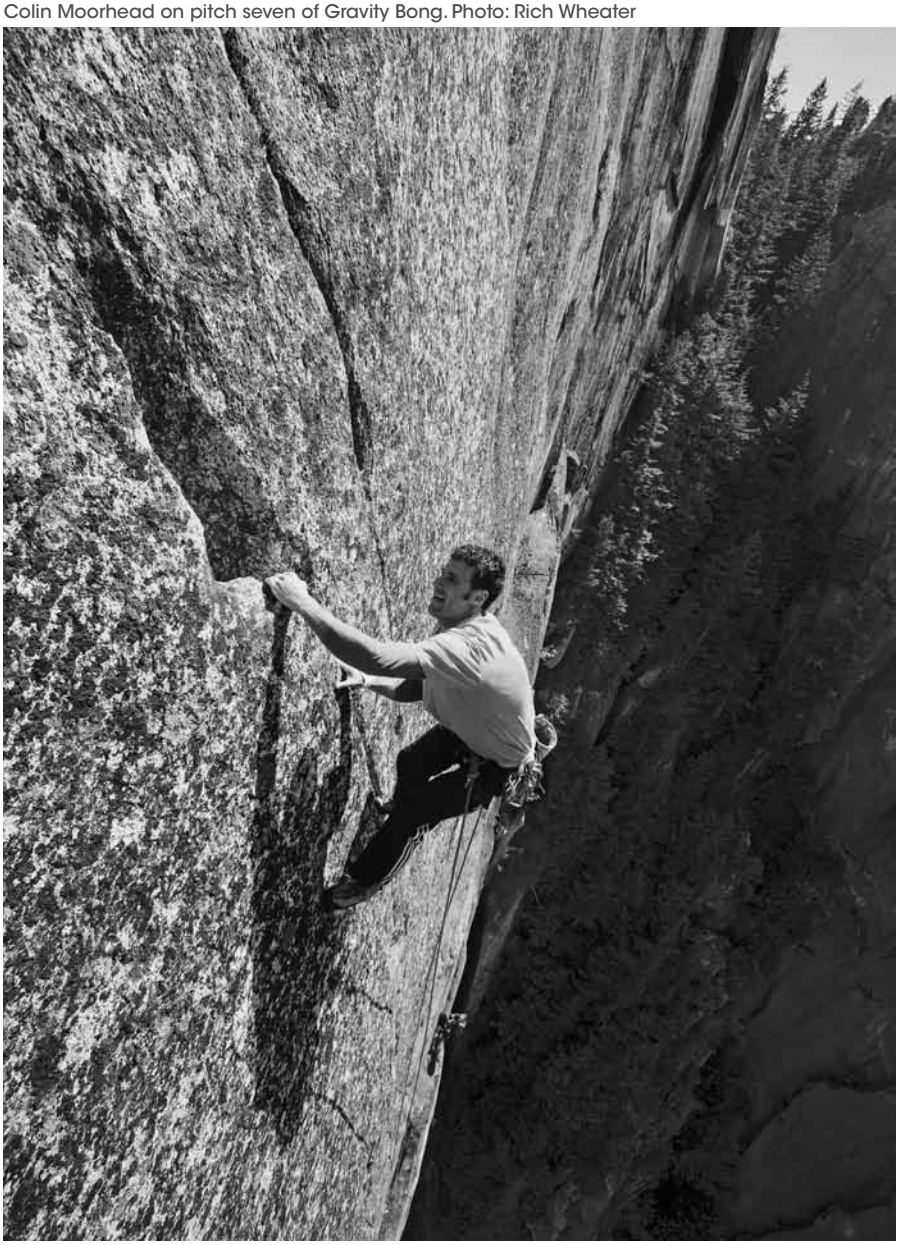
On August 28, I returned with Jason Kruk and a miserable weather forecast. The weather and my forearms held until pitch eight, at which time the skies opened up, as did my fingers. By my third attempt, the rain was blowing sideways and the time between lightning and thunder was immeasurable; however, the leaning, overhanging nature of the pitch kept the rock dry. Jason's belay stance, on the other hand, was in the most exposed position imaginable. Graupel was quickly turning him into a human snow cone. In conditions that would have most hard-men demanding the quickest escape possible, Jason stoically held his position, encouraging me to give it another shot. Without much hope of success, I pulled on the starting crimps one more time. Latching the jug hold after the crux amidst hail and lightning was one of the most intense climbing experiences of my life.

The resulting line ranks as one of the most sustained outings on the Chief. The pitch breakdown is 5.10d, 5.11c, 5.12a, 5.12c, 5.12a, 5.12b, 5.11c, 5.13a and 5.12a. Subsequent repeat attempts by Squamish luminaries confirm its quality as one of the best lines on the face. Although moderate by today's big-wall free standards, Gravity Bong stands out as a high point of my climbing career.

Summary

Gravity Bong (5.13a, 9 pitches), Prow Wall, Stawamus Chief, Squamish. FA: Jason Kruk, Colin Moorhead, Tony Richardson, August 2010.

Colin Moorhead on pitch seven of Gravity Bong. Photo: Rich Wheater



The West Face of Mount Bute

Senja Pelonen

IT ALL BEGAN with a quick comment from Greg Foweraker: "It'll go free!" That was all he needed to say to get the inspiration started. His words ignited a spark of excitement that transformed into a tangible picture, a vague red line drawn on a photo, a screensaver to dream upon and quick chats at work about details. Before we knew it, Katy Holm, Kelly Franz and I were in a helicopter, craning our necks for the best glimpse of the route we hoped to free.

The west face of Mount Bute looked exactly like the photo I'd stared at for months (minus the red line), and I was relieved to find that it didn't tower over my expectations or confidence. It had been awhile since I'd been in the mountains, and breathing in the fresh air and fabulous view was both calming and exhilarating.

The roar of the helicopter left us in the quiet scenery, and we set about rigging camp. As we settled into our new home, we quickly discovered that a nest of baby birds had already claimed the best real estate. First come, first served rules here, so we relocated lower down the hillside. The weather could not have been better for climbing, but bleary eyes from lack of sleep during our previous night's roadside bivy told us that the day would be better spent doing recon.

That night, we tucked into our sleeping bags and dreamed of perfect rock and splitter corners. The unknown climb ahead dominated my thoughts and I wondered how it would unfold. Would the rock be covered in thick moss or be perfect, clean granite offering textbook protection? Had I packed too much clothing or would I be shivering, wishing I'd brought one more layer? Fearing the latter, I slipped handwarmers into my pack just in case the 30 C temps decided to drop.

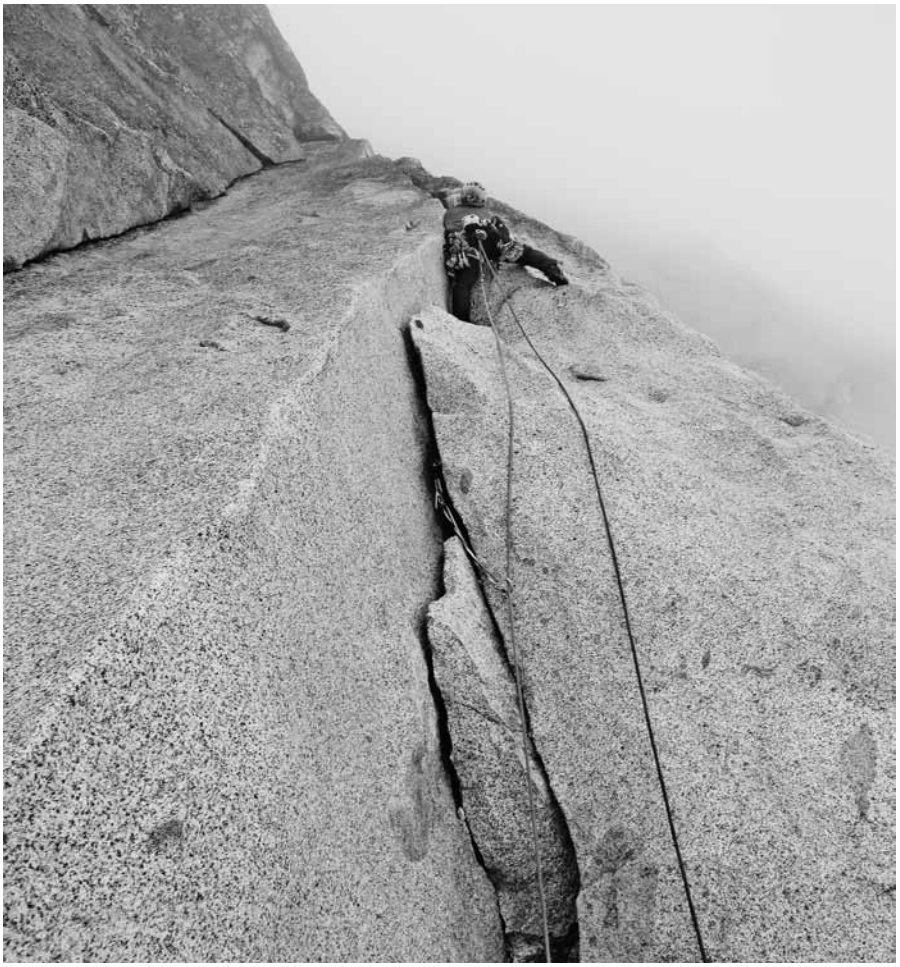
The next morning, we set off towards the peak in our approach shoes and crampons, travelling on perfect snow and rock ridges. The simple joy of bum sliding and bounding down snow slopes is a child-like feeling that must take years off your age.

Our first crux came at a steep col—before we even set foot on our route. The col featured a large rock fin with a near-vertical snow slope dropping abruptly below. Katy quickly determined that the wafer-thin fin was adequate for a rappel anchor. Kelly and I held our breath as she eased her weight onto the anchor and leaned out over the abyss. It held! Two rappels later we were safe on the glacier below. With no way to climb back out, and a long, unappealing detour back to camp if we didn't summit, we were committed.

By noon we had reached the base of our climb. I giggled when I saw a beautiful, clean crack that marked the beginning of our climb. Somehow I scored the first lead, and I was in my element—off the snow and ice and onto pure dry rock.

From the base of the fourth pitch, we could see that the diagonal crack above ended abruptly. Beyond, slab climbing would be necessary to connect the features. Rock shoes were required for this pitch and I cinched them tight for good measure. As I approached the end of the crack, I began to feel like I'd spent too much time riding mountain bikes this past spring and not enough time in rock shoes. My head started to waver with the lack of protection and a series of delicate slab moves. I pulled

Senja Palonen leading into the murk on pitch one during the second ascent of the West Face of Mount Bute. Photo: Kelly Franz



my thoughts together and told myself I was perfectly capable of climbing this section. I committed and found teeny crimpers and smears to link the moves together.

Reaching the other side of the slab, my relief was short-lived. I discovered the rock was loose and protection less than desirable. I inched upward like a sloth, cursing my lack of headspace until finally I was able to locate a sufficient belay. Kelly then burled his way through a steep section, busting out his guns as he gallantly led us into the next dihedral, where the rock improved dramatically. We amused ourselves with stories and jokes as Katy took the final day's lead, gardening her way up the grungy dihedral and fashioning footholds out of dirt and moss that she excavated from the corner.

After six pitches of climbing, we arrived at a ledge so huge it could have been mistaken for an LA super-highway. My fears of sleeping on a tiny precipice melted immediately. We stripped ourselves of heavy packs and climbing gear and settled into our spacious new home.

The next morning brought dismal conditions. With graupel pounding the tarp, we rolled over for a few more hours of snoozing. Suddenly Katy yelled, "It's sunny!" We poked our heads out to discover a break in the swirling clouds, giving us hope that there was more to do than huddle in our sleeping bags all day. With the weather still unsettled, we snapped a few reference photos just in case we needed to retreat in a whiteout.

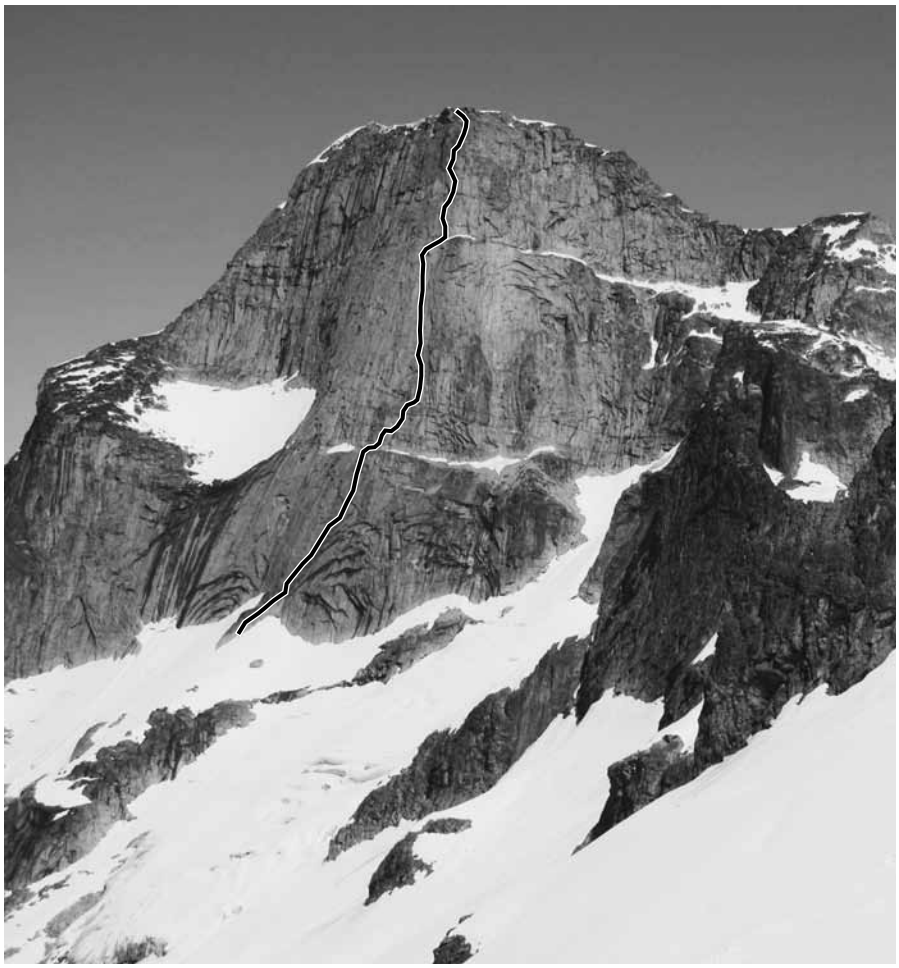
I stuffed a set of hand warmers into my gloves. With toasty hands, I found the climbing bearable and was stoked to discover that climbing in six layers of clothing wasn't all that bad. However, after four pitches in freezing conditions, we pulled the pin and retreated back to our comfy bivy ledge.

With our gas supply unexpectedly low, we resorted to the only dinner we could make without using any fuel—cold instant mashed potatoes mixed with miso gravy that tasted like rank fish. A nightmare meal to a vegetarian like me! We would each choke back one spoonful of the dreaded concoction before quickly passing the pot, all the while fighting to keep the mixture from ejecting back out the same way it went in.

The next morning dawned cold but fairly clear. We scurried up the first three easy pitches and quickly reached the Caboose pitch—a steep corner reminiscent of its namesake but with a heady crux. A simple slip of the foot and a clean fall left me confident that the next try would be successful. Unfortunately, in the face of unsettled weather, another possible 15 pitches above and near-empty fuel canisters, we did not have time to play around. My heart sank as the goal of freeing this line was quenched. Instead of brooding, we regained psyche and dug into the amazing line of gorgeous rock that hadn't been touched in 24 years. With a fresh goal of simply reaching the summit, the pressure was off and we enjoyed a mix of free and aid tactics. It was some of the best climbing I did all summer, high above Bute Inlet with a stunning view of the Waddington Range.

After 19 pitches of varied, enjoyable and challenging climbing, Katy punched through to the summit snow and belayed us up the final pitch. We hiked up to the true summit of Mount Bute and basked in the warm evening light. I had just summitted the first big route I'd ever tried to free and it was an amazing experience. The entire adventure was a success that left me with a heightened desire to explore, the motivation to try harder and the cherished memories of a few magical days in the mountains with great friends.

The West Face of Mount Bute, Coast Mountains. Photo: Senja Palonen



Summary

Second ascent of the West Face (5.10+ A1, 800m, 19 pitches) of Mount Bute, Coast Mountains. Kelly Franz, Katy Holm, Senja Pelonen, July 11-13, 2010.

Frozen Zombie Versus The Titan

Matt Maddaloni

SQUAMISH IS MY HOME. Most climbers who visit Squamish in the summer would agree with the British Columbia slogan, The Best Place on Earth. Winter is a different story. It rains here for what feels like six months straight. I don't consider those who move here locals until they have survived one such wet winter. How *does* one survive the grey months in Squamish?

You have to be creative and open-minded. Some answers I've found embrace the rain like kiteboarding storms, kayaking swollen rivers, snowboarding backcountry peaks and my recent favourite, surfing amongst seals and bull kelp. As a climber though, it can be pretty hard to stay motivated. Ice climbing here is a bit of a joke. A joke on those who think three days of ice every two months can be called a season. The ice never gets a chance to form strong pillars and, at the most, creates runnels over slabs that are thin and marginal. The blank granite faces offer no protection, and without the possibility of deeply placed screws, most lines that do form are top-rope only or terrifying solos. Bolts would be a good option, but there are many existing traditional routes under the ice that would be marred forever, not to mention the scratches sharp tools would inflict.

This past winter I discovered a line that could not be done as a rock climb, but never had enough ice to be considered a viable ice climb—a perfect candidate for a mixed line. It had the perfect combination of just enough holds through a fun roof to gain a spot of ice that flowed over a blank granite slab above the lip. The ice was even thick enough to take short screws in places. Tim Emmett and I tried this route—on and off, with and without ice—as the "ice season" came and went. We added a few bolts, tried it with heel spurs and tried it without heel spurs. Eventually, Tim and I sent it without spurs or leashes. It can be worked in any season (as long as you don't mind lowering off the last bolt at the lip), thus finally offering some difficult, yet safe, mixed climbing in Squamish. We called it Frozen Zombie not only because it is located beside the Zombie Roof, but also because of the alcoholic drink that bears its name, a good one anytime of year.

Frozen Zombie was a great example of thinking outside the box during a Squamish winter. A few other adventures came and went: rigging a safety net below a sport route for solo attempts, designing a new piece of rock protection for expanding flakes I named the Anticam, kiteboarding two-metre bore waves on the Squamish River, setting up a cable-cam system at the Britannia Beach indoor skate bowl, and an attempt at an alpine route near Lions Bay on Harvey's Pup. But the project that really got me fired up last year was a winter aid-climbing-cum-cleaning project of a new 20-metre horizontal roof located across the Squamish River.

Cleaning new routes in the rain is actually a very popular Squamish winter activity for those climbers who can't seem to take up more season-appropriate activities. The rain bubbles through the dirt-filled cracks and washes away the moss and lichen that has been scrubbed off. It is usually a lonely chore, but the masochistic new router works hard with high hopes of summer attracting line-ups of climbers to test their mettle on the recent creation. Endless praise from peers replaces the lack of human contact during the solitary cleaning missions. I found myself playing this game at a new wall I dubbed Echo Wall (located below Echo Lake). Alex Comptois and I paddled across the Squamish River in my 14-foot inflatable with chainsaws and pickaxes to build the steep 30-minute trail to the base. The first ascent of the gigantic roof was actually quite terrifying and an adventure in its own right. Huge loose blocks were plastered along its entirety, making for careful and precision nailing and hooking. The 45-metre line required three days to climb and clean, finally wearing it down to possible free-climbing condition.

Having survived another winter, all the rain-soaked, dirt-covered and gnarled scrubbers crawled out of the wet coastal forests into the blazing, glorious sun. Our routes were ready, the endless hoped-for line-ups in queue and waiting.

"You need a boat?"

"There is no bridge?"

"A 30-minute steep hike!"

"Who would climb there!?"

The line-ups fizzled away and we were left to try the massive roof ourselves. Over the next few months I headed over with various partners: Alex, Tim, Paul Cordy, Marc-Andre Leclerc and Steve "Manboy" Townsend. And we had a great time! The line started up a 5.12 slightly overhung finger crack with powerful throws up an arête for balance. At about 20 metres off the ground, the route enters an overhanging squeeze chimney. Edges inside make forward movement possible. At about 25 metres off the ground, the monster roof really begins. Flaring hand cracks and knee bars is the name of the game. At one point, I had to dyno to a hand jam, drop my feet out of a toe-and-heel jam and throw them over my head into another foot jam. The climbing is powerful along the double-overhang corner, but two rubber kneepads for knee bars make rests possible and are mandatory for survival. At a consensus grade of 5.13c, the route is one of the hardest combo trad/bolt lines I've ever been on. The Titan is one hell of an adventure. And next winter? Well, I'll be scrubbing pitch two….

Summary

Frozen Zombie (M8, 30m), Smoke Bluff Wall, Squamish. FA: Tim Emmett, Matt Maddaloni, January 2010.

The Titan (5.13c, 45m), Echo Wall, Squamish. FA: Matt Maddaloni, September 2010.

Matt Maddaloni on Frozen Zombie at the Smoke Bluff Wall, Squamish.
Photo: Nick Sopczak

SOMWOW

Mike Shannon

AFTER CAM ROBERTSON and I climbed Speedway (III 5.8, Beckey-deLong-Svensson, 1987) in the summer 2009, we scoped the potential for a second line to the south on Yak Peak. Our aim was to link some clean climbing all the way to the summit, ideally via the saddle and south ridgeline. While descending Speedway, we traversed south and found a great landing, which eventually became the top of pitch four. We saw the opportunity for a clean moderate line on good rock both above and below this point, so set our minds to visualizing the line using images gleaned from the Internet. On that same day, we climbed one pitch above the edge to establish pitch five, just to fill the rest of the day. Two more sessions that summer allowed us to link up from the ground to the top of pitch eight. Rainy weekends kept us from further expanding on the route until the next summer.

One so-called sunny day in July 2010 had us heading to Yak, but by the time we arrived, a low ceiling and sideways rain mixed with snow kept us off the rock. Instead, we started to flag an alternate approach to the south for direct access to Yak Peak. We returned with Jeff Sherstobitoff on July 22, clearing the new approach trail and hoping to top out. All jacked up on Double-Doubles from Timmy Ho's, we soloed up the rain runnel to pitch four. Despite being a team of three, we quickly moved through to pitch eight. It was Cam's lead to tackle the UFO-shaped feature halfway up pitch eight. He sent it and we were psyched.

My lead on pitch 11 began traversing to the saddle, but that's where I met the oatmeal granite. I cursed and cried and filled my trousers a bit. By the end of the day, we had contrived a 12-pitch line, sat down for some lunch and called it a day. The excessive landscaping of the new trail in the morning hindered our efforts at reaching the summit, but we rigged to the base of pitch 13 and got mega sunburned—all in all, a very productive day. On August 2, we simuled the route from the ground to ensure the descriptions were correct, and added a bolt here

SOMWOW on the south face of Yak Peak, Cascade Mountains. Photo: April Shannon

and there for posterity. Cam ventured off above our highpoint and headed for what looked to be pretty solid horizontals up and right. What he found was disintegrating tabletops, all with very little purchase. Retreating back to the belay was not an option, so he pushed through to a promising ledge, hoping someone could collect his cams—the ones that didn't fall out of the choss. Since he forgot the drill with us, he engineered a rough belay and yelled down, "I'm as secure as I'm going to get! Climb on!" Jeff seconded, and wished for some Depends in his size when his footholds began crumbling. Jeff delivered Cam the drill but forgot the hammer. With plenty of time—and I mean plenty of time—to look upwards for alternatives, I chose a bushy but easier line to the left. Once reaching my nerve-rattled *amigos*, we finished putting in the two-bolt station and I lowered back to add two bolts to my variation.

We ran out of rock at the top of pitch 14, but decided to pull up on the junipers in order to summit. We accessed the open meadow with an easy body belay (pitch 15), and ate lunch as we debated the trip to the top. We moved right and eventually came across the scramble atop Speedway. Smoke from nearby fires made us oblivious to the looming storm heading our way. We topped out just as the thunder-pumping clouds became visible overhead through the smoke, and let me tell you, they recommended through their firework-like cracks and bangs that we should celebrate quickly and head for the descent.

Seven One-Move Wonders of the World (SOMWOW) may be considered run-out in certain sections for the grade, so all parties should be confident on sporty slabs. If you are, this puppy will be a tremendous adventure!

Summary

SOMWOW (5.8+, 15 pitches), Yak Peak, Cascade Mountains. FA: Cam Robertson, Mike Shannon, Jeff Sherstobitoff, August 2, 2010.

Approach: From Highway 5, park at Zopkios Rest Area. Walk a short distance east heading up out of the rest area. At the "Wrong Way" sign (or second telephone pole) look left into the trees to find the start of the new West Side Trail. This new trail was established to access the west side of Yak Peak for a more direct approach to SOMWOW and Speedway. It leads to the base in about 40 minutes, with 300 metres of elevation gain. At the base of the slab, head east towards the two small ponds before Speedway. SOMWOW starts just after the first pond you encounter.

Gear: Cams to 3.5", stoppers, 12 draws/slings, two 60-metre ropes (if rappelling the route), two-bolt anchors to the top of pitch 14.

P1: 5.4, 60m. Belay in the scoop of rock between the two ponds. Trend up and left towards the right-facing finger crack. Good pro on the underside, but the crack is fragile as it thins towards the top. Straight up to the darker rock for the belay with one more piece optional at the ledge before the first station.

P2: 5.4, 55m. Pad up the slab (one bolt and one piton) towards the massive horn high and left. Look for the station to your right in the small dishes as you approach the horn.

P3: 5.6, 55m. Protect the move around the horn and head straight up towards the flowery cracks with good protection. Clip a bolt before you step up and left to the next level.

P4: 5.3, 55m. Go straight up at the small breaks. Good gear abounds above. Watch for the station in the brown horizontal seam once the pitch flattens out.

P5: 5.4, 60m. Continue straight up looking for a bolt near the darker band at 30 metres and then trend slightly left. Pad up towards the large ledge. Continue up and left to the station near the right-facing crack.

P6: 5.5, 55m. Staying left of the bigger roofs, either take a small step up at the overlap, or work left, then back right around the corner.

P7: 5.5, 55m. Step right just above the bulge at station. Stuff something in the left-facing corner, then head straight up on easy ground.

P8: 5.4, 50m. Scramble through the broken rock up and right. Throw in a piece on the right, then look for an easy crossing to the anchors. The traverse left to the anchors is often wet, so choose wisely.

P9: 5.7, 60m. Aim for the saucer-shaped UFO flake. Place a piece on right at the first bulge, then to the middle of the UFO you go. Protect the committing steps (dead centre) that get you on top, then pad to the station.

P10: 5.5, 55m. Follow the lighter-coloured rock up and left. Head for the high bulge (two bolts).

P11: 5.7, 55m. Aim for the breaks in the rocks above, clipping the bolt at the first bulge. Protect the featured, yet polished section of rock. Venture back to the left to find the station.

P12: 5.7, 60m. Straight over the middle of the block via a fun and well-protected move. Work up the cracks to the right of the bushes to finish in a small dish. The rock on the right of this bulge is rotten, so heading over to the middle is the best option.

P13: 5.8+, 60m. Climb up to the first bolt just over a small black bulge. Continue to the second bolt, planning your move to the right into the dirty trough. Note the break in the greenery above. A couple of good placements in messy seams will get you through the worst of it and into the junipers. Trend right at top of trough, slinging stumps if need be. Move back left across the ledge to the anchor, which is directly above the trough.

P14: 5.7, 55m. Left of belay, head up the two veins to the juniper island. Stay left of island aiming for the "whale's back". Sling a tree or two and move left up the whale's back with an optional gear placement halfway along this feature. Once on ledge, clip the first bolt, then trend right to the second bolt and towards the opening in the greenery. A chained anchor can be found in the white rock.

P15: 4th class, 55m. Trend right and then straight up to the open meadow. There is no real belay for this pitch. Continue to the summit.

Descent: Either rappel from the top of pitch 14 via bolted stations (two 60-metre ropes required), or continue to the summit by scrambling up treed ledges, moss grooves and dirty cracks for about 200 metres of sustained 4th- and easy-5th-class climbing, then return by the standard Yak Peak descent.

Vancouver Island Report 2010

Lindsay Elms

A CLIMBER WALKS into a bar in downtown Victoria with one glove on. The barman asks him why he is wearing one glove. The climber replies: "Before I went out, I watched the weather forecast on the CBC, and the reporter, Claire Martin, said, 'On one hand it might be hot, but on the other hand it might be cold.'"

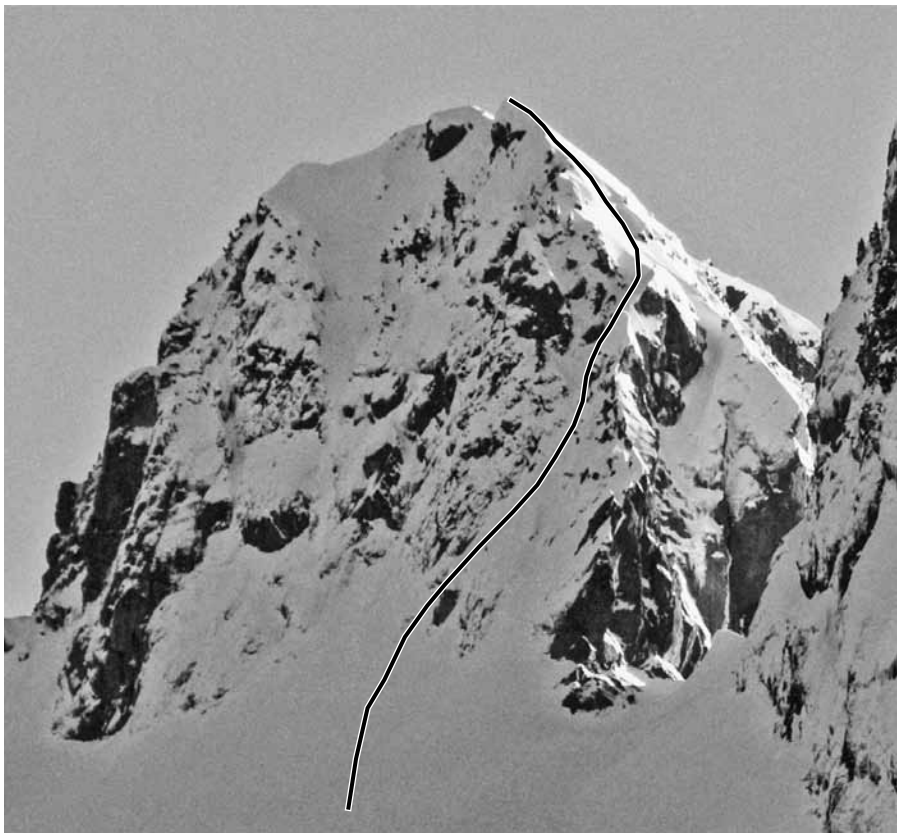
Thankfully, that is just an urban myth (we hope), but we really had an unusual winter on the Island. For the official three months that constitute winter, we had very little snow at lower elevations. Logging roads that are usually impassable due to several metres of snow remained bare and drivable into March. Unfortunately, the weather wasn't very conducive for winter climbing until mid-February. As for the summer, at least there were no significant forest fires to challenge access to the mountains of Strathcona Provincial Park or other areas, but there were the usual campfire bans and logging-road closures due to high temperatures. However, during the first week of August, smoke from mainland fires did waft across the Salish Sea and throw a blanket of smog across the Island as far as the west coast, leading many people to think the Island was on fire. Fortunately, this dissipated after a couple of days, and the sun stopped looking like the defoliant agent orange at sunset and a Mexican tequila sunrise in the morning. For almost six weeks during summer, we didn't get a drop of rain. What all this meant for mountaineering on Vancouver Island is another stellar year with several winter first ascents and some new summer routes in the mountains.

The New Year began with Peter Rothermel leading his usual *katzenjammer* "cat's wail" climb of Mount Arrowsmith on January 1, but adverse snow conditions (or was that hangovers) stymied the summit reveille. Then on February 14, Tawney Lem, Lindsay Elms and Craig (Quagger) Wagnell made the first winter ascent of Logan Peak (not Mount Logan). A week later on February 21, Lindsay, Quagger and Sasha Kubicek completed the long-awaited first winter ascent of Triple Peak via Victoria Route on the north face. Several parties over the years had attempted the peak but were thwarted by soft snow. This time the snow was firm right from the get-go, and the three pitches to the summit were in perfect condition. Sasha was heard saying: "This is the best climb I've ever had!"

Seven days later on February 28, Tawney, Quagger and Sasha drove the Toquart Main logging road to the very end and climbed Mount Hall. This "last of the main Mac's" (referring to the MacKenzie Range) didn't receive its first ascent until the summer of 2002 when Sandy Briggs, Russ Moir, Rick Johnson and Hinrich Schaeffer climbed it. March saw the snow really begin to fly, and it started to finally feel and look like winter—better late then never! Skiers were seen carrying their skis into the backcountry (and getting turns in) until the end of July. Finally on June 3, Lindsay, Sasha, Quagger and Val Wootton made the first ascent of an unnamed 1,300-metre peak (and several of its satellite spires), 3.5 kilometres to the south of Mount Hall.

This year the ACC Vancouver Island Section had its first summer camp on the Island for many decades and membership interest was off the Richter scale. The basin known as Shangri-La in the Mount Alava/Bate sanctuary near Tahsis was the scene of not two but three one-week camps, each comprising of 14 people. E&B Helicopters out of Gold River flew all the participants in and out, as well as the biffies. The goal was to minimize environmental impact on the area created by 42 people, and it was an overwhelming success.

Triple Peak in winter showing the Victoria Route on the north face. Photo: Craig Wagnell



All the peaks—Mount Alava, Mount Bate, Thumb Peak, The Thumb, Mount Grattan, and several subsidiary summits and ridges—received multiple ascents, including some first ski ascents. Amateur botanists led by Judith Holm also made an extensive plant search of the area, identifying and GPS-ing their location, and Ken Wong took an impressive seven gigs of photos. Several species on the red list were found. A bug inventory was also collected.

Francis Bruhwiler returned several times in the summer to the MacKenzie Range, putting up new routes on the spectacular rock spires. First of all, on July 24 with Mike Davis, he completed the first enchainment of all the summits. The route began with an ascent of the northwest ridge of Redwall Peak (5.6), followed by rappelling into a tight notch between Redwall and the Mackenzie Summit. They climbed a loose arête for 40 metres, scrambled along the ridge and then climbed another short pitch to the top of MacKenzie Summit. To get off the top, they first made one 15-metre rappel from a tree and then a 35-metre rappel from a boulder to a notch below a sub-peak west of Shadowblade. A 15-metre climb up a steep face (5.8) of the sub-peak gained access to the tight notch on the west side of Shadowblade. The first pitch on Shadowblade's west face followed a right-trending ramp to a face traverse that ended at a small bush (5.8). The second pitch climbed a slab finishing on a sharp ridge three metres below Shadowblade's main summit (5.8). They then rappelled from a horn 10 metres below the summit on the east side. Flattop's slab and summit were easily reached by climbing a short crack to the slab and then scrambling to the summit via the north face. Another 55-metre rappel off a large rock horn on the east side of Flattop gave them access to easy ground near the Witches Hat. They scrambled up the Witches Hat, then climbed the east ridge of the Centaur (5.6). From the Centaur's summit, they rappelled 30 metres down the east face, then continued along the ridge crest until they were forced to rappel once more to reach a gully on the north side of the Mackenzie Range onto easy terrain.

Francis returned on August 24 with Randy Mercer to put a new route up on the north face of the MacKenzie Summit. This 300-metre route for the most part was 3rd- and 4th-class terrain, but there was one 5.6 crack for 60 metres. The route finished off with another low-5th-class traverse (60 metres) to the summit. The pair was back again a week later and climbed three 20- to 25-metre routes at the base of the northwest ridge of Redwall Peak that Francis had first put up in August 2004 with Mathieu Masse. Two routes were of 5.8 and one of 5.7. In late August, Martin Smith, Tony Vaughn and Rick Eppler made a rare ascent of Waring Peak after getting "a spot of rain" during an attempt of Mount McKelvie.

Sasha Kubicek (leading) and Lindsay Elms (belaying) on the first pitch during the first winter ascent of Triple Peak. Photo: Craig Wagnell

Cerberus

Roger Wallis

IT'S A LONG WAY to Bella Coola, British Columbia, from Toronto, Ontario, which is why we had never been there. In fact, it's even a long drive from Golden, B.C., more than 1,000 kilometres, and it seemed like it, but we passed by some beautiful country. However, the totally destroyed, forest-fire-burned villages of McLure and Louis Creek in B.C. were a sobering sight, and later, as we drove north on Highway 97, the afternoon sky turned completely black requiring us to use vehicle headlights. Now the significance of B.C.'s 2010 Williams Lake fire became a reality to us mere tourists. In Williams Lake, for hundreds of metres along the sidewalk, utterly exhausted firefighters and EMS personnel just sat, feet in the gutters, head in arms, not talking, just waiting. Everywhere there were fire trucks and people in uniforms with walkie-talkies and satellite phones. It was quite overwhelming, and from our own totally non-essential perspective, it was possibly the end of the road. No one was crossing the Chilcotin to Bella Coola, either today or for many previous days. So, we would wait and see what the morrow brings.

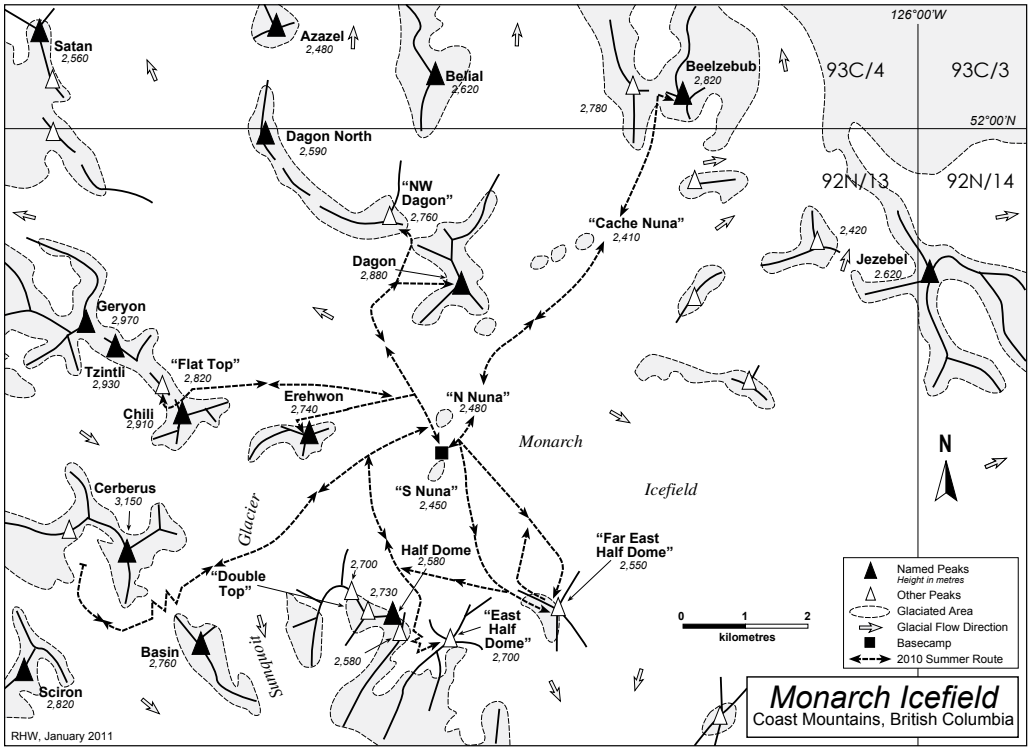
Early next morning the helpful staff at the B.C. Information Centre told us to go and see, for as far as they knew we were clear to go. On Highway 20, no cars were travelling west, just us, and very few vehicles came towards us. The smoke became ever thicker, and beyond Alexis Creek major fires were still burning on both sides of the highway. Helicopters buzzed overhead, and though there were fire crews everywhere, no one said we couldn't keep driving—so we did.

Though the thick smoke cleared, the haze persisted and the kind folk at the Gibson Inn at Tatla Lake assured us we "should be able to see Waddington"—but we didn't. Beyond Anahim Lake the paved road becomes good quality gravel and leads to the summit of "The Hill" on the Freedom Road, the by-land access to the Bella Coola valley.

The "Hill" was as exciting as was advertised, especially with 18-wheelers and huge gas trucks coming up. The drop offs were spectacular with 30-metre-high conifers hardly making the height of each hair-pin turn. Below, the valley opened out. On the north side, clean granite slabs flared upwards for 300 to 500 metres—a mini Yosemite; to the south, each side valley gave enthralling glimpses of granite peaks and sparkling glaciers. To us, this was an unknown gem, a lost valley, a Shangri-La. The town of Hagensborg was all Norwegian tidiness with a great grocery store. Bella Coola was a more intriguing mixture of the sea, First Nations and the bucolic. The temperature was 41.7 C. We were seaside, but the real ocean lay 200 kilometres to the west. At these temperatures goodness only knows what was happening to the snowfields 250 metres above us.

First task: visit the helicopter company, West Coast Helicopters, that provided superb and helpful service. Low and behold, the first person we met inside their office was Fred Beckey. He had recently fallen from a horse in Colorado, so he wasn't yet sufficiently recovered to climb, but he was in full vocal mode and Fred provided us with really helpful advice.

Our helicopter needs were subservient to that of the B.C. government's concerns with the continuing fires on the Chilcotin Plateau. Eventually, the ever-resourceful Richard Lapointe came up with a plan. His on-call fire duty ended at 8 p.m., so we would load at 7:55 p.m. and do two flights to the northern edge of the Monarch Icefield, a half hour each leg. He could then land at Hagensborg in the dark at 10 p.m. Well, if it was OK with Richard, and he's the pilot, it was OK with



us. Nothing like landing at dusk in a place you have never been to.

Richard gave us an exciting ride from sea level to the backside of Mount Saugstad. The views were fantastic: granite faces everywhere, seracs, icefalls, snow faces, sheets of ice. Snowside Mountain loomed up and there were the Jacobsens, a simply fabulous place with stuff to climb in every direction. But no spare time for a grand tour and leisurely decision-making, we had to land somewhere and get out.

On the northwest side of the Monarch Icefield is a couple of prominent nunataks. The more southerly one (GR983593), 2.1 kilometres east-southeast of Erehwon, had a small glacial lake and an ice berm/serac that provided some shelter from the west and north. There was a small flat shelf, and so between crevasses, Richard let us off and flew away into already darkening skies. It might be 40 C in Bella Coola but it was already -5 C on the Icefield. We set up camp in the gloom, and an hour later in the dark Richard was back with the rest of the group. Tents up and into bed.

The next morning we survey our new land. To the southeast, the Monarch Icefield extends as a pristine white tablecloth to the foot of a spectacular backdrop with the complexity of Monarch Mountain on the northeast, and the fairy castle ribs and spires and glistening silver of Princess to the southwest. To our immediate left is Beelzebub and to the right Cerberus, and behind us Erehwon and Dagon. We can take off in any direction and there is something to climb. What a fabulous place!

Though the sun cups were often enormous, sometimes more than one metre across, and were hard ice in the morning and almost slush in the afternoon, AT skis were really helpful to cover the distances involved to reach the base of individual peaks. Though for some of us, our competence, or rather lack of it, was pretty clear when skiing this terrain.

Every possible weather condition accompanied our stay: a day of torrential rain; gale-force winds that left Paul's tent with just one remaining guy; temperatures down to -20 C; our pond frozen solid; new snow in flurries or major dumps; and days of bluebird skies and real heat, which led us to be perched on an ice pedestal 40 centimetres off the deck by the time we left.

Snow and ice routes were in excellent condition, but the rock was quite variable—good granite, not-so-good volcanic, and variable contact material between the two. The climbs were invariably pleasant and the views outstanding: Waddington to the far southeast; endless unknown mountains to the west between us and the ocean; and to the north, beyond Snowside and the Jacobsens, there was range after range of spectacular-looking peaks that were beyond our maps. On an outing to Beezlebub, we discovered a cache of two vivid burgundy-red heavy-duty plastic bags on the summit of the highest of a group of four nunataks (GR006631) lying two kilometres northeast of Dagon. They contained a mixture of leather and plastic climbing boots, climbing gear, clothes, stoves and food. Ravens had torn the uppermost bag apart, but the lower was untouched. However, there were no names or labels, so we have no idea when the cache was made or to whom this gear belongs. The only clue was the 1959 edition of a paperback novel titled *The Immense Journey*, which contained the enigmatic inscription "To Eleen, hope you are having a great trip, Love, Clark."

Our final climb was to be Cerberus. We could clearly see the clean line of the south ridge, the original 1961 ascent, as well as the "Abraham Lincoln" snow patch described by the 2002 ascent of the northeast ridge by Matt Perkins and Jim Ruch. Our interest though was the west face that was descended by the 2002 party. An early start and a fast ski up, down and across the top of the Sumquoit Glacier led to the base of the south ridge, which was turned, giving access westward into the hidden cirque beyond. However, the view was not what we expected. Instead of a steep, continuous slope of snow and ice leading to a summit ridge, there was a broken mass of complex serac lines—bulging and stacked—dropping off over the south face in a series of open major crevasses systems. Amidst all of this, there were many fresh debris deposits from the highest tier of seracs. Maybe there was some subtle line near the west ridge, but whatever line one chose one was still directly in the line of fire of the uppermost serac band. It was a 100 per cent sunny day with the temperature still rising and the slope open to the sun all afternoon. This didn't look like the most promising place to be, so we retreated. By now it was too late to begin the 600-metre ascent of the south ridge—so Cerberus in the summer was not to be.

Richard had received an absolution from fire duty, so he picked us up at noon the next day. On the drive home, in the real world, fires still burned on both sides of the road across the Chilcotin, but we had enjoyed a wonderful first visit to the Coast Mountains. We had seen mountains extending onwards in every direction, clear against azure skies, not a sound of anyone, not a ski track anywhere. Pity we hadn't come 30 years earlier.

Summary

North face of Erehwon (2740m). Paul Geddes, Norm Greene, Patrick Lloyd, Bill McKenzie, August 4, 2010.

West face/NW Ridge of Dagon (2880m). Paul Geddes, Norm Greene, Patrick Lloyd, Bill Mckenzie, August 6, 2010.

Southeast ridge of "Dagon Northwest" (2760m unnamed summit GR947633). Roger Wallis, August 6, 2010.

West ridge of Beelzebub (2820m, East (higher) summit). Paul Geddes, Bill McKenzie, August 8, 2010.

Northeast face/southeast ridge of "Flattop" (2820m unnamed summit GR939605). FRA: Paul Geddes, Norm Greene, Patrick Lloyd, August 9, 2010.

North face/northwest ridge of "East Half Dome" (2700m unnamed major summit GR987565). FRA: Paul Geddes, Patrick Lloyd, Bill McKenzie, August 11, 2010.

"Far East Half Dome" (2550m unnamed summit GR004570). FRA: North face on skis by Norme Greene, August 11, 2010. Northwest ridge by Roger Wallis, August 11, 2010.

The Strathcona Centennial Expedition

Philip Stone

GRADUALLY, THE TIMBERED hill we were traversing steepened and the roar of the tumbling creek below grew louder as we were forced ever closer toward it. Both were good signs that we were nearing the mouth of the valley and would soon be on the renowned Della Falls trail. Just as the end was in sight, a wall of dense second-growth forest appeared and a collective groan rose from the group. It had already been a long day—well, a long three weeks—but we pulled out some reserve energy and crashed into the sticks. What followed was almost comical, if we'd had the energy for a smile. Two steep creek gullies choked with countless thin, fallen tree stems barred our way. Packs snagged, legs and arms grazed, we pushed and grovelled through and finally found ourselves on a long-overgrown skid track that took us downhill and on to Joe Drinkwater's old mine road, the Della Falls trail.

Relief! Our journey across Vancouver Island was almost complete. The private celebration we shared there on the trail with smiles, handshakes and high-fives would be a small start for a province-wide commemoration of British Columbia's Provincial Parks (BC Parks 100) to be honoured throughout 2011. To understand how a group of dirty hikers came to be part of such a noble event we have to turn the clock back a hundred years to the events that led to the formation of Strathcona Park, B.C.'s first provincial park.

AT THE TURN of the 20th century, Banff and Jasper were already enjoying their reputation as a destination for well-heeled visitors, and tourism promoters in British Columbia wanted a slice of the action. After a tourism convention in Vancouver in 1909, the B.C. government was lobbied to create a similar park. The premier, Sir Richard McBride, duly set aside an area of land in the centre of Vancouver Island, the Strathcona Reserve. Reports of the scenic wonders secreted away in the heart of the Island had filtered out over the preceding years from exploratory expeditions, such as John Buttle's inland forays from Clayoquot Sound and Rev. William Bolton's epic traverses down the length of Vancouver Island in 1894 and 1896.

The Commissioner of Lands in McBride's Cabinet was a stocky rancher from the Okanagan, Price Ellison. A blacksmith by trade, Ellison had been lured from his native England by the California Gold Rush and gradually made his way north to Canada on the scent of Cariboo Range gold. He settled in the North Okanagan where he became a successful farmer, rancher and fruit grower. His political aspirations eventually took him to Victoria as representative for Yale and Okanagan, but it was still 11 years before he distinguished himself sufficiently to be appointed to the government cabinet.

And so it was that in the summer of 1910 the Honourable Price Ellison arrived at the mouth of the Campbell River ready to journey through the Strathcona Reserve on what became known as the Strathcona Discovery Expedition. His aim was to explore and survey the reserve and report to the government on its suitability for park status. The adventures of Ellison, his 20-year-old daughter Myra and the expedition party of 24 are beautifully documented in the writings of his nephew Harry McClure Johnson along with pictures by photographer Frank Ward. It is a tale of a grand adventure, over 300 kilometres up roaring river rapids by canoe and overland through rugged mountains from Campbell River to Port Alberni.

The high point of their journey, in more ways than one, was their ascent of Crown Mountain on July 29, 1910. Despite an injured knee, advancing age and a less than spry physique, Ellison's dogged determination took nine of the party up and over some challenging terrain to the summit of this Island landmark. There, the views southward into the heart of Strathcona could hardly have presented a more dramatic vista of Island alpine. Elated, Ellison and the Crown party descended to the Elk River where they rejoined the rest of the expedition team and made their way south

The 1910 Crown Mountain ascent party.
Photo: Frank Ward (image 10147 courtesy of the Museum at Campbell River)

down Buttle Lake by canoe. Following the surveyed route laid out only days before by Captain Roberts, the expedition continued through the mountains, over the Island's "Great Divide" at Price Pass and onto Port Alberni.

On his return to Victoria, Ellison filed his report to cabinet, and in March 1911 the Strathcona Act was passed, establishing Strathcona as the very first of British Columbia's now world-famous provincial parks.

NEEDLESS TO SAY, this incredible trip and important chapter in B.C.'s history deserved to be repeated and celebrated. With the 100th anniversary of the expedition in 2010 approaching, I began a conversation in the spring of 2007 with BC Parks' staff, Ellison's descendants, and local historians and mountaineers to see how this might come about. The ideal catalyst came when I joined the Strathcona Park Public Advisory Committee (SPPAC). Here was the perfect forum for a joint venture between the public and BC Parks. With guidance from section head Ron Quilter and SPPAC chair Tawney Lem, an organizing committee was struck. Together SPPAC and BC Parks planned a re-enactment of the 1910 Discovery Expedition marked by an official proclamation issued by the government and signed by the lieutenant governor.

We raised funds and secured in-kind support through sponsorship deals, ironed out logistics and planned several public events along the way. This was to be much more than a simple backcountry trip. It would be a focal point for raising awareness about the history and future of Strathcona Provincial Park and help launch BC Parks 100 to be celebrated province-wide in 2011.

Finally, after a year of dedicated planning, the Strathcona Centennial Expedition set off from the mouth of the Campbell River on the morning of July 22, 2010. The government proclamation was read aloud for a little fanfare and the team headed off on foot between the shopping malls and industrial suppliers of Campbellton. In no time at all we were walking the riverside trail by the bank of the Campbell River. While there have been many changes in the past century—the river now sports three hydro dams that have tamed its flow and there's a highway cutting through Strathcona to Gold River—we quickly rediscovered the sense of adventure the pioneers must have felt as we set out to cross Vancouver Island under our own steam.

Our link to Ellison and his party was forged by reading from McLure Johnson's journal along the way. From the swirling river water, the deafening roar of Elk Falls, up to the shore of McIvor Lake and the waiting canoes, we were transported back in time by Johnson's beautifully crafted words.

Jamie Boulding and his family and staff at Strathcona Park Lodge had taken care of all the support logistics and food preparation, and with what would become a hallmark of the whole expedition, we made a seamless switch from hiking boots to canoe paddles at McIvor Lake toward the end of the first day.

The lazy, sun-soaked scene on the sandy beach at McIvor quickly gave way to our first challenge. Rounding the point through the opening onto Campbell Lake we were met by a stiff

Members of the 2010 Strathcona Centennial Expedition with Mount Rosseau behind. Photo: Philip Stone

headwind and rolling whitecaps—tough but refreshing work after a long, hot day on the trail. We battled hard against the wind while waves threw spray over the bows and the setting sun ignited it all in a warm orange glow. After a three-hour paddle we pulled onto a narrow strip of beach facing west. The mountains of Strathcona poked out above the timbered ridges surrounding the lake, including our prize, Crown Mountain.

It took us several days to leisurely make our way across Campbell Lake and portage past the last dam to Upper Campbell Lake. The same journey—but with poling and lining their canoes through the rapids—had taken Ellison and his 1910 team about two weeks! To facilitate the logistics and to enable as much participation as possible, the expedition had been organized in four distinct legs. Our first leg drew to a close on the morning of the fourth day at the shore of Upper Campbell Lake, where we said good-bye to some of our canoe team and welcomed new arrivals for the overland hike to Crown Mountain.

Fourteen heavily laden hikers headed up from the lake along logging roads toward the park boundary. It was a long, hot haul of 17 kilometres up to our first camp on a dry but roomy log landing. Amongst the crew on this leg were Murray Sovereign, great-grandson of Price Ellison, Robert Behrendt, VP and GM of NVI Mining Ltd. (our main sponsor), and Ron Quilter, section head with BC Parks.

We woke to see the full moon setting over Crown Mountain and the first rays of sun on what looked like would be another clear, hot, sunny day. Quickly, we packed and got back underway. The logging road went a little further, about a kilometre or so from camp, and ended close to the edge of the old-growth and the welcoming tranquility of Strathcona. Now we were in close synch with the 1910 party as we climbed up onto the plateau of Mount Evelyn. We read Johnson's journal as an almost up-to-the-minute commentary to our own travels. We stopped for lunch on the top of a rocky bluff overlooking the Tlools Valley where Johnson described Colonel Holmes encouraging the Ellison team on.

Luckily, the journal also gave us a heads up of places and lines of travel to avoid, so we forewent their route down off Mount Evelyn and instead deferred to our gathered knowledge in picking a line down through the steep forest back to the valley floor. Another long day drew to a close as we set camp by the shore of Myra Lake, 100 years from the night Myra herself had been there.

Over the next two days we kept to the script, climbing up the west side of Tlools valley onto the ridge northeast of Crown Mountain and following the height of land south toward our objective. The meadows and views along the way were exquisite, but they came at a stiff price of bush and steep terrain. On the night of July 28, we pitched our camp on a shoulder to the east of Crown Mountain and prepared for our summit bid.

Sunrise on summit day broke in a glorious fireball of orange and gold. Low fog covered the lakes we had canoed across, and exotic bands of cloud drifted above the maze of peaks on the mainland Coast Mountains. In the warm morning light we began our climb, following the ridge up and then traversing open snow slopes rightward and onto the north side of the mountain. A short snow chute led to a set of ledges that drew us out and onto the crest of the North Ridge. A straightforward 3rd-class scramble up the ridge took us, all 14 of us that is, onto the spacious summit of Crown Mountain 100 hundred years to the hour that Ellison, Myra, Colonel Holmes and their party had first stood there.

Ron Quilter and Andy Smith, dressed finely in their carefully packed ranger uniforms, unfurled a BC Parks 100 banner. We all joined together in cheers of celebration to our success and to the memory of Ellison's foresight and legacy. The birth of BC Parks could rightly claim this summit as its home, and the surrounding forest, lakes, rivers, ocean and mountains could hardly be a more appropriate testament to British Columbia's natural splendour to support that contention.

Gradually, we made our way back to camp, thrilled with the day so far. But there was more in store. As we arrived close to our clustered shelters, we stumbled upon what was obviously the 1910 party's basecamp, not more than 20 metres from our own! The whole group gathered and wandered through the site, marvelling at the long-dormant story lying there in the heather. No one was more touched by the moment than Murray Sovereign whose great-grandfather and great-aunt had camped here exactly a century ago. There were the poles cut for the canvas A-frame tent, a fire pit and, as if to lay aside any doubt, a rusty sardine can as listed by Johnson amongst their rations.

The rest of the day was whiled away in the sunshine. Some dropped down to the col below to swim and fetch extra food from our cache. A side-trip was made to Desolation Point, a landmark Johnson referred to several times.

The next day, we made our way down toward the Tlools Creek valley and the shade of its towering Douglas firs. It took us two full days to reach Upper Campbell Lake, where our fellow expedition organizer Barb Baker waited with Jaimie Boulding for our return. Back to the canoes for the crossing to Strathcona Park Lodge, where a celebratory barbeque and acknowledgement of our sponsors and departing participants awaited.

To commemorate the success of the 1910 expedition, a public event had been organized for the following day—fittingly, B.C. Day. Farewells said to most of the Crown team, the five of us who would complete the entire expedition—Tawney Lem, Kate Balzer, cameraman Aaron Black, audio engineer Chris Kruger and myself—were joined by Barb Baker and three others for the canoe trip down Buttle Lake.

We stopped at the park's headquarters at Buttle Narrows for the ceremony with local dignitaries, BC Parks' officials and supporters of the park before we were on our way down the lake. What a great contrast the canoeing was to the effort of the hike. We rafted our canoes together and hoisted a small, but effective, sail and rode the wind and waves to camp at Marblerock Creek. One more

day was required to reach the south end of Buttle Lake, where we re-supplied and changed crew for the last time.

News came that two of the party couldn't make it, but, in a sublime twist of fate, we met two climbers on their way back from the Golden Hinde who decided to join us. With food already packed for a complement of 11, it was a perfect stroke of luck. Back on the trail we headed up the Price Creek valley on the old trail. The Price Creek trail is no longer maintained and there was plenty of windfall and bush to contend with. We made camp at the "Cream junction" just as darkness fell.

The route from here up to Green Lake offers some prize bushwhacking. Luckily, it is short-lived, but what it lacks in quantity it makes up for in quality—tangles of slide alder, devil's club and salmon berry capped off by several rushing creeks racing through the undergrowth. Once through the bush the terrain opened up into a dramatic spectacle below the north face of Mount Rosseau. We crossed the snout of the glacier below Rosseau and made our way up to the height of land on the "Great Divide", as Johnson so nobly refers to as Price Pass.

A thick smoke haze from forest fires in the Interior almost blacked out the sun, turning it into a glowing fireball as it sank toward the horizon. Now we could see the last part of our journey as the land dropped away southward through Margaret Creek and on toward Great Central Lake and Port Alberni.

Over two days we descended. First, to the shore of Margaret Lake to admire the icebergs floating like white jewels in its deep blue waters. Then, across stunning meadows carpeted with heather and wildflowers. Then, down, down the steep hillsides with ever-greener vegetation. Lush hellebore, lily-covered ponds and roaring creeks to the shore of Homasum Lake accompanied us on our way to the Della Falls trail and Great Central Lake.

Waiting at the dock were two gorgeous war canoes provided by the Hupacasath First Nation. After our long day bushwhacking we were relieved to sit in the canoes and get back to the rhythm of paddling once more. A last night at camp on the shore of Great Central Lake and we arrived at the Port Alberni end of the lake by mid-afternoon, 17 days after leaving Campbell River.

The final part of our journey was by train to Victoria, where we gathered for breakfast at the Fairmont Empress, just as Ellison had dined before. We toasted our success and said farewells at the end of our own grand adventure. Although this was the end of our journey, it would be the beginning of a series of events and celebrations honouring Price Ellison and the legacy of British Columbia's Provincial Parks. BC Parks 100 will be celebrated throughout 2011 with events and functions around the province.

Summary

Expedition participants: Rory Annett, Barb Baker, Kate Balzer, Robert Behrendt, Aaron Black, Anita Brochocka, Gwenda Bryan, Marion Bryan, Bob Carreau, Tyler Hasebe, Chris Kruger, Tawney Lem, Evan Loveless, Seamus Mooney, Nick Page, Ron Quilter, Andy Smith, Barry Smith, Murray Sovereign, Philip Stone, Ryan Stuart, Paulo Tanon, Christelle Mounier Verneuil, John Young.

2010 Strathcona Centennial Expedition on the summit of Crown Mountain. Photo: Dave Bolten

Silverthrone to Smith Inlet

David Williams

until his untimely death, for perhaps a decade the late John Clarke and I would get together a couple of times a year to go over maps, discuss plans and contemplate past and future coastal alpine traverses. One area we kept returning to was the region between Owikeno Lake and Seymour Inlet. John shared one of his secret places on his to-do list with his very good friend Lisa Baile. Together with three companions, Lisa undertook what must have been a delightful though physically demanding north-to-south traverse through this area in 2003, which she documented lovingly in "Journey with John Clarke" (*CAJ*, 2004, vol. 87, p. 91).

In this region of meandering ridges, glaciated summits and pristine valleys, an east-to-west traverse also appeared feasible. This would involve flying into the mountains, something I have never been brilliantly keen on. However, in discussing this idea with Javier Garcia Fernandez, a recent émigré from Spain who is always keen, the summer 2010 trip was born. Upon pondering the maps, I realized we would start the traverse close to a jewel of the Coast Mountains—Silverthrone Mountain. Because we planned to use a helicopter to access the route, we decided to extend the trip east. In the late afternoon of Sunday, July 11, 2010, we were dropped off by West Coast Helicopters out of Port McNeill onto the glaciated basin on the upper Silverthrone Glacier, two kilometres east of Silverthrone Mountain (51°31.2' N, 126°05.0' E). With clouds dissipating we spent a wonderful evening ascending to the summit of Silverthrone via the east-northeast ridge. I would not call this climbing a mountain; rather, we visited the summit of one of the premier peaks of the range. I read about this mythical summit almost 30 years ago when I first arrived in Canada. From the summit, the views and the feeling of grandeur were stupendous.

Javier Garcia Fernandez on the summit of Mount Silverthrone. Photo: David Williams

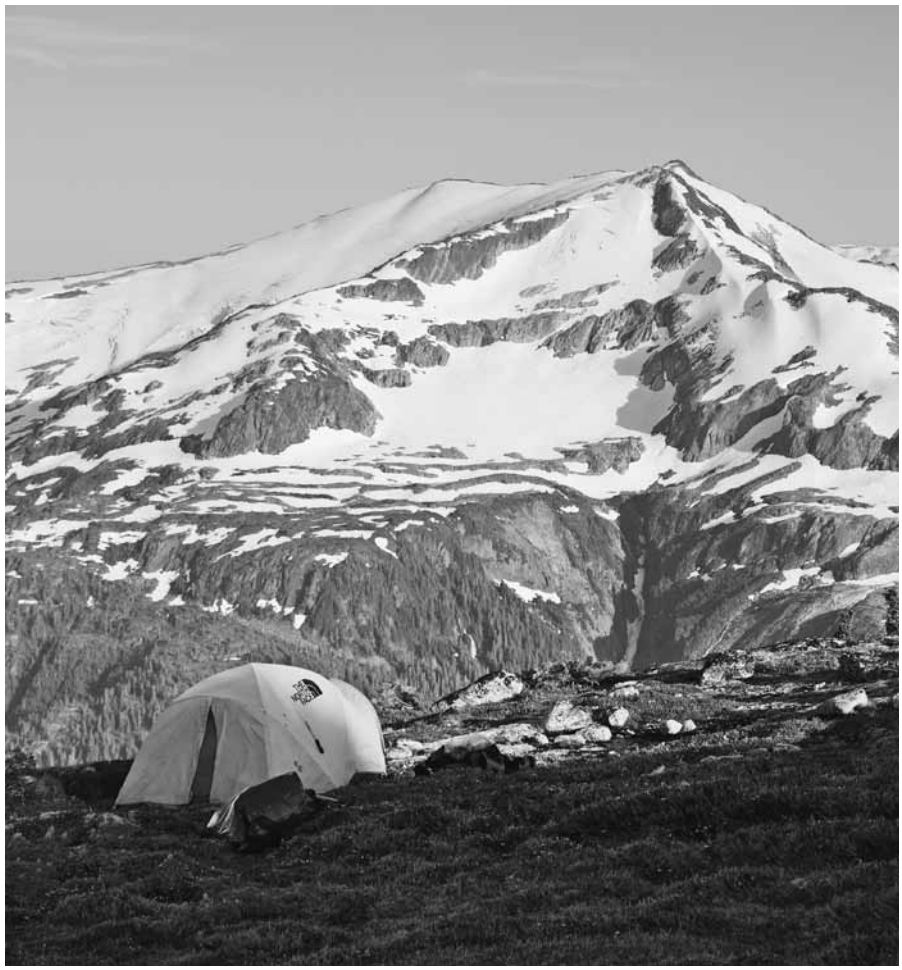
The next morning we woke to wind and snow, but after a few hours of waiting we decided the conditions were good enough to take a low route (rather than the high route) south and west across the icecap. Using a compass, we made our way to the col north of Mount Calli (51°29.8' N, 126°06.2' E). From the col, we descended below the clouds to the upper Pashleth Glacier and plodded to the rapidly decaying snout of the glacier, which in places is covered with soil and vegetation. At the snout (51°31.7' N, 126°13.4' E) we turned south up the next drainage and worked our way between the crumbling moraines and broken ice to the top of a rock/moraine spur that splits the glacier (not shown on the map). In intermittent rain we carved a tent platform in the silt and rubble and made camp (51°30.7' N, 126°13.8' E).

The following day turned brilliant after some initial rain showers. We started plodding south on blue ice. Upon arriving at continuous snow, we worked our way southwest through spectacular country. The anticipated icefall and seracs just above the pass (51°28.7' N, 126°14.8' E) went easily, and soon we were on the divide between the Pashleth and Kingcome drainages. Travelling west, we likely followed the steps of John Baldwin and his crew—for a few hundred metres at least—from their horseshoe traverse of the Kingcome River drainage in summer 2004 (*CAJ*, 2005, vol. 88, p. 92). After a long day, we made camp in a large wind cirque below the summit of peak 6,600 feet

(51°27.8' N, 126°20.1' E) and relaxed in the warm evening with beautiful views towards the head of the Selman Creek and Wakeman River valleys. The following day we descended to the pass (51°28.6' N, 126°24.5' E). This is a wondrous wild place covered with monstrous bear and moose tracks, and families of goats roaming the ridges. Over the next two days we travelled southwest above the Wakeman River. At a pass (51°25.3' N, 126°30.2' E), we descended briefly into the beautiful meadows of the upper Seymour River valley before starting the big ascent of Mount Philley. We followed the northeast ridge to the summit of Mount Philley, with a pit stop on route to retrieve the food cache we had placed on our flight in. The beer and chips were a tasty treat.

From the lesser summit (51°24.2' N, 126°33.8' E) two kilometres north of Mount Philley, we descended west to the pass at the head of Catheralle Creek (51°24.1' N, 126°35.1' E). This was one of the highlights of the trip, a delightful place scattered with tarns and cascading waterfalls interspersed with beds of bright-coloured alpine flowers. The ice tongues plunging northwest off of Mount Philley provided an impressive backdrop to a serene place. We clambered up the southeast ridge of peak 6,000 feet (51°24.6' N, 126°36.9' E) and descended a few hundred feet and made camp.

In the morning the valleys were filled with fog, but this dissipated as we descended the glacier flowing north off peak 6,000 feet. Below the glacier the valley was choked with alder, but before long, we were crashing through mature forest. Unfortunately, we later discovered one of Javiers side pockets had blown open during our bushwhacking battle. We had lost our honey and some juice crystals. Though disappointed, we had little difficulty wading Saghalie Creek (51°26.5' N, 126°39.2' E), and spent the afternoon thrashing part way up the east-southeast ridge of peak 6,700 feet (51°27.9' N, 126°42.6' E) before camping at 4,300 feet (51°27.4' N, 126°40.8' E). In the morning we dropped our packs and meandered to its summit with our ice axes. Once again, we could see peaks of the Monarch Icefield as well as Mount Waddington and Mount Silverthrone. Now, also a sliver of Owikeno Lake came into view, and we saw for the first time into the upper reaches of the rugged Smokehouse Creek and Piper River drainages, as well as our intended route along the ridgeline between these two valleys.



An unclimbed peak above Smokehouse Creek. Photo: David Williams

We returned to our packs and ascended southwest to the top of peak 6,400 feet (51°26.6' N, 126°43.2' E), where we ate lunch. From here we enjoyed the views into the remarkable upper Smokehouse Creek valley. Surrounded by sweeping granite walls topped with ice, this is a majestic place. We expected the crux of the trip to involve getting out of Smokehouse Creek, over and down peak 6,500 feet (51°24.7' N, 126°46.5' E). It was a relief to see a weakness in the cliff bands that might allow us to access the upper snow slopes of the northeast face of this peak. Continuing southwest along the ridge line, we camped that night on a knoll (51°26.3' N, 126°44.2' E) and spent a lovely evening looking out across Smokehouse Creek to peak 6,500 feet and considering our options for the next day.

In spite of following in the footsteps of Lisa Baile and friends for a kilometre here (*CAJ*, 2004, vol. 87, p. 91), descending off the knoll proved to be the most technically and mentally challenging hour of the trip. We did not use our rope, but we lowered our packs to one another on this short, but intense, descent down continuous cliff bands. Looking up from below, there appeared an easier line down. Shrugging off the intensity of our descent, we thrashed southwest across the valley floor and made a quick pit stop when we reached the alluvial fan below peak 6,500 feet. Upon reaching the base of the cliffs, we discovered our planned route was not good. But a nearby vegetated crack

system worked fine. Feeling relieved with our success, we lunched at an incredible perch atop the cliff bands surrounded by the sound of falling water. In the afternoon, we climbed a steep, tiring snow face. We camped (51°24.8' N, 126°45.6' E) below the summit and enjoyed another great evening out.

In the morning we soon ascended the summit and basked in our moment of glory, snapping a couple of team photos. The summit provided an excellent vantage point to view our days ahead on the ridge system between the untouched Piper River and Smokehouse Creek valleys. Descending from the summit was straightforward, and we spent the next four days following a wonderful, continuous ridge system snaking west. During the hot afternoons, we cooled off in one the many tarns. There was the odd difficulty in route-finding, and one intense weather system that blasted over us on our 11th night (51°23.2' N, 126°55.9' E). But all in all, we delighted in this wonderful wander elevated above the tangle of B.C. wilderness below—surrounded by the splendor of glaciated summits.

Perched at our final summit, peak 5,900 feet (51°22.7' N, 127°00.6' E), I was stunned by the shear intricacy and beauty of coastal B.C. The length of Smith Inlet lay stretched out below us with ridge upon ridge layered and disappearing into the distance. From this peak, we descended southwest into open meadows and made camp near bug-infested ponds (51°22.0' N, 127°01.9' E) that provided some fine swimming to finish the day and a place to watch the dragonflies. From the crest of the ridge (51°22.0' N, 127°02.6' E) we crashed down north to the creek bottom and followed the creek west. Our last day of travel started smoothly through open forest, but as usual, the thrash down this old-growth valley went on longer than we anticipated. By mid-afternoon we were standing among the reeds on the water's edge of Smith Inlet (51°22.8' N, 127°06.3' E) listening to seal pups calling for their mothers.

After a lovely evening enjoying our remaining food, we headed to bed for what was a wonderfully relaxed sleep. The tide was out when we woke in the morning, and we both enjoyed the serenity of the place, wandering around the mud flats in bare feet with no packs on. By 9 a.m. Pacific Eagle Aviation picked us up. As we flew from Smith Inlet to Port McNeill "skimming over archipelagos, lakes forests and gleaming peaks," as with Lisa Baile, I could perhaps hear a John Clarke "Wow!"

Summary

Summer alpine traverse from Silverthrone Mountain to Smith Inlet, Coast Mountains (5 days, 123 kilometres of distance and 11,303 metres of elevation gain (including side trips to climb peaks)). Javier Garcia Fernandez, David Williams, July 11-25, 2010.

East-northeast ridge, Silverthrone Mount. (51°31.2' N, 126°06.8' E). Javier Garcia Fernandez, David Williams, July 11, 2010.

Northeast/upper north ridge, Mt. Philley (51°23.4' N, 126°33.5' E). FRA: Javier Garcia Fernandez, David Williams, July 16, 2010.

Southeast ridge, peak 6,000 feet (51°24.6' N, 126°36.9' E). FRA: Javier Garcia Fernandez, David Williams, July 16, 2010.

East-southeast/south ridge (3rd class), peak 6,700 feet (51°27.9' N, 126°42.6' E). FRA: Javier Garcia Fernandez, David Williams, July 18, 2010.

Northeast ridge, peak 6,400 feet (51°26.6' N, 126°43.2' E). FRA: Javier Garcia Fernandez, David Williams, July 18, 2010.

Lower northeast face/upper east ridge (low 5th class), peak 6,500 feet (51°24.7' N, 126°46.5' E). FRA: Javier Garcia Fernandez, David Williams, July 20, 2010.

Scud Glacier

Blake Herrington

IT IS SAID THAT TRUE adventure begins when things start to go wrong—or at least not as planned. By this measure, if none other, Nate and I did little besides adventuring on our supposed climbing trip to the eastern Stikine Icecap. Our months of training had done little to prepare us for getting swept downstream by rivers, or nervously dodging the grizzly whose tracks we'd followed for miles. It also didn't help us when trying to fabricate ourselves a pair of boots!

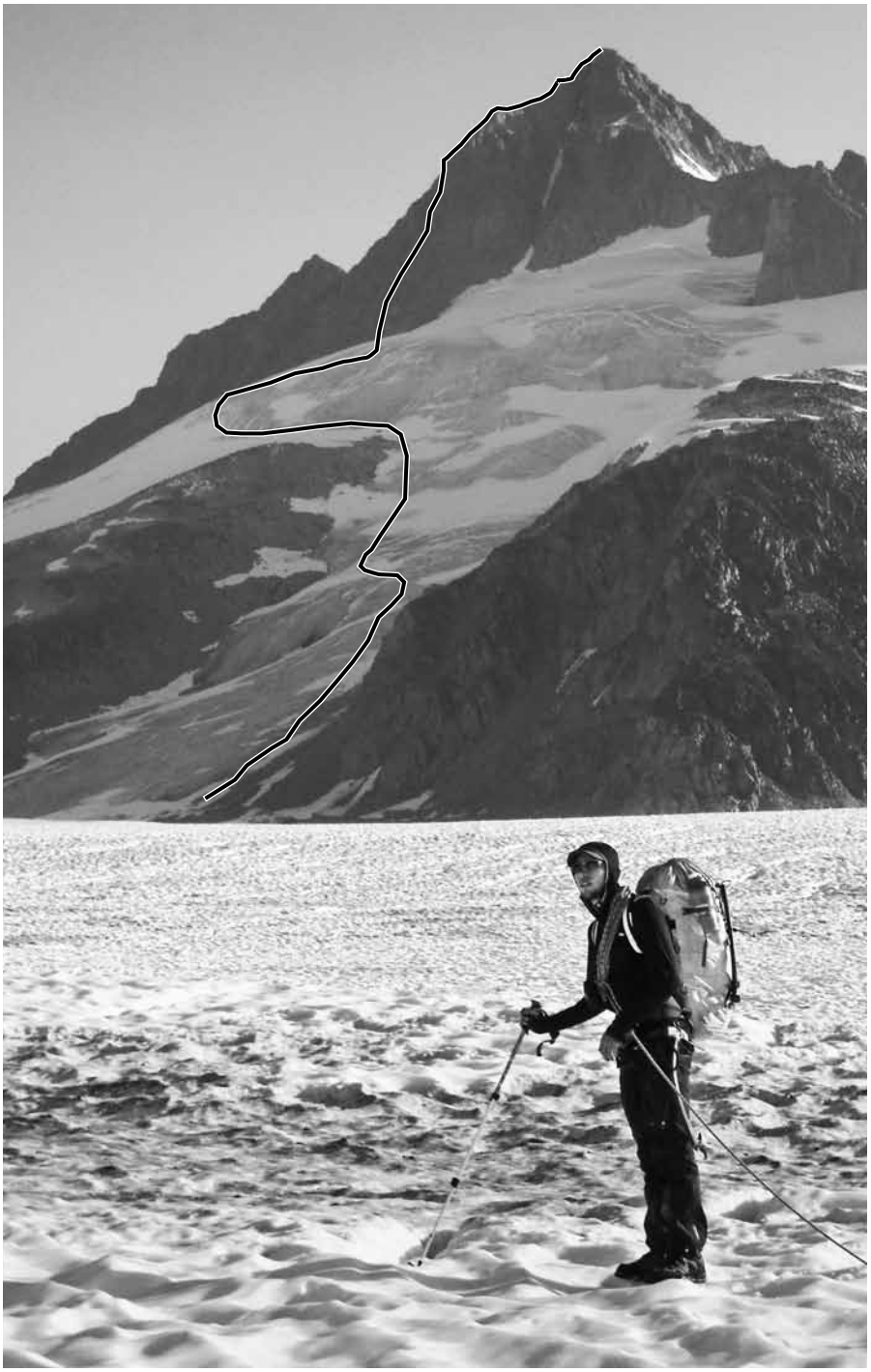
In August 2010, Nathan Farr and I met up in Seattle and drove the 26 hours to Tatogga Lake, B.C. From there, we chartered a floatplane and flew 85 kilometres west to Yehiniko Lake, a body of water that drains into the Stikine River and is near the Alaska-B.C. border. At some point during the hurried packing of the plane and the flight, my partner's boots were lost. We believe they may have been poorly secured in a rickety cargo hatch of our Eisenhower-era craft. We "built" a pair of boots using tennis shoes, the stiff plastic of a backpack frame, some waterproof material from a dry bag and heaps of Seam Grip. These sufficed for the 25-kilometre approach, glacial travel and even some steep ice climbing. Unfortunately, the lightweight footwear was accompanied by lightweight rations, as our food-filled airdrop of supplies missed the soft seasonal snow and exploded into a yard sale of debris amid the rock and ice of the lateral moraine.

We had intended to climb peaks located off the Scud Glacier, including the first ascent of the north ridge of Mount Ambition (it would be the peak's second overall ascent). After 450 metres of steep névé and ice steps, I was relieved to put on rock shoes and begin my block of

leads. Relief was immediately replaced by disgust when we realized that the grey stone we'd hoped would be clean granite was, in fact, sedimentary garbage. Calling this stuff kitty litter would be an insult to the makers of Fresh Step. After four pitches of oozing up the crumbling filth, we had some introspective moments, trying to decide whether we really wanted to commit ourselves and our single backpack containing a single sleeping bag and a single can of fuel to several hundred metres of rock-climber Russian roulette. We began rappelling.

Fortunately, the rock in most of the range is granite, or granitic. From the col above our icefall, we turned north and the stone instantly improved. We rallied our spirits and adjusted to a new reality—ascending 650 metres of solid stone on the south ridge of Mount Endeavour (2,820 metres) for the peak's second ascent and the first ascent of the ridge. We named it Arête sans chaussures, which translates to the ridge without boots. Difficulties in getting off the mountain after a 1,200-metre route were exacerbated by the fact that we had not really intended to climb the mountain during that weather window, so we knew nothing about its complex architecture. Many rappels, much downclimbing and 20 metres of tat later, we were back at basecamp.

Blake Herrington approaching Dalestrom on Peak 8692 from the Scud Glacier.
Photo: Nathan Farr



After a couple of well-deserved rest days, spent rationing our calories, re-brewing our dwindling coffee supply and eating "oatmeal plus" (that's oatmeal plus whatever scraps, crumbs and gravel we'd collected off the glacier), we set out to climb the west buttress of Peak 8692 (2,630 metres).

We climbed through mostly solid granite in four steep pitches to the aesthetic ridge crest, which continued at around 5.8 to the top. This summit had also been reached once before, but we were mainly content with the fact that we were not constantly raining loose rock down on the belayer. Our route was named Dalestrom (Dale combined with Maelstrom) in honour of our human-tornado of a seaplane pilot.

A flooded river and many kilometres of wading and bushwhacking brought us down from the land of snow and ice back to the forested shores of Yehiniko Lake, where we were picked up by float plane, 12 days after being dropped off.

Acknowledgements

This expedition was supported by the AAC McNeill-Nott Award.

Summary

Arête sans chaussures (D 5.6 AI3, 1200m), Mt. Endeavour (2820m), Stikine Icecap. FA: Nathan Farr, Blake Herrington, August 2010.

Dalestrom (D 5.9+, 750m), Peak 8692 (2630m), Stikine Icecap. FA: Nathan Farr, Blake Herrington, August 2010.

The Interior

North Pillar Direct

Jon Walsh

THE COMPLEX NORTH FACE of Mount MacDonald is an unsung gem amongst Canadian alpine rock objectives. Its clean quartzite walls tower more than 1,500 metres above the Trans Canada Highway in Rogers Pass and provide climbers with 500-metre to 1,000-metre routes of high-quality adventure crack climbing. Surprisingly, it's rarely visited. Rogers Pass is only 40 minutes from my home in Golden, and is one of my favourite places to ski, so I usually spend a fair bit of time there every winter. The north face of MacDonald is right in your face on the drive there, and it's almost impossible for me to go by it without cranking my neck out the window for a good gawk—sometimes to the dismay of my passengers, as the road conditions are usually poor when the skiing is good. It's true, the Selkirk Mountains are far better known for world-class powder than technical climbing routes, but perhaps this only adds to MacDonald's mystique and attraction to those committed to fight gravity.

It's a bit of an unpleasant approach to get to the base of the rock. A pull-out to park your car on the side of the Trans Canada just west of the snow shed below the face marks the staging point, and the adventure begins by crossing Connaught Creek on a log conveniently located about 50 metres west of the parking spot. A bit of minor bushwhacking soon gives way to step-kicking up the leftover avalanche debris in the approach couloir. Care is needed for some exposed and slippery scrambling required to bypass a cliff near its top, but in two to two-and-a-half sweaty hours, you'll find yourself below an enormous canvas of amazing in-cut stone, guaranteed to keep you on your toes for many hours of good, clean fun. Definitely not the easiest two-hour approach but good value nonetheless.

Jeff Relph leading the 5.11a corner on the North Pillar Direct. Photo: Jon Walsh

The first time I went up there was on June 26, 2004, with rock master Colin Moorhead, when we made the first ascent of Prime Rib—a 12-pitch 5.11b route up what's known as MacDonald's Little Face—in a 17-hour car-to-car push. Over the years, I've learned a great deal about climbing from Colin, and his strong sense of ethics has always had a big influence on me. This adventure would be no different, as he was as motivated and determined as ever. Halfway up the route, after stubbornly sitting out an afternoon shower, Colin led the crux: a run-out, 5.11 knifeblade-protected face pitch that connected us to features we could follow to the top. A couple of rope-lengths later, the intensity continued as we raced up the last two pitches in an electrical storm before rappelling the route. Although we got wet and scared, it was a highly rewarding day in so many ways. The route ascends an obvious rib feature just left of centre, and it was instantly put on many people's to-do list. The Little Face is the sheerest part of the mountain and is separated by a deep cleft just right of the main face.

On August 19, 2005, I ambitiously roped up with the legendary Bruce Kay for the first time, and we made the first ascent of the North Pillar—a prominent pillar of sustained 5.10 and 5.11 cracks sandwiched between two deep gullies on the north face proper. After 11 awesome pitches, we ventured left onto easier simul-climbing ground on the upper headwall, which eventually steepened back to 5.10 terrain. The last five pitches were climbed in the dark, but a full moon guided us down the northwest ridge and into the Herdman bowl without the need for headlamps. We completed the 19-pitch adventure in a 30-hour car-to-car push, calling it 5.11 and A0 because of two hangs.

On July 8, 2010, I was back at the base of the face—this time with Jeff Relph and the intention of starting up the North Pillar Route, freeing it and then continuing up virgin ground for the direct finish that Bruce and I avoided. This line prominently stood out from the ground, especially when the early morning or late afternoon sun kissed the upper headwall. I had envisioned climbing it with Bruce, but the sustained nature of the climbing on the first half of the route had eaten up too much time, and the line of least resistance to the left had made more sense. Jeff and I are always psyched to get in over our heads together, and we had shared many great adventures in the past. Some of our most memorable climbs were All Along the Watchtower on the North Howser Tower in the Bugaboos, the East Face of Mount Babel in the Rockies, and, in 2006, an attempted new route on the Ogre in Pakistan's Karakorum Range (we made it to approximately 6,900 metres). Nowadays, Jeff has two kids and I had one in the oven when this adventure happened, so it's hardly surprising our hectic schedules don't align as frequently anymore. But when they do, the stoke is high.

We left the car at 3 a.m., a little earlier than Bruce and I had, and with some prior route knowledge, we made good time on the first 11 pitches climbing them in only eight rope-lengths. An

The North Pillar Direct on Mount MacDonald. Photo: Jon Walsh

80-metre pitch of 5.7 started things off and brought us to the base of the pillar where the climbing becomes more sustained. Pitch after pitch of 5.10 and 5.11 climbing ensued with excellent opportunities for nut and cam placements the whole way. Some corners were downright splitter, and it was a pleasure to climb them again. The fixed knifeblades we had left from our 2005 ascent were key to freeing the 5.11b crimpy face crux on pitch three. The next crux came on the sustained seventh pitch. Unfortunately, it wasn't solved on lead before the pump overcame Jeff. As it came nearly 50 metres into the pitch, we didn't bother to lower and try to resend. I found the secret foothold while seconding, which helped me free the moves, and we both agreed it was 5.11c. However, the A0 grade still remains since it was not freed on lead.

We soon passed the junction of the 2005 route and continued straight up the pillar staying on, or as close to, the ridgeline as possible. At least four more pitches of 5.10 and 5.11 passed before the angle of the upper face relented, but there were still always moves of 5.9 or harder on just about every pitch. The higher we got, the more we found ourselves negotiating wet rock due to the melting snow bands left over from a deep winter snowpack. Although the climbing in this part of the wall was only of moderate difficulty, we felt totally committed. Rappelling from here would be a scary undertaking as the chance of pulling loose blocks down or the ropes getting stuck was high. In the waning light, we finally hit the west ridge with about 200 metres of 4th-class scrambling remaining to the summit. It was nearly 11 p.m. as we coiled the ropes and soaked in the impressive views from Mount Columbia in the Rockies to the Howser massif in the Bugaboos. The immediate peaks that lay before us in Glacier National Park stood proudly in profile against the alpenglow, while glaciers and deep valleys filled the shadows between. Although it wasn't quite the summit, it was the end of the climbing, and we decided to use the few remaining minutes of dusk to get started on the long descent. Fifteen minutes of scrambling to a dark summit would not have added any value to our day. So it was that under a clear but moonless sky, we commenced downclimbing and rappelling the west ridge. As per usual, we carried no stove to melt water and no extra clothing or bivi gear, so it was important to keep moving.

Luckily, as we only had one ice axe and no crampons, there was no overnight freeze and the snow was soft enough for kicking secure steps down the 55-degree couloir that lead into the Herdman bowl. Bruce and I had previously rappelled this feature as a dangerous choss-filled, snow-free gully, so it was nice to find it so easy this time. Good boot skiing saved us time and energy once we were in the bowl, which again was a big contrast to the scree pounding that we endured five years earlier. It got light as we finally found the log to cross the raging Connaught Creek. Punching the clock, our car-to-car time was 26 hours. The 40-minute drive home was the true crux of the day, and we had to switch drivers halfway. Fortunately, there was no traffic at 5 a.m.

All said and done, we figured we'd climbed the face in about 23 to 25 pitches with very little simul-climbing, and I thought it was significantly harder than the North Pillar route I had previously climbed with Bruce. It was also of the same fine quality, although Bruce and I had found much drier conditions. That being said, I think it was easier overall to climb a bit of wet rock and have more snow to aid the approach and descent. We brought a standard double rack (with singles of micro cams and single #3 and #4 Camalots) and one set of nuts. We only placed one piton, which we left fixed. I'd recommend future parties bring the same rack, but the pitons are optional.

It was definitely a wild and committing route with a ton of good rock climbing on it. The option is there for future repeats: easier on the left, or more sustained on the right. In comparison, both the Seventh Rifle (which I climbed two weeks later) and All Along the Watchtower, both on the impressive west face of North Howser Tower, felt shorter, easier and less committing than the north face of MacDonald.

Summary

North Pillar Direct (ED2 5.11c A0, 1000m), Mt. MacDonald, Rogers Pass, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Jeff Relph, Jon Walsh, July 8, 2010.

Seventh Rifle in a Day

Raphael Slawinski

THE ALARM GOES OFF at 3:30 a.m. I do not hear it, as I have my earplugs in against Jon's snoring, but he does. I stick my head out of the tent and look at the sky. Not a single cloud obscures the thousands of stars; there is no excuse to go back to sleep. Unfortunately, by the time we choke down our instant oatmeal the stars have disappeared behind dark clouds. But with a full French-press worth of coffee in our veins there is no turning back, and we set off boulder hopping by headlamp across the moraines. The early morning light is just enough to see by when we crest the Bugaboo-Snowpatch col. What we see is not very inspiring: thick, low clouds stream from the north across the Howsers. The thought of rappelling into the west face in marginal weather does not appeal. We run back down to Applebee, where we crawl into our sleeping backs and do not re-emerge until almost noon.

The scene replays itself two days later, but this time the stars keep shining all through breakfast, and from the col, the Howsers are black silhouettes against a perfectly clear sky. We cache all excess gear, including crampons, at the col, and with the double set of cams clinking around our hips, we continue across the Vowell Glacier. We walk through a small tent city in East Creek, but it is early and everyone is still asleep. Not long afterward, we stand on the spur overlooking the glacier below the magnificent west face of the North Howser Tower. The day's adventure is about to kick into high gear.

Four rappels deposit us on the glacier. As we descend, we dig the heels of our approach shoes into the steep, hard snow mindful of the long run-out to the talus below. With no ice gear, no bivi gear, a single rope and a rack, I feel the exhilarating lightness of our commitment. Likely the easiest and certainly the most pleasant way back to the fleshpots of Applebee leads over the summit. We fill up on water where it trickles from the snow into the talus and sketch back up more frozen névé to the base of the rock, nut tools doing double duty as miniature ice axes. To escape the exposure down the slope we have just ascended, we crawl down into the moat and start the climb from its icy depths. The first pitch is a rude awakening with its hard moves on wet, polished granite. Fortunately, it deposits us in a low-angled gully and simul-climbing quickly warms us up. We stop to belay over a couple of desperately slimy chockstones, but soon we are moving again and emerging into the sun on the slabs below the imposing upper headwall.

We take advantage of a trickle to pound back a bunch of water and fill our bottles for the climbing ahead. A few more rope lengths of simul-climbing gets us to what looks to be the business—fun steep climbing on good rough granite. A couple of pitches in particular get our attention with thin, balancey moves but, luckily, good gear. Eventually the summit ridge comes into view. So many times one grows tired of a climb before it is over, but here we do not have the time to wish for the steep stuff to end when we pull onto the nearly horizontal summit ridge. And what a ridge! The granite is warm in the early evening sun, huge walls drop off on both sides, and we are grinning from ear to ear as we gun for the summit of the Bugaboos. On top, we celebrate with the firecrackers Jon brought along for the occasion. After reading through the entries in the summit log, attention is turned to the descent. It goes more quickly than expected, and we don our headlamps for the last rappel over the yawning 'schrund. We skip across the Vowell Glacier, down the bucket steps below the col and arrive back at Applebee just after 11 p.m.

Summary

One-day (19-hour round trip from Applebee) free ascent of Seventh Rifle (VI 5.11-), west face of North Howser Tower, Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains. Raphael Slawinski, Jon Walsh, August 2010.

Raphael Slawinski exiting the moat on pitch one of Seventh Rifle. Photo: Jon Walsh

Mythologic

Lyle Knight

I was perched on a thick branch that protruded from the ice, the points of my crampons seated comfortably into the soft wood. I cleared some dead limbs and watched as they drifted unimpeded past Marc's position in the belay cave to disappear into the fresh snow far below. The climbing had been relentlessly steep with the final 15 metres overhanging through a series of aerated pillars. In the last few moves I'd reached a gentle hook over a thin dead limb that protruded from the ice and placed just enough weight to swing a pick into the tree above. Once on belay, Marc moved smoothly up the final pitch and revelled in the delicate and engaging moves.

We'd left my home in Coldstream, B.C., long before daylight and hiked through fresh snow in the dark forest. The climb came into view in the morning light as we kicked steps around the final escarpment, and I watched as Marc went through the same cognitive process I had experienced a week earlier. He gazed upward at the feature, re-positioning and re-analyzing to try and gain both focus and scope. There was an otherworld ambience with the towering rock features pierced by this tremendous, tawny bolt of ice.

Marc took the first pitch, climbing a short and somewhat rotten WI3 step to a ramp. He moved behind the main feature into a cave and ascended the backside through two short WI4 steps to a ledge. It was climbing like no other, moving in and out of rocky caves via the vertical, golden pillar. On my lead I moved onto the face of the ice and excavated a reasonable ice screw in the first aerated crux. I traversed further right still into an auburn groove and stemmed against a sizeable icicle to find better placements leading to the next cave.

Marc tackled the next section of vertical pillar to a small ledge at the upper lip of the cave and stepped right beneath a ceiling of icicles. He hooked around this roof to a beautiful ochre flow of steep quality ice leading to a ramp and short, vertical step into another spacious cave. Heading out, I wrapped around the steep feature for the third time and found a groove to stem, working hard for both pick and screw placements.

I encountered another steep ramp that required delicate stemming and creative gear on marginal ice. I moved straight into the final pillars and found sun-baked ice that had formed and re-formed many times to result in complicated and interesting climbing. It was a physical and mental pitch, and I tied-off exhausted and elated to bring Marc up. In three rappels we were on the ground and sorting gear in the fading winter light.

On the return drive we considered names and drew upon the ambience and nature of the formation to land on Mythologic. It felt as though we'd climbed a vertical Ogopogo, 140m of WI6 in an area better known for wineries and orchards than hard, technical ice. In hindsight, the name also spoke to the aural traditions of our sport as this climb will likely not find its way into a mainstream guidebook. It lies between Lillooet and the Rockies, so the story of Mythologic may have to live on through its climbers and their experiences.

Lyle Knight on pitch four of Mythologic during the first ascent. Photo: Marc Piché

Summary

Mythologic (WI6, 140m), Enderby Cliffs Provincial Park, Enderby, B.C. FA: Lyle Knight, Marc Piché, January 10, 2011.

Facing page: Mythologic, Enderby Cliffs Provincial Park. Photo: Marc Piché

Turret's Syndrome

Will Stanhope

IT'S 3 A.M. IN EARLY AUGUST in the Adamants of the Northern Selkirks, B.C. A group of 10 of us are camped in a tight little cirque ringed by giant fangs of rock: the Turret, Blackfriar and Ironman. When I get out of the tent the sky is still gunmetal black. Every so often I can see a star or two poking out of the blackness. Last night I had trouble sleeping. At around midnight I took a big slug of Grants blended Scotch whisky and that helped. At night, there is nobody to bounce ideas off, to joke around with—just an endless mental Ferris wheel of fear and desire. At some point, the Scotch kicked in, everything turned warm and fuzzy, then before I knew it, the alarm started beeping.

Andrew Boyd joins me at the stove, which is propped up on a rocky nook nudged against the glacier. The espresso maker is gurgling, and Andrew punches a hole in a can of condensed milk. Sonnie Trotter always said that Andrew reminded him of a rock star. In the beam of my headlamp, I can see the resemblance: pronounced facial features, baboon arms and a damn-the-torpedoes attitude. I've always appreciated his gritty determination. When I was 17 years old, I repeated his route, 69, in Murrin Park, Squamish. This 5.13b gear line ignited my interest in trad climbing. Last year, Andrew and I got it into our heads that we could free the East Face of Mount Slesse in a push. This 1,000-metre beast of a face schooled us big-time, and we got a scant five pitches up. But, despite the failure, I knew I had found a partner with good headspace and a similar risk tolerance to my own.

Anybody who has climbed with Andrew knows he possesses pure talent. He moves like a wildcat, with laser precision interspersed with punchy movements. He'll knuckle down on crimpers 10 metres above the talus, furiously implode his chalk bag, eyeball the microscopic crystals and make it happen. It's a sight to behold. As the late Mike Mott once said, "I've seen a lot of good climbers in my life, and Andrew is one of them."

After the second shot of rocket-fuel coffee, it's time to start hiking despite feeling like it might start to rain at any minute. We march towards the glacier anyway. It never hurts to "take the gear for a hike," as Jon Walsh says. Plodding up to the base of the wall, the Turret menaces over us like some unholy stone cathedral. The features reveal themselves to us as light creeps over the face.

Andrew starts the leading. He navigates overhanging choss, hopscotching corner systems at a steady pace. Placing gear at intermittent intervals, he never once hesitates or second-guesses himself. Then he hands over the rack, and it's my turn to live up to my end of the bargain.

The crack above me widens out to an overhanging off-width. I try to weasel myself in, but that technique only leaves my legs peddling in space. Instead, I stuff in a bunch of gear and switch to layback mode. Pumped and scared, I hang on a piece. Lowering down to a no-hands stance, I manage the pitch on try number two.

After plowing through the lower dihedrals, we arrive at a halfway ledge delineating the lower-angled rock from the steeper upper half. The rock here is excellent: laser-cut corners, arêtes and face edges. I peer up into the corner above me. It looks too thin for fingers so I slam a couple pins and boulder out left, gambling that the next corner over is a bit wider. It is.

From here I motor up a beautiful singular dihedral, praying that it doesn't run out. Andrew follows the corner pitch as storm clouds engulf the cirque. He scratches his fingers in the back of a grotty finger crack seeking any sort of jam at all. "I don't know how you did this!" he yells into the wind. I try to smile through chattering teeth while I belay him up to my stance, which consists of a few nuts and an under-cammed TCU shoved sideways into a strange horizontal crystalline crack. Nobody has ever been to this little cave before, and I get an uncomfortable, eerie feel from it. I've butted us up into an impasse: loose and steep to the right and left, and a roof overhead. Now the weather, which has

Will Stanhope on pitch nine during the first free ascent of the south face of the Turret.
Photo: Andrew Boyd

been threatening all day, has morphed into a full-fledged hail storm. We are a stone's throw from the top of the Turret and I am scared.

As Andrew leads the next pitch in the storm, I consider this little crystal cave. Maybe somebody else has seen it, but I highly doubt it. Through the wind, snow, rain and sun, this cave has been here for eons. And for a brief speck of time, we get to be a part of it—this geological anomaly, magical hangout and desperate dead-end. Experiencing places like this is one of the biggest reasons I alpine climb. Past the fear, I feel very lucky. "Tag me my waterproof!" yells Andrew, ripping me out of my daydream. I open the bag and delicately fish around with wooden fingers for his jacket. Andrew has found a way to escape the crystal cave by venturing down and left. His movements, characteristically smooth and calculated, have turned frantic. He has that hell-bent look in his eyes. We are now in a whiteout.

I can't hear much when Andrew finishes the pitch—just vague murmurs lost in the wind. I need to lower out about 10 metres or face a hideous horizontal pendulum. I'm really cold now, and not thinking very fast. I take the cam out of the crack and lower off a couple of sideways nuts in the strange crystalline rock. If they rip, I'll go for a terrible whip. Out of the cave, I'm now completely in the storm. I clean the pitch and meet Andrew at the belay. I'm a jabbering mess and gear hangs from my harness in disarray. Andrew's eyes are gleaming. From here the angle lessens off. I throw on a fleece and burrow into a chimney for warmth. "We can stay here until it calms down!" Andrew hollers at me from a foot away. I'm nodding, or shaking—can't tell which. The storm looks to be holding off, and 20 minutes later we are on top of the Turret. We trace the edge of the south face for a rappel line but come up empty-handed. It looks like our only option is to rap the northwest face and hike down 300 metres of snow in rock shoes. We're unbothered though. The storm has relaxed for a bit, just long enough for us to escape.

Back on the glacier at dusk, Andrew punches up the snow cone at the base to retrieve our boots. I take off my climbing shoes and sit down on a rock. Clouds are rolling in. We trudge back to camp as the rain starts to spit.

Turret's Syndrome on the south face of the Turret, Adamant Range. Photo: Andrew Boyd

At the stove, we brew up some tea mixing in some Grants. "How long do you think we could've stayed up there waiting out the weather?" we ask each other between sips. The storm doesn't relent for four days; nobody else manages to climb anything. We walk from tent to tent, share stories and booze, and shiver the days away. The peaks turn into popsicles. Finally, our helicopter pilot, Don McTighe, nails a gap in the visibility and flies in to retrieve us.

The chopper lands us on the shore of Kinbasket Lake. We sift through a mountain of wet gear and clothes, steaming in the afternoon sun. Across the lake, clouds are still spiralling around the Adamants. So much of climbing is luck. We threaded the needle and had a chance to dance with that secluded beauty—a rare gift.

Acknowledgements

Trip sponsorship was provided by Arc'teryx. Beta was provided by Peder Ourom over coffee at Starbucks in Squamish. Inspiration was provided by Craig McGee and Evan Stevens.

Summary

First free ascent of the south face of the Turret via Turret's Syndrome (V 5.11+, 600m), Adamant Group, Selkirk Mountains. FFA: Andrew Boyd, Will Stanhope, August 2010.

Gold Pours from the Hills

Conor Hurley

THE PINNACLE of the ski touring experience is the ski traverse. It is a combination of travel, skiing, mountaineering and the majesty of the mountains wrapped into a multi-day package: a foray into the mountains, an escape from humanity, a glimpse of how simple life can be.

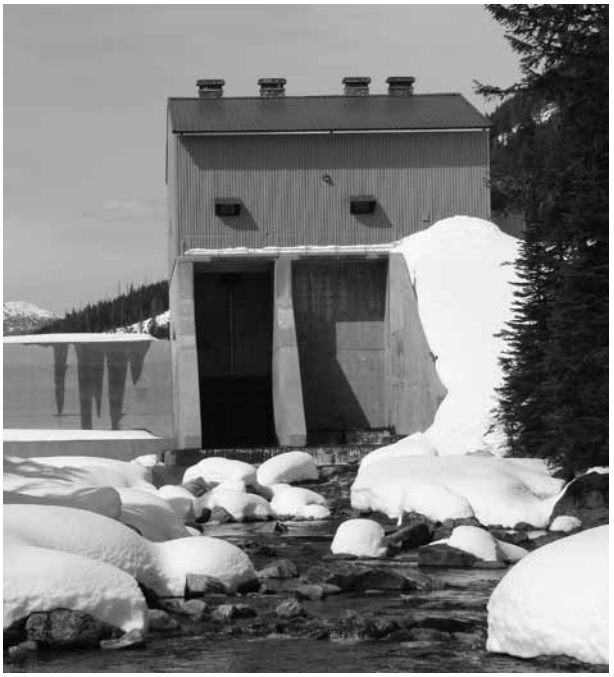
British Columbia is rich in potential for ski traverses; it is also a province rich in natural resources and has a long-standing history of an extraction-based economy. Mining, logging, fishing and powder snow have made the economic wheel go round and round for over a century. For the past 30 years, the backcountry ski industry has taken advantage of B.C.'s deep snow and extensive glaciation. But now, western America's thirst for electricity has taken fancy to B.C.'s steep glacier-fed creeks.

Independent power projects (IPP) are touted as sources of green energy and a sound alternative to coal and nuclear power. Described as small, run-of-the-river, low-impact projects, IPPs are starting to pop up all over B.C. In fact, there are currently 627 applications for water licenses under process and 151 water licenses that have already been granted in B.C.

There are two IPPs located south of Revelstoke on Pingston Creek and Cranberry Creek, both tributaries of the Columbia River. The Columbia itself has been dammed 14 times. Salmon don't run here anymore and the damming of the Columbia has destroyed an entire valley of fertile farmland.

Last April brought a fickle winter to the Columbia Mountains. Eight layers of surface hoar were buried from early February to early April, making a ski traverse sound like a bad idea. But a couple of big dumps wiped the slate clean, and our ski traverse became more than just a pipe dream.

The Gold Range begins roughly 100 kilometres south of Revelstoke in the Monashee Mountains. An extensive network of logging roads on the western shore of the Columbia River provides access to an otherwise uninhabited mountain range. When my parents dropped Nev Bugden, CJ Wright, Audray Ayotte and I off on the Odin Forest Service Road, we had the food on our back and the skis on our feet to get us to our cache at the Blanket Glacier Chalet five days to the north.



The Pingston Creek independent power project. Photo: Conor Hurley

All I could see were cutblocks as we climbed up the logging road. But that is B.C., where industry is part of the beauty. It was once thought that the forests were inexhaustible, but now virtually every valley in the Columbia Mountains has been logged. That same mentality has been employed in the conception of IPPs, with hundreds of creeks being targeted by private corporations for development. But micro hydro is a good thing, right? And aren't these projects designed to keep the creeks running free?

The truth was evident when we crested the bench above the unmanned Pingston Creek IPP. These projects are anything but micro. The creek was dammed and nearly a square-kilometre-sized pond sat behind it. The way these projects work is water is taken from the creek (in some cases, up to 80 per cent of the creek's flow is diverted) and directed into a large pipe called a penstock. The pipe runs alongside the creek for kilometres down to a powerhouse where the water is forced through a turbine by gravity. Sometimes the water is returned to the creek, other times it is not. The dams, the penstocks and the powerhouses are obvious, but imagine the infrastructure surrounding these projects. Each one depends on the construction of new roads and transmission lines to function.

Aside from the facilities at the dam, the only other things to be seen were "No Trespassing" signs. Crown Land is one of the jewels of B.C. It makes up 95 per cent of the province. Public access is king. But a water license and the right to build an IPP gives private corporations (which may not be Canadian) not only the ability to bar citizens from their natural resources, but the right to sell to the public the energy created by said natural resources.

Since 2004, the Pingston Creek IPP has generated more than $37 million worth of power. However, most of the power generated by IPPs doesn't end up in the homes of British Columbians, but rather it is transmitted south of the border to states such as California.

Without thinking twice about the signs, we crossed the bridge and contoured around the shoulder of Mount Burnham towards our camp at the toe of the Frigg Glacier. Mount Odin's 1,660-metre north face and the south face of Mount Niflheim were two potentially daunting parts of our trip, but

proved to be an incredible ascent and descent.

Two days later, and after a high camp on Gates Peak, we skied down an icefield, which was half the size the map showed it to be. Glacial recession in B.C. is a reality. While on our traverse, we crossed numerous areas that our 1970-datum maps showed to be glaciated, but in 2010 were devoid of permanent ice.

IPPs rely on glacial meltwater to generate power. Their peak power production is achieved during the spring freshet when the creeks are full. As creek levels go down, so do IPPs' power production. During the winter months, when B.C.'s power needs are the greatest, IPPs' production levels are the lowest. As B.C.'s glaciers recede, the effectiveness of IPPs will also decrease.

A long day led us to a camp at the 2,700-metre col just west of Cranberry Mountain's summit. After all, we too were playing the melt-freeze cycle: wake up early, travel, wait, travel late.

The next morning, as I peered between my ski tips down Cranberry's northwest face, I contemplated the snow's journey down the glacier, into the South Cranberry Creek, into the holding pond behind the dam, down the penstock and into the Columbia River. What could be the effect of diversions such as the Cranberry Creek IPP on the environment?

As the skies clagged in we neared the summit of Blanket Mountain, the next mountain to the north. It was the first poor weather we'd had on our trip, but it did not cover up the missing south-aspect glacier we were supposed to cross. Unfortunately, here in B.C. the glaciers are receding faster than most would like to imagine. On the bright side, our food cache awaited us at the cozy Blanket Glacier Chalet with our gracious hosts, the Schaffers.

Clear skies and sunburns were the theme of our trip and the following day we got them again. We floated across the Mulvehill basin, a network of hanging glacial benches, and then booted up to a quartzite dome perched above a 450-metre precipice.

Under a salmon- and lavender-hued sky and over a steaming hot soup, Nev, who hails from Newfoundland, explained to us the demise of the Grand Banks fishery. While the Grand Banks are a completely different ballgame than IPPs, their story is poignant in manifesting the effects of unbridled exploitation of natural resources.

The predawn light awoke us on the second-to-last day of our journey. The hot breakfast sank into my belly like the fact that soon we would descend back into reality. We were on our home turf for the last two days. The terrain was familiar and the travel was easy. A quick stop for lunch before our final climb up to the summit of Mount MacPherson was the prelude to a not-so-cruisey descent of the classic Revelstoke ski run, the Womb.

Since completing our traverse, I began to contemplate IPPs and me. Both a resident of B.C. and a ski tourist, my way of life is dependent upon modern-day conveniences. Fortunately, there is plenty we can do to decrease our need for power. Conservation is everywhere; all we have to do is find the will to do it.

CJ Wright skis towards Cranberry Mountain during the Gold Range traverse in the Monashee Mountains. Photo: Conor Hurley

The Process

Joshua Lavigne

WHEN ASKED TO WRITE about my solo, the climb seemed like an arbitrary point of reference, an object or tool with which one can experience climbing. For me, the experience stands above and beyond the objective, and therefore, writing about it is not arbitrary but ambiguous. The experience transforms the object of climbing into a subject of life and gives climbing its essence. The transformation of what is essentially inanimate into something sentient, connecting us to nature, the rock and the mountains. This is where we stand in communion with the world around us.

This is why I solo. To give myself the opportunity to let go of the old and embrace the new, forcing myself to find fluidity between thought and action. I have soloed since I started climbing, and it has always been an integral part of my climbing philosophy. If I want to strengthen my mind as a climber, soloing is the most effective tool. While climbing with no rope, it is of the utmost importance to identify the difference between objective and subjective fears; to be confident and remove any doubts from the mind. If I continually delayed or second-guessed my actions, paralysis would quickly consume me. This doesn't mean that while soloing I don't get overcome by fear; it just means that rather than hanging on the rope and forgetting about the fears, I have to confront them—you could even say embrace them.

The motivation to solo free climb the west face of the North Howser Tower in the Bugaboos was born in 2007 when Simon Meis and I climbed a variation to a couple of routes on that face, which resulted in a moderate free climb called Under Fire. After this success, I returned the following summer with Carlyle Norman to complete the route in a single push from Applebee campground in less than 24 hours. While I was climbing the route for a second time, I imagined what it would feel like to be soloing. I felt comfortable with the idea for the majority of the route, except for a couple of loose pitches and the crux 5.11 pitch. To help overcome these sections I decided to start practicing the dark art of rope-soloing. Over time I developed a technique where I could protect myself with a rope but not waste hours rigging and re-climbing the protected sections.

The summer is always a busy time for the Canadian rock climber. The rock season is short and the possibilities seem endless. So, after returning from a guiding season in Europe, I found myself with only a couple of days to climb. Like most trips to the Bugs, I started by looking at the forecast. Then I hurriedly packed my bags and raced down the dusty Bugaboo forest service road. The shadows slowly stretched across the valley as I ran up the moraines to Applebee Dome, with Snowpatch and Bugaboo looming above and welcoming me back. When I arrived at Applebee the crowds where settling into the evening routine, enjoying drinks and conversation. I avoided the temptation to engage with them, and instead began preparing my gear.

When the morning arrived and it was time to move, thick fear in the predawn air weighted me down. I had to maintain a stoic presence to get my feet and mind moving towards East Creek. I had travelled the path to the west face of the North Howser many times before, so I didn't need to focus on where I was going. Rather, I focused on my breathing, trying to find a rhythm and then using that rhythm to discipline my thoughts. The sun was just starting to rise when I found myself connected to the first rap anchors. For me, this was the moment of complete commitment. Once I started rappelling, the process will have begun.

The route can be divided into three sections: lower, middle and upper. The lower section (originally aid climbed as part of the route Shooting Gallery) is a large right-facing corner, clean at times and terrifyingly loose at others. This was the mental crux of the route and where I used the rope the most. The corner finishes on a perfectly flat tabletop. I arrived just as the sun started to glimmer over the Pigeon Feathers. I sat there, captivated by the moment, looking over East Creek and listening to the silence. The nervousness that initially infused my blood was now diluted by a deep sense of clarity.

The middle section of the route consists of several rising traverses, first leading across left to the Seventh Rifle gulley, and then back right to a large bivy ledge where the routes Seventh Rifle, Young Men on Fire and Southwest Face all meet. With both ropes on my back, I could travel quickly, enjoying the movement of moderate granite climbing. My momentum increased with every move, and I quickly arrived at the bottom of the first crux pitch of the upper section.

The upper section of Under Fire ascends the route Young Men on Fire. The crux is a beautiful right-facing finger crack with a slab exit, which I would have no problem rope-soloing. The pitch that worried me was a gritty and wet 5.10 that has poor gear. The rope came out but I found it of little use as hollow and wafer-thin flakes offered little confidence. I couldn't finish the original pitch because of wet rock, so I ended up climbing to the right looking for another way. These are the moments in the mountains when experience and confidence are invaluable. I turned the corner, climbed new terrain and eventually found a way to the top.

When I arrived at the summit, only a sliver of air was slipping across the peaks. My mind unclenched and I quietly watched the clouds bump into one another. I removed my shoes and placed my hands and bare feet on the cold granite slab—finally I was able to relax. I gave myself the opportunity to enjoy a moment of complete communion.

For me, motivation manifests itself

in two different forms, either as the goal or the process. As a climber, it is important to be motivated by both, but as a soloist the process is even more crucial. The quality of our movement and mental state are reflected in how committed we are to the process. We learn and grow from our experiences and not from the goals we achieve, which means the more energy we put into the process, the richer the experience. If the only thing that motivates us is to achieve the summit, then anything less may quickly lead to disappointment. This is not to say that the end goal is intrinsically superficial or unnecessary as a motivating factor. It's just important to understand that although the goal may be necessary, it is not sufficient in motivating one to climb. The experience of climbing this face alone has been etched into my consciousness and it will be shackled to me forever, always reminding me of the battle between the goal and the process.

Summary

First solo ascent (8 hours) of Under Fire (ED2 5.11, 20-25 pitches), west face of North Howser Tower, the Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains. FSA: Joshua Lavigne, August 5, 2010.

Joshua Lavigne on the summit of North Howser Tower after rope- and free-soloing the west face via Under Fire. Photo: Joshua Lavigne

West Kootenay Alpine

Shaun King

THE MAGICAL WEST KOOTENAYS are a world-class destination for skiing and mountain biking. The local rock-climbing scene is also gaining notoriety thanks in large part to the *West Kootenay Rock Guide*, which boasts more than 400 climbs in 22 climbing areas. Nearly a hundred new routes have been established since the guidebook came out in June 2009, and there is no end in sight of great rock left to develop.

Despite all this, the region maintains a certain anonymity with its remote location. That's fine with me. It means there is more to explore and fewer people to bump into when you are out there. The alpine-climbing scene is one that offers countless rewards for the adventurous, but apart from day-trip objectives in the Valhallas (which are well described in the new guidebook), good beta is hard to find.

One such local playground is the Silver Spray Cabin area of Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park. It is like a mini Bugaboos in that the hut sits smack dab in the middle of some attractive spires and sheer walls—a natural draw for alpine climbers. I was able to find lots of information on easy scrambling objectives in the area but shocked at the absence of beta on technical climbs. In July 2010, I headed up there with locals Sean Tasker and David Lavallee to get a closer look.

The most impressive feature is the steep ridge to the southwest of the hut. Technically an extension of the south ridge of Mount McQuarrie, this attractive wall and its sub-peaks required names to aid with descriptions; especially if there was climbing to be had. The obvious choice was South, Centre and North Cabin Peaks. An enticing open-book corner up the sheer northeast-facing wall below North Cabin Peak was beckoning.

Not surprisingly, we found a couple of pins in the crack system out left of the open book, but the corner itself was devoid of any previous traces and challenging enough to have warranted pins if it had received a prior ascent. We equipped the second stance with rap hangers on the way down to avoid the nasty hanging belay that Sean used on the way up. Story Time is a very aesthetic line with comfy belay ledges, reasonable gear, great views and a quick approach from the hut.

The next day saw us on another cool feature that had been calling to me. Sunrise Mountain has a southeast-facing snow couloir, which sits to looker's right of an impressive prow that I labelled "Sunrise Prow". A bowl to the left of the prow holds snow that must avalanche down the face and clean the rock quite nicely in the spring. We climbed this face for two pitches before following a blocky spine up to the right to gain the prow proper. Some creative route-finding wrapped us around onto an exposed catwalk, which led delicately up the final headwall. The snaking nature of the route combined with the avalanche path led to the name The Serpent's Prow.

This is just a tiny taste of what this area has to offer in the way of new routes. I already have my eye on several other projects and will definitely be back for more.

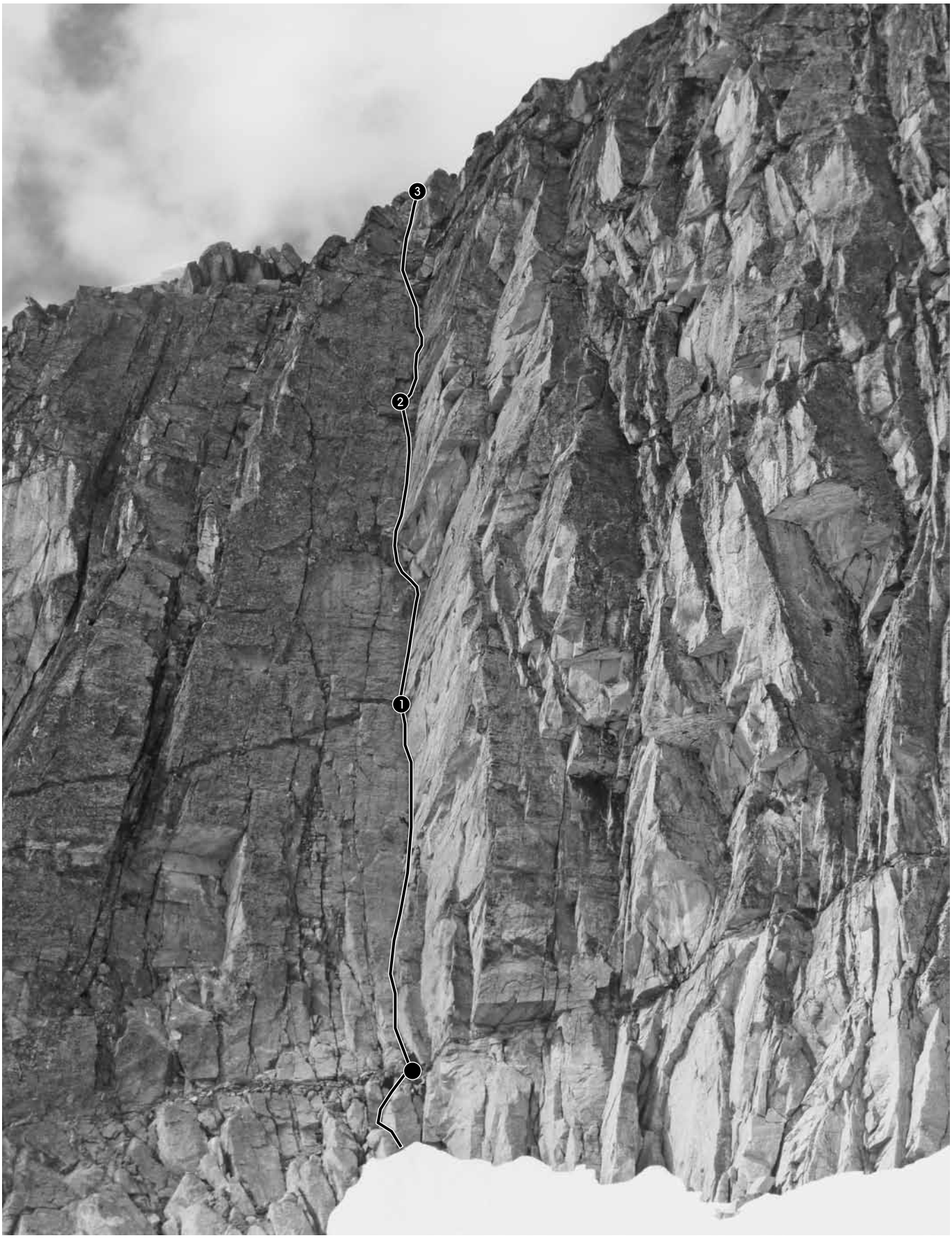
The Serpent's Path on Sunrise Prow. Photo: Shaun King

Summary

Story Time (5.10-, 3 pitches), North Cabin Peak, Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park. FA: Shaun King, Sean Tasker, July 2010.

The Serpent's Path (5.10-, 5 pitches), Sunrise Prow, Kokanee Glacier Provincial Park. FA: Shaun King, David Lavallee, July 2010.

Facing page: Story Time on North Cabin Peak. Photo: Shaun King


3
2
1

Bookends

Bruce Fairley

IT WAS THAT GREAT ALPINIST of the Interior Ranges, Hamish Mutch, who first got me interested in the country that lies beyond the Uto-Sir Donald col. He craftily recruited me into a climb of Mount Sir Donald without revealing that the objective was the unclimbed east face. Only Noel Odell and his party had ever summitted Sir Donald from the east side of the mountain, putting up the Odell Rib in a brilliant *tour de force* in 1930 (see *CAJ*, 2007, vol. 90, pp. 139-140).

After overcoming the east face with Hamish, I was fortunate enough to scoop Dave Jones (there's a first for the Selkirks!) on the east ridge of Mount Uto a few years later. We left a sling on the rappel required part way along the route, which Dave discovered, to his chagrin, on his second ascent shortly after our climb.

Somewhat greedily I then decided to tackle the one remaining unclimbed aspect on Sir Donald, the southeast face, which Bill Durtler and I climbed in the summer of 2006, narrowly escaping a rescue attempt for being overdue when other parties slowed us up on the descent via the classic Northwest Ridge.

Since I was apparently just about the only climber interested in this great expanse of walls and buttresses that form the eastern ramparts of the Selkirks above the Beaver River, I was able to rest on my laurels a while. But the lack of symmetry bothered me. It would be more pleasing to have two routes on either side of the Odell Rib, which meant another line was needed somewhere to the south. Fortunately, there was an obvious candidate on Terminal Peak, the mountain which rises immediately to the south of Sir Donald.

For this adventure I recruited the steady Marvin Lloyd and my young law student, Morgan Blakley. We spent a 13-hour day on the run up to the col and down the Uto Glacier, and the humpity-bumpity of getting across the base of the east face of Sir Donald and across the ribs and basins thereafter, finally gaining a scrappy ridge dropping down from Terminal's east face. Late in the day I led a pitch of 5.8 on this ridge to take us to some narrow bivy ledges just as darkness descended.

The Southeast Ridge of Terminal Peak, Rogers Pass. Photo: David P. Jones

Ascending the ridge the next morning to where it abutted into the east face, we then loped up and across some grassy slopes interspersed with small rock steps to the first upthrust in the southeast ridge, which was our objective. From that point on, the ridge presented a series of one- and two-pitch quartzite rock steps up to about 5.7 in difficulty with 3rd- and 4th-class ground in between. It was very pleasant climbing. Late in the afternoon we rappelled from a tower and slithered across a greasy ledge to finish the climb on a couple of pitches of snow.

This was my first time on Terminal Peak and as I took in the view north to the complex southeast side of Sir Donald, it occurred to me that if I had ever seen the face from this aspect I never would have attempted it.

Clouds had been building all through the day, and the descent in a pounding storm was character building. We reached the road after 18 hours on the go. I was pleased to have bookended the Odell Rib, but like that shunned and unknown climb, it is unlikely that many other parties will ever find their way over to our route. Still, it is surprising how only half a day's travel from the major highway centre of Rogers Pass, one can achieve a feeling of climbing in deep wilderness, where only a handful have been before. It's a feeling worth the effort.

Summary

Southeast Ridge (D- 5.8), Terminal Peak, Rogers Pass, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Morgan Blakley, Bruce Fairley, Marvin Lloyd, July 31- August 1, 2010.

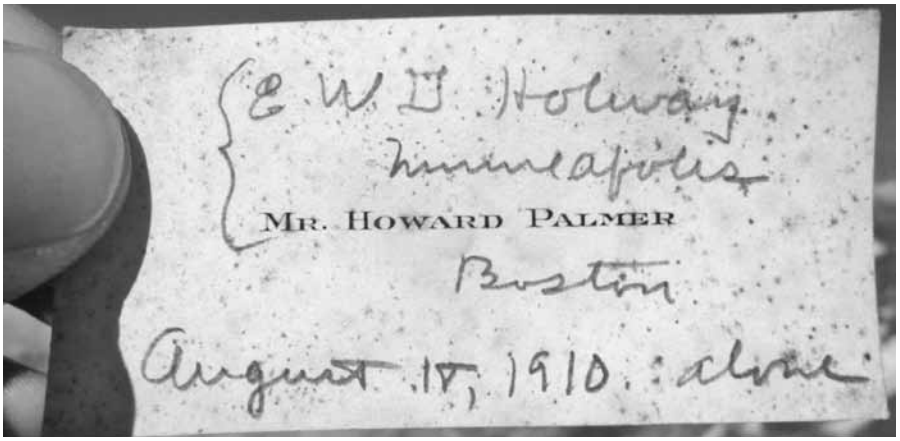
2010 Battle Brook GMC

Brad Harrison

THE 2010 GMC CAMP was held in a very remote and seldom visited part of the B.C. Interior. The head of Battle Brook lies directly south of Mount Wheeler and Purity Mountain, and due west of Grand Mountain. I very much savoured the solitary nature of this GMC. We certainly didn't have any other folks strolling through camp on their way elsewhere.

The campsite was gorgeous with a plethora of flowers in full bloom by early August, excellent water, soft tent sites and a minimum of any kind of insects. This in a year when the denizens of Golden reported their worst mosquito season in recent memory! As the site is in a bit of cul-de-sac, we were subject to very little wind, even with the passing of substantial thunderstorms.

OK, I will admit the days were a bit long. Basecamp was situated at the base of Grand Mountain at an elevation of 1,743 metres and many of the peaks were pushing 3,300 metres. That adds up to substantial vertical gain each and every day with a minimum of short-day options. But the peaks were awesome with Purity, Grand and Wheeler being real treats. On one particularly serendipitous day, mountain guide Jeremy Mackenzie found the completely legible original register placed by Howard Palmer in 1910 at the summit of Grand Mountain.



The 1910 first ascent register on the summit of Grand Mountain. Photo: Jeremy Mackenzie

That discovery made my summer.

One of the most rewarding features of modern GMCs is our ability to explore, in depth, relatively untravelled areas. It would be reasonable to assume that very few people have camped at the head of Battle Brook. We were there for eight weeks, which allowed us to sort new approaches and routes on most of the peaks in the area. It is worth noting that existing guidebooks lack information pertaining to our particular basecamp.

The GMC has tremendous cooperation from a large list of supporters, including Don McTighe of Alpine Helicopters, John Dawes of the Golden Sobeys, Paul Frasca of Tembec Forest Industries, Alison McIsaac of the Kicking Horse River Lodge and the ACC office staff. Without all of their assistance, the camp would definitely not run as smoothly as it does. In my opinion, the 2010 Battle Brook GMC was a success in all facets. The guides, leaders and my staff worked extremely hard to please the participants and were successful in doing so.

Thanks to all of the GMC participants this past summer. Your enthusiasm and continued support are really the catalyst that keeps your humble servants pushing to make the GMC as enjoyable and rewarding as possible for all involved. Hope you are able to attend the 2011 Tsar-Somervell GMC.

2010 GMC Ascents

Mountain	Route	Parties	Participants
Wheeler (3336m)	South Couloir/Black Glacier/Northwest Ridge (FRA)	1	3
Wheeler (3336m)	South Couloir of Kilpatrick/West Ridge	1	9
Grand (3287m)	West Face/Northwest Glacier (FA)	8	50
Kilpatrick (3224m)	South Couloir/West Face (FRA)	2	12
Purity (3149m)	North Ridge	13	115
Pristine (3037m)	West Face	10	72
Chastity (2921m)	Southeast Ridge (FRA)	1	4
Vestal (2928m)	East Ridge	3	17
Alpha (2621m; GR686556)	North Ridge	11	102
Bravo 2904m; GR673569)	North Face	13	86
Charlie (2840m; GR667578)	South Ramp	3	18
Delta (2929m; GR679581)	South Ramp	14	102

The Rockies

The Black Band

Brandon Pullan

We awoke in our bivy on the second day on route—the top of pitch 20, I believe—three climbers lying tightly in parallel on the small ledge. The flat limestone rocks birthing our beds that were balanced gingerly the previous night had shifted throughout dreamtime, creating a disheveled, uneven mess that we were trying to morph our backs to. Water dripped from the wall at our feet, and behind us the sun crept up, illuminating the upper part of the Northeast Buttress of Howse Peak above us. The still air and the Easter-coloured sky were a fine way to bring in the new day.

This proud feature has seen much action since its first ascent in 1967 by Don Vockeroth, Lloyd McKay and Ken Baker. At the time, the route was the most difficult in the Rockies, a reputation short-lived I'm sure. The summit is just shy of being an 11,000er, thus removing it from the peak-bagger's list. It stands quietly alone as a magnificent backdrop to the mighty Mount Chephren. The north and east faces have been the scenes of some wild winter ascents, but the buttress dividing these two notorious faces is the eye-catching, head-turning, dreamy line.

I readied myself to lead up to the base of the Black Band. Fred had clawed delicately through the Yellow Band the previous evening to get us to our bivy perch—a feat a few pints will be shared over. We climbed two loose pitches to the base of the Black Band proper. This band of black limestone is the steepest section of rock on the route. I had heard of other parties descending from here as a result of the difficult route-finding. We lined up the correct corner with the description in both the *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* and the original route account. Dismayed, however, our chimney of desire (the crux 5.8 A1 or 5.9 free) was blocked overhead by none other than the remains of winter. Clearly, the high alpine was not as "in condition" as we had hoped. The chimney was shedding layers as we tiptoed back along the base of the Black Band, contemplating options and eyeing potential variants.

A moment of silence at the belay and a hit of reality convinced us to put the sheets of paper away and follow our noses. I headed up a promising right-facing crack with a roof blocking the way. Decision time was time spent not moving, so the decision was easy to make since time kept moving—seemingly fast.

Up I went, through the roof and into an alcove. A spider web of rickety pitons made us wish we were carrying bolts. "Let's not fall now!" The steep 5.10 crack I'd just climbed opened into a wide fissure splitting the wall above us. Up I went. Sixty metres of fantastic steep rock climbing with easy protection landed me on a small ledge. Another short pitch brought us onto a good ledge allowing for a sigh of relief. The next pitch was the steepest and most difficult as it followed a line up jagged and protruding flakes, stacked in a manner that would disgust any potential ascender. The sandwiched life-sized playing cards were locked in, bonded by the opposing force of the next giant flake. Steep as it was—even by Yam standards—I managed to pinch, squeeze and stem upwards to the obvious crux: a sideways huck for what appeared to be a solid grip, away from the flakes and onto solid rock. Latching the hold, I carefully mantled coming to the end of the 60-metre rope.

Above and to the left of us were roofs—big ones. We seemed to have climbed ourselves into the steepest area on the east face. A ledge of sorts allowed for an easy, although protection-less, traverse for two full rope lengths directly to the right, thus delivering us back on route. This juncture was marked by one of the few pitons we met on the mountain. Looking down we could see where the route was meant to go and the upper impassable snow-choked chimney.

Black bands are known for having steep and usually poor rock; however, for us, on this occasion the Black Band opened up, let us in and most importantly, let us out again—on top. Not all bands seem so generous. One fixed piton at the bottom marks the start of the way through our variant and one fixed Black Diamond Stopper at the top marks the spot where you traverse hard right. The climbing in between equals stellar. The rest of the 1,200-metre buttress is, well….

Summary

The Black Band Variant (5.10-, 7 pitches) to the Northeast Buttress route on Howse Peak (3290m). FA: Fred McGuiness, Will Meinen, Brandon Pullan, July 2010.

Will Meinen following the second pitch of the Black Band variation on the Northeast Buttress of Howse Peak.
Photo: Brandon Pullan

The Peach

Raphael Slawinski

IN BETWEEN OVERNIGHT alpine outings in March 2008, Pierre Darbellay and I took a break from big mountains and big packs to head up Storm Creek. We had already enjoyed a couple of good days up there, climbing some fantastic, weirdly iced new ground. We wanted to see if there was any more hidden further up the valley. As we skied along, an imposing hanging dagger with an overhanging scoop of yellow rock came into view. We found our objective. In fact, we found more than we had bargained for, and we retreated from below a radically overhanging crack with our tails between our legs.

AFTER A THREE-YEAR absence from Storm Creek ice, I head back there with Grant Meekins. With all the recent snow the track has disappeared, but the snowpack is supportive and we make good time up the valley. Two and a half hours after leaving the car we drop our packs at the mouth of a small rock cave and crane our heads back to gawk at the climb. "Pretty but kind of short," says Grant. I remind him of Barry Blanchard's dictum that if it was not for foreshortening, nobody would try anything. We eat, drink, gear up and swim up deep snow into the cleft holding the first pitch.

The ice pillar looks nice and straightforward enough. I whack in a tool and I am rewarded with a cut on the bridge of my nose as a large chunk explodes in my face. Unexpectedly, I actually have to think about where to put my tools and crampons, and even place the occasional screw. Above the pillar I slog up a small snowfield and anchor to ice that has dripped from the broken dagger far above. I lean back and look at the bail sling I left three years ago halfway up the overhanging crack. I am both dreading and looking forward to doing battle with it.

Grant takes the second pitch up a less-than-vertical rock face. It looks like glorified scrambling, but having done it before I am not fooled. The angle might be kicked back, but as Grant works his way up, a steady stream of discarded hand and footholds pits the snow below. As I follow it, cleaning the gear is easy enough—some of the pins simply coming out in my hand. The pitch is a nice example of why alpine climbing often seems hard in spite of often underwhelming grades. Sure, the climbing might be only 5.9 or M6 or whatever, provided everything one pulls on actually stays put.

The Peach, Storm Creek Headwall. Photo: Raphael Slawinski

I tighten my boots, grab all the rock gear we brought but leave the screws behind, and step up to the crack. A good pin gives me the confidence to paste my cramponed feet on the polished rock and start climbing. A big reach to a chockstone with an old sling around it, a big cam goes into gritty rock next to it just in case, and I punch it. Like layBacking a granite crack, continuous motion is the key here. An arm bar lets me get my breathing back under control. I fiddle in more gear, and stem for all I am worth to snag a loose ledge.

The next order of business is finding

a decent anchor: a tall order in a world of shattered limestone. I feel the gentle but insistent pull of the bolt kit on the back of my harness. No, dammit! I am not going to profane this route by placing a bolt I do not absolutely need. I am glad I brought a proper rock hammer, as I blast through layers of choss to drive knifeblades into better rock underneath. I add a rock thread and at last I have something resembling a solid anchor. Yippee!

Grant graciously lets me have the last pitch. It looks really cool, hard but not outrageously so. But with every move up the overhanging corner I am acutely aware of the painful smack into the ledge below I would incur if I should fall. I try to get into position to place a pin but to no avail. In the end, I hang from a tool hooked in a patch of ice and wail in two good pins. Ever the sport climber, I step back down to a no-hands stance to ensure a legitimate redpoint. My focus drifts and the first attempt results in testing the pins with a short fall. They hold. After lowering again to the ledge, I climb past them and gun for the ice. Swinging is awkward in the tight confines between rock and ice, but in the end I manage a good stick. Relief! Still, the ice is anything but cruisey, and daylight is noticeably fading by the time I anchor to the last of the ice before it turns into a snow slope.

With the days long and the route short, I did not think it necessary to bring a headlamp. Yet here I am at the top of the route, with darkness falling even more rapidly in the falling snow. Fortunately, Grant makes quick work seconding the pitch, and before long we are sliding down the ropes, past the lip of the broken dagger and over a spectacular overhang. The ropes pull easily, the knot is already down and then they stop. No amount of yarding can undo whatever happened to the far end. There is nothing for it but to abandon one of our cords, and to make two more raps instead of one. But even a lost rope cannot wipe the grins from our faces. It has been a grand adventure.

Summary

The Peach (WI5 M8, 110m), Storm Creek. FA: Grant Meekins, Raphael Slawinski, March 12, 2011.

The climb is situated between Crash and Sinister Street. It cannot be seen until one is almost right across from it.

P1: WI5, 30m. Climb an ice pillar in a deep cleft, and then slog up snow to the base of a loose wall.

P2: M6, 20m. Climb the wall to a loose cave (two-piton anchor up and left).

P3: M8, 20m. Follow a wide overhanging crack up and right (three fixed pitons) to another loose ledge (two-piton and thread anchor up and right).

P4: WI5 M7, 40m. From the left end of the ledge, climb an overhanging corner (fixed nut and two fixed pitons) to a broken dagger. Get on the dagger from the left and climb interesting ice to where it ends in a snow slope.

Descent: Two 60-metre rappels from V-threads.

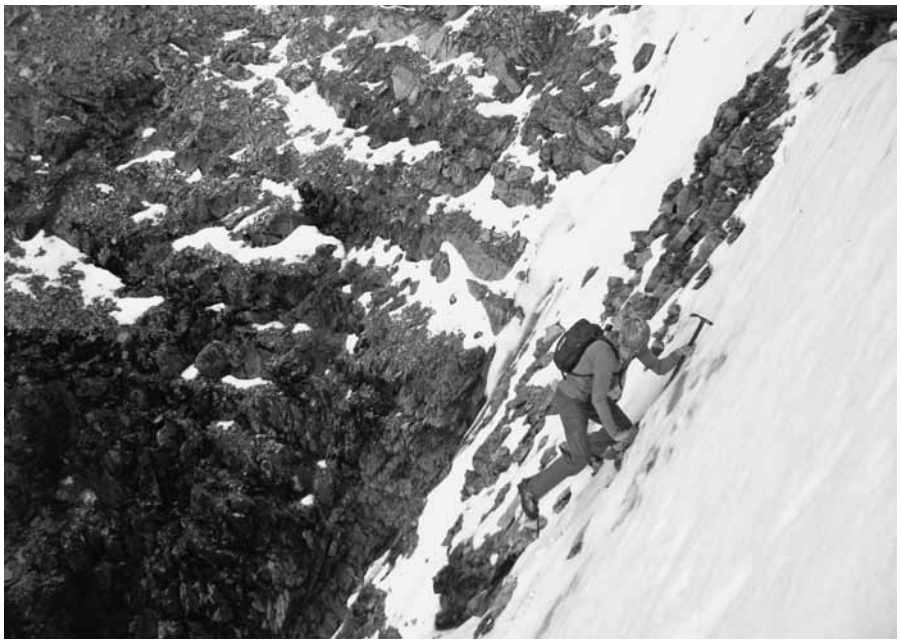
Gear: Screws, cams to #4 Camalot, and a few pitons and nuts.

Raphael Slawinski on the crux third pitch of The Peach. Photo: Grant Meekins

Going Sideways

Eamonn Walsh

MOVING OVER SEMI-technical terrain is one of my favourite forms of climbing; it goes beyond scrambling but is not quite full-on climbing. It is this infamous low 5th class that many dread and only few relish. There is much terrain that falls into this category in the Canadian Rockies, much of it to be found on the never-ending ridges.



Dana Ruddy on the west side of Paragon Peak during the Paragon-Bennington traverse. Photo: Eamonn Walsh

SOME MIGHT CALL ME CHEAP, but I like to think of myself as a gear saver. As an example, when Dana Ruddy, Raphael Slawinski and I hiked into Amethyst Lakes to check out the southern Ramparts, I briefly thought about wearing my brand new lightweight mountaineering boots. But back home when trying to decide on my footwear, my eyes were always drawn inexorably back to my somewhat tattered-looking running shoes, which had been bought the previous summer on sale. If I wore my runners on this trip, it would save three more days of wear on my new boots. So, with the long hike into the Tonquin and our objective being potentially mostly a scramble, I reasoned that the runners would be a better option.

We hiked in on the evening of July 30, arriving in the Lakes area as the sun sank behind the horizon and the mosquitoes rose from the damp earth. It was when I first viewed the Southern Ramparts that I started to silently, and not so silently, worry about my choice of footwear.

The following morning we hiked around the lake to the base of the north end of the southern Ramparts. We then scrambled up to Lookout Pass and out of range of the insects. Using the rope just once and scrambling the rest, we scampered up Redoubt via the Northwest Ridge and arrived at the summit (3,120 metres) to find a register with only two entries. One was from the second ascent of the Northwest Ridge, and likely, the overall third ascent of the mountain (Don Morrison, D. LaChapelle and Bob Jones). The other names were Fred Beckey and Jerry Fuller from their first ascent of the east face. It seems unlikely that no one else had ascended this mountain, so either no one had the audacity, as we did, to sign their name alongside these legends, or previous ascents simply did not find the register.

The first ascent of the mountain ended in disaster for the team of F.H. Slark and F. Rutishauser when they never returned from their climb. On August 27, 1927, the pair summitted Redoubt either by the Northwest Ridge route or the West Face. Evidence of their successful ascent was found the following summer when the team of D.L. Busk, J.E. Johnson and H. Fuhrer climbed the West Face to the summit where they discovered the missing team's summit register. Also "a rucksack was found some distance down the west slope." Their bodies were never found.

We descended partway down the ridge to the ledge that runs the entire length of the southern Ramparts. We followed the ledge, which involved a lot of side-screeing, some scrambling and one section that called for crampons, to reach the base of the West Face of Dungeon. A quick romp up this through some wetness and soft snow brought us to the cairn-less and register-less summit (3,130 metres). There had certainly been other ascents of this somewhat remote summit, as evident in the 2010 *CAJ* (page 143) that documents Richard Gebert's solo ascent on the East Face route—an impressive effort indeed. Back down to the ledge and onto Oubliette, my partners started grumbling about all the sideways scree slogging and a mutiny was initiated. They wanted to go directly up the North Ridge of Oubliette rather than continue along the ledge to the original route. The traitors were successful, and we climbed up this ridge to Oubliette's north peak and onto the main summit (3,090 metres) where we found a huge cairn but no register. The mutineers had made a good call, so I decided not to punish them. After basking in the late afternoon sun, we descended the original route to the Oubliette-Paragon

col and started down the couloir. In the end, my footwear was adequate as the feature was mostly snow with the lower section being hard packed and low angled. Needless to say, my runners were finished by the time we slogged out the next day; however, in the end, I found them to be a pretty good footwear selection for this excursion.

NOT TWO WEEKS LATER, Dana and I were back in this beautiful area, hiking in late on August 14 to make a bivy above the Wates-Gibson Hut. Our objective this time was to continue a traverse from Paragon to Bennington. This time I was armed with burlier boots. We started out early the next morning and made rapid time up the very aesthetic East Ridge of Paragon. After summitting the 3,030-metre peak, we descended to the Oubliette-Paragon col and traversed the west side of Paragon to the South Ridge and then descended this to the Paragon-Parapet col, known as Para Pass. After a lunch break we continued up the North Ridge of Parapet. About halfway up the ridge, I realized that I had left my lunch at the col—and my headlamp. I was infuriated, not because I would go hungry (well, a little bit), but more because I would now have to buy a new headlamp and the bars would go uneaten—unless some lucky rodent found them in the jumble of boulders. Dana patiently listened to my tantrum until he'd heard enough then started climbing with my grumblings fading the higher he got. Eventually I got over my deep loss and followed after my partner.

After a brief respite on the summit of Parapet (3,107 metres), we moved on to the next section, a high and wild ridge between Parapet and Bennington. We managed this with mostly exposed scrambling, but eventually we had to uncoil the rope for one short bit of 5.6 and one 10-metre rap. Our hopes of continuing up the North Ridge of Bennington were thwarted by lingering snow and wetness, so we took the easier option of the West Face. This we reached by traversing out onto the jumbled Bennington Glacier, and then up 40-degree ice to scree slopes and finally the summit. A descent down the Southwest Ridge brought us onto the Fraser Glacier and eventually to our camp 12 hours after we had departed.

LATER IN THE SUMMER I hooked up with J. Mills for some more sideways alpinism. We originally had more grandiose plans, but the weather and conditions were not co-operating. So with what appeared to be a promising window of almost three full days, Jay suggested an idea he had been eyeing up for awhile. It was a traverse over three prominent peaks—Sarbach, Kaufman and Epaulette—at the far north end of the Waputik Range. He figured that it would be reasonable even with the fresh summer snow, so we decided to pack the overnight gear, get up high and see how far we could go.

Raphael Slawinski rappelling a gendarme between Dungeon Peak and Oubliette Mountain during the southern Rampart traverse. Photo: Eamonn Walsh

As we drove north we could see that everything looked wintry, but the weather was clear and cool—perfect for moving fast over complicated terrain. We parked the car at the Howse Pass/Mistaya Canyon parking lot and started hiking at 12:55 p.m., and in about four hours we had scrambled the North Ridge of Sarbach (3,155 metres). From here we continued on, descending the South Ridge to a horizontal-ish section of the ridge that we followed up and down until we reached a promising bivy at 2,890 metres, not far from the North Face of Kaufman (Christian) North. The time was 7:20 p.m., so we set about excavating a comfy ledge, set up our wee tent and enjoyed the spectacular view of Forbes as we ate and drank our fill.

The next morning I was wishing I had brought an extra layer as the day was cold and windy. Appendages were numb as we started out by 8:20 a.m. We climbed up the North Face of Christian Peak, which was quite snowy, making the terrain that much more interesting. After topping out on Christian (3,094 metres), an interesting descent down the south side required two rappels and very serious downclimbing. We then found ourselves in a deep, cold notch in the ridge. We put the rope on to climb out to a slab of beautiful dark limestone, and then some snow climbing brought us to another prominent notch that required another rappel and deposited us below the North Face of Kaufman (Hans) South. Here, we wallowed up through deep snow, ice and rock—it was starting to feel a lot like winter. Reaching the summit of Hans (3,110 metres) brought us into the sun, but it wasn't until we descended down the south side that its rays finally brought warmth. This descent was probably the most challenging

terrain we encountered. It was time-consuming, involving three rappels and more engaging downclimbing. After quite some time we reached the broad col at 2,730 metres and walked up vast plates of shale to the Northwest Ridge of Epaulette, then up the ridge to its summit at 3,094 metres. A little bit of snowy, slippery downclimbing got us into a large gully that allowed for a rapid drop in elevation. Getting spat out the bottom, we started side-hilling towards the next bump in the ridge when suddenly we had had enough.

After a brief discussion, we began descending towards Howse River—the desire to be on flat ground was overwhelming, but what we encountered was not straightforward terrain. Once we entered the forest, we found ourselves a number of times traversing back uphill to get around cliffs. Hitting flatness just after 7 p.m., we stopped for the night, which was warm and comfortable at this lower altitude. However, the next day had us longing for the fun scrambling we had just escaped as we slogged 18 kilometres to reach our car. All day the weather moved in as forecasted, and the last hour of the trudge had us almost running as the wind sent trees crashing down in the forest around us. The rain hit in earnest as we drove south towards home. Talk about good timing.

A few days after our trip, I ran into Barry Blanchard who informed me that back in 1979, Don Gardner and Neil Liske had traversed the Waputik Range from the Saskatchewan River Crossing all the way to Mistaya Lake, bagging Sarbach, the Kauffmans, Epaulette, White Pyramid, Howse and Stairway Peak along the way. You've got to respect the old school!

Summary

Southern Rampart traverse (IV 5.6, 5.5km, 2000m). Dana Ruddy, Raphael Slawinski, Eamonn Walsh, July 30, 2010. Note: Every part of this traverse had seen human feet before, except possibly the North Ridge of Oubliette.

Paragon-Bennington traverse (IV 5.6, 5km, 2000m). Dana Ruddy, Eamonn Walsh, August 15, 2010. Note: Possible new terrain between Parapet to Bennington.

Sarbach-Epaulette traverse (V 5.5, 15km, 2800m). J. Mills, Eamonn Walsh, September 2-4, 2010.

Para Glacier

Karl Ricker

AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL meeting of the ACC in 1932, A.O. Wheeler proposed a Committee on Glaciers and Glacial Action, comprising several section sub-committees to form a program of glaciers to study. Nine club sections were involved in the plan and 13 glaciers were selected, several in the Rockies and Selkirks, having been under study before the founding of the club whose members had continued the earlier surveys.

For the program to be initiated in 1933, the Edmonton Section selected tiny Para Glacier, lying between Mount Bennington and Parapet Peak, because it was very close to their Surprise Point Memorial Hut on Penstock Creek. It had not been subject to any prior investigations. On August 2, 1933, Cyril Wates and party established three survey points to initiate observations. A "base rock" (painted) lying 188 feet from the glacier snout was established, tied into position from two other survey points established on nearby moraines. A neat survey diagram of their locations is on page 183 of the 1993 *CAJ*.

Measurements were continued by Wates on August 1, 1934, and again on August 2 in 1936 (1935 being omitted), with the results published in the 1937 *CAJ* (page 113), along with results of surveys on other glaciers studied by other sections of the club. By this time journal editor A.A. McCoubrey was chairman of the Glacier Committee, and soon to become president of the club. However, there were very few reports on measurements on any of the committee's selected glaciers in our journal henceforth, for no known published explanation. McCoubrey passed away in 1941, and after the war, observations on some of the selected glaciers were continued by the Dominion Water and Power Bureau. The Para was not on their list; its last measurements were in 1936 noting that ice recession was eight-fold greater in 1934 to 1936 (97 feet) as opposed to the six feet in 1933 to 1934. Was that the end of work on the Parapet? In terms of published results, yes.

In August 2010, I stopped on a very wet day to dry out at the Wates-Gibson Hut, which had been built in 1960 to replace the small Surprise Point Memorial Hut. Inside the cabin there was a very interesting faded photocopy of the Memorial Hut log book—its visitor-use register. In its somewhat blurry pages, two further surveys of the Para Glacier were discovered: In 1939 (by inference) by H.E. Belyea, and in 1950 by renowned American glaciologist Ed LaChapelle (deceased, 2007). Someone else also noted in 1979 that the glacier terminus was 250 feet upslope of a lake, observed by Belyea to be in the course

For the period of 1933 to 1950, the following table shows the recessional history.

Year of Survey	Recession from Previous Survey	Average Rate Per Year (m)	Cumulative Recession (m)
1933	Base marker set	–	–
1934	6′ (1.83 m)	1.83	1.83
1936	97′ (29.57 m)	14.78	31.40
1939*	132′ (40.23 m)	13.41	71.63
1950**	317′ (96.62 m)	8.78	168.25

of development at ice edge in 1939. Unfortunately, I was not equipped to conduct a survey for 2010, so detective surveying awaits some enterprising individual, using Wates' survey diagram to establish a new position of the glacier terminus, vis-à-vis, change since 1950.

There are two ambiguities earmarked by the asterisks: The year of survey by Belyea (*) is not decipherable in the hut log book, but she says it was three years from the previous survey; for the 1950 survey LaChapelle (**) says he calculated 740 feet from the "base rock", and Wates states that the "base rock" is 188 feet from the toe of the glacier terminus in 1933. If either of these assumptions is incorrect, the above table should be corrected when a new survey is carried out. From the tabled data, the overall recession rate for the 17 years averages out to 9.9 metres per year, which might be light for what would be expected for a glacier of this size and aspect at this latitude. If the 188-foot reduction from LaChapelle's calculation is ignored, the ice retraction for the 1939-50 time interval would be 505 feet (153.92 m), thereby ballooning the cumulative recession to 225.55 metres, and hence increasing the 17-year annual rate of recession to 20.5 metres per year.

The Scheduler

Glenn Reisenhofer

THE SCHEDULE clearly stated I had a few days off in a row. I stared in disbelief. As I jotted the dates down I figured this was one nice Christmas present. The only drawback was that everyone I knew had previous engagements. After all, it was the holiday season.

As the days off approached, I wondered what would occupy my time. Skiing is out. There's no snow anywhere in the Rockies. Bit cold for a bouldering road trip. Hmmm. How about a bit of ice climbing? I've never done a solo ice-climbing road trip before. This will be entertaining.

After a few days of getting back into things, I found myself at Waterfowl Lake. Hmmm. Finishing Hammer looks like a great ramble and only a 15-minute approach. Perhaps I should check that out. But where exactly is it? I scanned the cliff and various gullies with my binos. I could find One Ring Circus, but not Finishing Hammer. I didn't have *that* much Scotch last night. Or did I?

Up and left of One Ring Circus, I spotted a skinny strip of thin low-angled ice leading to a steeper bit. Above this and to the right was another fatter smear. Maybe I can link those up, and in the process, find Finishing Hammer Gully. I managed to get my skinny frame up to the base after 45 minutes of sick uphill travel. A few mixed moves got me over a small bulge and onto the thin ramp. The withered strip of ice was terrifyingly thin and dry. Maybe I'll sneak left onto that easier-looking rock. Even though the rock was plagued by looseness, the climbing felt secure and I felt more at home.

This led to a small snow slope, which butted up against a steeper wall. A series of moves on thinner ice brought me to the main event—a mildly steep step. At this point I almost backed off. The ice creaked under the pressure of my tools. When another groan escaped from the brittle ice, I considered retreating again. After some hesitation, I managed to get myself together and finish the pitch.

In order to find a way to the upper pitch of ice, an easy snow ledge was traversed to the right. The most obvious line up was directly below the ice, which I could easily see from below the short rock band. Without a belay this tiny bit of rock was too much and the consequences were too high if I failed. Traversing back left a bit helped to find a much longer, but easier, bit of rock. This took me to the base of the final fat ice sheet. Dry dinner-plating ice continued to the end.

Four 30-metre raps off of trees delivered me back to my pack. A snowy, shifting scree ride down followed. Several healthy hollers bellowed forth when I reached my van. I was happier than students in a tavern. My hat goes off to the scheduler who graciously gave me this holiday gift. Without a doubt the line is easy, but I hadn't done anything new in awhile and you know, it felt great.

Summary

The Scheduler (WI3, easy 5th-class rock, 120m), Waterfowl Gullies, Icefields Parkway. FRA: Glenn Reisenhofer, December 27, 2010.

The Scheduler works up the ice from left to right. Photo: Glenn Reisenhofer

Alpine October Fest

Raphael Slawinski

THE COOL THING about the spring and fall shoulder seasons in the Rockies is that, depending on mood and weather, one can pick and choose between sport climbing, alpine rock, ice (OK, maybe not quite in early October) and alpine climbing proper. I felt like I had not been up into the snowy alpine for a while, probably due to the simple fact that I had not. Absolutely fantastic névé conditions were to be had as a result of all the crap weather earlier on. The forecast was for a cool, clear day, and I felt the urge to experience it from the summit of a mountain.

MOUNT SIR DOUGLAS is the second-highest peak in Kananaskis Country. Unlike a lot of Rockies' peaks, it does not have a walk-up route. True, none of the routes on Sir Douglas are extreme, but they all require climbing. Along with the glaciated approaches and location out of sight of a paved highway, it all adds up to make it a "real" mountain.

Joshua Lavigne had never climbed Sir Douglas, while I had already visited its summit four times, but we both thought it would make a fine fitness outing. And so it was that 7 a.m. found us biking up the initial stretch of the old logging road toward Burstall Pass. Two hours later we were having a snack on South Burstall Pass reluctantly contemplating the obligatory elevation loss into the Palliser River valley. But it had to be done, so down we went, through alpine meadows torn up by hungry grizzlies looking for tasty pikas.

A narrow gully directly below the upper couloir gave us our first taste of tool swinging for the season. Once onto the face above, we put the rope away and soloed up on perfect névé—a rare treat in the Rockies. However, the narrow, corniced summit ridge had me asking for the rope again. Standing on small, exposed ledges just below the summit, we enjoyed the sun on the south face while we ate lunch and tried to identify peaks as far away as the Purcells. And then it was back to the north side again, downclimbing the snow ramp of the original Northwest Face route: kick, kick, plant, plant—the same movements repeated hundreds of times. It would be easy to get bored and sloppy were it not for the big drop below one's feet to encourage good form. As we crested South Burstall Pass for a second time in the day, the late afternoon sun swung around to pick out the ribs on the face we had just climbed and descended. One last look at Mount Assiniboine poking up on the western horizon and we plunged down into the shadowed valley, toward bikes and dinner.

The Double Direct on the northwest face of Mount Sir Douglas. Photo: Raphael Slawinski

THANKSGIVING WEEKEND had whetted my appetite for alpine climbing, so Joshua and I made plans to get out again the following weekend (Can you tell I am a weekend warrior?). I tried to think of something I had not done before, but not too far from the road that it would not fit into a regular weekend. In the end we came up with the Elzinga-Miller route on the north face of Mount Cromwell.

This would be my second trip up the north face. Ten years ago, Jim Sevigny, my alpine mentor, and I walked up Woolley Creek in early September to attempt the Robinson-Arbic route. The weather was far from splitter. A light drizzle fell as we waded across the Sunwapta River, and low-lying cloud hid the face so that we had to sit on our packs and wait for a couple of hours before we could even see the start of the route. The face looked to be in great shape, with white streaks coming down all over the place, but upon closer inspection the white stuff turned out to be slush. No matter, we could still drytool around the non-existent ice, but it took time. Sunset found us chopping into an exposed snow rib and setting up our bivy tent. I slept well, in spite of Jim next to me shivering and rubbing warmth into his limbs all night. The following day we topped out around noon and got back to the car just as the skies opened up. As Choc Quinn once famously said, "Alpine climbing is all about timing and hormones."

This time around we planned to send the face in a day car-to-car. It sounded like a reasonable enough plan, especially since it meant we would sleep

in a warm van and carry light packs. Joshua took the fast-and-light philosophy one step further by forgetting his helmet, but he figured that between his hard head and soft toque he would be all right. The early morning cold in the glacial cirque below the north face chilled our bodies, more used to shirtless sport climbing at The Lookout than early winter in the high country. The waves of spindrift pouring down the route did not make things any more pleasant either, but we had come to alpine climb and some suffering was to be expected. In deference to the spindrift and snowy ice, we pitched out the first few rope lengths before switching into simul-climbing mode on the snowfields in the middle of the face.

In the past, the summit serac sported overhanging ice that had some people aiding off of screws, but thanks to glacial recession, we were able to bypass it on moderately angled ice. A few rope lengths of glacial ice, an easy cornice, and we broke onto the summit ridge. The cornice just below the summit was a little more substantial, but after carving a tunnel through the wave of snow, we popped out into the sunshine on top. Beautiful, beautiful mountains stretched to the horizon in every direction: Mount Alberta just across the valley, Mount Clemenceau in the middle distance, and far to the north, Mount Robson. It was only mid-afternoon, so in spite of a brisk wind we lingered and took it all in. After all, how often do you get to sit on an island in the sky surrounded by the most impressive peaks in the Rockies, having just climbed a north-face route, knowing you have plenty of daylight to get down?

Alpine climbing: good fitness and good fun. Well, sometimes.

Joshua Lavigne starting up the Elzinga-Miller route on the north face of Mount Cromwell.
Photo: Raphael Slawinski

Joshua Lavigne on the middle section of the Elzinga-Miller route.
Photo: Raphael Slawinski

Summary

The Double Direct (III+ WI3), the northwest face of Mt. Sir Douglas, British Military Group. FA: Joshua Lavigne, Raphael Slawinski, October 12, 2011.

First one-day ascent of the Elzinga-Miller (IV WI4), north face of Mt. Cromwell. Joshua Lavigne, Raphael Slawinski, October 16, 2010.

Skiing the Rockies' Classics

Andrew Wexler

IT WAS 1991 WHEN I first realized that skiing didn't require chairlifts and ticket lines. I was loitering at a friend's house back east, flipping through an issue of *Powder Magazine* plastered with photos of great American heroes like Glenn Plake and Scott Schmidt, when I came across a short article chronicling the backcountry skiing adventures at Tuckerman Ravine in New Hampshire. Twenty years later, I remember that moment as though it were yesterday. The article described people hiking up the flanks of Mount Washington and skiing its steep slopes. The message was clear: I needed to step outside the world of resorts and travel into the backcountry.

What I didn't know was that the two-page article would end up shaping the course of my life. Fast-forward to the spring of 2010. The Canadian Rockies had just experienced one of the worst snowpacks in recent memory, and many skiers I know considered trading their powder boards for racing snowshoes. But for those who stayed the course, the 2010 spring ski season yielded some great ski mountaineering prizes.

Like clockwork, big lines in the Rockies started falling by early May and didn't stop falling until well into July. Some classic alpine routes like Skyladder on Mount Andromeda and the Kahl Route on Mount Stanley saw numerous descents (I heard reports that on one particular day Mount Stanley had more than 10 people on it—all with skis). The big north-facing lines on Mount Quadra and Mount Fay above Moraine Lake also got kissed (both in a day from the car), as did the west face on Mount Lefroy and the northeast face of Mount Victoria (the big piece of real estate overhanging Lake Louise). And these were just the little blips on the radar that I know about. Surely there were others.

Don't get me wrong. I'm not saying that these were the biggest lines that got skied during the 2009-10 season, or even that these descents were anything new. This is merely an attempt to record some of the classic alpine routes in the Canadian Rockies that are becoming increasingly popular ski mountaineering objectives.

On May 13, Josh Briggs, Nik Rapaiche and I left Canmore at 2:30 a.m. with the goal of skiing the Kahl Route on the north face of Mount Stanley. A party had just reported skiing

Josh Briggs about to drop into the Kalh Route on the north face of Mount Stanley. Photo: Andrew Wexler

Eamonn Walsh crossing the bergshrund on his way up Skyladder on Mount Andromeda before skiing the route. Photo: Andrew Wexler

it a few days prior and the conditions seemed excellent. In the summer, this is a beautiful ascent with a lot of walking. But in spring conditions with good snow coverage on the approach and on the glacier, this is one of the best ski descents in the range. The face is never too steep (although you think otherwise when it's looming overhead) and can hold good, preserved powder until late May or early June. Plus, it's one of those faces that stare at you whether you're skiing at Lake Louise or climbing on Castle Mountain.

Two weeks later—after spending a few cold days camped at the Columbia Icefields campground teaching general mountaineering to the British Military, and staring up at Skyladder on Mount Andromeda—Eammon Walsh and I decided to give this iconic climbing route a try. On May 30, we left Canmore in the middle of the night and headed up the Parkway. We parked the car around 5 a.m. and walked for a bit before putting on our skis. This is the most popular route to the summit of Andromeda and provides fast travel when covered with a spring snowpack. The lower half of Skyladder is the steepest but never crests more than 45 degrees. About halfway up, the route turns into an open bowl, and we almost turned around because of deep snow and some interesting shears. But after a few nerve-wracking steps, the snow got better and we continued. We were glad we did because the skiing was excellent.

Having spent too many days climbing at the Back of the Lake below the overpowering shadow of Mount Victoria, Ali Haeri (who'd already skied the Northeast Face of the South Summit with Marco Delasalle earlier in the season) joined Eammon and me for a summer ski safari. Our main goal was The Sickle on Victoia with our number two objective being the West Face of Lefroy.

We approached via Lake O'Hara and spent the night of July 5 camped at the Abbot Pass Hut. The next morning, after sketching across some steep, exposed cliffs in the dark, we abandoned The Sickle idea and turned our attention to Lefroy. In case you've already forgotten, last summer was not the driest, and a recent storm had just laid down about 30 centimetres of snow in the alpine. This made for excellent travel both up and down. We finished the trip by skiing down the Death Trap and hiking out to Lake Louise. Despite skiing the ultra-classic West Face of Lefroy, our Death Trap exit turned into a walk of shame with The Sickle staring down at us, mocking our failure.

There are two main factors that must come together to ski big terrain in the Rockies: conditions and motivation. I'm not sure which one is more important. If it were simple, conditions would be perfect in January and everyone would still be motivated to get after it. But as it is, the high alpine peaks don't often come around until late April, and by then most people are thinking about rock climbing in the sun instead of sliding on snow. For those who are still keen to lay tracks down some of the coolest faces on the planet, all you have to do is pick up a copy of Sean Dougherty's *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, look for the faces with snow, and go.

Hungabee Direct

Larry Stanier

I SPEND A LOT OF TIME on the dock at Lake O'Hara and spend a fair bit of that time staring up at Hungabee. The "Chieftain" and I have had a bit of a love-hate relationship over the past 12 or so years. It has thrown a few rocks at me, and I have flipped it the bird a few times. But we have coexisted for at least seven or eight trips to the summit with guests. For several years I have felt it was time to work on our relationship. The best way to do this (it refused therapy sessions) was to find a better way to the summit where the Chieftain may be a little less tempted to throw rocks, and I would keep the bird in its glove.

Finally the stars aligned, conditions were good and someone wanted a big adventure. Ellorie McKnight was a long-time O'Hara Lodge staff, and her dad, John, a wily old-school mountaineer. We agreed to take a run at straightening out the normal Hungabee route. It was a grand adventure and they did very well.

Here is the beta. From Opabin Pass (glaciated approach) follow the West Ridge route up scree and gullies over a small peak (Opabin Peak). There is a good bivy site on the peak but a slightly better one is in the col below. Water is from snowmelt but may be unavailable in a very dry August. Some opt to bivy at Opabin Pass itself, but it is often windswept and rat infested.

From the bivy sites, follow the normal route up through steepening quartzite (4th class) until you can traverse left through quartzite ledges and slabs to gain the base and southern edge of the big snowfield/face that is the main feature of the west face of Hungabee. Climb (3rd and 4th class) up the right margin of this face on shattered limestone. The rock is usually steeper, more solid and less threatened by stone fall the further climber's right you go. This can be especially important if descending in the afternoon heat.

When the ridge steepens, the traditional route goes way out to the right (southeast) on ledges either above or below a grey limestone band with a chimney/gully system just left of the crest. Disregard both traverse ledges and climb the chimney (low 5th class) continuing up the ridge crest for five to seven pitches. Generally, the climbing is slightly left of the ridge crest as the climber's right side is often brittle and slightly overhanging. Generally, the grade is low- to mid-5th class with good belay stances. Fixed anchors may be found since we rappelled this ridge during our descent. Generally, the rock is reasonable (for Rockies alpine).

When you gain the spectacular north ridge, follow it over a couple of wild knife-edge sections and one big sporty step-across move to where it steepens again at a yellow band capped by the black band. The yellow band goes easily, and then a steep moderate pitch through the black band leads to easy travel a short distance from the summit. To descend, follow the ascent route almost in its entirety. It may be possible to rap earlier off the summit ridge and avoid the step-across section.

I highly recommend a selection of pins (three knifeblades, #5 lost arrow and a baby angle, perhaps) and a hammer. All fixed pins should be tested. At present it would be wise to bring at least 10 metres of rappel cord as rats often ravage fixed cord in that area. A selection of cams and nuts dependent on how comfy you are on lightly travelled 5th-class alpine limestone (read: steep and loose in sections).

The traditional line on the upper mountain traverses some very insecure ledges, crosses a couple of nasty gullies and has a few traversing pitches with poor anchors and stances. It is threatened by rockfall from a huge scree slope and holds ice late in the season when all else is dry. I hate that place, and can't imagine ever going there again.

Summary

North Ridge/West Face Variant (D 5.6), Mount Hungabee, Lake O'Hara. FA: Ellorie McKnight, John McKnight, Larry Stanier, August 17, 2010.

The new North Ridge variant to the original West Face route follows the upper section of the right-hand skyline directly to the summit of Mount Hungabee. Photo: Larry Stanier

Moyen Monster

J. Mills

FOR MY FIRST DAY on ice this year, I took a drive down the Spray Lakes Road in Kananaskis Country by myself with the intention of climbing R&D. However, as I was passing Burstall Pass parking lot I noticed a cool-looking line on Mount Burstall. I had my bike on the roof so the approach only took about an hour, and soon I was picking my way up some slabby rock and onto the thin ice. The ice turned out to be pretty good WI3 or easy WI4. The hardest climbing was at the bottom, but I continued up all the way to the ridgeline—from where I spotted another unclimbed early season ice line on the adjacent Snow Peak. I descended the ridge, having to only do one rappel along the way, and made my way back to the Burstall Pass trail.

Two days later, Eammon Walsh and I headed down the same trail with our sights on the sliver of ice I had previously spotted. A couple of hours later we were at the base nervously looking up at 60 metres of vertical chandeliered ice. I decided to give it a go, and it was indeed full value. The climbing was sustained WI6 and mostly too airy for good ice screws. There were some super cool features though, and it rekindled my addiction for steep ice.

Above this pitch, we traversed left a short ways and Eammon did a great job of leading through some overhanging and unprotected M5 climbing onto a strip of WI4 ice that gained the top. We continued up snow slopes and short rock steps to the summit and then easily descended the ridge. Last winter, Eammon, Steve Holeczi and I started our season with a new route that we named Facile Monster. Since this one was significantly harder, we named it Moyen Monster.

Idiot Son of an Asshole on Mount Burstall. Photo: J. Mills

Moyen Monster on Snow Peak. Photo: J. Mills

Summary

Idiot Son of an Asshole (5.4 WI3R), Mount Burstall, British Military Group. FA: J. Mills, October 22, 2010.

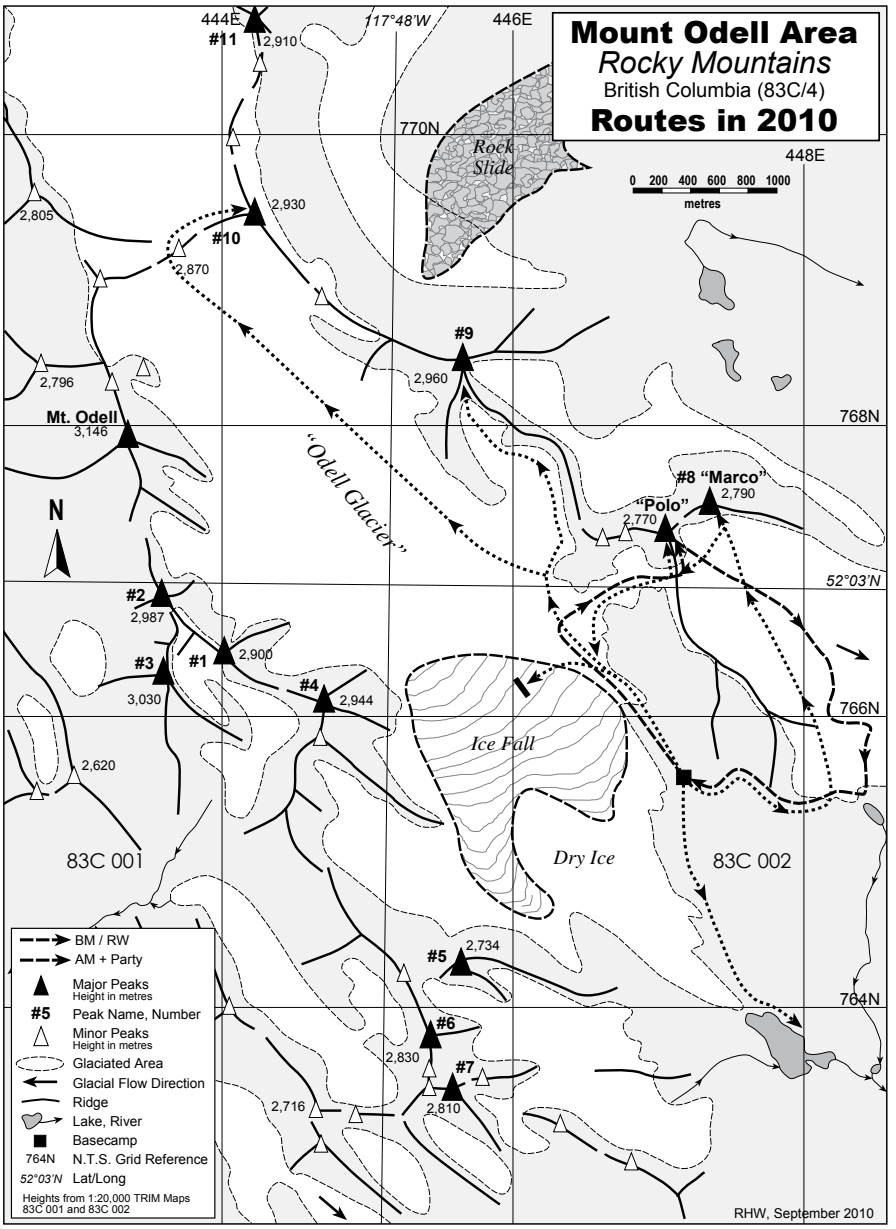
Moyen Monster (WI6 M5 R/X), Snow Peak, British Military Group. FA: J. Mills, Eamonn Walsh, October 24, 2010.

Not Rooked This Time

Art Maki

IN 1978, DAVE WHITBURN and I spent a star-studded night in a meadow northeast of Rook Mountain after deciding that we were on the wrong side of Rook to climb it in the time available. We had left the Chess campsite and our companions, Bob and Harriet Kruszyna, Hamish Mutch and Peter Vermuelen, with the idea of making the first ascent of Rook Mountain, which we reckoned was just over 10,000-feet high and located at the southern end of the range of peaks we had christened the Chess Group [*CAJ*, 1979, vol. 62, pp. 6-8]. Since then I have harboured the hope of returning to conquer that peak from a more promising direction. This past year, while climbing in the nearby valley of the "Odell Glacier", just south of Tsar Mountain, the time was ripe (after 32 years) to satisfy that hope.

First, Conrad Janzen, Roger Wallis and I sought to explore the peaks surrounding the Odell Glacier, which we thought might not have been previously visited. We used a sketch map provided by Roger with the most significant peaks arbitrarily numbered. Along with us came my daughter, Mai Maki, her two sons Holt Maki (age 13) and Jonah Joughin (age 12), and Roger's climbing partner, Bill McKenzie. Our camp was established via helicopter on a lovely bench at 7,200 feet (2,200 metres) overlooking and just east of the Odell Glacier. The campsite was just over seven kilometres south of Tsar Mountain.



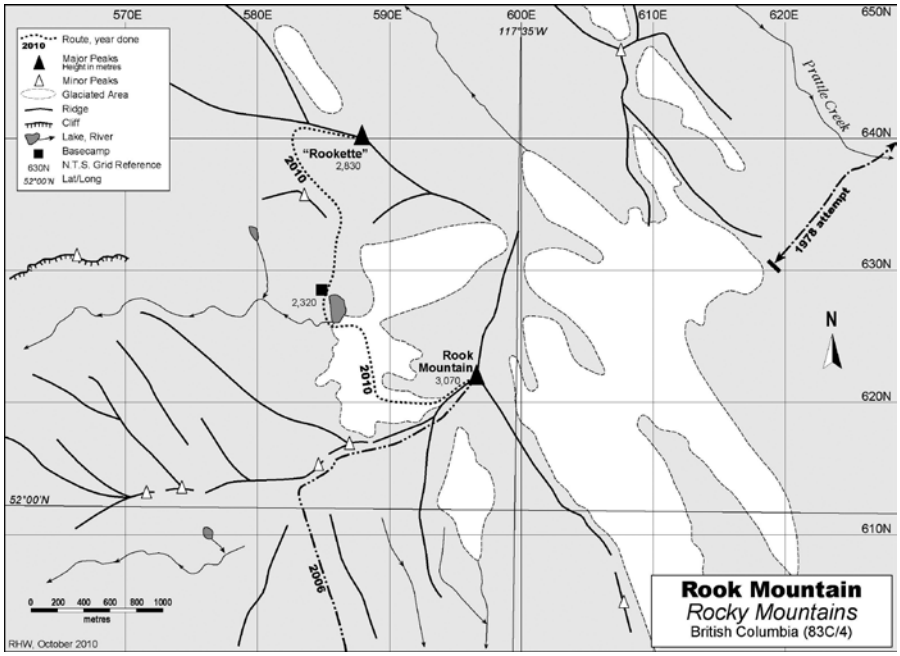
On July 19, Conrad, Mai, the two boys and I climbed peak 2960 (#9 on map) via the south-southeast slopes. This peak is the highest of the several peaks bounding the Odell Glacier on the east. It is 3.5 kilometres south of Tsar. On the summit we found a cairn, but no note to indicate who might have made it. We presumed that the peak had been climbed by a party that may have also climbed Mount Odell. After a day of rest we ascended the Odell Glacier to its highest point and then turned right to ascend peak 2930 (#10). Again, a small remnant of a cairn was found but no record.

On July 23, Roger and Bill came in by helicopter. After many years of communication by e-mail I finally met Roger for the first time. They spent the day setting up their tent and inspecting the neighbourhood.

Meanwhile, the rest of us went over the lateral moraine, up the recently bared rock of the glacier basin, and then up the glacier just east of our camp to climb peak 2790 (#8a) and peak 2770 (#8b), which seemed not to have been previously climbed. We dubbed them "Marco" and "Polo", respectively. Those two peaks are nearly the same height but about a half kilometre apart. They are two kilometres southeast of peak 2960 and on the same ridge that bounds the east side of the Odell Glacier. Marco (#8a) was slightly higher and was

ascended by the east-southeast ridge. Polo (#8b) was slightly lower and was ascended by the south ridge. We then descended to the edge of the Odell Glacier and back to camp. The next day, Roger and Bill climbed Polo in the opposite direction, first ascending above the Odell Glacier and finally descending via the glacier to the cirque just east of camp.

At this point it was time for my daughter and family to return home. The rest of us took advantage of the helicopter to move camp to a lake at 2,320 metres just west of Rook. On July 26, Roger, Bill, Conrad and I ascended the leftward-trending snowfield on the west flank of the southwest ridge of Rook. Upon attaining the highest snow col, we then scrambled up the remaining scree slope to the summit (3,070 metres), which was reached by 10 a.m. after a 5 a.m. start. The weather was perfect with hardly a cloud in sight, so we basked in the sun for two and a half hours. The cairn at the summit and the enclosed summit register showed that the Grizzly Group had preceded us in the year 2006 as a 100th anniversary climb for the Alpine Club of Canada. This group consisted of Leon Kubbernus, Lyn Michaud, Mike Simpson and Peter Speer who climbed from the east flank of the southwest ridge, so we presumed that ours was a new route. The lower part of our route provided a wonderfully long sitting glissade on the descent.



The line of ascent up the west flank of the southwest ridge of Mount Rook. The summit is just out of view off the left side of the photo. Photo: Art Maki

The following day, July 27, Conrad and I made what appears to have been a first ascent of the smaller companion peak just northwest of Rook, which we called "Rookette". We climbed Rookette (2,830 metres) by traversing to the west ridge, which was then ascended to the summit ridge, and then along the summit ridge providing some interesting but easy rock climbs over a few steps. The weathered limestone of the area provided excellent friction for climbing.

Summary

Rook Mountain (3070m), new route (F) via west flank of southwest ridge; second ascent of the mountain. FA: Conrad Janzen, Art Maki, Bill McKenzie, Roger Wallis, July 26, 2010.

West ridge (F) of Rookette (2830m). FA: Conrad Janzen, Art Maki, July 27, 2010.

Marco (2790m) and Polo (2770m). FRA: Conrad Janzen, Jonah Joughin, Art Maki, Holt Maki, Mai Maki, July 23, 2010.

Twelve Years Later

Raphael Slawinski

APRIL 1999. My most exciting winter season yet was wrapping up. The X-Games, Ouray, and early repeats of hard routes big and small: it felt like being caught up in a whirlwind of overhanging rock and ice. Toward the end of the season I got involved in the Rockies' biggest new-wave mixed project to date—the visionary Rocket Man on Mount Patterson. The route was the brainchild of "Everyday Dave" Thomson, but the scale of the project meant extra manpower was needed, which was where I came in. Kefira Allen and I spent a couple of days toiling on the wall, jumaring up lines strung over the lower pitches, bolting our way toward the final icicle, pushing the high point a little higher. Dave and Eric Dumerac were the first to top out on the route. After jugging to the top of the ropes, they finished up the last two pitches of ice. From below, the ice had looked continuous and so the drill was left behind. But Rocket Man had an ace up his sleeve: the final ice did not quite connect with the snow ledge below, requiring a few metres of unprotected drytooling to start. I am a peak bagger, and summits—even arbitrary ones, like the transition from steep ice to low-angled snow—matter to me. But I am also a sport climber, and climbing a route in a single go from bottom to top means just as much—because, as Grivel ads used to say, style matters. And so Kefira and I crossed the thawing Mistaya River and skied toward Rocket Man one more time. Kefira's shoulder was wrecked and awaiting surgery, but she selflessly volunteered to jumar behind me to give me a chance at climbing the route. I was decked out in a stiff Gore-Tex suit with straight shafts and leashes—quaint technology from another century. But mixed climbing was still mixed climbing, and the yellow limestone and blue ice were the same then as they are today. Dave skied up the moraines to watch our progress and take photos. I do not remember too much from that day; after all, it was 12 years ago, and Dave is not here anymore. I do remember dodging a falling cornice on the route, and breaking through the river ice on the ski back to the car.

Raphael Slawinski on pitch three of Rocket Man during the second ascent.
Photo: Jon Walsh

APRIL 2011. It was another flawless early spring day. Jon Walsh and I met in Lake Louise, fuelled up on cappuccino, and raced up the Parkway. The outside thermometer in Jon's car dipped to an unseasonal -18 C, but skiing toward the east face of Mount Patterson had us shedding layers in no time. Two hours after leaving the car we were changing out of AT boots and into climbing boots at the base of Rocket Man. With a bit of simul-climbing, Jon took us up the first two pitches. Our pace slowed dramatically as I started up the third. Detached ice and loose rock had me holding my breath as I gingerly weighed creaky edges. Coming to a fork in the road ahead—with more insecure drytooling but bolts up left, or ice but no gear up right—I hesitated for a few moments before heading right. A lock-off on a flexing flake, a rushed swing into thin ice, then another, and I had my feet back under me.

The next two or three pitches went more easily thus letting us recover from all the exertion. From a fat snow ledge, one more pitch of rock remained. But why was the first bolt so high and where were all the holds? Who bolted this piece of choss and sandbagged it, anyway? Some climbing physicist, I am told. After exploring his options, Jon finally committed to the least bad of the holds and started climbing. A few moves later something gave way and he was off. But why was he not stopping with a bolt at his waist? The mystery was solved when the bolt was found still attached to the quickdraw—the yellow limestone had exploded around the hole. Jon contemplated life for a few minutes and headed back up.

After all the excitement, the ice pitches at the top were pure joy—steep but solid, with breathtaking exposure all the way down to our up-track. And then we were standing in deep snow at the top of the ice, looking at the upper mountain festooned with monstrous mushrooms and cornices. We were grateful not to be venturing among them, but to be downward bound instead.

Summary

Second ascent of Rocket Man (M7+ WI5+, 9 pitches), east face of Mt. Patterson, Icefields Parkway. Raphael Slawinski, Jon Walsh, April 4, 2011.

Carcajou Glacier

Mark Klassen

ERICA ROLES AND I CLIMBED what may be a new route on the Vice President in Yoho National Park. I would be a bit surprised if a local climber from Field had not climbed this at some time in the past, but we haven't been able to find any information on it, so we'll claim it as ours until someone else corrects us. We called it the "Carcajou Glacier" route because we saw wolverine tracks on the glacier during the ascent—*carcajou* being the French name for wolverine.

The route starts from Emerald Basin and ascends a rock buttress to the right of the gully that drains the glacier south of The President/Vice President massif. Then it climbs a short but steep ice tongue on the southwest face of the Vice President. The route is very similar in character to Mount Aberdeen's North Glacier or Mount Stanley's North Face, but with less objective hazard than either of those routes. Having said that, a 50-metre section of unpleasant and exposed gravel (easy) and 40 metres of unprotected 4th-class climbing with no anchor mar the route somewhat. But overall, we found this to be an excellent route for climbers used to climbing in the Rockies.

We started at Emerald Lake at 6 a.m., which felt like a bit of a late start for an alpine climb. But it gets light pretty late in October, and we needed to be able to see where we were going when we reached the terrain below the glacier. Light was essential to finding our way through the buttress of complex cliff bands and gullies to gain the upper cirque between The President and Vice President.

Our strategy worked and at first light we were at the end of the Emerald Basin trail trying to figure out where to go, the route from Emerald Basin to the glacier not obvious. I remember Dan Griffith telling me about climbing The President via Emerald Basin in 1987. He said that going up the right side was easier than it looked, so we chose that way. Funny how I can't remember last week, but for some reason I can remember beta from my first guiding season almost 25 years ago.

A talus cone led to a steep and exposed gravel and talus gulley, and then about 40 metres of 4th class led to easier ground. The gravel was unpleasant and there was no protection or anchors on the 4th-class bit. Earlier in the season this could well be snow covered (or the gravel would be softer) so it would be more enjoyable and easier. There could be some other options to bypass this section that we didn't have time to investigate. There is another gully just left of the one we climbed; it looks like more climbing but the rock quality looks OK. The other option would be to try to ascend the major gully that drains the glacier, but there is more objective hazard from rockfall and an unseen serac far overhead.

Above this a bit more talus led to a cool, narrow traversing foot ledge (4th class, no protection or anchors), and then some nice climbing up 3rd- and 4th-class slabs and steps. At the top of the buttress, we gained the glacier by climbing a short section of steep ice amongst crevasses to get into the upper cirque. From here it is easy to ascend the glacier past some large slots to the base of the ice tongue on the southwest face of the Vice President.

This section provided 60 metres of 55-degree ice and another 60 metres of lower-angled ice around crevasses leading to the upper glacier. We went hard to the climber's right here to bypass a broken section, and then easily back left to the summit.

Our descent was made down the regular route to President Pass and then back down the glacier and rock buttress to Emerald Basin. The unprotected/unanchored 4th-class bit required some focused downclimbing to say the least.

Summary

Carcajou Glacier (AD 4th class, 55° ice), southwest face of the Vice President. FRA: Mark Klassen, Erica Roles, October 14, 2010.

The upper ice tongue of the Carcajou Glacier from President Pass. Photo: Mark Klassen

The East

Evangeline

Andriy Kolos

ice climbing in southern Ontario requires a well-funded gas card and a rare fervour. There's a lot of driving relative to the vertical distance climbed. But the short routes that do get climbed often start right off a lake and are sustained all the way to the top. Very few waterfalls actually freeze up in southern Ontario, so it's left to the melting snowpack to feed the ice. Many climbs are on isolated lakes off the snowmobile paths. All you feel is stillness. All you hear is silence.

This is the forest primeval. The
murmuring pines and the hemlocks,
Bearded with moss, and in garments
green, indistinct in the twilight,
Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad
and prophetic,
Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that
rest on their bosoms.
Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-
voiced neighboring ocean
Speaks, and in accents disconsolate
answers the wail of the forest.

As I drove around picking partners up early Sunday morning, I told them we could decide on the drive northward where we would start our day. Watt Lake, McCauley and Diamond all had interesting options, but Danylo Darewych sent me a note mid-week saying he stumbled upon something that might be of interest to me at Papineau Lake.

"Andriy! Something has touched down to the left of My So Called Life. It looked great, but upon closer inspection, it was just a thin sheet. You might be able to get a screw higher up in the flow, but it's just a lacy, chandeliered paper sheet down low. Well, maybe you could find some gear…." He also attached some photos showing an ice line gracefully flowing down the off-vertical face. It was as if someone had delicately draped a curtain and covered it with sparkles.

I'll be honest. Even though temperatures were forecasted to be in the low teens and Papineau requires an hour-long approach across a windswept lake, there wasn't any doubt in my mind that we would check out the conditions there first. The ice wasn't going to be any better and the thermometer any kinder elsewhere, so we had better just make the trek across the lake to check Danylo's discovery. I was convinced the line had to be tackled sooner than later because it faced southwest and other routes there typically just get more baked as the season progresses. With the warm spell from the week before, it wouldn't take long for the ice to dry up or detach.

Pictures always make ice look fatter than it really is. The dark shade of the rock didn't come through in the photo. It looked thin, but it wasn't even a sheet of "thin"—it was simply a hanging set of baby chandeliers, all supported by the ones below. But there was no time to waste—with four folks and the cold temps, this wasn't going to be a high-volume climbing day and the sun was going to come around the corner shortly. Would I be able to convince everyone that "we" should start with this, rather than the fat flows? I tried to sound as convincing as I could.

Maybe it was the fact that I had started uncoiling the ropes at the base, or the clouded-by-the-cold reasoning, or out of simple boredom that they had agreed.

"I'll just go take a look if I can find some gear in the corner," I told Ben, as I started up. Delicate climbing right off the lake led me to the corner. Liberating some ice chunks plastered to the corner revealed a crack. Fiddle, fiddle, in went a Tricam. Smack, bang, ouch, ping, ping, in went an angle. *It's only the next move or two that look questionable. Gear is right here. It's good. Let's see*, I told myself. Never again do I want to tiptoe my way up a creaking, flexing, delaminated sheet of chandeliers. Somehow my focused attempt at being delicate was sufficient for me to gain enough ground and get a stick into some decent ice, and in a roundabout way searching for good ice, I somehow gained a ledge. More gear placements materialized and I apologized to Ben for taking so long. He was dutifully belaying stuck in one spot rather than running around trying to stay warm like the others.

The next section also required a circuitous path as I searched for hints of thicker ice that would lead me to my destination—a final good stance from which I hoped the ice was thick enough to accept screws. Just as my confidence began to grow, a tool placement sheared, and the new-found confidence disappeared amidst a few whines and giggles. The mind works in funny ways. With a building pump and focused concentration, I reached the aforementioned stance. I side-pulled an icicle with one hand while clearing ice with the other. I was put off by the eerie sounds of the ice chunks falling behind the detached flake of rock I was standing on. *How cool and special is this*, I thought.

With a few equalized screws placed in the aerated ice to calm my mind, the final sticks in the thick ice should

Andriy Kolos on the first ascent of Evangeline at Lake Papineau, southern Ontario.
Photo: Adrienne Tam

have been easy. However, the ascent required my full attention to the very end. A beautiful journey requiring commitment, adept gentle passage, belief and steadfast vision, just like its namesake. Du calme! However, this was nothing compared to the perseverance of a hardworking and jovial people displayed during the adversity of the Grand Dérangement. A deep bow to my inspiration!

Still stands the forest primeval; but under the shade of its branches
Dwells another race, with other customs and language.
Only along the shore of the mournful and misty Atlantic
Linger a few Acadian peasants, whose fathers from exile
Wandered back to their native land to die in its bosom.
In the fisherman's cot the wheel and the loom are still busy;
Maidens still wear their Norman caps and their kirtles of homespun,
And by the evening fire repeat Evangeline's story.
While from its rocky caverns the deep-voiced, neighboring ocean
Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest.

Note: Excerpts from "Evangeline, A Tale of Acadie" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1847.

Summary
Evangeline (WI4+, 25m), Papineau Lake, Ontario. FA: Ben Iseman, Will Gilbert, Andriy Kolos, Adrienne Tam, January 16, 2011.

Mixed Momentum

Nathan Kutcher

WARM AND DRY is a disappointing way to kick off the ice season. While all the winter climbers across southern Ontario were eager to get back to hacking on ice, November came and went with little hint that winter would ever show up. Thankfully, when the temps finally dropped and the snow finally came, we were treated to real Canadian winter—at least for a month or two. The arrival of the cold weather helped usher in more than 30 new ice and mixed routes; too many for me to recount here, so I'm just touching on the ones that stand out to me.

As usual, the season started a little sooner at the northern granite cliffs than at the southern limestone crags. Pascal Simard and Cindy Doyle linked thin smears of early season ice with crack climbing and drytool moves to climb Life's a Bitch (WI4, M6R) at Edelweiss.

Jaded with the long commutes to distant areas, I spent most of my season closer to home on the less-iced-up southern cliffs. First on my to-do list was finishing up a route I had started equipping last year at The Grotto. Off the Couch (M6+, 13m) starts out with a bouldery crux, pulling a small roof to enjoyable climbing on jugs and thin seams that lead up the gently overhanging wall. A more difficult version, Couch Surfing (M8-, 14m) climbs the crux section of Off the Couch before cutting out left to continue on steeper terrain and joins the last two bolts of Highway Robbery. This great link-up offers continuous moves out steep rock and provides a stepping-stone between Off the Couch and the more difficult routes in the centre of the cave.

Despite a lack of heavy seepage and the usual freeze-thaw cycle, January saw an increase in new route activity. Instead of random new lines, it was the flows that form consistently, and fall down soon after, that provided the ice for most of the new routing. One exception was Peripheral Visionary (M9, 20m). This new route climbs on small, technical holds out the centre of the horizontal roof of The Grotto. It ends on a reliable drip that forms a large dagger at the lip of the roof, which is followed by a steep flow of early forming ice.

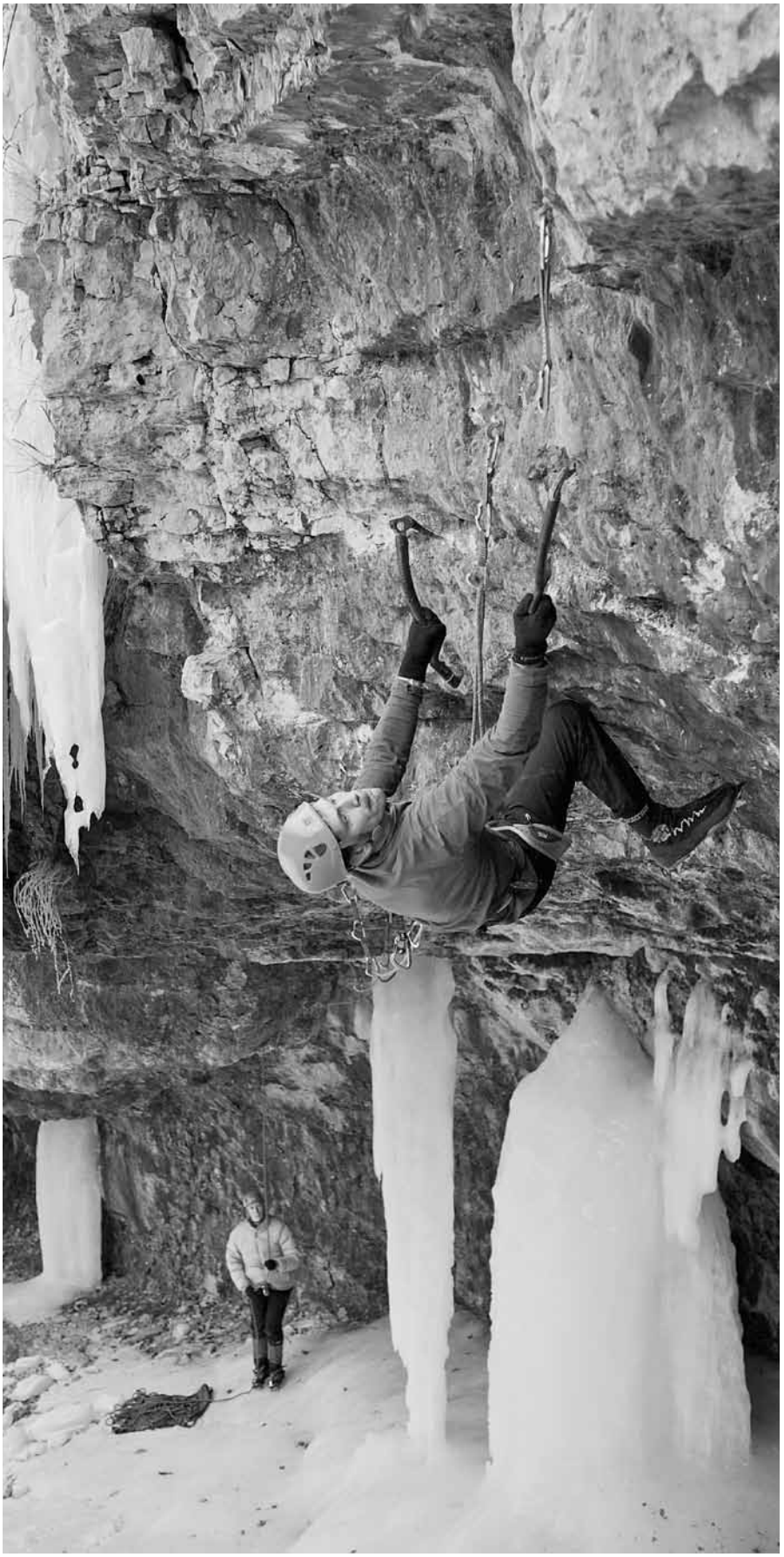
At his new crag at Jordan Lake, the prolific Danylo Darewych climbed Joshua (WI2+ 5.3, 25m). It starts out on thin ice and then turns to turf sticks before climbing onto a rocky ramp that leads up to thicker ice, passing nice cracks for rock gear. In good years it may ice over completely, but in the usual southern Ontario conditions it should make a great route for those looking to ease into mixed climbing.

With word of an unclimbed line being formed, Andriy Kolos headed to Papineau Lake. There he found Evangeline (WI4+, 25m). This committing line climbs thin steep ice, protected by rock gear and stubby ice screws. At 25 metres tall, the delicate and sustained route "isn't long enough" to be harder, so is likely another southern Ontario sandbag. Meanwhile, at the heavily travelled Diamond Lake, Rebecca Lewis and I climbed the previously unrecorded route, A Turn for the Douche (WI4 R, 30m). This year was the first time we've seen it to be reasonably well-formed and attached. Unfortunately, thin, unconsolidated masses of icicles and unfrozen turf proved otherwise and things nearly did take a turn for the douche. At Hidden Gems Crag, Justin Bryant climbed a steep pillar in a small ice-filled notch, calling it Jade (WI4, 23m).

The consistently cold weather continued into February perpetuating the lack of meltwater, but the new route activity didn't slow down. Fully back

into the swing of winter climbing, some overlooked lines from years past were knocked off and some difficult projects were completed. Dave Broadhead and Josh Burden went off into the woods hunting for new ice—and they didn't come back empty-handed. At Kushog Lake they picked off Spaghetti Wrestler (WI3+, 12m) and then worked on establishing a nice trad mixed line that they should be eager to get back to complete. Dubbed The Stimulator, it climbs thin, discontinuous cracks up a gently overhanging wall to a skinny dagger and should check in around M6. Moving on to Sherborne Lake, they found The Usual Suspects (WI4, 13m), which climbs a pair of steep pillars. Skeleton Lake also proved to be far from climbed out. Dr. A.T. McGuire, Rebecca Lewis and I climbed a verglassed corner with drytooling and turf sticks to create La Petite Lesbo Noir de Nord (M4, 15m). Also at the same cliff we climbed a dark-yellow, thin-ice dribble called Yer in for a Treat (M5, 12m). We can likely only dream of finding a full pitch of engaging climbing like the first eight metres of this route somewhere in southern Ontario.

Sparks were flying through the winter as I worked on piecing together a massive line across The Grotto. Centipede (M10, 22m) crawls over the longest expanse of the cave's stepped horizontal roof. There is something about steep drytooling that seems to always leave me hanging upside down, dangling from the rope. With big moves between small holds and the ground threateningly close by, the sports action was always high. On one occasion, I was tangled up in a figure-4 and just about to clip a draw when my tool popped. I found myself swinging headfirst like a human wrecking ball with the ground whizzing by at what felt like mere inches below my helmet. After that near miss, I decided it would be better to clip without my feet above me, which led to some interesting manoeuvres. Centipede starts by monkeying across ice blobs forming from a tight seam in the otherwise blank roof. After this short section of unusual



Nathan Kutcher on Centipede at The Grotto.
Photo: Martin Suchma

ice climbing, a stance at a thin pillar provides a chance to recompose before the most difficult section of the route. From the pillar, the line attacks a sequence of sustained moves between technical and sometimes hard-to-see holds with bad to nonexistent footholds, and crosses approximately eight metres of nearly horizontal roof. Nearing the lip of the cave you are rewarded with a jug and a good heel hook where you can try to work some lactic acid out of your arms while trying to get some blood back into them. After leaving this rest, the route shoots to a blind pocket and onto sloping holds with difficult-to-use footholds that help keep just enough body tension to avoid falling off. At this point, Centipede joins Highway Robbery at the end of its crux with a powerful move out to the right with the pick of your ice tool edging sideways on a thin, technical potato-chip-like hold. Once established on the headwall and with some weight back on your feet, it's just a matter of holding on with ballooning forearms between a few big moves to the anchors.

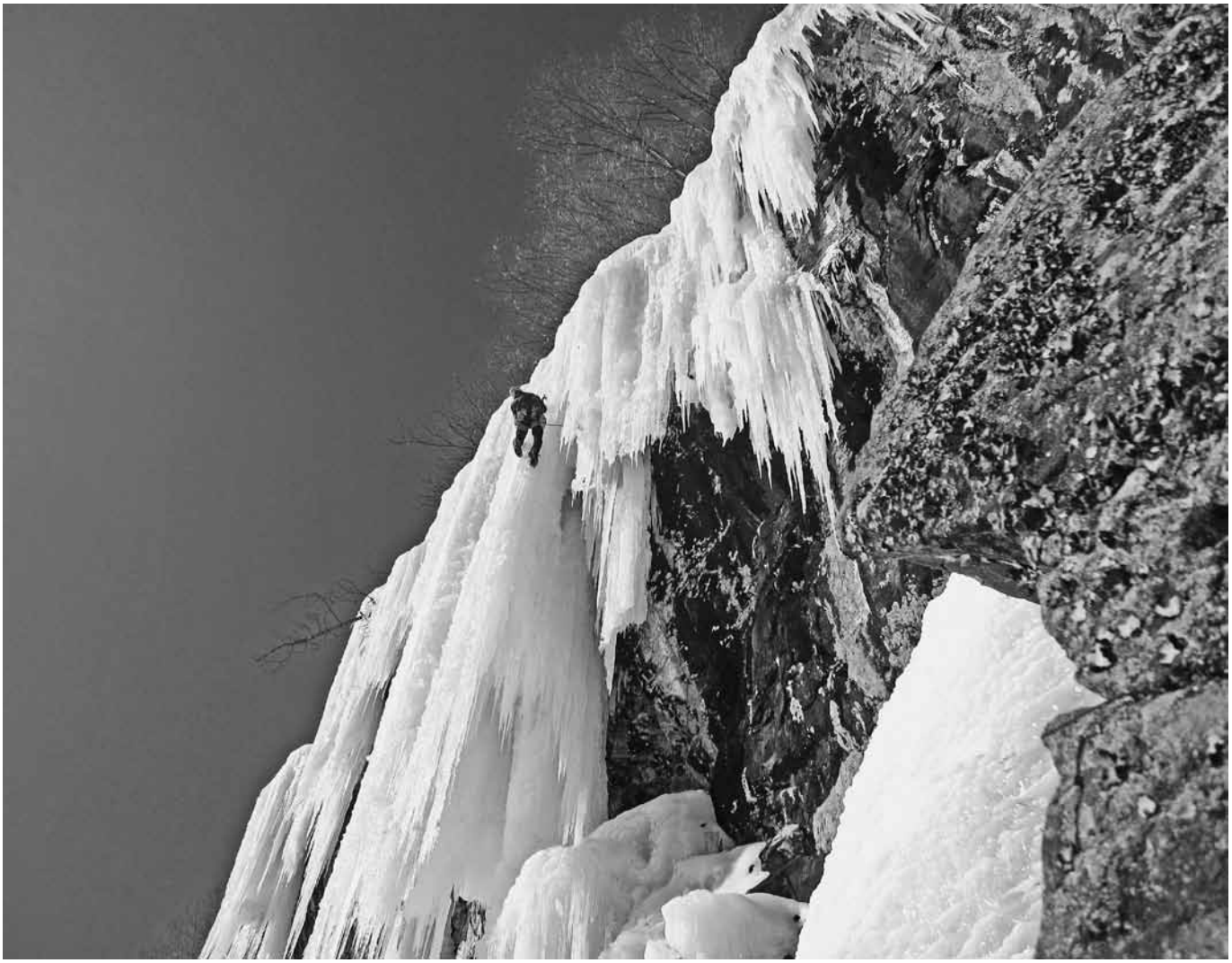
Mid-February saw a warm spell that hit the ice hard. It provided some meltwater to feed the undersized flows, but the thaw came at a point were it was too late for most routes. With the sun getting stronger there wasn't enough time for many of the routes to recover. The southern areas were hit especially hard, and with another big roof project in the works, I was under the gun to try and complete the new route before the hanging ice melted away from the lip. With one hard move left to link on redpoint before the ice, I thought Mandatory Overtime (M10, 18m) was almost in the bag. But it wouldn't be that easy. Thawing rock became another big issue in the mad redpoint-dash. After several days of effort I had the sequence of moves figured out. Big moves through the starting jugs, a couple of longer moves between holds that quickly diminish in size, choke up on the tool, paste my opposing foot on the miserable smear, fire for the small pocket almost two metres away. My body launched upward, the pick finding the hard-to-hit pocket just as my feet cut away from the rock—and just as the launching hold, which was supposed to check my violent swing, crumbled. I was sent flying like a rag doll away from the rock and found myself in need of a new sequence. After poking around and breaking off more potential holds, sorting out a new way to the pocket had to wait until another day.

Returning a week later, the rock was refrozen but the ice had receded far enough that it wasn't anywhere close to the last pocket. After figuring out a possible new sequence to complete the crux and reach the pocket, I was still facing the problem that the ice was now out of striking distance. With some searching over the lip I found a couple of small edges that promised to be the answer. Some smart use of my feet and the extra moves required to get to the ice actually felt very doable. There was still a chance, but after my previous attempts figuring out the crux, I was getting tired and it seemed like my redpoint chance was fading as I lowered to the ground. With the season looking like it was quickly coming to an end, I decided I had one opportunity left.

With the moves fresh in my mind, I was able to quickly climb through the opening section and up to the crux without expending any surplus energy. I started into the new series of moves I had unlocked and reached up to the sloping intermediate divot. I had to believe the pick would hold as I fought to get my feet into position and make the lunge for the final pocket. Holding on with one hand while winding up for the launch, I could feel my fingers starting to open up as I lurched out toward the pocket. The pick slotted into the hold and cammed into place as my body cut away from the rock. I could feel my arms continuing to fade as I swung my feet back up and fought to cling to the roof. I quickly worked my way out towards the beckoning-yet-tapered dagger. With a pick hooked into the ice I swung my body away from the rock and onto the deteriorating icicle. Ice never felt so difficult as I attempted to hack away, barely able to grip my tools. Once finally established on the dagger, the final three metres of easier ice to the anchor was a battle that couldn't be over quick enough. Clipping into the anchor it was hard to believe that I had actually pulled it off.

The freeze-thaw cycles continued through February and well into the end of March, making for hit-and-miss conditions. The ice at McCauley Lake held up well to the late-spring warm spells, and Pascal Simard found thin ice formed up and still attached on the sought-after line of Mr. Hide (M5+, 20m). This trad mixed route starts out on a thin sheet of ice in a dihedral and then works both rock and ice up the corner to a drytool finish ending at an anchor near the top of the cliff. The Blue Max Wall also at McCauley saw a short burst of new route action with a difficult ice route nearly completed and two new sport-mixed lines going up. My route Fishing for Hooks (M6+, 15m) climbs a weakness on hard-to-read rock at the right end of the wall to a fun transition onto a smear of ice near the top. The easiest way up isn't particularly straightforward and requires hands-on-rock moves as well as drytooling. Kolos completed a line he had started equipping the season previous. High Voltage Superman (M6, 20m) climbs the wall between and behind Blue Max and Adopt-A-Drip. After a hard move near the start, more moderate climbing leads up to stemming between the rock and ice. After clipping the last bolt, he climbed out from under an ice roof between the two big icicles and onto the steep ice above. All three completed routes should be a great addition to the growing collection of southern Ontario moderate mixed routes.

The end of this winter was an interesting turning point for Southern Ontario ice climbing. With the surging development of new mixed routes over the last few years, we finally have some good mixed cragging opportunities. With only a few individuals establishing these new lines and a short season to boot, development has been moving along at a surprisingly fast pace. Will development slow as the easier lines are picked off, or will momentum continue to build? As this season sputtered to an end, most of us were left with projects still unclimbed indicating the psych will continue for at least another year.



Nathan Kutcher on High Voltage Superman, McCauley Lake. Photo: Rebecca Lewis

Summary

Life's a Bitch (WI4, M6R), Edelweiss. FA: Cindy Doyle, Pascal Simard, December 2010.

Off the Couch (M6, 13m), The Grotto. FA: Nathan Kutcher, December 11, 2010.

Couch Surfing (M8-, 14m), The Grotto. FA: Nathan Kutcher, John Scott, December 19, 2010.

Peripheral Visionary (M9, 20m), The Grotto. FA: Nathan Kutcher, John Scott, January 9, 2011.

Evangeline (WI4+, 25m), Papineau Lake. FA: Will Gilbert, Ben Iseman, Andriy Kolos, Adrienne Tam, January 16, 2011.

A Turn for the Douche (WI4 R, 30m), Diamond Lake. FA: Nathan Kutcher, Rebecca Lewis, January 16, 2011.

Joshua (WI2+ 5.3, 25m), Jordan Lake. FA: Danylo Darewych, Antonio Segura, January 26, 2011.

Jade (WI4, 23m), Hidden Gems Crag. FA: Justin Bryant, Danylo Darewych, Antonio Murillo Segura, January 28, 2011.

Spaghetti Wrestler (WI3+, 12m) Kushog Lake. FA: Dave Broadhead, Josh Burden, February 5, 2011.

The Usual Suspects (WI4-, 13m), Sherborne Lake. FA: Dave Broadhead, Josh Burden, February 6, 2011.

La petite lesbo noir de nord (M4, 15m), Skeleton Lake. FA: Nathan Kutcher, Rebecca Lewis, Dr. A.T. McGuire, February 6, 2011.

Yer in for a Treat (M5, 12m), Skeleton Lake. FA: Nathan Kutcher, Rebecca Lewis, Dr. A.T. McGuire, February 6, 2011.

Centipede (M10, 22m), The Grotto. FA: Nathan Kutcher, Rebecca Lewis, February 13, 2011.

Mandatory Overtime (M10, 18m), Dairy Queen. FA: Nathan Kutcher, Rebecca Lewis, February 21, 2011.

Mr. Hide (M5+, 20m), McCauley Lake. FA: Andriy Kolos, Pascal Simard, Tiago Varella-Cid, February 27, 2011.

High Voltage Superman (M6, 20m), McCauley Lake. FA: Andriy Kolos, Nathan Kutcher, Doug Smith, March 13, 2011.

Fishing for Hooks (M6+, 15m), McCauley Lake. FA: Nathan Kutcher, Joe Palma, March 13, 2011.

Foreign

Babes, Big Walls and Bad Shrooms

Jasmin Caton

I straddled the lichen-encrusted sharp summit ridge of Nalumasortoq, eyes shining, chapped lips smiling broadly. It seemed surreal that less than 48 hours earlier I was glimpsing this fishtail-esque granite peak and its many towering neighbours for the very first time. I couldn't believe how smoothly things had gone so far; all our flight connections had worked out, we had managed to sleep off our jet lag in some comfy hostel accommodations and now we were here, in granite-climbing paradise with splitter weather, splitter cracks, three weeks to go and already a long route with a ton of super fun free climbing under our belts.

If my expectations of hardship and suffering seem rather pessimistic, consider that my husband, Evan Stevens, visited Tasermiut Fjord, Greenland, in 2002. Not only was his trip plagued by some poor weather and voracious mosquitoes, but unexpected travel expenses and some jet-lagged sabotaged food shopping resulted in starvation rations for most of his trip. He came home 10 kilograms lighter, bearing photos of gorgeous vertical granite walls and tales of hand cracks that shoot skyward for hundreds of metres. Despite the siren's song of granite splitters, it took me eight years to muster up the fortitude and skills required for the trip. When I teamed up with big-wall free-climbing queen Kate Rutherford for an expedition to Tasermiut Fjord in mid-July 2010, I felt ready to tackle the adventure and adversity Greenland would surely dish out.

Jasmin Caton laybacking an off-width on the upper half of War and Poetry on the west face of Ulamatorsuaq, Tasermiut Fjord, Greenland. Photo: Kate Rutherford

As Kate and I rappelled down the 600-metre, 19-pitch British Route (VI 5.12+) on Nalumasortoq, we chatted about what adventures the rest of our trip would hold. My post-summit elation and resulting optimism seems almost laughable in hindsight: "So, Kate, here's what I think, we send our new route over the next week, and then we can come back to the British Route, climb it in a day and redpoint the two 5.12 pitches, then we can hop on Ulamatorsuaq and try to free one of the 30-pitch 5.12+ lines on it!"

From the summit of Nalumasortoq we had been able to get a good view of an unnamed, unclimbed 600-metre face that we hoped to attempt a new route on. The rock looked promising, but the glaciated access to the base appeared broken and challenging. After descending the British Route, we returned to basecamp and rested for a day, then took advantage of some drizzly weather to scope the eight-kilometre, 1,400-vertical-metre approach to our unclimbed objective. Thick fog and some convoluted sections of glacier stopped us within several hundred metres of where the climbing would begin. As we hiked back down to basecamp the rain began in earnest, giving us plenty of tent time that evening to weigh out the pros and cons of attempting a route on the tempting but difficult-to-access unclimbed face.

Fast-forward two weeks. My bright-eyed bushy-tailed optimism is replaced by antsy, neurotic impatience. We have spent days festering in our Megamid at basecamp in drizzly unsettled weather. Each time the weather has cleared and the rock has begun to dry, we have packed up and bivied at the base of one objective or another, only to wake to fog clinging to the granite faces, rain-induced rockfall and, before long, the drizzle would begin again. I battled the boredom by embarking on hikes through the unbelievably scenic terrain around camp—crystal-clear turquoise-tinted fjord water, white sand beaches littered with anemone shells and kelp, boulder-studded hillsides leading to soaring granite walls. Kate made watercolour paintings of the stunning scenery, but after trying to encourage my own artistic side by writing some poetry, I decided to go bouldering. Coarse granite jugs in undercut boulders, edgy faces with spongy heather landings, even some chalked-up problems providing evidence that other weather-stymied climbers had put in their basecamp time as well. I tried fishing for arctic char from the beach, but kept losing lures when the hooks became tangled in the thick kelp. Since the fishing wasn't going as planned, I used my West Kootenay wild-craft-rich background to forage for some tasty additions to our increasingly dull meals. I found some lovely large, succulent brown mushrooms that I noticed some Czech climbers collecting and eating daily. After the Czechs confirmed that the mushrooms I found were the right kind, they offered to trade me for a nicer, larger specimen they had found. I happily agreed, and Kate and I cooked up a pasta feast filled with lots of juicy, spongy chunks of wild mushroom. A few hours after dinner, Kate began retching and I wasn't far behind. It was a rough night, and the next day we were weak, tired and just hoping to survive the trip, never mind climb another route. Ironically, the Czechs were fine after eating the mushrooms that I had found.

We recovered from our mushroom incident quickly, but our remaining time was dwindling down to days. The goal of completing a first ascent had shifted to just climbing something before we had to head home. Spending all that time in camp under the distinctive pillar-shaped form of the 1,830-metre high Ulamatorsuaq had motivated us to use up our last bit of time in an attempt to climb War and Poetry, a 31-pitch 5.12c masterpiece done in 1998 by Todd Skinner, Paul Piana and friends. We had already lugged ourselves and our gear up to the base twice, and both times awoke to precipitation and water streaks running down the initial 15 pitches of 5.10 to 5.12 slab climbing. Finally, with only four days left, we got enough of a weather window for the rock to dry. The weather forecast, received by texts sent to our sat phone from our boys back home, sounded solid for at least a few days.

We launched up the route, climbing the initial 12 pitches of low-angle 5.10 and 5.11 relatively quickly, with both leader and follower sending. The 13th pitch was the first crux, a thin and desperately technical 5.12a/b slab. Kate climbed it with grace and style, narrowly missing the on-sight. In the meantime, clouds had begun to fill the sky, a bitter wind had whipped up and we were still three pitches from our bivy ledge. We switched gears immediately, pulling on gear to move quickly and arriving at the disappointingly tiny bivy ledge as the first drops of spitting rain began. I was able to fix one more pitch—a crumbling, kitty-litter-ish nightmare—before we called it a day and hid under our noisily flapping tarp and single sleeping bag for the night.

The next morning dawned clear and icy cold, and we abandoned our desired style of leader and follower freeing in favour of faster techniques, like the second jumaring and leader French-freeing when necessary. It was on pitch 21 or so, as I dragged my meat through a gaping crack, leaving scabs on my shoulders, spine and knees, that I had the epiphany. After poetically dancing and prancing our way up the 5.10 to 5.12 slab pitches on the first half of the route, we were now waging war with steeper rough, wide, physical dihedral climbing. Ah ha! War and Poetry! Pitch 25 was the only respite, and one of the coolest pitches I've climbed in my life—a perfect 5.11 fingers splitter in golden granite. We topped out in a rain and windstorm just before dark, too preoccupied with the time and energy needed to get ourselves back down the face safely to be over-elated at our success.

We rapped all night, doing 28 raps to get to the ground in a variety of conditions that ranged from wet and windy to dry and windy to calm and pouring. The only consistent thing was the cold. I pretty much shivered the whole night, except when I rapped down the wrong way off a ledge and had to jug back up. I am confident that I have never been so exhausted in my life. My fingertips were completely raw and I was having sparkly over-tired hallucinations in my peripheral vision, although maybe that was just a residual effect from the mushroom poisoning. We reached the ground just after dawn and collapsed into our tent at the base of the route after feasting on ramen, herbal tea and ibuprofen. Five hours later we were ready (barely) to limp the 700-vertical-metres back down to base-camp for a real feast and some more sleep.

After a day of hiking around to reclaim our gear from a stash up the valley, our precious time in the Tasermiut Fjord had run out. Under perfect clear blue skies, a Zodiac showed up to transport us back to civilization. As ready as I was for a hot shower and a juicy muskox burger, I was sorry to be leaving behind the possibility of another adventure on the beautiful walls of Ulamatorsuaq, Nalumasortoq and their many unnamed neighbours. As we organized our gear in Nanortalik, preparing for our many flights back home, I set aside a bag of mosquito coils, my fishing rod and a few other Tasermiut necessities, and left them stashed in a local's shed, ready for when I make it back to the best place I have ever climbed.

Acknowledgement

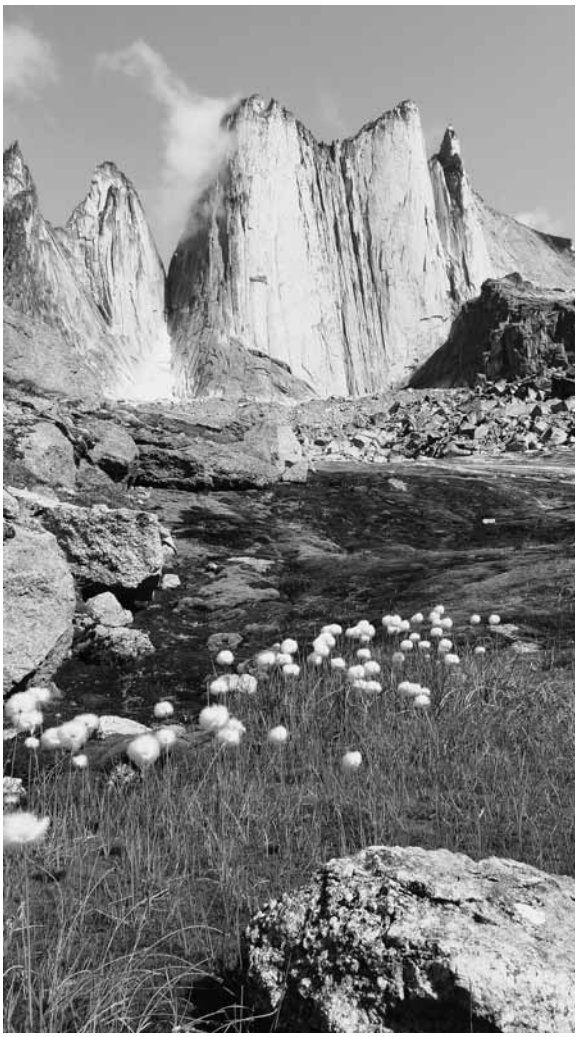
This expedition was supported by the ACC Jen Higgins Memorial Fund.

Summary

British Route (VI 5.11+ C1, 600m, 19 pitches), west face of Nalumasortoq, Tasermiut Fjord, Greenland. Jasmin Caton, Kate Rutherford, July 19-20, 2010.

War and Poetry (VI 5.11+ C1, 1000m, 31 pitches), west face of Ulamatorsuaq, Tasermiut Fjord, Greenland. Jasmin Caton, Kate Rutherford, August 2-3, 2010.

The west face of Nalumasortoq. Photo: Jasmin Caton



Vegetarian Couloir

Raphael Slawinski

THE WEST BUTTRESS, Denali's *voie normale*, is a gorgeous hike at altitude. Between dragging a sled to the 14,000-foot camp and jetting to the top from there, my lungs and legs got a good workout. But the climbing muscles, the arms and the head, were left wanting. As soon as my dad and I returned to Kahiltna Basecamp, I started scoping around for a partner for something more technical. It did not take long to find one. Joel Kauffman had bumped over to Kahiltna from Little Switzerland a few days earlier, and was game for some steeper fun before flying out. We decided on Bacon and Eggs on the Mini-Mini-Moonflower, a route my friend Eamonn Walsh established a couple of years ago with Mark Westman.

Being already June, it got quite hot on the lower glaciers during the day. We waited for the evening freeze and left basecamp at 11 p.m. Have you ever climbed through an Alaskan white night? It is an unforgettable experience. As the golden evening sunlight slowly left the summits, it was replaced by a cold blue glow. We stepped out of our skis and into our crampons around 1 a.m., and headed up a grey ice slope. After a while, the ice steepened and we roped up and simul-climbed into the dusk. The continuous movement kept me from getting cold or sleepy. The technical crux was a rock step barring access to the upper couloir. Water ice plastered a right-facing gash and gave good steep climbing. A few more lower-angled pitches on occasionally thin ice got us to below the heavily corniced ridge. I had a half-hearted charge at the cornice directly above the couloir, but steep unconsolidated snow forced me back to the belay.

It was tempting to declare the route finished, pull out the V-thread hooker and start rappelling. After all, we had made it to the end of the difficulties, no? Well, if we were truly at the end of the difficulties, why did we not just "walk" up to the top, 50 metres higher? Of course, the truth was that real crux still awaited. The Mini-Mini-Moonflower might be an insignificant bump in a land of giants, but formalities have to be observed all the same. I started traversing up and left below the cornices, hoping that what I could not see would prove easier than what I could. Every once in a while I would stop and dig like a badger, trying to find some ice for protection. Eventually, the rope ran out and I shouted down to Joel to start moving. Making for a gap where the cornice had fallen, I punched precarious steps to the top.

The Tokositna Glacier lay below us. The sun was already rising on the east face of Mount Hunter, while down the glacier the west face of Mount Huntington lay in deep shadow. We snapped a few photos, then carefully retraced our steps down the snow slope. It was a relief to reach solid ice, and to drill the first of eight or so V-threads. We skied into basecamp just in time for breakfast, and by the afternoon we were drinking stout on a patio in Talkeetna. I looked forward to going home and rock climbing in the sun, but at the same time, I already missed the Alaska Range. I knew that I would be back.

PS: I THOUGHT I knew where Bacon and Eggs went, but it turned out I did not. It appeared that in our rush to trade skis for crampons, Joel and I started climbing one ice slope too soon. Not that it matters. We found good climbing on our line, and we topped out on the same bump on Hunter's east ridge as Eamonn and Mark did on their route. The only reason our line would not have been climbed before is that no one had bothered; but unless someone comes forward to claim it, I suggest the name "Vegetarian Couloir" for this fun, if not terribly significant, outing.

Summary

Vegetarian Couloir (III WI4), north face of the Mini-Mini-Moonflower, Alaska Range. FA: Joel Kauffman, Raphael Slawinski, June 2010.

The Mini-Mini-Moonflower (left peak) and the Mini-Moonflower (right peak): (1) Bacon and Eggs, (2) Vegetarian Couloir, (3) North Couloir. Photo: Raphael Slawinski

Gasherbrum I

Louis Rousseau

THREE LESS MEMBERS to share expenses meant a really fat bill for the rest of us. The news of our halved team came as a financial blow for Alex Txikon, Gerfried Göschl and me, especially since we are not sponsored athletes and we were already operating on a tight budget. Despite now only being a team of three, we decide to go ahead with our project to climb Gasherbrum I in winter for the first time and hopefully by a new route on its south face.

January 31: We reach basecamp at 5,100 metres after seven days of approaching up the Baltoro Glacier. The weather is very similar to a Quebec winter—approximately -10 to -20 C during daytime and -20 to -30 C at night. All in all, our mood is good and spirits are high, especially with the added inspiration of Simone Moro, Denis Urubko and Cory Richards making the historic first winter ascent of Gasherbrum II. We invite them to our camp for a wonderful dinner prepared by our amazing cooks, Waqar Younis and Muhammad Khan.

February 10: Taking advantage of the good weather, we leave basecamp early in the morning in frigid -25 C temperatures. Despite big loads on our backs, we feel that our bodies have already gained some acclimatization. We work hard up the route until 2 p.m., where at 5,800 metres a strong wind and freezing temperatures forced us back to basecamp.

February 15: In clear but cold weather, we once again climb up the steep south face. Our fixed ropes from the first attempt are buried under wind-pressed snow, making for difficult work to dig them out. We reach our cache at 5,800 metres at 11 a.m.—much later than planned. Gerfried and Alex belay while I climb ahead. Leading is more risky, but it is certainly warmer. The combination of altitude and cold make rotten rock and 70-degree ice very challenging. Alex and Gerfried follow, each carrying more than 20 kilograms of fixed rope. We end our 12-hour day at

Gasherbrum I (left peak) showing the attempted new route on its south face. Photo: Louis Rousseau

our new highpoint of 6,100 metres and begin our descent back to basecamp in complete darkness.

February 17: In a little more than five hours, we reach the top of the fixed lines and forge more new terrain. The climbing becomes more difficult, so height is gained very slowly. In addition, a route-finding error forces us down a bit in order to find a better way. We descend at 4:45 p.m., disappointed that we didn't reach our planned destination for Camp 2 at around 6,250 metres—the only place to set a safe and comfortable camp due to the sustained steepness of face below.

February 25: Alex remains at basecamp with a high fever while Gerfried and I climb through bad weather to try to push onto our proposed Camp 1. After an exhausting ascent, we reach the ridge at around 6,300 metres in the early afternoon. We hack more than two hours at the blue ice to create a tiny platform for our tent. Finally, after three weeks of hard work, we establish Camp 1. Exhausted yet satisfied, we descend back to basecamp after a 14-hour day. That same day, three porters reach basecamp with 24 chickens, kerosene gas and other crucial items we required. Because of deep snow on the Baltoro Glacier, it took them eight days of hard and unbelievable effort.

March 1: Our first night actually sleeping on the mountain was accompanied with a harsh -35 C and strong wind. Sleep was futile. The combination of being exhausted and the stormy conditions forced us back down to basecamp. At least now our bodies were acclimatized for the next step—the summit attempt.

March 9: After a night at Camp 1, we climb to approximately 6,600 metres at which point we decide to bail. A 200-metre, 70-degree ice wall stops us in our tracks. The ice is smooth and hard like marble, making it impossible to place ice screws. After nearly 40 days of focusing on the route, the decision to retreat is not easy. With heavy packs and heavy hearts, we reach basecamp that night to mend our wounds—psychologically and physically.

March 13: With renewed motivation (and a promising weather forecast from Dr. Karl Gabl in Austria), we get an unexpected second chance. Our new plan is to reach Gasherbrum La, a 6,300-metre pass on the other side of the mountain on the border with China, from where we will try the Japanese Couloir in hopes of reaching the summit. We depart basecamp at 5 a.m., loaded with our gear and food for four days. After many hours of slogging and some drops into hidden crevasses, we reach 5,900 metres on the Gasherbrum Glacier for a short break. At 4 p.m. we stop at a safe place for the first night, about 100 metres below the pass.

Louis Rousseau leading an ice runnel at 5,600 metres during an attempt to make the first winter ascent of Gasherbrum I by a new route. Photo: Gerfried Göschl.

March 14: Navigating through many seracs and crevasses delivers us to Gasherbrum La. We reached the bottom of the Japanese Couloir in the afternoon and exit it at 7,000 metres at 5 p.m. where we find a flat place for the tent. The summit looks so near—close enough to touch. Contradicting the weather forecast we received from Austria, there was a strong northeast wind. Therefore, we fixed the tent with ropes, but it was impossible to put the roof (cover) on. As a result, we had to expect a colder night, less protected against this strong Karakoram winter wind. Still, we were optimistic, our weather forecast said that the wind will go down and we would have good climbing conditions on our route till the very summit.

March 15: We start cooking at 2 a.m. after a very cold and sleepless night. There was no break in the 80-kilometre-per-hour wind, so we wait until 9 a.m. before finally coming to terms with the fact that a summit push would be hara-kiri. We pack and descend, unhappy but alive without frostbite.

We fought for the first winter ascent of Gasherbrum I to the absolute end of the season, leaving basecamp on exactly March 21—the first day of spring.

Summary

First winter attempt of Gasherbrum I (8080m) via a new route on the south face, Karakoram, Pakistan. Gerfried Göschl (Austria), Louis Rousseau (Canada), Alex Txikon (Basque), January 31-March 21, 2011.

The High Alpine Circuit

Rick Hudson

EVERY STORY HAS A START, and this one began some years ago when a copy of Peter Potterfield's *Classic Hikes of the World* (W. W. Norton, 2005) was pulled from a shelf one evening. It confirmed what had always been a faint awareness before: that the Cordillera Huayhuash (pronounced "why wash") in Peru was one of the classics. "We should do that," someone said.

Then in 2007, the guest speaker at our annual ACC section dinner was Jeremy Frimer. He spoke about a number of ranges, and mentioned the Huayhuash. Although a small range (it's barely 20 kilometres north to south and 12 kilometres west to east), it boasts a string of famous summits, including the beautiful Yerupaja and Suila Grande, both over 6,000 metres. It turned out that Jeremy had written a guidebook to the range (*Climbs and Treks in the Cordillera Huayhuash of Peru (*Elaho Press, 2005)), in which he included an intriguing description of an alpine circuit that differed markedly from the classic circuit described by Potterfield.

The strands were coming together slowly, but more time passed before thoughts turned to action. My daughter Jacqui had accompanied Jeremy on two of his Huayhuash climbing trips. She recommended we use an outfitter and a guide, and put us in touch with a friend who was both. So we began planning a visit for June 2010 when the mid-winter season (southern hemisphere) ensured the least likelihood of rain.

The choice of a team drew from the local ACC section, as I was keen to have people whose strengths I knew. In the end, we were the magnificent seven who called Vancouver Island home, while Ferdi and Bernhard (old climbing friends from elsewhere) came from the UK and Germany, respectively.

In early June we assembled in Huaraz, an alpine town that is the jumping-off place for the Huayhuash's more famous sister range, the Cordillera Blanca. Huaraz has an elevation of more than 3,000 metres, a fact quickly noticed each time we walked from our hostel down into town, and were then obliged to puff and pant back up. "Don't worry, you'll get better," said someone on the first evening, as my wife, Phee, and I struggled to keep up with the rest who had already been there two days.

Acclimatization was the order of the day. One morning we arranged to be driven up a bad road (all roads in Peru are bad, including the main paved ones) to a lake where we straddled mountain bikes and took a wild, dusty descent into the valley with the Cordillera Blanca facing us under a blue sky. The downhills were easy, but the occasional uphill reminded us we were at 4,000 metres and still needed to adapt.

Our Huayhuash outfitter, Alfredo Quintana Figueroa, owns and operates Mountain Climb Travel in Huaraz. With friend Christian Silva Lindo, he had done the first complete inner alpine circuit of the Huayhuash in 2004. Jeremy Frimer had based his description of the route to some degree on the account they sent to him, together with his own experience of many of the passes.

Now, it should be mentioned that many people claim to do the alpine circuit. Indeed, one evening in Huaraz we met a well-known ACMG guide, together with his clients, who had just completed it. Yet, when questioned about certain passes, they seemed not to know them. Clearly, there are at least two alpine circuits, thus creating some ambiguity. With Alfredo, we felt confident that we could adhere to Frimer's new classic, which Alfredo enthusiastically explained was considerably better than the traditional circuit—which in turn, you will remember, had been deemed one of the world's best by Peter Potterfield.

A further bonus was that Christian Silva himself was to be one of our two guides, together with Alfredo's brother Jaime Quintana. We had, therefore, a most experienced team with which to tackle this relatively new trekking route; a route that rose and fell by 1,000 metres on most days and crossed at least one (sometimes two) passes close to 5,000 metres each day. Many of these passes would be impassable to donkeys,

Traditional Alpine Circuit	Elev. (m)	High Alpine Circuit	Elev. (m)	Comment
Pampa Llamac Pass	4,300	Pampa Llamac Pass	4,300	Easy
Sambunya Pass	4,750	Sambunya Pass	4,750	Moderate
Cacanampunta Pass	4,685	Punta Garacocha	4,910	Crux. 5.3, rappel
Carhuac Pass	4,650	Kiricasha Pass	4,835	Moderate
Punta Carnicero	4,600	Chaclan Col (not as on map)	4,780	Moderate
Portacheulo de Huayhuash	4,750	Urpipunta Pass	4,800	Moderate
Punta Cuyoc	4,950	Nishaqui Pass	5,120	Glacier crossing
Punta Tapush	4,750	Velilina Pass	5,000	Long, steep
Yaucha Pass	4,847	Rasac Pass	5,129	Glacier crossing
Pampa Llamac Pass	4,300	Pampa Llamac Pass	4,300	Easy

so the team was strengthened by adding two high-altitude porters (Marco and Cesar) to carry food and equipment where the donkeys could not go. To these four were added a four-man cook team who, when needed, would also carry supplies, but more importantly would hopefully provide culinary extravaganzas to power us up those long slopes.

Acclimatization continued. A day was spent hiking to a high lake in the Blanca followed by a three-day/two-night loop over a 5,200-metre pass as a shake-down to see how the gringos could handle the altitude, the guides could lead and the cook team could deliver. There were some adjustments all around. Finally, we boarded a bus bound for the village of Llamac located at the end of an excruciating track of twists and plunging precipices.

Camped on Llamac's soccer field during the midst of World Cup 2010 fever, we resisted the invitation to play the local team. We were at 3,300 metres after all and needed our oxygen for more pressing matters. To my surprise, the tourist register revealed that over half the visitors to the Huayhuash that season were from Israel, a small country with a big interest in the region.

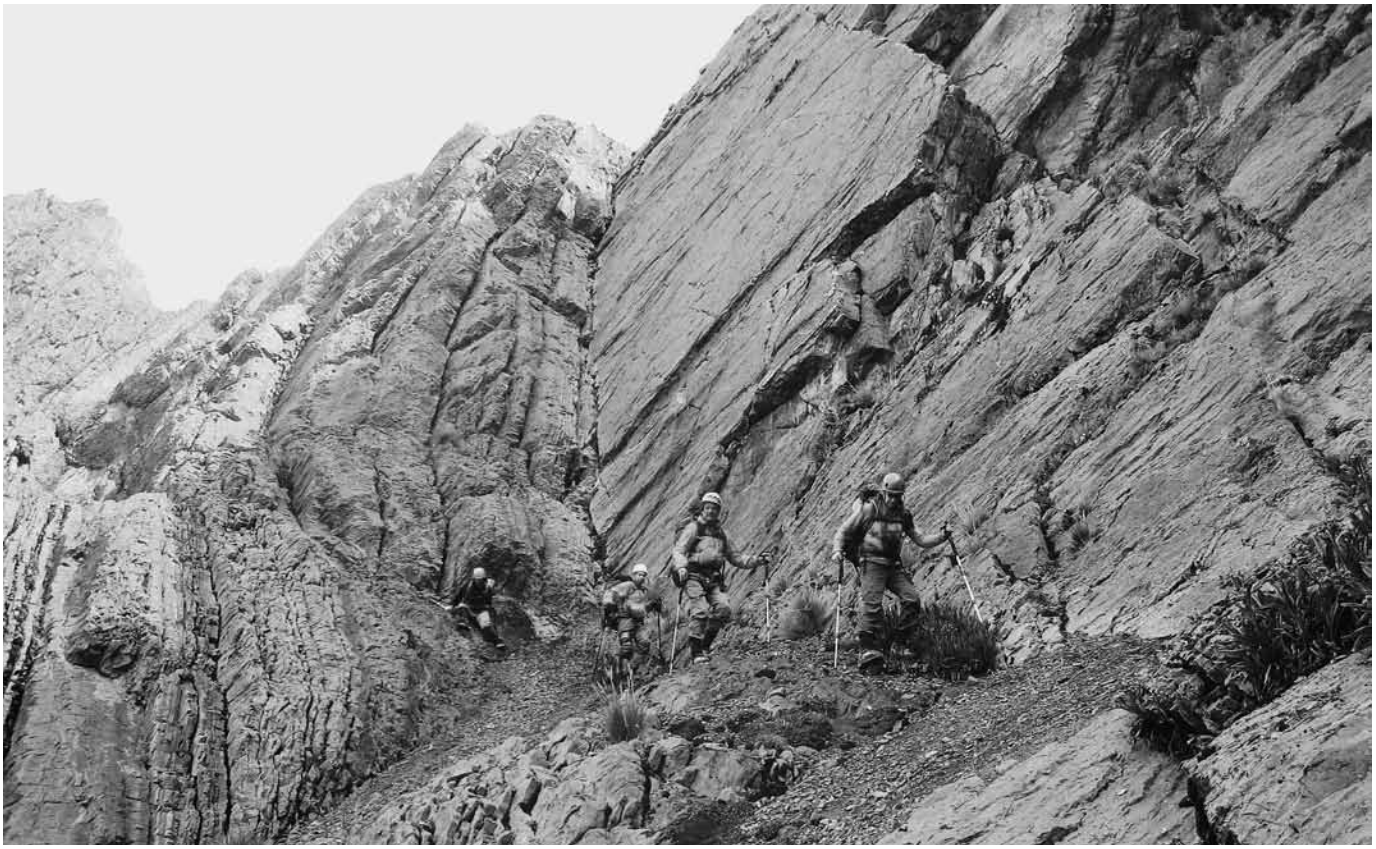
The following morning, after so much planning and preparation, we climbed 1,000 metres out of the valley to Pampa Llamac Pass (4,300 metres), before a long descent to Lake Jahuacocha (4,066 metres). The forecast had been for rain, and as evening came on and we approached camp, it duly arrived. We were a cold crew who huddled that first night in the mess tent to tuck into a hot and very welcome dinner as the rain drummed on the canvas and snow fell at higher elevations.

We were now at the start of the circuit itself with the option of going either clockwise or counter-clockwise around the range. Although Frimer recommends the latter in his guide, we had opted for the clockwise choice for a number of reasons, most notably that in the clockwise direction, the two toughest passes are last—met at a time when we would be fittest and most acclimatized, we thought. In retrospect, we made the right choice for the wrong reasons. In a clockwise direction, the approaches to the 10 passes are generally gentler, while the descents are steep and not the sort you would choose to ascend.

There was thick cloud on Rondoy (5,870 metres) close on our right as we crossed Sambunya Pass (4,750 metres) the next day, and shortly thereafter said goodbye to the team of burros and their masters. Where we were going, they could not follow. We would meet them on the following evening at Lake Mitococha. Meanwhile, we had a long descent into the Rondoy valley followed by a further 350-metre rise to the pocket Lake Garacocha, hanging on the side of the Cerros Paria.

During our approach over sharp weathered limestone, we gazed at the ridge above the lake and queried our guides as to where exactly tomorrow's pass went. It was certainly not obvious. A confusion of answers did not instil much confidence, which was added to

Descending the steep east side of Garacocha Pass (4,900 metres) on weathered limestone. Photo: Rick Hudson



by a dump of snow overnight that did little to encourage us the following morning. But in due course, we scrambled and climbed a series of wet limestone ledges and slabs, happily with excellent friction, which brought us to a long rising ramp about 30 metres below a jagged skyline. There our guides showed their mettle and strung a rope up a face that turned out to be an easy 5.3 with plenty of holds and ledges.

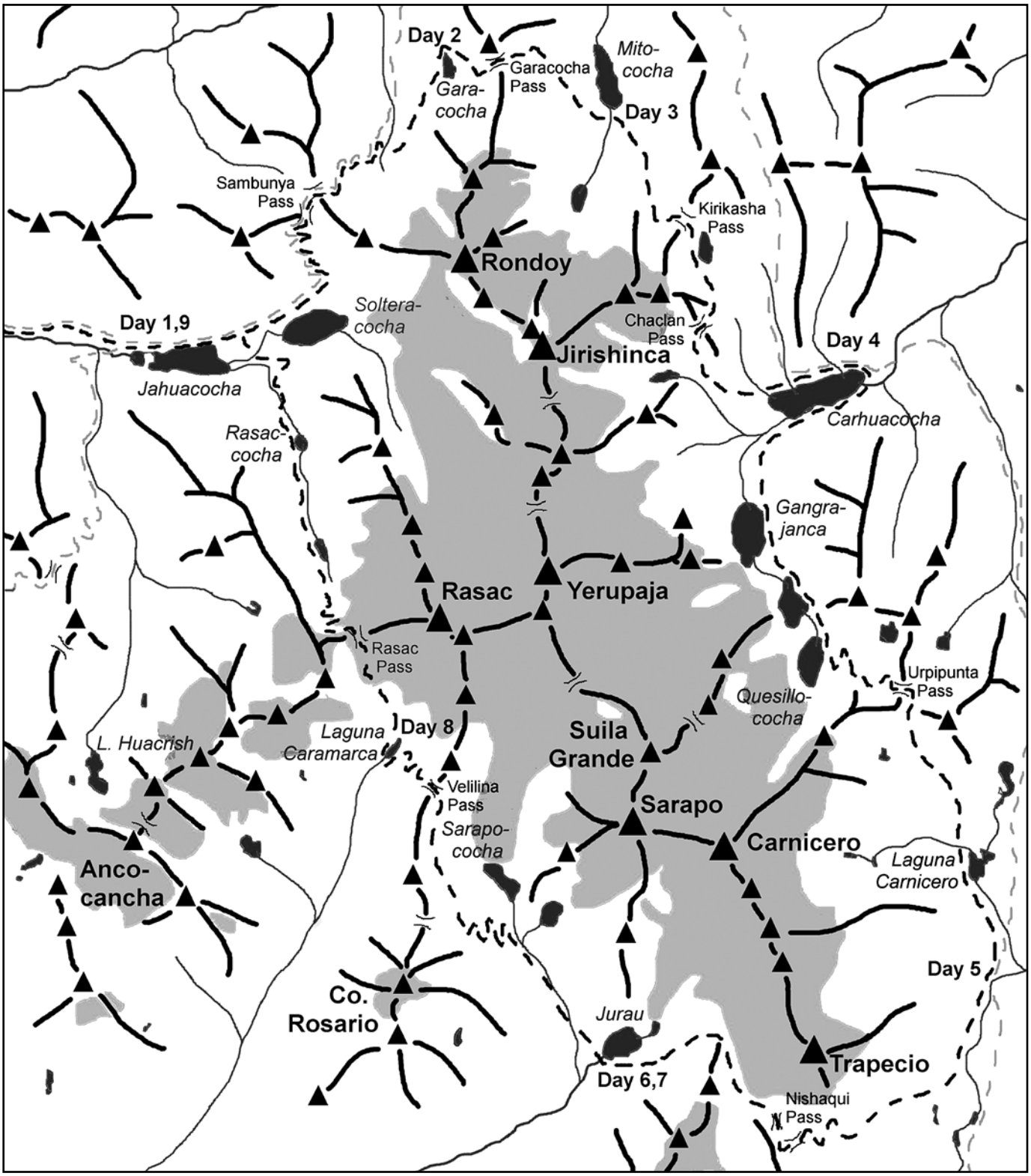
Noon found us perched on a narrow ridge. An airy position it was with a dramatic drop on the east side down to our evening's destination—a long way below. The wind had dropped and the sun was out for the first time in a while, so the inevitable wait to get nine trekkers and eight crew down the equivalent of two rappels passed pleasantly enough. As the ropes were coiled and we stood below the cliffs, we were as yet unaware that we had just passed the crux of the alpine circuit. Other passes would be higher, other days would be longer, but Punta Garacocha was the most technically challenging.

The following morning offered glimpses of Rondoy towering above our meadow camp as we began another steady climb to Kiricasha Pass. Having yesterday crossed over the Huayhuash's northern buttress, this was the start of our trek down the "back" (east) side of the range. Initially the slopes were covered in grass, flowers and ubiquitous cow patties (the area is not a national park because it has long been privately owned and used for winter cattle grazing), but above 4,500 metres the alpine gravels and talus slopes appeared, with only occasional pockets of flowers and a few birds. At the pass, a wide barren area of broken rock, the guides amused themselves hunting for ammonite fossils in a known rock band and subsequently appeared with several nice specimens.

Over an idle lunch in the sun we learned that our day was far from over, and there was another optional pass to cross before the long descent to Lake Carhuacoche at 4,138 metres. There being little alternative to this option, we gamely traversed across steep, grassy slopes before another long rise brought us to a pass that the guides called Chaclan Col. However, this is not the Chaclan Col (5,180 metres) shown on maps, located between Jirishanca (6,094 metres) and Yerupaja Chico (6,089 metres). Happily, our col was a mere 4,780 metres, but it offered a spectacular view of the east side of the main summits, and we stood for some time, despite the cool wind and sporadic rain. Clouds sent ragged shadows sliding across twisted icefalls that are now all that remain of the glaciers that once covered these magnificent summits. The guides pointed to classic ice routes of the 1980s that were now unclimbable—barely a snow patch left on their once white faces.

A feeling of sadness enveloped me as we made the 600-metre descent to the lake below as thoughts of what has been lost, and what is still to lose, went through my mind. But the arrival of steady rain in the late afternoon focused my attention on getting down steep wet grass slopes with a minimum of

Approaching Nishaqui Pass (5,120 metres) from the east with Trapezio Peak behind. Photo: Phee Hudson


Day 2
Garacocha Pass
Gara-cocha
Mito-cocha
Day 3
Sambunya Pass
Kirikasha Pass
Rondoy
Soltera-cocha
Day 1,9
Chaclan Pass
Jirishinca
Day 4
Jahuacocha
Carhuacocha
Rasac-cocha
Gangra-janca
Rasac
Yerupaja
Rasac Pass
Urpipunta Pass
Quesillo-cocha
L. Huachish
Laguna Caramarca
Day 8
Suila Grande
Velilina Pass
Sarapo
Sarapo-cocha
Carnicero
Laguna Carnicero
Anco-cancha
Day 5
Co. Rosario
Jurau
Trapecio
Day 6,7
Nishaqui Pass

injury, crowding out the bigger picture of climate change as we straggled into Carhuacoche camp.

Dawn brought another day of hope. Through the morning fog that lingered after the night's rain, there were tantalizing glimpses of the range, so close, yet invisible. Half an hour's walk along the south side of the lake brought us under the giants, and as we arrived, the mist burned away, and in front of us rose 2,000 metres of spectacular summit, glacier and ridge. The nearness and sudden exposure combined to create a dramatic effect. From the northern outlier Rondoy, past the spear-shaped Jirishanca, to the massive bulk of Yerupaja (at 6,617 metres, the highest in the range), to Suila Grande (6,344 metres, where Joe Simpson touched the void), a panoramic sweep dazzled the eye in the bright morning light. Cameras clicked, superlatives gushed. This was what we had hoped to see.

That evening, we camped at the village of Huayhuash, although the word village is used cautiously. The vista of scattered thatched huts and stone corrals set in a shallow green valley with a stream running through it was offset by the sad reality that we were sharing our camp that night with the "alpine circuit" trekkers. The area was littered with garbage and unburied human waste. It transpired that our 11-day route touched the popular circuit at only two points, but at both the lack of clean-up by the owners who pocket a handsome profit from every passing trekker and the apathy of the many groups' guides has led to this sorry state. The irony is that many donkeys go down the mountain lightly loaded and could easily be used to carry out any trash that was not burned on site.

Happily, the next morning our path once again diverged from the madding crowd, and we were quickly on our own, without trail, heading up a broad grassy valley that offered wonderful views of the outlying peaks at the southern end of the range. Jurau (5,674 metres), Quasillo (5,600 metres) and, at the southern end, the beautiful Trapezio (5,653 metres) towered into a blue sky. All morning we slowly curved around Trapezio, keeping it on our right. At noon we were close to a pass that led back into the western drainage, and said goodbye to the burros, which we would not be seeing for some days. This in turn meant our daypacks became real packs again.

Loaded down, we crossed the Nishaqui Pass at 5,120 metres next to Trapezio, and then roped up for a short tongue of glacier. What followed was a very long descent (800 metres) to Lake Jurau, which stayed obstinately out of sight around a corner of the valley for much of the afternoon. Above us, soaring basalt columns formed summits that backed the Jurau Glacier, but we only had eyes for that blue pool of water in the valley. It finally appeared after some hours of descending glacier-polished slabs. Back on grass again, we found a cattle trail that provided the best route down the moraine. Something we had learned early: when in doubt, follow a cow.

Incredibly, the next day was designated a rest day, and while one or two folk seemed to misunderstand the meaning of "rest", most took a well-deserved break to wash socks, re-proof boots and eat as much as possible. Sadly, this latter option was limited. All the food we had was needed for the next two days. Feeding 17 people makes for large loads, and our porters and kitchen staff had acquitted themselves impressively, but there is a limit to what even the sons of Quichua, born at 4,000 metres and built tough, can carry. However, halfway through our rest day an *arriero* arrived unexpectedly with three burros bringing much-welcomed food, including fresh potatoes and unlikely oranges. Later, our porters, avid fishermen all, caught tiny trout in the lake, so the rest day was doubly blessed.

We now faced our final two days, and final two passes, both of which were high and had a certain reputation. But after the rest day, we were in good spirits and ready to tackle such challenges. An early start took us past the basecamp of Simon Yates and Joe Simpson, an empty spot like any other except for a large boulder that identified the place. It was here that Joe finally dragged himself after breaking a leg on the descent of Suila Grande, being left for dead and then crawling for three days down the Suila Glacier, as told in *Touching the Void* (Jonathan Cape, 1988).

We were in no mood to crawl, despite our packs. Our line took us up the west side of the Suila Valley where a long, steep and grassy slope rose 800 metres to the Velilina Pass at 5,000 metres. Clouds had moved in and our views of Suila Grande, its infamous north ridge and the more infamous glacier were partly obscured. Nearing the top, we trudged up fine loose gravel (that held startlingly healthy succulents) before dumping our packs at the saddle with relief. Beyond lay another long descent, this time into the Segya River valley and Lake Garamarca, where we would camp for the night. And beyond that lake, the approach to tomorrow's crossing, the glaciated Rasac Pass (5,120 metres), was visible under scudding cloud.

Like so many things in life, that which is most anticipated often transpires to be the least dramatic. Our promised nemesis—Rasac Pass—turned out the following day to be a good plod up an easy glacier. With local knowledge from the guides, we exited through an un-obvious notch and descended cliff bands on the north side with only one steep scramble. Thereafter, it was simply a matter of putting one boot in front of the other to lose 1,100 metres so painfully gained over the previous day. By nightfall we had closed the circle and were back at Lake Jahuacocha (4,066 metres), where trekkers, trash and trinkets for sale were all in evidence.

It was the end of the trip in many ways, and we celebrated with our gallant guides, porters, cook team and donkey crew in a suitable manner. A day later we reached Llamac, where the bus was waiting.

Summary

The High Alpine Circuit, Cordillera Huayhuash, Peru. Participants: Catrin Brown, Ferdi Fischer, Christine Fordham, Phee Hudson, Rick Hudson, Stan Marcus, Russ Moir, Bernhard Steinbeis, Charles Turner, June 18-27, 2010.

Coleman Headwall Descent

Andy Traslin

GROWING UP IN North Vancouver and spending all those years staring at the north side of Mount Baker looming south of the border, I knew that I had to ski it someday. We had been studying the weather for the past few weeks ,trying to find the elusive bluebird day in June to finally make an attempt on descending the Coleman Headwall—a classic mountaineering objective on Baker's north face. We were tired of seeing clouds in the forecast, so we finally decided to just go and see what would happen. You don't know till you go.

The original plan was to hike up to the glacier, take some photos and check out conditions—nothing more. My brother Mike and I met our friend Jason Hummel of Tacoma, Washington, at the parking lot, strapped gear to our backs and made the hike through the forest. As soon as we hit the alpine, we busted through the clouds, and to our amazement, it was clear and bluebird. We hiked up to some icefalls content to simply take some shots skiing back down the glacier. Since the snow was beginning to metamorphose to corn, we decided to hike up a few hundred metres more to cash in on some extra vertical. I wasn't too keen because I was trying to take it easy for the Test of Metal, a marathon cross-county mountain bike race that I was signed up for the next day.

"Well, what do you think about going a little higher?" How can you turn down an offer when conditions are absolutely primed for steep skiing? I tried to get my partners to break trail for awhile since I wanted to conserve some energy for the next day. My efforts at coercion were met with mixed results, so it was time to write that plan off and just give'er. Our recon trip had turned into a summit assault and we beelined it for the top. My brother and I climbed to the true summit while Jason waited for us on the plateau. Descending from the summit, we rejoined him at the top of the headwall.

Ideally, the best way to ski a big alpine line like this is to climb it first to inspect conditions; however, we were confident that the sun was warming up the slope enough for effective edge control. The Coleman Headwall slowly rolls over from the summit plateau, which provided superb turns. As the angle of the face steepened, we hit the fine line between where snow and ice meet. Achieving that feeling of flowing with gravity as each turn floats down the mountain is truly living in the moment. Steady turns and careful edging led us to the traverse onto the Western Lobe. Route-finding became sketchy as we traversed below seracs and rapidly warming slopes. In addition, Jason was directing me towards the seracs for better photo opportunities. At one point, I sloughed some wet snow onto Jason, which almost bumped him from his precarious stance. We made one more leftwards traverse, followed by a little air over the bergshund, and then it was down to the relative safety of the Coleman Glacier below. The epic 45- to 50-degree 2,000-foot ski descent was over and velvet corn delivered us back to the moraine.

Andy Traslin skiing the Coleman Headwall route on Mount Baker, Cascade Mountains. Photo: Jason Hummel

Remembrances

Nancy Louise Guy
1918-2010

"I've always held that life should be fun…. You can't stop growing old, but you can chose to be young inside," philosophized Louise Guy.

Louise passed away on September 30, 2010, at the age of 92. We all loved Louise—she was an easy woman to love. She was kind, tolerant and generous; she was optimistic and always enthusiastic; she was humble and modest; she had a beautiful smile and was a delight to be with. For me, she was an example of how life should be lived.

Born Nancy Louise Thirian, May 26, 1918, in London, England, she spent her first few years in Switzerland. She grew up in England and trained in domestic science in Leicester. Hiking trips to Switzerland with her brother as a teenager inspired her love for mountains.

She met her husband-to-be, Richard Guy, while he was studying mathematics at Cambridge University. In 1938 they went on a two-week-long hiking trip through the English Lake District. Staying at youth hostels along the way and climbing every mountain in sight, the pair must have raised eyebrows with their bold and non-conventional undertaking.

Louise and Richard were married December 21, 1940. The Second World War seriously altered their plans, Richard being posted to Iceland and later to Bermuda to do meteorological forecasting for the Royal Air Force. They did, however, manage to get together occasionally during this time, for three children—Anne, Mike and Peter—were born during the War. While Richard was far away, Louise raised the children by herself.

After the War Richard worked first as a teacher in London, then in far-off Asia. Posted to Singapore, they lived an adventurous life. On one occasion they climbed Borneo's Mount Kinabalu (4,095 metres)—Louise being only the second woman to reach the top at the time. Richard's next teaching position was in Delhi in India. There they explored north into the Himalaya, and on one trip reached the Rohtang Pass in Himachal Pradesh.

But it was in the mountains of Canada that Richard and Louise really blossomed. In 1965 Richard was hired to teach in the fledgling math department at the University of Calgary. Before long he was head of the department and Louise was his loyal support.

Immediately upon arriving in this country, Richard and Louise discovered the Rockies. Feeling unworthy of the "elite" Alpine Club of Canada, they first climbed with friends from the math department. Ever adventurous, Louise took up rock climbing. Math professor Eckhardt Grassman was her guide and teacher, and together they climbed many rock routes, including Grillmair Chimneys on Yamnuska.

Joining the ACC in 1969, Louise attended her first General Mountaineering Camp in 1972. She loved it so much that she returned 30 times over the next four decades. When the camp was in danger of being cancelled in the mid '80s, she felt that she had to do something and personally wrote letters to many past participants, urging them to attend the camp. The camp survived and today is flourishing, thanks to her efforts.

Louise had many other mountain adventures over the years. In 1989, at the age of 70, she and Richard skied around the base of Mount Logan and climbed to the site of Camp I at 10,000 feet. In 1991, once again with Richard, she attended a Calgary Section Camp beneath Mount Waddington. The camp was hit by a violent storm and lashed by winds and heavy snow for almost a week. Suffering from bad colds, Richard and Louise just burrowed deeper into their sleeping bags and toughed it out.

Although Louise had a number of health issues over the years—breast cancer, heart surgery, partial lung removal and a wonky knee—she did not let this stop her. She was active right to the end, and at 90 years of age would ride her bicycle to the corner store for milk and bread.

A very generous woman, Louise supported a myriad of charities, both financially and with her time. She worked for years with the Faculty Women's Club at the U of C, drove for Meals on Wheels and volunteered for Project Ploughshares. Each year, with Richard, she would climb the Calgary Tower to raise money for the Alberta Wilderness Association. She was the oldest woman to do so and once commented how it had become more difficult over the years, saying, "I'm not 80 any more, you know!"

Louise and Richard were great supporters of the ACC and came to the Mountain Guides Ball every year. They were first up on the dance floor and last to leave. In 1998, they were honoured as Patrons of the Ball. Together, the pair received many awards from the mountain community, including the A.O Wheeler Legacy Award and Honorary Memberships in both the ACC and the Calgary Mountain Club. Just recently, Louise was selected by CBC as Calgary's Most Active Senior.

Although Louise was a great-grandmother, she would not quit. The last adventure I shared with her was on Valentines Day 2008. At 89 years of age she skied almost all the way to Lake O'Hara. It was bitterly cold but Louise soldiered on most of the 11 kilometres to the lodge, finally accepting a ride on a snowmobile for the last kilometre.

Only a few months short of her 70th wedding anniversary, she left us. Louise lived a remarkable life that touched many of us. As we grow old, may we all try to live our lives as she did, always guided by her example—her kindness, enthusiasm and joy. And for me, her beautiful smile is the memory I will always cherish of Louise.

—Chic Scott

Wallace Richard Joyce
1915–2010

Wallace joyce—Wally to all of his friends—died peacefully in Toronto on December 10, 2010, surrounded by family. He was in the 96th year of his very active life.

Even though he did not start mountaineering until he was 40 years old, Wally made his mark within the ACC, where he was a widely known for 55 years. In 1955, he participated in the General Mountaineering Camp (GMC) at Mount Robson. He was immediately enthralled with the sport of mountaineering and paid for a lifetime membership in the Alpine Club at the end of the camp—a typically astute investment. Wally attended at least 29 GMCs over the next 40 years, the last at Fairy Meadow in 2000.

Wally also participated in more than 23 other ACC climbing camps, section camps and expeditions, including the 1967 Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition in the St. Elias Range. He particularly enjoyed the alpine climbing camps, which were popular with stronger ACC climbers in the 1960s and 70s. These non-guided camps explored new ground in the Coast Mountains, Rockies, Selkirks and Premiers, and on Baffin Island. During one of these camps, Wally made what he considered his "best" climb—Mount Waddington's northeast summit (1969). At the Baffin Island camp (1963), Wally participated in naming Mount Overlord in Auyuittuq National Park—the name being both a reference to the Viking gods, after which many of the local peaks are named, and also to Operation Overlord, the Allies' 1944 landing in Normandy during the Second World War in which he had taken part.

In the early 1980s, with the retirement from active mountaineering of some of his companions from the 1960s and 70s, Wally found a fresh outlet for his interest in exploratory mountaineering by climbing with a group of ACC Toronto Section members. Although we were 25 to 40 years younger than Wally, he quickly adapted to our rather different style of climbing, camping, food and humour. He adopted us, and vice versa, as we explored new ground in the Rockies, the Selkirks and the St. Elias. He rapidly added to his list of first ascents, new routes and mountains climbed.

Wally's annual 15,000-plus-kilometre solo drives to Canada's western mountains each summer were legendary among friends and family. His station wagon was his "home away from home," as he lived in the back with a sleeping bag on a plank, offering the explanation: "It makes it easier to get away early in the morning." Around his mountaineering and horse riding activities, Wally would visit relatives and childhood friends, artists and art galleries, and totem poles, as well as enjoying ferry rides along the B.C. coast.

By 2000, Wally had climbed more than 400 peaks, of which at least 20 were first ascents, and a further 20 were by new routes.

Although Wally gained most pleasure from snow and ice climbs (his wood-shafted ice axe, with its straight pick and no wrist loop, is familiar to many of us), he was competent on all types of terrain. He proved this many times over the years, including ascending Bugaboo Spire on his 75th birthday and soloing the Dome, above Sapphire Col in the Selkirks, in his 86th year. It was unexpected kidney failure in November 2000 that tied him to thrice-weekly dialysis and stopped his climbing career.

Wally was extremely generous to the ACC during his long association with the club. In the early 1960s, he made a significant contribution to secure a lease for Crown land on the shore of Lake Mazinaw, on which the Toronto Section's Bon Echo Hut was built. He also contributed towards the building and re-building of the Toronto Section Cabin at the ACC Clubhouse site in Canmore, to the Canadian Alpine Centre in Lake Louise, and to the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff. Wally has left to the ACC his extensive mountain library collection, his photo albums covering all the GMCs and club camps he attended, and more than 20,000 colour slides of Canada's mountains. By his will, Wally has also made a very generous bequest to the ACC estimated to be worth in excess of $1 million. This was announced publicly at the May 2011 AGM in Canmore.

More than a dedicated mountaineer, Wally was a man of many talents and had numerous other lifelong interests. Wally was born August 3, 1915, and grew up in Calgary and surrounds. He attended Western Canada Collegiate where Bob Hind, later to become an ACC president and honorary president, was a contemporary. He was a boy scout and would remain in contact with some of his fellow Calgary scouts for more than 70 years.

He studied mathematics and physics at University College, University of Toronto, and graduated in 1936 with First Class Honours and was awarded the Chancellor's Gold Medal. Wally worked as an actuary and in senior management for Imperial Life Assurance Company of Canada in Toronto for 41 years, retiring in 1977.

In Toronto, Wally spent time with his extensive eastern-Canadian family based in Unionville, Ontario. He met Kathleen McKay, a childhood friend of his mother, whose endowment later supported the founding of the McKay Art Centre and the Varley Art Gallery. It was through Kathleen that he met their family friend, Frederick Varley, a member of the Group of Seven artists. These connections led Wally to make numerous visits to juried art exhibitions at the Art Museum of Toronto (now the Art Gallery of Ontario) where he became enamoured by the depth and scope of representational art.

In 1939, on the outbreak of WWII, Wally joined the 1st Survey Regiment of the Royal Canadian Artillery and served the war effort across Europe. In the Sicily/Italian campaigns as an artillery surveyor, he did much hill scrambling, and in late December 1943, while awaiting the beginning of the Italian Campaign, Wally and members of the regiment climbed Mount Etna (3,330 metres).

In 1945, in Amsterdam, Wally "purchased" a painting of the Jungfrau by Von Deutekom, using cigarettes in lieu of cash—cigarettes being the more valuable commodity. This marked the start of what grew to be an extensive and varied personal art collection. In 1966, Wally visited Switzerland and climbed the Jungfrau and the Matterhorn.

Returning to Toronto and his career at Imperial Life, Wally began to build his collection of art. His first two Canadian paintings, bought in 1946, were works by Emily Carr. Later acquisitions included works by Frank Holliday, Frederick Brigden, Roland Gissing, A.Y. Jackson, Henry Glyde, W.J. Phillips, Kathleen Daly, Peter Ewart, Doris McCarthy, Joachim Gauthier, Dick Ferrier, Sandra Henderson, Leo Tibbles, Gordon Peters, Robert Genn, Alan Collier, Ted Goodall and Don Hamilton. As an involved collector, he knew most of these artists personally.

The history and nature of Wally's art collection is described in *Peaks and Totems: One Man's Passion* by Katarina Atanassova (2005), a 31-page catalogue for an exhibition of part of his collection at the Varley Art Gallery held February to April 2005.

Wally bequeathed his Emily Carr collection to the Vancouver Art Gallery and his Group of Seven paintings to the McMichael Gallery in Kleinberg, Ontario. The remainder of his collection will go the Varley Art Gallery in Unionville. An earlier gift of $1.48 million to the Varley Art Gallery is helping to build an extension to the gallery.

A passion for theatre, ballet and opera were a facet of Wally's life. This passion was easily indulged in Toronto. He was still driving to the Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Stratford Shakespeare Festival at 94 years of age.

Having learned to ride horses as a child in the foothills of the Rockies, trail riding was another of Wally's passions. He participated in trail ride camps with the Trail Riders of the Canadian Rockies for more than 30 summers over a 60-year period. This fascination with trail riding is integral to another part of his art, sculpture and photographic collections.

Over his lifetime, Wally travelled extensively, visiting more than 100 countries, many of them off the beaten track. He traversed Papua New Guinea, trekked across the Sahara Desert to Timbuktu, through the Upper Volta and Burkino Faso to the Congo and through Rwanda and Kenya to the Indian Ocean at Mombasa. He also made long treks in Patagonia, Peru, the Himalayas and in Tibet, and followed the Silk Road from Beijing to Kashgar, through Pakistan to the Hindu Kush and the Karakoram. Wally built an outstanding collection of artefacts from these trips. After his kidney failure, he discovered cruise lines offering "dialysis at sea", and so cruised the Baltic, the Mediterranean, the Caribbean and from Alaska to California.

Wally's enthusiasm for mountaineering was matched by the artistic flair expressed in his photography. Rarely did a day go by in the mountains that Wally did not compose a series of mountain photographs. He could control the pace of many a climb by his frequent and insistent calls for "photo stops". Wally's photographic notoriety is recalled by Robert Kruszyna (*CAJ*, 1979, vol. 62, p.6), "Dave [Whitburn]… proceeded to click off photos like a latter-day Wally Joyce." Over the years Wally's Kodachrome collection of Canada's western mountains grew to more than 20,000 images.

Often the essence of a person can be judged by the number and diversity of his friends, and by the esteem in which he is held. This was certainly true of Wally. Across the decades and through a wide range of interests and activities, Wally made many lifelong friends. He was an easy person to both like and respect. We enjoyed and appreciated his quiet humour, his erudite knowledge, his thoughtfulness and the simple pleasure of his company. It was a privilege to have known and climbed with Wally. He was one of a kind.

Wally said, "My passion for the mountains must have been bred in my bones for I never approach them without an exaltation of my spirit."

— Roger Wallis

Willi Pfisterer
1926-2010

I first met willi pfisterer in Waterton in 1982. I was a fresh warden with dreams of someday making a career in public safety, and Willi was down to teach the annual spring mountain rescue and climbing school as part of his alpine specialist role with responsibility for training in Waterton National Park.

The stories of Willi were already legend in the Warden Service, and his actual appearance lived up to the reputation. He was barrel-chested and he walked with a mountain guide's rolling gait; he smoked an ever-present hooked Peterson pipe; and he wore a Tyrolean felt hat complimented by red knicker socks, especially knitted with extra rows of wool to cover his jumbo calves. (We had heard of those socks and knew that only the alpine specialist dare wear red knicker socks to a school.) He had an infectious grin and a twinkle in his eye as he introduced himself and asked in a rough Austrian accent if we were ready to "quit sucking coffee and spend a little time on the side hill?"

That was the first of several training schools and climbs that I was fortunate enough to attend with Willi, and he became a mentor to me, a gift I only really appreciated in later years. Willi had a way of recognizing and fostering talent and was more than willing to allow others to learn to lead under his tutelage. As he put it, "Rescue work is all about the team. My job is to develop wardens with local knowledge and skills so that the warden team can successfully complete any rescue." His personality,

direction and ambitious objectives set the perfect environment for learning. For example, when keeners were rushing early in the morning while he set off at a measured guide's pace, his comment of "You rush on ahead, I'll wait for you on the top," was just enough to make them slow down.

On a climb of Mount Crandell on that first school, I also witnessed the uncompromising side of Willi. A new warden who had misrepresented their skills and ability had been hired on. When the exposure on the ridge became overwhelming, this individual began to crawl even though the ridge was still about a metre wide. Willi took a spare piece of rope and tied the person between two trees with strict instructions not to touch anything. After summiting, we untied the hapless new warden on the way back to the office, and Willi suggested that perhaps it might be a good thing to "learn to walk if you want to be in the Warden Service."

Willi was hired as an alpine specialist with Parks Canada at the same time that Peter Fuhrman was to replace Walter Perren, whose pioneering alpine specialist role with parks had been cut short due to leukemia. Willi's responsibility included training wardens for Jasper, Waterton, Revelstoke/Glacier and eventually Kluane, while Peter looked after Banff, Kootenay and Yoho, and Pacific Rim. While Peter was more suited to the political limelight of Banff and used his political skills to foster the public safety program with management, Willi was, in essence, a field man whose schools often took wardens to new and challenging locations. Willi led schools to all of the icefields in the Rockies, and after several tries, he eventually got a group of wardens to the summit of Robson, a mountain he personally had climbed seven times.

Willi's incredible familiarity with Robson and his sense of humour were evident several years later when a rescue team of younger public safety specialists whom he had tutored were attempting to reach some stranded climbers on the north face. Clair Israelson recalls climbing up in a storm from the Schwarz ledges and being directed literally step by step by Willi who was at the base with a radio. Eventually, Clair called down and said to Willi that he was unsure of where to go as he was on a flat area of snow and that in every direction he went, it dropped down. After a short pause, Willi replied, "Yes, well, you screwed up. You're on the top."

When Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau was looking for a guide to climb some mountains in the national parks, it was natural that Willi should be the one to lead him. Willi was very proud of the ascents that he did with Trudeau, including the East Ridge of Mount Edith Cavell, but only used his understated wit when describing them. He recounted that Pierre had said to him, "I trust you, Willi, but what about the rope?" to which Willi replied, "Don't worry. If it breaks, I got a better one at home."

Prior to his posting as an alpine specialist, Willi had worked in Rogers Pass with the new avalanche research and control program created when the Trans-Canada Highway was completed in 1961. Willi brought his experience in snow craft from there to the mountain parks, where he was instrumental in setting up regular study plot observation sites in Banff and Jasper for avalanche forecasting, and he implemented both 105-millimetre recoilless rifle and avalauncher control techniques for the Banff-Jasper Highway. He was also key in spearheading the rescue dog program in Parks Canada. He garnered support for creating the first professional avalanche dog handler position in North America when he had Alfie Bustrom and his dog, Ginger, posted to Jasper in 1969. Willi was also a founding member of both the Canadian Avalanche Association and the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides.

In the early 1970s, when Peter Furhman brought the idea of helicopter sling rescue to the national parks, it was Willi who created the pilot test that is still in use today to ensure that rescuers are not put at risk with inexperienced or low-hour rescue pilots. He was also key in developing high-altitude rescue capability when Kluane National Park was created. As part of the development of high-altitude response in the north, he organized warden training schools to numerous peaks in the park, including the East Ridge of Mount Logan, a climb he had completed on the first Canadian ascent in 1959 with Hans Gmoser. It was on the descent of this climb in 1980 when near tragedy struck. Tim Auger and Peter Perren slipped and fell off the ridge and were avalanched more than 600 metres to the glacier below. Incredibly, both survived the fall. Even though Peter's knee was shattered, he was not buried and managed to dig out Tim, who was blue and not breathing but recovered quickly once his head was exposed. Willi and the others made their way to the base and were amazed to find both climbers alive after falling such a distance. When the helicopter arrived at basecamp and could not get to the victims due to cloud, it was Willi's persuasion that convinced the pilot that it was clear above and he could fly up through the cloud to where they were and evacuate them. The weather socked in immediately afterwards, and it was un-flyable for three weeks.

When Willi retired form Parks Canada in 1987, he estimated that he had climbed more than 1,600 mountains and been involved in some 700 rescues. Sadly, one of the last jobs he did as a rescue specialist was something that no father should ever be asked to do. His son Fred had been working as a heli-ski guide in Blue River when he and his group were involved in a large avalanche. Willi was called in as part of the nearby rescue resources, and it was not until he got to Blue River that he found out that his son was one of the seven fatalities. Willi had to take Fred's body back to Jasper for burial.

Willi retired to Tete Jaune, and when there was smoke coming from the chimney, I always made a point to stop for a cup of coffee and listen to some tales of rock climbing in Thailand or to take a look at some of the gold he mined from his claim in the Yukon. He was a great man and he had a great influence on the public safety program as we know it today. He will be missed.

—Brad White

Richard Eppler
1952-2011

Rick eppler—the mountaineer's mountaineer—passed away late in the afternoon on February 22, 2011, after a long battle with cancer. With his passing, we have lost a friend and a Vancouver Island climbing legend. Rick was proud of his family, and from many conversations I had with him I came to realize what a pivotal touchstone they were for him throughout his life. It is said that his nephews and niece recount in awe stories of the escapades they got up to with "Uncle" on Sunday afternoon rambles. They know only the half of it.

Since the 1970s, Rick led and participated in more ACC trips than anyone can remember, and he quickly established a legendary ability to find the way to the summit and back, no matter the conditions. During his early climbing days, Rick pored over maps and aerial photos to plan his attack on a dwindling number of Island peaks that remained unclimbed. And so it was my fortune to become his partner in crime as we pioneered the more remote mountains off Highway 4. Credited to Rick are the first recorded ascents and naming of Adder Mountain, Cats Ears, Hidden Peak, Steamboat, Limestone Twins, Fifty Forty and Triple Peak. These trips always started with the words that so captured why he climbed: "Let the adventure begin." His explorations did not stop on Highway 4, and he went on to climb all of the major peaks on our Island, including other notable first ascents such as Mount Cain, Mount Ashwood, Rhino and Velella Peaks, Tom Taylor Tower, Mariner and subsidiary peaks, Grattan and the Thumb. Rick's faultless memory of the route and meticulous note-taking made him the go-to person before setting out for the Island's mountains, and it is little wonder that Bruce Fairley depended so much on Rick's Island knowledge when producing his update of Culbert's climbing guide. But I believe Rick's most enduring contribution to Island climbing was dreaming up the notion of an Island Qualifier Award. Thus it was that the IQ Plaque became a coveted commemoration of a person's achievement in climbing all of the infamous nine qualifying peaks, any four of which would suffice to become a full-fledged member of the ACC. The days of qualifying in that manner have passed, but this award will go on for generations to challenge youth, no matter what their age, to go out and find themselves in the sublime reaches of Vancouver Island. Appropriately, Rick was the first to attain that award, which I surprised him with on the summit of the Golden Hinde.

Although Rick explored other avenues to "feed his rat", like drag racing or fly fishing, at heart Rick was through and through of the mountains. Rick had an artist's eye for mountain photography, and I continue to be amazed at his prize-winning photos that I had blindly walked past. I suppose I should not have been surprised that Rick took up oil painting—of mountains, of course—and in these was able to perfectly capture the mood of setting out on a spring climb. Right about now was his favourite time of year: snow packed down on the bush, the days getting longer, time to put down skis and ice tools and take on that list of climbs cooked up over winter. The early training on our local hills launched him into bigger projects, and he climbed widely in the Coast Mountains, the Cascades, the Rockies, the Kluane Range and Washington's volcanoes.

Rick frequently took part in club ventures where he really shone. His presence on any trip increased the depth of experience and strength of that party. Who in this club cannot remember the relief of Rick providing a rope down a greasy rock pitch or a steep, exposed, nasty patch of ice, often as darkness or weather pressed? Only after seeing to the safety of his fellow climbers did Rick then come down, un-belayed and with sure steps. Rick was at his finest when things got tough and when his skills were most needed.

Rick was a collector of model trains, mugs, T-shirts, Clint Eastwood movies, rocks and minerals, mountaineering books, photographs and of course, summits. These treasures could be found surrounding him wherever he lived, encroaching happily on his space. Rick was not an easy person with himself or others, but he was always there when it counted. More recently, Rick took his energy out on the Sooke Hills where he explored extensively and frequently with an assorted collection of like-minded friends. I never met these colleagues, but over beers he was full of his weekly escapades with them, and I think this outing became for him the window back to adventure.

About a decade ago, Catrin, his wife, introduced Rick to Europe where he came to appreciate exploring in Wales, Scotland and the Alps, including an ascent of Mont Blanc in a storm. Especially during the past three years, Rick went as often to Switzerland as he could. During a single day in the Alps he would photograph flowers in the alpine meadows, climb a vertical wall using the self-belay of a *via ferrata*, summit a 4,000-metre peak and take a couple of rides on those cogwheel trains he so loved. All this followed by rösti, brätwurst, beer and a Swiss cheesecake with far too many blueberries on top, delivered by a young lady in Swiss attire in the antique cellar of some wayside inn. This was paradise.

If courage and steadfastness under duress define a mountaineer and friend, then there was never one better than Rick. Walk untroubled to those last blue mountains, my friend, sure in the knowledge that your life enriched ours.

—Rob MacDonald

Thierry Cardon
1947-2011

In 1975, thierry cardon was recruited by Hans Gmoser from his home in France to join the team of guides at Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH). That first season in the Cariboos was the start of a 35-year career that saw him become one of the longest serving and most influential mountain guides in Canada. During those many years he guided both winter and summer in the Bugaboos, the Bobbie Burns and the Gothics. The following tribute to Thierry appeared in the CMH Heliskiing newsletter.

On january 11, 2011, our good friend, colleague and mentor, Thierry Cardon, passed away at his home in Invermere after a relatively short battle with cancer. Our hearts and best wishes go out to his wife, Sylvie (yes, they were married the previous week!), and his daughters, Emily and Gillian.

I can't overstate how profoundly Thierry influenced all of us. He was an innovative, out-of-the-box thinker who pondered the multi-faceted challenges we face as heli-skiing guides and prodded the rest of us to do the same.

In the aftermath of a tragic accident in the Bugaboos in 1981 he devised and successfully advocated for the use of the "run list". This simple innovation moved the decisions on where we should ski (and maybe even more importantly, where we shouldn't) away from the heat of on-the-fly operations that are subject to numerous environmental and human influences, to a team-based approach in the more objective environment of the morning guides' meeting. Like so many great ideas, it was elegantly simple and blindingly obvious in hindsight.

Thierry lived our values—uncompromising in matters of safety, and selflessly dedicated to creating a truly memorable experience for the thousands of guests who were fortunate enough to spend time with him in our mountains. He was always the first to pitch in when there was work to be done and the first one ready to head out in the morning. He had a wonderful sense of humour and a sage's sense of purpose.

He remained tirelessly dedicated to CMH right to the end. On my final visit with him, Thierry spent much of the time explaining his latest ideas on the chaotic nature of deep slab instabilities, ways to further enhance service to our guests and discussing our marketing initiatives. He spoke with the calm urgency of a man who knows he has something to say and not much time to say it.

That day he was remarkably strong and at peace with his fate. He had no regrets. It was wonderful to reminisce and laugh with him. He said he was headed on his greatest expedition yet. Take care, my friend. I have no doubt that you will reach the summit.

— Rob Rohn

Manfred Rockel
1964-2011

Sometimes... it is difficult to make sense of the world. Something stops. And we don't. For a terrifying moment it feels like the entire globe has quit turning and left us skidding across its surface. We stagger in our steps, or spin in our tracks to look, waving our arms and tipping, losing our balance. We wonder, "why" it happened, "how" it happened. We feel we need to know this because, of course, we're afraid—afraid that if we don't understand it, then the same thing could happen again, and hurt us again.

Events mock our confidence that the world works in particular, predictable ways. That the good guys always win. One minute our friend is here. The next, the tenses in all of our sentences have to change. As do our conversations and memories and holidays and menus and concert tickets and carpools and living arrangements and play dates and business plans and prospects. It suddenly feels like everything has been dumped in a heap and is all tangled like coat hangers at the bottom of the closet. We're not just grabbing a T-shirt and running out the door anymore. We're having to bend over and stick our head in the dark and pick the whole mess up at once, invariably finding that there's more stuff hooked and snagged together than we realized.

Snagged together like the way in the days preceding Manfred's memorial, we discovered we needed to find a sensitive person to direct the emotional traffic generated by all of Manfred's returning girlfriends; because Manfred was one of those bright spirits. He was generous and joyous and he knew how to be a friend and he knew when to be a friend. He also knew how to find others, to accept what they had to offer with grace, and to build experiences that helped everyone enjoy the world in the same way that he did.

Manfred could enjoy. And that was what Manfred did in the mountains—what he found in climbing them, and what he found in skiing them. Enjoyment. Accomplishment. Satisfaction. Those were the things he was creating with absolute care and typical confidence during our trip to Kokanee Cabin.

With me, like he was with a surprising number of others, he had more friends than most could manage. Manfred was a regular partner. In the mountains I found him always dependable and supportive. He was intelligent, experienced, strong, safe and ever reliable in an environment where many can be overwhelmed. I was always grateful for his company and his ability.

I first skied in the backcountry with Manfred over Christmas 2004.

He was clearly experienced and super fit. During a long day that took us from one end of the Adamant group to the other, from peaks to creek, he kept up to or led the best of us despite struggling with faulty gear that tossed him on his head more than once in the tricky snow conditions. At the end of that afternoon, I swear Manfred had more snow in his fleece sweater than there was under our skis. Yet when we pulled in at dusk and the rest of us collapsed, Manfred went straight to the kitchen and was still on the balls of his feet an hour later, smiling as he slid plates in front of us with a flourish at the dinner table.

One bitterly cold and windy day on another trip, this time near Sorcerer Lodge, Manfred and I had only each other willing to go out for a ski. We found the glacier stripped to its ice by flaying winds, but we thought we might find better prospects for turns in a cirque a few kilometres to the west. When we got there, after skinning into blowing snow the whole way, we looked at the attractive slopes in front of us and decided that we didn't dare go near them for fear of the stiff wind slab that we had seen developing over the previous days. As consolation, beating our hands together in the cold, we opted to climb up to an adjacent col and hope for a view. The going was horrible and potentially treacherous—faceted, sugary snow barely hiding rocks—and at the top it was colder and windier than ever, though we could see for miles to the north. Manfred actually unzipped his coat so I could shelter and light a cigarette. We discussed briefly and agreed that we didn't dare ski down what we had climbed up. The slope looked great, sure, but he didn't like the angle in those conditions, so we carefully descended in our original steps back to the glacier.

On the long rattle back over the hard snow toward the lodge, one of Manfred's noodle-ly powder skis blew off his foot, slid away down the ice and vanished at speed over a convex roll a half kilometre away. Gone, we thought. He skied the rest of the way on one foot, laughing the whole time. When we found the ski next to a little lake almost where we had started, he grinned and told me he had bought them wide because he hoped that having them would guarantee good snow conditions.

Last year, back at Fairy Meadow in the Adamants, Manfred was part of a group that explored a route we had never travelled before, to a more distant peak that demanded long and complicated route-finding. When the group of skiers returned tired that evening, with a few quite cranky and still trying to make their points about the day's conversations and each other's decisions, Manfred didn't take sides. I lifted my eyebrows at him as he was pulling his boot liners out to dry. Grinning like a cat, he declared, "When you guys go up there tomorrow, have a look at my tracks. I made about three GS turns down the whole slope."

Going to Kokanee Cabin this year, Manfred pulled into Nelson, B.C. on the Friday night after a long drive fraught with road closures and bad weather. With his fancy Volvo in the shop and too late to sign on for a ride with anyone else, he had exhumed his old truck with its busted gas gauge and limp tires and unpainted replacement door (with the price still scribbled on its window and all).

After getting up early on the Saturday, we spent most of our day sitting around the airport waiting for flying weather to allow us into the park. When the helicopter eventually delivered us to the cabin later in the afternoon, we went outside right away to wallow around in the deep snow, practicing with our transceivers. We were having fun, working hard and glad for the exercise. Of course, we knew that conditions were potent, and we had seen the most recent avalanche bulletins and weather reports. It was warm and snowing off and on when we went inside for our first meal of the trip.

On the Sunday morning, our whole group left the hut to have an easy "look around" the area. We had even selected the locally named "Happy Valley" as our destination because of its reputation for benign terrain, suitable for foul-weather skiing. Aware and communicating, we felt we were being considerate of the conditions, yet confident we could exercise care and do some gentle exploring.

Manfred led for much of the day until the time of the avalanche. He was feeling strong and doing the kind of thing he liked. He and Daren, between them, took care of most of the heavy trail-breaking that morning. Thinking of the group, Manfred even skied over onto the southwest side of the ridge at one point to look at an incident site reported by the previous week's group. And then skinned back up the hill to us to report on the conditions he observed. He was doing what he wanted to do. He was where he wanted to be. He was happy.

The service for Manfred was held at Earl Gray Golf and Country Club in Calgary on the heavy weather evening of January 28, 2011. The room was filled beyond capacity, and the photos and speakers indicated a life that spanned continents, academic disciplines, social classes, business interests and a myriad of recreational pursuits, friends and associates only vaguely aware of each other. When it was time to leave the gathering, brushing windshields and offering arms to assist partners in slippery shoes across the parking lot, it was surprising how many of Manfred's friends, despite suit jackets and high heels, could produce headlamps to light their way in the falling snow.

Manfred Rockel died on January 16, 2011, from head injuries sustained in an avalanche northwest of Kokanee Cabin. He lived in Calgary where he was respected as a brilliant engineer, an innovative entrepreneur and a generous friend. He climbed and skied all over the world.

— David Dornian

Stephen Michael Horvath
1946-2008

"I'll just start out before you guys because I am slow and you will catch up to me very quickly."

And so would begin another day of climbing with Steve, some days we would quickly catch up to him and others it would be hours later, but Steve left from camp first if possible. It was one of those "Steve-isms" as I called them, something he liked to do or say. Never fast, just steadily and competently on all types of terrain.

"I'm just going for a short walk, back in a little while."

It must be a camp day then, socked in with clouds, when you could not see a thing.

His idea of a short walk was to be gone for most of the day, out into the clouds. At first I worried, but over time got used to it as I realized he preferred to be alone in the mountains, wandering out into the fog, trusting to the mental picture in his mind of the surrounding terrain to keep him safe. He never got lost, and days later, in better weather, we would often come across his tracks far from camp. His occupation as a psychologist meant he often listened to and talked with people all day long, so in the mountains he seldom spoke much, preferring quiet and his own company.

"Remember the ptarmigan?"

Another often heard Steve-ism. Sixteen pitches up on his favourite climb, a first ascent of Little Dag in B.C.'s Valhallas, we sat for lunch with our feet hanging in the air. Only after several minutes did we realize that the little rock beside us was actually alive. It was a young ptarmigan too scared to fly out from the huge face, and so it perched there while Steve ate his lunch and softly stroked its feathers until it calmed down. He was a gentle person to nature, seldom killed mosquitoes and only occasionally swatted horseflies, preferring to just wave them off. He had infinite patience towards the natural world.

"Good night, Paul."

When he said "good night" it meant we had reached the summit somewhere and I could then have a *siesta* while he smoked his pipe and absorbed the wild world around him in peace and quiet. I seldom argued. The quiet times away from work were very important to him, restoring the equilibrium that patients' confidences tested.

"Let's go to the Valhallas."

When asked where he wanted to go climbing, this was his answer. He loved clean, vertical granite, and as such, pioneered many new routes there. They were close to home for him, easy for short trips which allowed him to spend more time with his family, something very important to him. He often found one-week camps too long as family called. If not climbing, it was tennis, skiing, mountain biking or piano—always active.

"Growing up, there was nothing for sale. And, we had no money anyways."

Steve grew up in Slovakia, leaving only as the Communist border was slamming shut, and emigrated to Canada and a new life near where the Rockies reminded him of home. He learned to climb in the Tatras, free climbing in his bare feet or socks because no climbing equipment was available. Consequently, he loved the freedom of not being attached to someone else, climbing to a high standard, begrudgingly only putting on the rope when absolutely necessary.

"Where are we going this year?"

He was a very fast and skillful skier, out every day either at the local hill or touring in the surrounding mountains. From the top of the ski lift, his beloved Valhallas were visible and they would serve to remind him of the coming season. Midwinter my phone would start to ring and the question would be asked, and he would not relent until plans would start to come together, thus organizing his summer. Thinking of getting out to the mountains was almost as important as being there; the freedom to dream and the anticipation of the climbing to come was essential to his well-being.

"Remember the dog?"

How could I forget? Many years ago Steve had fallen into a bergschrund and returned to the surface with a broken heel, amongst other injuries. Air-lifted to the Golden hospital, he waited, lying on a bed in the emergency room, listening to the doctor in the cubicle next door say he did not know how to set the leg of the patient he was then attending to. "Maybe we should phone someone," the doctor suggested. Steve nervously looked at his own leg and wondered if he should, or even could, leave, only finding out later when the doctor explained that the "patient" next door was actually a friend's dog that had fallen off a truck and broke its leg. They were phoning a vet! Steve loved to recall that story, delighting in the humour of it, his own suffering forgotten. He never grumbled about the weather or bugs, saving that for the motorized backcountry users.

"Have you got the tape?"

Early in our journeys together, Steve dislocated a finger while leading, which he always insisted on doing—the leading that is. Upon my arrival at the belay he held up a dislocated finger to show me. The trip is over I thought, but no, I set it back in place and splinted it to its neighbour. He then continued leading upward. Steve was tough. Politics you complained about—mountaineering, never!

"Get up here."

Steve was never happier than when out on clean, thin-featured limestone faces pushing the limit, far from anyone, reliant only on himself. So this only meant one thing: When on lead, if Steve came across an ugly chimney, wet crack or mossy gully, it was suddenly my turn on the sharp end. On the first ascent of Mount Proteus's face, he generously gave me the flowing waterfall to lead through.

"SHALL I WRITE IT UP?"

This was a statement more than a question. Over the years, Steve wrote many articles for the *CAJ*. In his youth, they were stories of new routes and discovery in the mountains. Over time, they became more introspective and the simple joy of being in the mountains came through. The hunger for the summits diminished as well, and he often chose to let us go up while he went off solitarily to savour the mountain world around him. Many people go to the mountains for the challenge of climbing, but for Steve, mountaineering was just an excuse so that he could be out in the wilderness where he was content. A true lover of nature, sitting on a mountaintop or listening to the rain while comfortable in his tent, it made no difference, he was at peace.

— Paul Allen

Andrew Langsford 1970-2011

ANDREW BROUGHT home a meditation a few months before he returned to "the vastness of space." At that time, he was healthy and vibrant, still alpine guiding, rock climbing, maintaining a regular yoga practice and mountain biking. You wouldn't know that he was a man struggling for his life.

Andrew accomplished many things in his lifetime. He was proud of becoming a UIAGM mountain guide, but also happy to be done with that process and on to living his life guiding people in the mountains. Andrew was not only successful in his career and various climbing goals and adventurous travels, he also excelled in making connections with others. Andrew authentically enjoyed people, whether he was teasing them or sharing a funny story. He enjoyed deep conversation and a good laugh. Last, but not least, his immense capacity for loving the people who were important to him flowed easily and naturally. I was one of those people, and now for the rest of my time on earth I know that I have experienced what is called true love, and I am forever thankful for my journey with Andrew.

What I and many others have learned from Andrew Langsford is that *this* life could be cut short, so *now* is the moment to live it like he did—with passion, a sense of adventure, humour and courage to step into the unknown, and to trust that the universe will provide.

—Theresa Calow

A Meditation for the Living

"The soul has a need for space; in the vastness of space it is able to breathe, to expand and rejoice. If you restrict the soul, it is stifled, and it withers and languishes. And that is what happens to human beings who allow themselves to become absorbed by all the material details of daily life without taking any time to dive into the vastness of space. For the soul suffers from having had to accept the restrictions of a body. A child that is born is a soul restricting itself, and this restriction is essential in order to allow manifestation. But at the time of death, the soul returns to the vastness of space.

Life is made up of these two processes, restriction and expansion, and to lead a balanced life you must know how to apply them to your existence: you enter your innermost being to connect with the universe, to the universal Soul; then you come back into a restricted state to work. But don't stay restricted for too long, or you will get bored and suffer. Remember to open yourself up to the vastness of space."

—Omraam Mikhael Aivanhov

"Friendship Col", watercolour painting by Suze Woolf (2009)

Index

ARC'TERYX EVOLUTION
IN ACTION


NINE DAYS YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS.
The World's Best Mountain Films and Books
www.banffmountainfestival.ca
1.403.762.6301 • 1.800.413.8368
Presenting Partners
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC
THE NORTH FACE
REDWOOD CREEK
THE BANFF CENTRE PRESENTS
BANFF MOUNTAIN FILM AND BOOK FESTIVAL
OCTOBER 29 – NOVEMBER 6, 2011
Photo: Alex Girard backcountry skiing, Rogers Pass, B.C. © Ryan Creary
The Banff Centre
inspiring creativity

patagonia®
patagonia.com

Arctic breakfast: At 2am, Olivier Favresse sends pitch 10 of the Devil's Brew. Sortehul Fjord, Greenland. BEN DITTO

The Alpine Club of Canada

helping you reach your summit

Photo: Nancy Hansen

The ACC Environment Fund provides grants to assist individuals and groups in their pursuit of activities that contribute to the protection and preservation of mountain and climbing environments.

The Jen Higgins Memorial Fund provides grants to support young women in their alpine-related outdoor pursuits.

The Jim Colpitts Memorial Fund provides grants to support young people on mountain-related training courses.

The John Lauchlan Memorial Award provides grants to assist Canadian alpinists with their expeditions.

The Karl Nagy Memorial Award is granted to aspirant ACMG guides and ACC volunteer leaders. Award recipients attend the ACC's General Mountaineering Camp to shadow and learn from full guides.

www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/grants/

40

MEC 1971

MOUNTAIN
EQUIPMENT
CO-OP

mec.ca

ISSN 0068-8207

$29.95 CAN

94

9 770068 820001