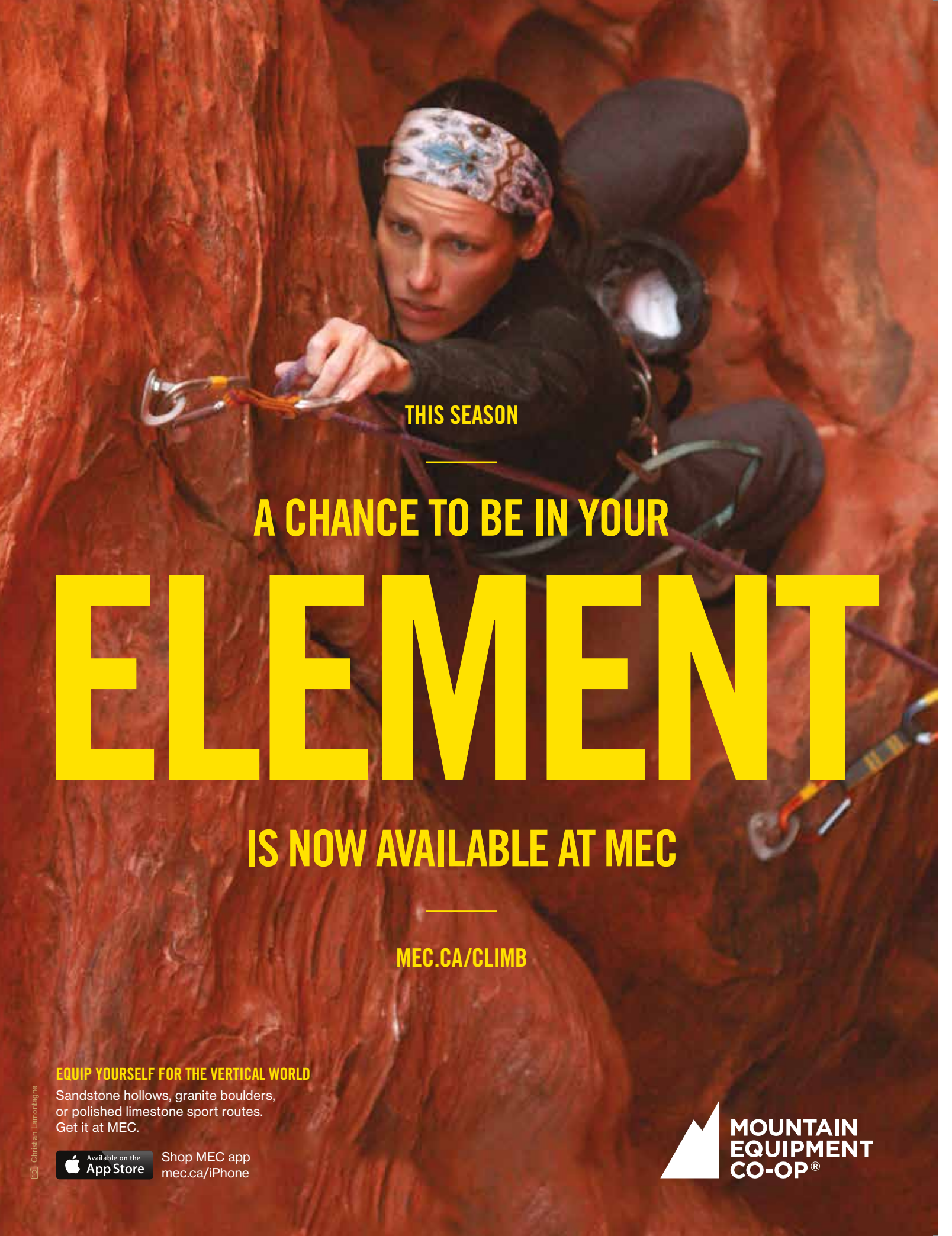
Canadian Alpine Journal

2013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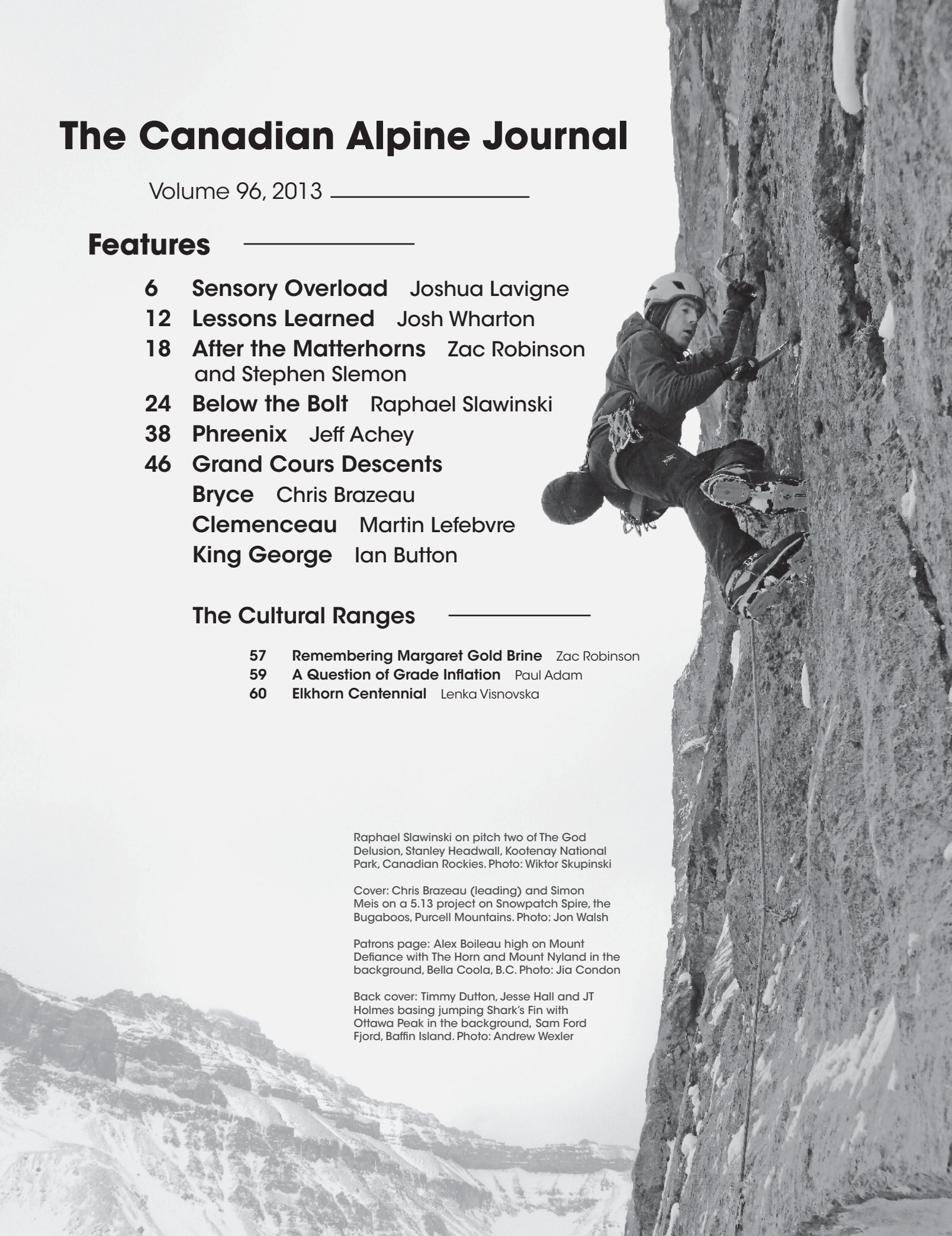
The Canadian Alpine Journal

Volume 96, 2013

Features

The Cultural Ranges



Raphael Slawinski on pitch two of The God Delusion, Stanley Headwall, Kootenay National Park, Canadian Rockies. Photo: Wiktor Skupinski

Cover: Chris Brazeau (leading) and Simon Meis on a 5.13 project on Snowpatch Spire, the Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains. Photo: Jon Walsh

Patrons page: Alex Boileau high on Mount Defiance with The Horn and Mount Nyland in the background, Bella Coola, B.C. Photo: Jia Condon

Back cover: Timmy Dutton, Jesse Hall and JT Holmes basing jumping Shark's Fin with Ottawa Peak in the background, Sam Ford Fjord, Baffin Island. Photo: Andrew Wexler

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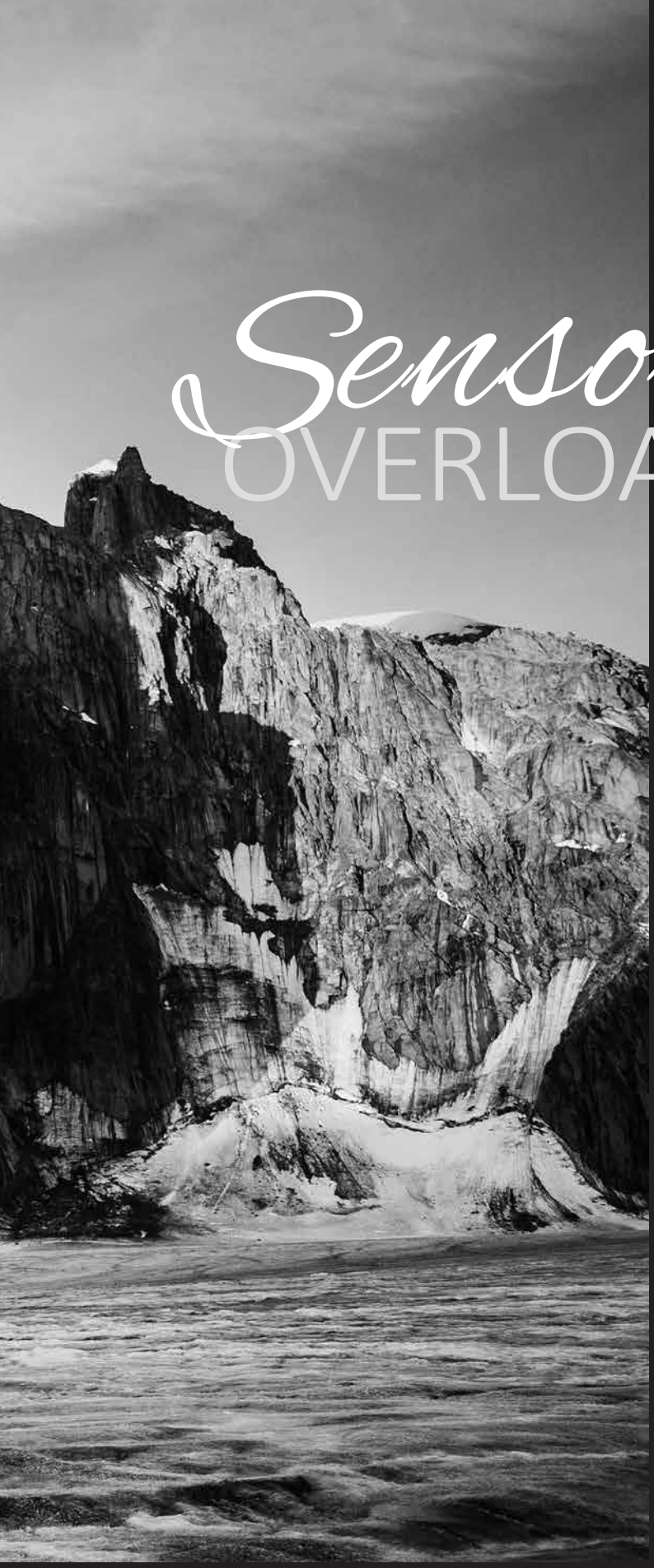
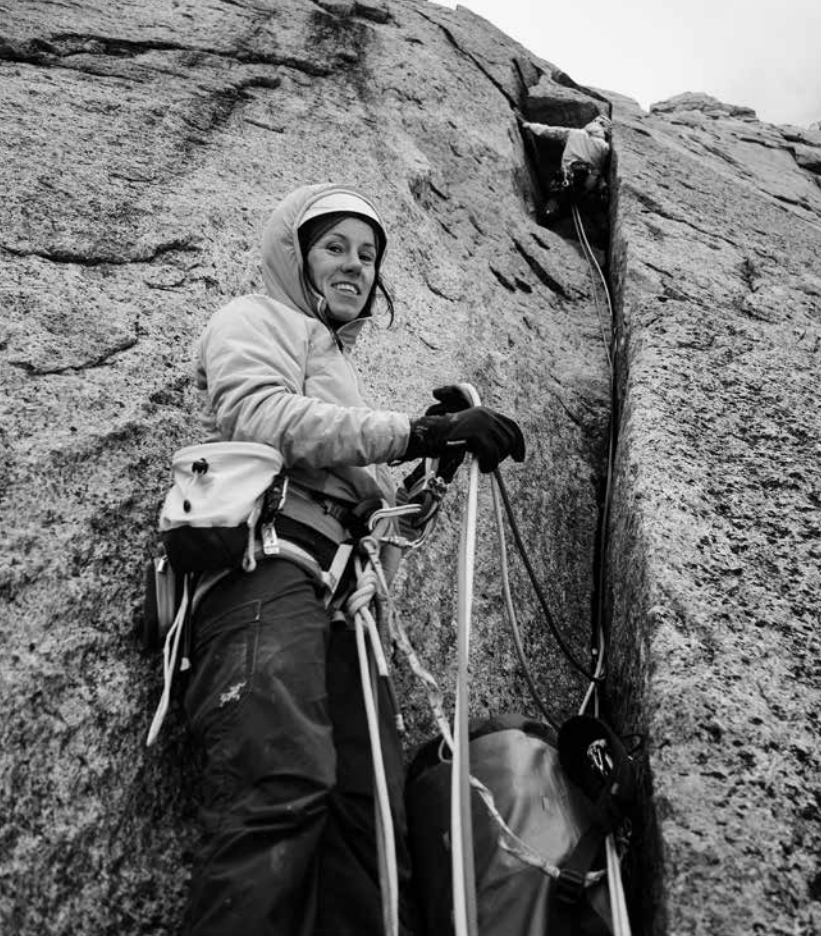
"Mount Hungabee" pen, ink and pencil drawing by Glen Boles (2012)



Sensory OVERLOAD

The arctic sun had crossed all the cardinal points on the horizon and was hidden behind the Penny Icecap to the north. Streamers of fog and rain slipped across the peaks as the first hint of darkness started to settle over the northern landscape. A wind from the southwest was blowing hard. I ducked into a fissure on the summit plateau and prepared for the descent by pulling the smallest cam off my harness and setting it into a perfect bottleneck crack. This blue Alien—a talisman fixed to my harness for the past three months, and a lost partner's favourite cam—was a guardian that protected me, and now it's a gift to the mountain. I said a prayer, and then turned into the wind and rain, following my partners into the darkness.

Joshua Lavigne



Jon Walsh (leading) and Ines Papert finding perfect splitters on the South Buttress of Mount Loki. Photo: Joshua Lavigne

Previous spread: Jon Walsh and Ines Papert approach the north face of Mount Asgard. Photo: Joshua Lavigne

Joshua Lavigne on the lower buttress of Sensory Overload. Photo: Jon Walsh

The scent of an epic was strong. An arctic low pressure had arrived from the southwest, which had blindsided us. I suggested that we huddle under a tarp and wait for the storm to pass. The temperature was dropping and the arrival of snow seemed imminent, but not before the rain would drench everything. I thought that if we stopped and found shelter on the summit, then at the very least, we would avoid getting wet and potentially hypothermic. This, however, meant that we would be stuck on the summit with rime and snow covering a complex descent. Questions of how long the storm would last created doubts about stopping. In the end, the pressure to descend overtook us, and we started our way down with only 15 metres of visibility and more than 1,000 metres of rappelling and downclimbing. Our hopes lay in Jon's knowledge of the descent, our faith in each other and an unspoken intuition developed by time spent in the mountains.

JON WALSH AND INES PAPERT have been building their faith for decades by climbing countless days in the mountains—a devotion that transcends most responsibilities in life. Both Jon and Ines have young families. They are single parents trying to align their roles as father and mother with their desire for a life of meaning through the pursuit of adventure. For me, they are the perfect pair of climbers to travel with into the unknown. Both have a tremendous amount of experience and skill climbing big alpine routes in remote ranges, and they both have a strong connection to the outside world, which reminds them to come home. Jon's previous experience in Baffin Island was also a critical factor in stacking the odds in our favour. He had already climbed Mount Asgard three times during an incredibly and somewhat ridiculously successful trip with Chris Brazeau in 2009. During their trip, they had plans to attempt the northwest face of the South Tower, but travel conditions on the glaciers and time restrictions prevented them from doing so. Jon's drive to return to this unclimbed grade VI wall was what brought us together.

The northwest face of Mount Asgard rises 1,200 metres from the Turner Glacier. This imposing wall inspires the imagination to dream beyond conventional ideas of adventure. The shear grandeur of it conjures images of climbing endlessly into the sky to an outlook set between earth and heaven—a place where only the gods have been granted passage, an image or idea that does not fade with time or experience. From our base camp, directly below the northwest face, we found ourselves set amongst a landscape of ancient earth ruins: the rock carved by millennia of geologic forces and the ice below us a remnant of the most recent ice age. The eastern coastline of Baffin Island is cut with fjords and deep glaciated valleys, a land of extremes and a paradise for the rock climber looking for something a little more wild.

We entered this arctic landscape from the northern community of Pangnirtung, a fishing village set on the

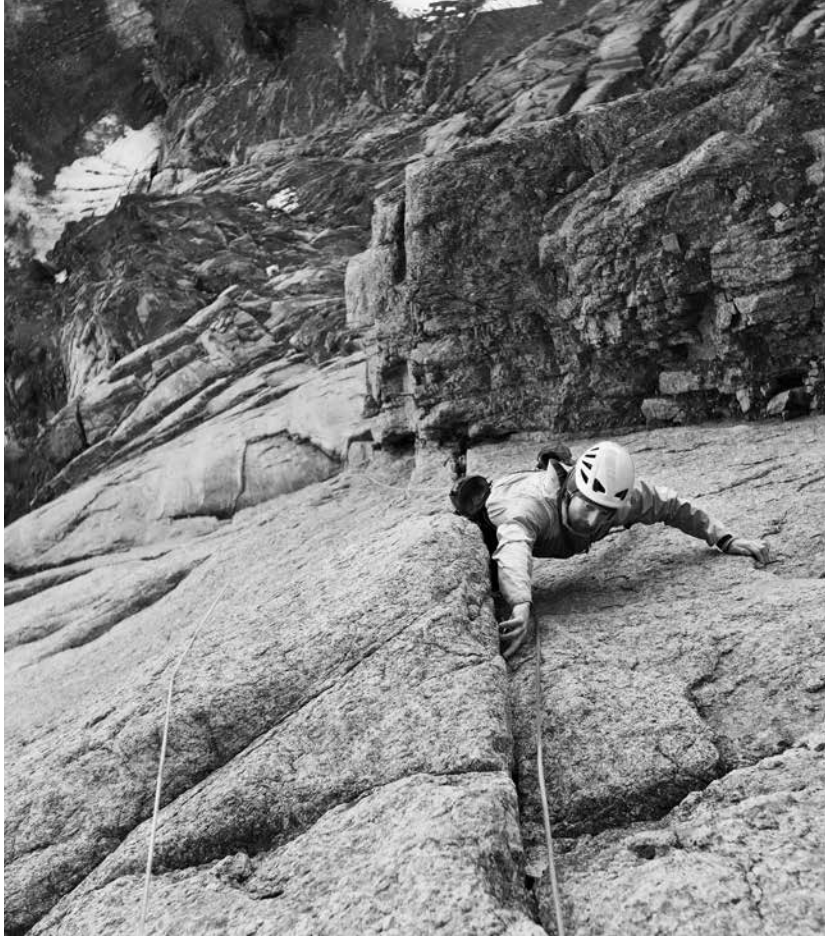
coastal plains of the Pagnirtung Fjord. We registered with the national parks service and set out towards the heart of Auyuittuq National Park. After a three-day hike along the sandy shores of the Weasel River, we arrived at the snout of the Turner Glacier and a cache of gear, which Jon had stashed during a winter ski trip to the same area. The labour of the approach up until that point had been reasonable. Our packs were relatively light and the weather was summer-like. We wore shorts and T-shirts, and the bugs had not yet infested the valleys. But that quickly changed with our packs now loaded with the food and gear needed to climb a Baffin big wall. We ground our way up the Turner Glacier with our heads down and our knees buckling. After two days of load carrying and a total of seven days of hiking, we were happy to drop our bags and settle into our new home on the ice.

Jon was the unifying member that brought the three of us together. We had not climbed together as a team, so the discussions on strategy and style required lots of communication. After much deliberation, we settled on a strategy to take bivy gear and enough food for three days on the wall, hoping to find water along the way. We also brought enough rock gear to aid and bolt difficult sections of free climbing. After a week of good weather, the forecast was taking a turn for the worst, so we started up the wall with little rest. The climbing was challenging but clean directly off the glacier, and we made quick progress up a prow we dubbed "the sit start," since all previous teams had accessed the west side of the face via a steep snow gully then a traverse, bypassing the first 200 metres. We wanted to climb the longest, steepest and cleanest line on the northwest face, even if it took longer—a challenging proposition while climbing in alpine style.

After 12 mostly clean and moderate pitches, we dropped our bags at a possible bivy site and took a few deep breaths, happy to be safely hidden under an overhang. While Jon was climbing the ninth pitch, a massive block had shot out from the top of the wall. It fell for 800 metres! That was enough time for Jon to downclimb five metres below his protection. The rock exploded and peppered us with shrapnel, nearly ending our trip in catastrophe. We didn't know the reasons for the rock fall or where it had come from, but we did agree that moving to the steepest section of the wall was still the best strategy and would reduce exposure to the hazard.

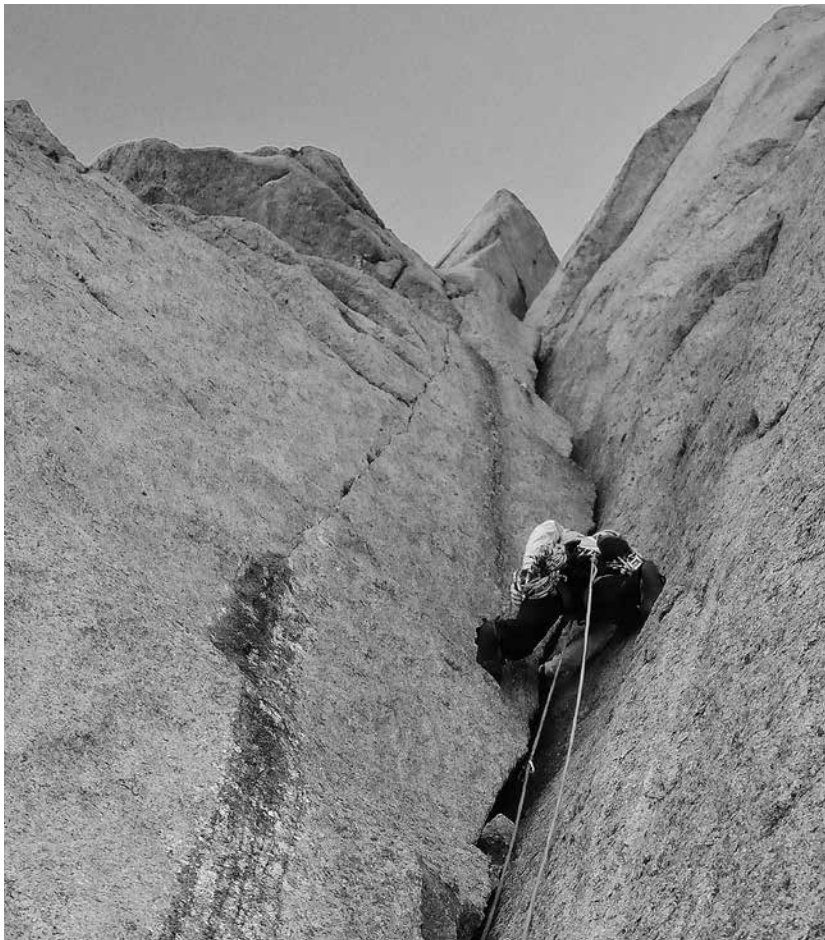
We traversed out towards a steep headwall to take a look at a splitter seam we had seen while scoping the route from the glacier. We made a tenuous 60-metre traverse only to be greeted by exfoliating flakes and loose rock. We backed off and reversed the traverse back to the ledge. As the sun set behind the Penny Icecap, we fixed our two lines. The tension from the day was still palatable, but luckily we were protected by the overhang above and could relax for at least a few hours.

After a short sleep, we awoke to another day of clear skies. The route continued up our originally planned series



Jon Walsh on pitch 15 of Sensory Overload. Photo: Joshua Lavigne

Jon Walsh on pitch 21 (day two) of Sensory Overload. Photo: Joshua Lavigne



of shallow corners and splitter seams, but we were still below a monstrous hanging pillar, which we assumed was the culprit of the rock fall. We ran out of cracks and had to make a committing and insecure rising traverse via face holds to move out from under the pillar. The line connected and we all relaxed, once again enjoying ourselves. Ten pitches of perfect red granite and continuous cracks brought us to a pitch below the summit. We were excited to be moving so quickly and felt calm, knowing that we would be arriving on the summit shortly. That's when the wind picked up and initial streamers from the impending storm started to spill over the summit.

AS THE ARCTIC NIGHT SETTLED around us, the descent in the sleet and cloud continued. The fog was heavy with texture and shadows, confining our senses to a small sphere of light cast by our headlamps. The rappel lines extended below with Jon at the end, floating in the abyss. We had managed to descend approximately 800 metres, including 10 rappels and several hundred metres of wet, loose downclimbing. According to Jon, we were only three hundred metres from the glacier, but he predicted the downclimbing would be on wet slabs, and if we decided to rappel, it would be over dangerously low-angle terrain. He continued towards the edge nonetheless, which was 10 metres from me, yet I couldn't see him. He was trying to find an answer to resolve our predicament, but the pieces had already been put in motion and we only had a few moves left before we were in checkmate.

The South Buttress of Mount Loki. Photo: Jon Walsh

Having committed to the descent, we were wet, hypothermic and precariously stuck in a labyrinth of slabs. We had one move left, which was to sit, suffer and wait for the storm to break. He turned around and came back to where Ines and I had already found a ledge. We emptied our bags and huddled under a flapping tarp with our wet sleeping bags over our heads. The night crept along and our body temperatures quietly dropped. The rain and snow continued and our standby shelter was no longer a place of refuge. I was afraid. Jon's hypothermia was worsening, the storm was intensifying and we had no water for hot drinks. If we didn't change our circumstance soon, the last move would have been played. We needed the fortress of Asgard to release its grip or a guardian to pry us from it.

Thousands of kilometres away, just as we huddled into our bivy, Paul Walsh, Jon's father, lay dying. Paul had been fighting a dauntless battle for eight years with Multiple Systems Atrophy. His nervous system was failing him and he had slowly lost the ability to use the muscles in his body, including his throat. He could hardly eat, and now could no longer breathe. His family gathered around him as he took his last breaths of life, and in that moment, perched on that slab, I watched Jon's hypothermia tighten its grip. Unknowingly, Jon had taken a path of suffering to be with his father during his last moments. Six hours had passed sitting in our hospice, the same time that Paul had taken to pass the last moments of his life, and with his final breaths he blew away the storm. The snow stopped, the wind died, the clouds parted as angelic rays of light filled our bodies with warmth and hope. Our guardian had arrived. We were released.

Summary

South Buttress (5.10+, 650m), Mount Loki, Auyuittuq National Park, Baffin Island. FFA: Joshua Lavigne, Ines Papert, Jon Walsh, July 22, 2012.

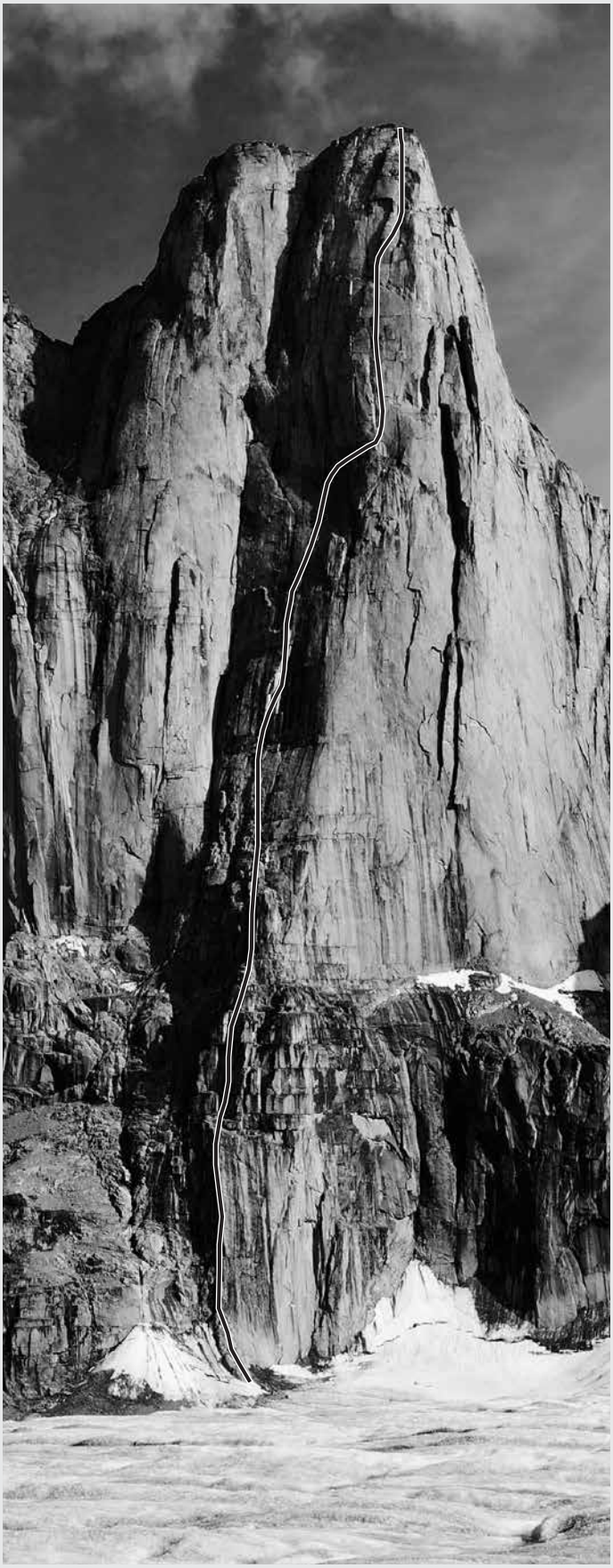
Sensory Overload (5.11+ C1, 1200m), north face, South Tower, Mount Asgard, Auyuittuq National Park, Baffin Island. FA: Joshua Lavigne, Ines Papert, Jon Walsh, July 24-26, 2012.

Acknowledgements

This trip would not have been possible without the generous help from the following sponsors: Arc'teryx, Mountain Equipment Coop, The Copp-Dash Inspire Award, Black Diamond, Scarpa, Lowa, Vega, Julbo, Gore-Tex and Stoked Roasted. Also, a big thank you to the staff at Auyuittuq National Park for being so helpful and considerate during difficult circumstances, and to our outfitter Peter Kilabuk for the boat services.

About the Author

Joshua Lavigne is an ACMG mountain guide who lives in Canmore, Alberta. He has sampled alpine granite all over the world, but his recent trips to Baffin Island reinforce his belief that Canada has some of the best mountains.



Sensory Overload

P1: 5.6, 50m. Start at the lowest point on the prow, which extends into the glacier, and look for a left-facing corner. Scramble up a gully and over loose blocks.
P2: 5.9, 35m. Climb up and right to a face crack.
P3: 5.10+, 50m. Climb left-facing dihedral to a roof, step right into face crack.
P4: 5.8, 55m. Follow the splitter face crack to a large ledge.
P5: 5.9, 50m. Step right over loose blocks into chimney.
P6: 5.8, 20m. Face climb rightwards away from loose blocks and chimney.
P7: 5.8, 60m. Follow a face crack to 4th-class scrambling.
P8: 5.9, 60m. Slab climb trending left towards a large corner system and belay on huge chockstone in corner.
P9: 5.10+, 40m. Continue following the corner then step right into a right-facing layback flake.
P10: 5.7, 60m. Trend up and left.
P11: 5.9, 50m. Traverse left on a ledge for 15 metres then up a thin right-facing corner.
P12: 5.10-, 60m. Continue up the seam to a large bivy ledge below an overhanging white dihedral. The first ascent party found water on the left side of the bivy ledge.
P13: 5.11, 30m. Climb an overhanging chimney/off-width.
P14: 5.11+, 50m. Continue up the corner with increasing difficulties to a dirty/wet crux section. Traverse right to a belay ledge.
P15: 5.11, 50m. Step back left into the corner and splitter hand-to-finger cracks on the left side, and then step right into a shallow left-facing seam.
P16: 5.10, 55m. Follow a hand crack with some loose rock.
P17: 5.10, 30m. Ascend a fist crack to blocky terrain.
P18: 5.10, 55m. Climb right-trending flakes and face climbing. Belay at a dyke below the very large suspended pillar.
P19: 5.10, 30m. Go up a left-facing hand crack and off-width. Traverse right to belay on a blocky ledge.
P20: Bump the belay 10 metres to the right.
P21: 5.10, 30m. Jam a hand and fist crack up a right-facing corner. Belay at ledge after climbing behind a chockstone.
P22: 5.10+, 40m. Step left onto the prow and into a nice finger crack until you can face climb back into the chimney.
P23: 5.11- C1, 35m. A wet squeeze chimney leads to overhanging fists, hands and fingers. Belay at top of the pillar.
P24: 5.10, 55m. Step left to a chimney and corner with a nice hand crack.
P25: 5.10, 25m. Move right over blocky terrain, and then mantle onto a large ledge. Step right to belay.
P26: 5.10, 50m. Walk right across the ledge to an off-width and climb into a chimney that leads to a hand crack.
P27: 5.10, 40m. Hand cracks lead to a short section of fingers.
P28: 5.10, 50m. Move right over black rock then back left with a tricky move over a large chimney. Belay below an overhanging finger crack.
P29: 5.11 C1, 40m. Climb the finger-sized crack to an easy section of hands to the summit.

Lessons Learned

¶ The Canadian Rockies aren't sexy, at least not within American climbing circles. They're mostly known for waterfall ice climbing and choss, neither of which inspire terms of endearment. American alpinists are mostly drawn to Alaska, South America and, eventually, Asia, content to torque their picks into solid granite and take desperate breaths at high altitude. ¶ For the past 15 years, I was guilty of taking the same approach. I hadn't even considered an alpine climbing trip to the Canadian Rockies. Instead, I had followed the well-trodden path to Patagonia and Pakistan, with an occasional foray to Alaska or elsewhere. But in 2011, I decided I wanted to experience a new place and to explore the legendary peaks and climbs of the Rockies. ¶

Josh Wharton

UNFORTUNATELY, I HAD NO IDEA what I was in for. The Rockies were bigger and badder than I expected. On my first trip, May 2011, my partner and I spent 12 hours plunge-stepping (on skis) over Woolley Shoulder to the base of North Twin, only to turn around amidst snow squalls and ski right back to the car. We salvaged the trip by climbing the Andromeda Strain, but it felt less than fulfilling. In September, I hiked over Woolley Shoulder again. This time everything was plastered with half a metre of fresh snow. Our free climbing hopes for the Twin looked very unlikely. With all the consolation prizes similarly out of condition, we waddled back to the car with our tails between our legs and settled for some quality sport pitches at Acephale. In December, I spent a week shivering through pre-dawn approaches and after-dusk descents, mostly at the Stanley Headwall. I realized that December was most definitely not the time for climbing big alpine routes in the Rockies.

Although I had climbed on every trip, none felt like a success and I was beginning to come to terms with what it would take to climb something big in the Rockies. I learned the peaks were finicky, and that it was necessary to spend several weeks in the area to have a real shot at the right combination of weather and conditions. I realized there were no easy sources for beta. There simply are not many active Rockies alpinists, and those who are, aren't given to jaw flapping or frequent blog posts. Jon Walsh told me he thought there might be 30 truly active climbers in the entire range. With so few climbers, I noticed that routes took on legendary status based upon only one or two ascents and few, if any, repeat attempts. It was an easy place to be scared off by climbs with a loud bark, but perhaps a less severe bite. And finally, I learned that a Rockies alpine climbing trip actually entailed lots of climbing. Unlike Alaska and Pakistan, sport climbing and good "Yam days" were plentiful in the Rockies, and with the comforts of Canmore nearby, there was no reason to hunker into a miserable tent while waiting for the alpine stars to align.

Despite all this, I was still a Rockies novice, but at least I had a handle on what the range required. So in May 2012, I set up base in Canmore; comfortable in an affordable rental, somewhat broke by expensive groceries and pleasantly sore from a steady dose of sport climbing at The Lookout.

Monday, May 7, 2012

I'm partner-less at the beginning of a good weather window. I send emails to everyone and their friends without much luck. Rockies lesson number nine: By May, most Canadians cannot even look at an ice tool, let alone consider swinging one next to a Yankee newbie. Fortunately, a fit partner is sitting right in front of me. My fellow Coloradoan and good friend Chris Alstrin is in Canmore shooting a movie about ski mountaineering. Chris hasn't climbed in months but routinely puts in

Josh Wharton onsighting the crux pitch of The Wild Thing on Mount Chephren. Photo: Chris Alstrin
Previous spread: Josh Wharton working through the gargoyles near the summit of Mount Robson. Photo: Jon Walsh

100 kilometre-plus efforts on his bike. After a bit of cajoling, I talk him into trying The Wild Thing (VI M7 WI5) on Mount Chephren. We leave the car at 4 p.m. to negotiate the isothermic snow and foreign approach in the light. Two hours later, we make a comfortable bivouac 100 metres from the base of the climb.

Tuesday, May 8, 2012

I can't sleep, and instead listen for wet slides. The night seems still and no major avalanches flush down the lower portion of the route. I'm up before the alarm goes off at 1 a.m. We have a quick brew and ditch all the bivy gear, apart from a Jetboil and a tiny tarp. The first 700 metres of the route goes in two pitches. We benefit immensely from spring snow, which makes the technical steps in the lower portion of the route short. There's not much in the way of gear, so Chris jumps right into some serious simul-climbing. I apologize for the lack of anchors.

The legendary A3 pitch is unbelievably cool—a thin, slightly overhanging crack on the left wall of a wide chimney with no choss in sight. The crux is locking-off long enough to clear away snow mushrooms and root out the next pick placement. For the next 10 metres, I'm glad I already spent some time at The Lookout. Over cocktails in Canmore a week later, Barry Blanchard tells me stories about the whipper-laden fight this pitch put up on the first ascent. Rockies lesson number 18: Sometimes it's best not to know a route's history before you attempt it.

The upper chimney is as aesthetic as any I've ever climbed on a big alpine route. Diamond-hard alpine ice requires five swings per stick and the soles of my feet start to ache with all the kicking. The last five metres, ordinarily climbed by burrowing under a chockstone, are completely blocked by cornices and mushrooms. With some serious burrowing and cursing, I engineer my way upward, and 15.5 hours after starting, Chris and I top-out right next to the summit. We exchange a solid, exploding fist bump.

Wednesday, May 9, 2012 (after 1 a.m.)

Lesson number 26: Bring fire-retardant, technical climbing clothing. The supposed four- to six-hour descent is epic. Lake Chephren is half a metre deep with slush, and Chris and I completely soak and freeze our feet before stepping off the edge of the lake and plunging up to our hips in snow. We spend two hours in a tree well trying to dry our feet by a smoky fire. We start again at 3 a.m., but give up after I lead us in a circle through the trees. Another fire and a fitful attempt at sleep due to blowing embers, and finally, at first light, we posthole miserably back to the van, arriving at 8 a.m. The descent takes as long as the climb.

Chris Alstrin seconding the upper ice pitches of The Wild Thing on Mount Chephren. Photo: Josh Wharton

Josh Wharton in the upper ice gully of Infinite Patience on Mount Robson. Photo: Jon Walsh

Thursday, May 10, 2012

Before the climb, I promise Chris I'll retrieve our gear from the base of the route, so despite being exhausted I drive up solo from Canmore. Fortunately, I've already learned lesson number 34: The Rockies require extra floatation. My second pair of skis help me get back to the base relatively easily and the heavily loaded (bivy gear, ski boots and two pairs of skis) ski out is intense, punctuated by a comical series of falls. This would have made good footage for Chris' ski film.

Friday, May 11, 2012

Jon Walsh has been a personal hero since I met him in Patagonia several years ago. He's psyched, tough and talented, and always seems to be doing something interesting in the climbing world. He meets me in Canmore at 3 p.m., and we drive north for Mount Robson's Emperor Face to catch a $700 helicopter ride to Berg Lake at 9 p.m. Jon has already paid his dues doing the 25-kilometre approach slog several times. He also has to be back for work on Monday. My tired legs aren't complaining one bit. Lesson number 49: Don't sweat a few hundred bucks when it might save you years of attempts and a few thousand dollars in the long run.

Saturday, May 12, 2012

We huddle together under a thin tarp until 3 a.m. and then set off. The entire Emperor Face is covered in fresh spring ice. It looks as if you could climb anywhere—new lines for generations to come, or at least repeats of long forgotten ones. We choose Infinite Patience (VI 5.9 M5 WI5), mostly intent on getting to the top of the mountain quickly and efficiently. Again the route is anything but choss. It's continuous one-stick hero ice, gorgeous névé and only the occasional stretch of powder-snow plodding. There are bits of technical climbing, but really the route is a physical and mental challenge. Robson is a little slice of the Himalaya.

Lesson number 57: If you're lucky enough to have a rare Rockies topo, pay attention to it. On the 800-metre traverse, Jon and I grow impatient, ignore Pellet's excellent topo and start towards the summit gargoyles too soon. More than 3,000 metres of relief between the summit and Kinney Lake below create powerful updrafts. I zig and zag amongst unprotectable rime ice, clearly off route, and eventually find the summit. It feels like I've been transported to Patagonia. The route takes 18 hours, but there's still a long unknown descent in front of us.

Sunday, May 13, 2012 (after 2 a.m.)

It feels like we've been downclimbing easy but serious no-fall terrain for hours, and most of it in big slide paths under clearly active seracs. To describe the direct descent down the south face as tricky feels like an understatement. We search for the hut we've dreamed of finding for hours to no avail. We finally give up and lay down in the snow with the tarp over us. At first light we wander downward again, finally dropping into the wet slide-laden Great Couloir. At noon we reach the car. An anonymous kind soul has left a beer sitting on the windshield. Lesson number 62: Rumble strips are the key to longevity of Canadian alpinists. Jon arrives home with enough time for a good night's sleep before work on Monday.

Tuesday, May 15, 2012

Mikey Schaefer, Dylan Johnson and I set off for the Greenwood-Locke (V 5.8 A2) on Mount Temple sometime

Mikey Schaefer a few pitches up the main headwall of the Greenwood-Locke route on the north face of Mount Temple. Photo: Dylan Johnson

in the early afternoon. Mikey is here to shoot some *authentic* alpine climbing for Patagonia. The north face of Temple is probably a bit of a stretch for a photo-op, but Dylan and I are too selfish to waste good weather on an easier route better suited to posing. We barely make it to an amazing bivouac perch before dark. A hundred metres above the top of the Dolphin, and with the lights of Lake Louise stretched out below, Mikey captures some phenomenal images. Lesson number 77: It's possible to actually get real-deal alpine climbing photos, but only with a photographer that is also a badass climber.

Wednesday, May 16, 2012

I would be lying if I said I wasn't beginning to feel a bit strung out. I'm tired and my feet hurt so much that I dread kicking steps. Fortunately, the Greenwood-Locke is technical and keeps us on our toes. Each pitch requires attention to detail and there are some serious sections of climbing for both the leader and seconds. Unlike Robson and Chephren, choss is abundant, particularly where big snow mushrooms push you off the summer rock line. Mikey continues to rip off the photos while Dylan and I take turns pushing the rope upwards. We find Steve House's crampons and a bunch of tat halfway up the headwall, a spooky reminder of his near fatal accident just two years ago. Lesson number 89: You can never truly master the Rockies. Spend enough time here and something is bound to give.

The last week has made me downright paranoid about Rockies descents. I almost dread the top-out and rightfully so since I exit into a bone-chilling snow squall. As if by some miracle and to my great relief, Dylan finds a descent down some sneaky gullies and we only posthole once or twice before reaching our skis at Lake Annette. We chase bear tracks out to the car. Dylan and Mikey repeatedly scream, "Hey, bear!" I mostly ski in silence, so exhausted that being a grizzly's snack sounds somewhat more appealing than skiing another kilometre.

Thursday, May 17, 2012

I sleep until noon and don't even check the forecast. For now, I'm satisfied. The Rockies have taught me well, and I know there are many more lessons and adventures to come. I'll be back next year, probably just to sport climb, but with a little luck maybe the Rockies alpine school will be in session again.

Summary

The Wild Thing (VI M7 WI5), east face of Mount Chephren, Canadian Rockies. Chris Alstrin, Josh Wharton, May 8-9, 2012.

Infinite Patience (VI 5.9 M5 WI5), Emperor Face of Mount Robson, Canadian Rockies. Jon Walsh, Josh Wharton, May 12-13, 2012.

Greenwood-Locke (V 5.8 A2), north face of Mount Temple, Canadian Rockies. Dylan Johnson Mikey Schaefer, Josh Wharton, May 15-16, 2012.

About the Author

Josh Wharton grew up in a small town in New Hampshire, fishing, biking and skiing, but moved west for college in the late '90s where he discovered climbing. He now makes his home in Estes Park, Colorado, with his wife, Erinn. As a full-time climber and Patagonia ambassador, Josh has not only climbed difficult new routes in Patagonia, Alaska and Pakistan, but has also won the Ouray Ice Festival mixed climbing competition.

Edward Whymper with ice axe and haversack, 1910. Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, NA66-509.

After the Matterhorns

The most spectacular burst of first ascents in the Rocky Mountains never would have happened if not for a chance meeting at Mount Stephen House in Field, British Columbia, a meeting that wouldn't have occurred if not for the most significant accident in mountaineering history.

"The Ascent of the Matterhorn, on July 14th 1865: The Fall." Gustave Dore, lithograph.

Zac Robinson and Stephen Slemon

BY THE SUMMER OF 1901, Edward Whymper was a defeated man. Although his 1865 first ascent of the Matterhorn brought the young English illustrator and amateur climber fame—the ascent is said to have crowned the great age of British mountaineering—the disastrous descent, during which a novice party member slipped into one of the guides, a rope broke and four men died, earned for Whymper an accompanying reputation that would stay with him for life: a reputation for intemperance, for reckless amateurism and for monumental self-privilege.

Never the most sociable of persons, Whymper managed his post-Matterhorn notoriety through self-pity—"Climb if you will," he would write, "but remember … that a momentary negligence may destroy the happiness of a lifetime"—through guidebook writing, through lecturing and through adventure. In Greenland, he drove across the glaciated landscape on a dog sled. In the Andes, he became the first westerner to climb to 20,000 feet. Whymper received the Royal Geographical Society's Gold Medal and was proposed for—but was not granted—membership in the Royal Society. Honoured maybe, but never wholly admired, Whymper aged inelegantly. He never again climbed meaningfully in the Alps. When he spoke about the Matterhorn incident, he seemed mostly interested in proving that he, himself, was not to blame.

Whypmer's established reputation for mountaineering achievement, however, and for self-promotion, stood him in good stead in 1900 when he approached the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) with a business proposal. Having seen the Canadian Rockies through a train window, Whymper came up with an advertising stratagem. In exchange for an all-expenses-paid visit for the summer of 1901, Whymper would undertake to speak favourably about the Canadian mountains, and about the CPR's magnificent hotels, in newspaper articles and in his public lectures in England and Europe. The railway company would cover not only Whymper's own transportation and maintenance costs, but also those of his four top-tier Swiss guides: Christian Klucker, Joseph Bossoney, James Pollinger and Christian Kaufmann. So outfitted, it was implied, Whymper and his unparalleled support team would climb in the Rocky Mountains, achieve Canadian greatness, and then profitably boast about it. The CPR couldn't have been more pleased.

And so in the summer of 1901, when Whymper and his entourage arrived in the Rockies, rumours were already circulating that the famous alpinist had come across the ocean specifically to achieve the first ascent of the so-called "Matterhorn of the North America"— Mount Assiniboine. In reality, the 62-year-old—racked as he was with rheumatism and insomnia—had no interest in attempting Assiniboine, or indeed anything that resembled a real mountaineering challenge. Whymper's difficult climbs were by now well behind him, and he knew it even if others, like the CPR, continued to mistake the shadow for the man. What's more, Whypmer had a marketable reputation to uphold. He had no intention of risking it through a failed attempt on a second-rate peak.

Instead, Whymper—superbly outfitted and supremely well guided—dutifully walked up a handful of peaks near Vermillion Pass, and the summer wore on. His brilliant Swiss guides, and his chief outfitter Bill Peyto, quickly figured out that Whymper's mountaineering summer was not going to end with a bang. Klucker felt underutilized. "We found to our regret that Whymper's ability was not of high order," Klucker later wrote, acidly. All felt despondent. Whymper's arrogance, his abrupt approach to human management and his constant hard drinking didn't help the situation. So poisonous was the atmosphere in camp that Peyto simply quit. An enraged Whymper stomped from his camp in the Yoho Valley down into the town of Field in search of new help.

An imposing array of empty liquor bottles and crates (bearing the caption "The Remains of E. Whymper") from Whymper's exploration of the Ice River Valley, 1901. Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, NA66-323.

And there, at the CPR's elegant Mount Stephen House, Whymper met the man who would prove himself the most dynamic force ever to whirlwind through the Rockies—James Outram. Outram's grandfather had so distinguished himself in the so-called "Indian Mutiny" of 1857 that Britain's parliament had voted him a hereditary Baronetcy and erected a statue to him on the Victoria Embankment. Outram was destined to inherit the title. But "a brain collapse from overwork," as he explained in his 1905 book *In the Heart of the Canadian Rockies*, "impelled" the 36-year-old abruptly to resign his position as vicar of St. Peter's Church in Ipswich the preceding summer, to board a steamship for North America and to seek "the mountain heights for mental rest and physical recuperation." Commentators on mountaineering history—Esther Fraser, for example, and Bob Sandford—would later identify Outram's malady more precisely as "a substantial nervous breakdown." It resulted in one of the most frenzied periods of climbing ever witnessed in the Canadian Rockies.

Some striking similarities linked the two displaced Englishmen in that summer of 1901. Both Whymper and Outram were unabashedly competitive in their pursuit of first ascents—Whymper, famously, had trundled rocks down onto a competing Italian team from his first-ascent perch on the Matterhorn summit. Both men had come to the Canadian Rockies in the prolonged aftershock of personal disaster—and with a view to a kind of restoration. And both were capable of arousing strong feelings of dislike from hired subordinates and fellow mountaineers alike. No wonder Whymper hastened to

invite the upper-class, energetic and companionably snobbish Englishman to join his superbly outfitted climbing party.

Outram accepted at once. The meeting and invitation was a stroke of great luck for the lanky vicar who's foremost desire was an ascent of "the most talked-of peak in the Canadian Rockies"—Assiniboine. He had seen it from the summit of Cascade Mountain a year earlier, during his first summer in the Rockies, but hadn't the resources on hand necessary for the venture. But now, with Whymper's team at his disposal, Outram suddenly found himself with *everything*: Swiss guides, the latest equipment, a local outfitter and time.

With Tom Martin now hired in place of the offended Bill Peyto and a kindred spirit joining him in the position of client privilege, Whypmer and his party found some momentary new energy and were able to rack up a series of modest first ascents in the Yoho Valley area: Mont de Poilus (then called Mount Habel), Mount Collie, Trolltinder Mountain and Isolated Peak. Unfortunately for Outram though, Whymper remained disinterested in Mount Assiniboine. Even the news of a nearly successful attempt on Assiniboine that summer, by the formidable Americans Walter Wilcox and Henry Bryant with the great Swiss guide Edouard Feuz, failed to reanimate Whymper's mountaineering ambition. But for Outram, the tidings "added fuel to the already consuming desire," not only to ascend the mountain, but to do so first.

After the first ascent of Mount Assiniboine, 1901. Left to Right: Christian Häsler, James Outram and Christian Bohren. Photo: J.H. Scattergood. Courtesy of the American Alpine Journal.

The news of that near success on Assiniboine had been delivered by none other than Bill Peyto. Whatever sour feelings Peyto harboured for his stubborn employer, this competition, now, for the still-unclimbed Assiniboine proved a significant motivator for rethinking his resentments, and so Peyto had returned to Whymper's camp with a call to action. "For experienced mountaineers," he announced, "there was no question of a failure." Whymper proved resolutely unmoved by this challenge, but not so for James Outram. Here was a chance for Whymper's party to achieve something, even if Whymper, himself, wasn't a part of it. And so an arrangement was made: Peyto pledged his services to the parson, and Whymper's ambivalence blessed the deal. With that, the camp disbanded. Whymper took what remained of his party off to the Ice River area (south of Mount Goodsir) and finished out his summer in further campsite drink.

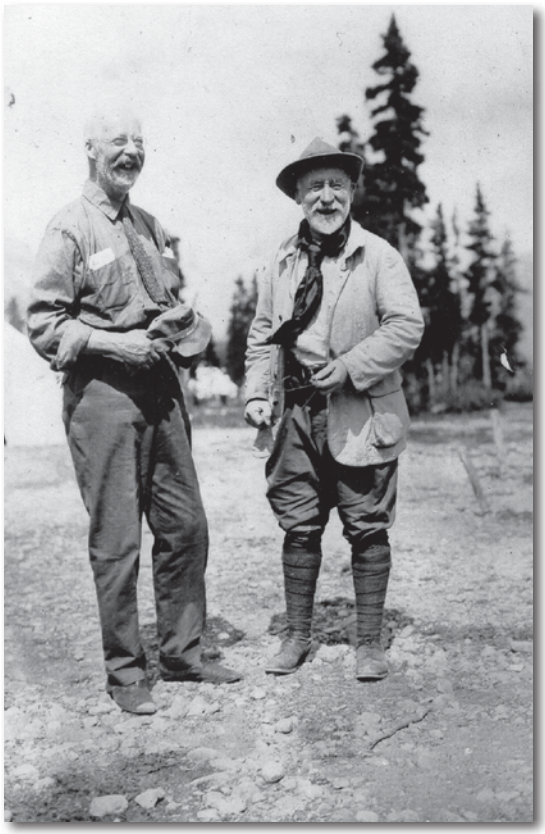
At this point, the two career trajectories also parted. Over the next four years Whymper would return often to the Rockies, ostensibly to evaluate their tourist potential for the CPR, but in all likelihood to run out his handsomely sponsored "freebie" through whatever publicity his name could still attract. In the end, Whymper published no official report of his travels. He wrote very little about the mountaineering region and promoted it even less. He did, though, pen a handful of uncomplimentary remarks about the people he had employed. Writing well after Whymper's death, Arthur O. Wheeler, long-time director of the Alpine Club of Canada (ACC), concluded that Whymper "came with the intention of discovering the Canadian Rockies and found that they had already been discovered."

But for James Outram, the disbanding of the Whymper camp would prove to be a new, and redemptive, beginning. From the Yoho Valley, Outram and Peyto left for Field, where—through the cooperation of Annie Mollison, "the incomparable manager" of Mount Stephen House—they acquired "provisions, blankets, etc.," and Swiss guides Christian Bohren and Christian Häsler. After a quick train ride to Banff, and two days of hard trekking, the party made history. Outram, Bohren and Häsler climbed Mount Assiniboine from the south and, despite nervous objections from the guides, boldly descended by the north, thus traversing the peak. It was a brilliant coup. "We stood as conquerors," Outram would write, "11,860 feet above the sea … on the loftiest spot in Canada on which a human foot had then been planted." Outram's ascent of the "Canadian Matterhorn" would also prove to be economically sublime. The first ascent firmly established his reputation as a mountaineer, and the CPR put its full support behind Outram, granting to him for the summer of 1902 all the amenities it had provided the year before for Whymper, including the services of Christian Kaufman.

That third and last season of Outram's climbing convalescence produced a record of first ascents that, as Chic Scott, an authority on mountaineering history in the Rockies, puts it, simply "defied description." "Never before or since," writes Scott, "has a climber had such an impact in such a short time." Throughout the summer of 1902, Outram racked up first ascents of an astonishing number of peaks: Mount Columbia, Mount Bryce, Mount Forbes, Mount Freshfield, Mount Lyell, Mount Alexandra and Mount Wilson. His smash-and-grab approach to peak-bagging offended many of his contemporaries, who quietly loathed him as "the interloper." The great

J. Norman Collie bemoaned the squandering of pioneering work that he and climbers like Walter Wilcox had accomplished, only to have "all the cream skimmed off by a man who has had all the hard work done for him, not to mention the assistance of the Swiss guides." But as far as the public was concerned, Outram had ascended to the height of mountaineering greatness. Media reports all cast the vicar as a youthful Whymper, a characterization easily made due to Assiniboine's moniker. That Outram had come to Canada for rest and reprieve from "a brain collapse," but instead built "cairns on fully half of the major unclimbed summits of the Rockies," made his mountaineering accomplishments all the more extraordinary.

"A brain collapse from overwork." It's a great story of bravery, of pushing beyond debilitating adversity into triumph, and it has passed into mountaineering history as one of Canada's grand narratives of climbing achievement. Outram's one short explanatory phrase, tossed into the front matter of his 450-page-plus memoir *In the Heart of the Canadian Rockies* (1905), is his only overt written indication that all was not well with him during this period. But subtler hints of something rather darker in the background abound in Outram's book: "[A]mong such lonely or on such solitary mountaintops as those in Canada," Outram wrote, "there may be found the long-sought sanctuary of the storm-tossed soul." And, here, in the Rockies, "burdens that seemed too heavy to be borne are rolled away. The throb of pain is stilled." Such indications of a haunted mountaineer, climbing perhaps in search of some kind of redemption, further buttress the curious parallel between our two "Matterhorn" ascentionists. Whymper, too, was persistently haunted by an insuperable burden from the past. "Every night," Whymper wrote, in his celebrated memoir *Scrambles amongst the Alps in the years 1860-1869* (1871), "do you understand, I see my comrades of the Matterhorn slipping on their backs, their arms outstretched, one after the other, in perfect order at equal distances. Croz the guide, first, then Hadow, then Hudson, and lastly Douglas. Yes, I shall always see them…."



James Outram and Arthur O. Wheeler at the ACC's Mount Robson Camp, 1924. Photo: Malcolm Geddes. Courtesy of Ruth Elliot.

New evidence, however, has recently come to light, and we now know that Outram did not actually come to Canada simply to recover from a "brain collapse." Paul R. Deslandes, a historian of imperialism and sexuality at the University of Vermont, gained access to a series of private letters, written in 1902 and 1903 between Frank Outram, James Outram's younger brother, and Dr. Henry Stearns, superintendent at the Hartford Retreat for the Insane, in Connecticut. In a scholarly article published in 2009 in the journal *Gender and History*, Deslandes discloses a hidden reason behind Outram's sudden departure in 1900 for Canada. "A thick packet of documents," writes Deslandes, "placed haphazardly among the papers of an eminent Connecticut doctor" revealed that "grave charges" were about "to be brought against James for immoral conduct with choir boys." Frank Outram's letters are withholding about "the precise nature of Outram's sexual exploits," Deslandes reports. But they do "offer the following explicit qualification: 'I never heard of any actual case of sodomy, but of fondling and masturbating the boys.'"

"Outram's actions," Deslandes continues, "could have easily resulted in criminal prosecution under the restrictive laws governing male same-sex relations." And so "Frank Outram and the youngest of his brothers, William, were instructed by a group of local authorities in Ipswich to take James Outram 'away at once' if they were to have any hope of 'preventing a Public Scandal.'"

This new evidence explains why Outram's eminent London family sent him to Vancouver in 1900. Whatever one makes of Frank Outram's description of his brother's "immoral conduct," the British Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 had made "gross indecency" between males, irrespective of age, a criminal offense in Britain, and in the wake of Oscar Wilde's famous trial for sodomy only five years earlier, it was evident that even upper-class citizens could be incarcerated for their sexual practice. Outram's family wanted him away from the scene of rumour, and themselves safe from the possibility of scandal.

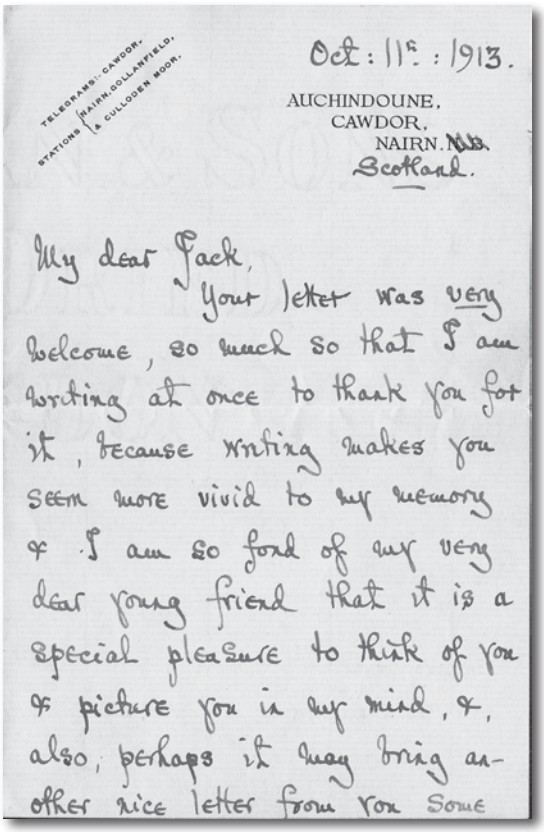
This packet of letters also explains why it was that Outram's spectacular Rocky Mountain climbing ended so abruptly after the summer of 1902. Deslandes reports that in October, a "family friend" from Vancouver wrote to the Outrams in London, saying that "if [James] is allowed to remain here in British Columbia … he will certainly involve himself in most serious trouble, and bring public disgrace upon his name." The "friend's" letter goes on to say that "a relapse" in Outram's behaviour had somehow "outraged the hospitality of a friend up-the-country," and to remind the Outrams of their "imperative duty" to protect their reputation. Writing to his elder brother as "Father's representative," Frank Outram commanded

James to "immediately put yourself in this Dr.'s [Stearns] hands absolutely and carry out whatever treatment he may specify."

One more letter adds to the narrative. A diagnostic letter of introduction, written by Sir George Henry Savage—eminent British psychiatrist, doctor to Virginia Woolf and friend to the Outram family—brings to Dr. Henry Stearns' "professional notice the Rev. Mr. Outram who I regret to say is a sexual pervert or invert. He has been in danger in England & I hear he has been in Vancouver in danger. I feel the only way is for someone to get a medical hold on him & if possible get him into some retreat for treatment & observation."

Outram, reports Deslandes, entered the Hartford Retreat in December 1902 under the assumed name "Mr. James." He proved himself a model patient: "always pleasant and gentlemanly"; "physically active"; he even entertained others with a "lecture illustrated by lantern, treating of his visits to the Canadian Rockies." Outram was released from care in June 1903.

What became of him immediately following his release from "treatment" is unclear. He was in Colorado in 1908. By 1912, he had returned permanently to Canada, this time to Vermilion, Alberta, where he underwent yet another transformation. Having inherited his father's baronetcy, the now *Sir* James Outram established himself as a gentleman capitalist and land developer. During the First World War, he commanded Vermillion's militia company and served as an instructor at the Provisional School of Infantry (Camp Sarcee) in Calgary. From 1920 to 1924, he worked in Calgary as an accountant-auditor and assumed senior positions in both the pro-British Loyal Orange Association and the ACC. In 1921, at the age of 56, he married a family friend, Lillian Mary Balfour of Brighton, England. Their life together was brief. Outram died in March 1925 after suffering a stroke. He was buried in Royal Oak Park Cemetery in Victoria, B.C.


TELEGRAMS:-CAWDOR.
STATIONS RAIRN, DALLANFIELD, & CULLODEN MOOR.

Oct: 11th: 1913.

AUCHINDOUNE,
CAWDOR,
NAIRN. N.B.
Scotland.

My dear Jack,

Your letter was very welcome, so much so that I am writing at once to thank you for it, because writing makes you seem more vivid to my memory & I am so fond of my very dear young friend that it is a special pleasure to think of you & picture you in my mind, &, also, perhaps it may bring another nice letter from you some

James Outram to John Davenall Turner, 11 October 1913. Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, M526.

WAS JAMES OUTRAM, as Frank Outram's letter implies, a predatory pederast, sent to the outposts of empire to avoid detection for impropriety? Did he climb so energetically in search of moral as well as physical restoration? Or was Outram just another victimized homosexual of his time, in search of liberty from rumour, inelegant speculation and unfair social restraint, a search that led him to the mountains, to self-affirmation within the "freedom of the hills"? Because of tightened privacy laws in the United States governing patient records, the Outram records in the Institute of Living Archives in Hartford, Connecticut, are now closed in perpetuity. But even were they open, we still wouldn't really know.

A rather smaller packet of letters housed in the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies in Banff, however, discloses a little more of the persistent ambivalence of James Outram as historical icon. In one of those letters, Outram writes from Auchindoune, Cawdor, Scotland, October 11, 1913, to "My Dear Jack" in Edmonton, then aged 13. "I am so fond of my dear young friend," reads the letter,

"that it is a special pleasure to think of you and picture you in my mind, & also, perhaps it may bring another nice letter from you some day when you feel inclined to do a kind action to an old man who loves you. I know letter-writing is an uncongenial task for a boy of your age, especially when the office claims so much of your time… Thank you also ever so much for the last sentence 'with much love,' which I very greatly appreciate: I hope it is really so, though I can hardly see how you can love an ugly old man like me, when we have not seen very much of one another. I do like to think you do, however, and hope you will more still when we get better acquainted, because I loved you the very first time I saw you."

Was "Jack" yet another in a series of children Outram placed at risk, the letter to him evidence of a lifelong continuation of the alleged improprieties of 1900? Or can Outram's letter be read as evidence of an adaptive disposition, titled London vicar turned mountain climber, again turned mentor, helping a young prairie office boy find his own way of seeing beyond his present confinement into a wider world? Despite his lack of formal training, "Jack"—John Davenall Turner—would nevertheless grow up to be one of Western Canada's most celebrated painters of the outdoors. He is especially well known for his paintings of the foothills, with the Rocky Mountains in the background.

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 entirely too many books on the subject. Robinson currently serves as the ACC's VP for Activities.

Below the Bolt

Raphael Slawinski

A few years ago, I went on a traditional kick at the Stanley Headwall, trying to climb as much as possible without placing—or clipping—bolts. Afterward, I wrote an article about the experience, titling it somewhat self-righteously "Beyond the Bolt" (2008 *CAJ*). Last winter, I went on another mixed climbing binge, but that time I packed a power drill for just about every outing. Hypocrisy? Perhaps, though I prefer to think of it as embracing climbing in all its variety.

Raphael Slawinski on pitch two of The God Delusion on the Stanley Headwall. Photo: Wiktor Skupinski

The Ghost in the Machine

November. In the end, what's climbing about? Gymnastics? Exploration? I suspect everyone will answer differently, and maybe even differently at different times. For example, I spent most of last September projecting one single-pitch route at the Lookout. Each day at the crag was much the same as the previous one: I'd warm up, get on my project and try to work it into submission. While I did make some discoveries along the way, such as it's better to hand-wrap rather than crimp the hold at the start of the first crux, I'd be hard pressed to call what I was doing exploration. Instead, I was essentially perfecting a gymnastic routine so that I could eventually execute it error free.

The Ghost in the Machine on the Stanley Headwall.
Photo: Raphael Slawinski

On a warm afternoon in late September, with the aspen turning yellow in the valley below, I surprised myself by floating the route almost effortlessly. Thinking it best to leave well enough alone, I didn't go to the Lookout again. Instead, as the days grew shorter and shorter, I woke up earlier and earlier on the weekends, trudging for hours only to climb a few pitches of snowed-up rock nobody had bothered to climb before. To make matters worse, most of the time I wasn't even getting up the damned things—just scratching up a little ways, noticing darkness setting in, looking up and seeing lots of hard climbing still remaining, and rappelling off. And repeating the same ritual the following weekend, hopefully gaining a couple of pitches each time. So what is it that lured me out of bed every cold, pitch-black Saturday morning? Knowing that, after passing the previous high point, I'd step around a corner or turn the lip of a roof, and finally see what lay ahead.

All the same, as much as one might aspire to live by the clichéd dictum that life is about the journey and not the destination, if one never arrives at one's destination then even a fun journey can become tiresome. And so, just as I was happy to finally send my project at the Lookout, I was happy to finally finish one of my mixed projects. Granted, it was by far the smallest one, but the best part of it was that it was just the start.

Jon Walsh on pitch one of The Ghost in the Machine on the Stanley Headwall. Photo: Raphael Slawinski

The Ghost in the Machine (M7, 70m), Stanley Headwall. FA: Raphael Slawinski, Jon Walsh, Ian Welsted, November 18, 2012.

This is a fun little route with two back-to-back pitches of solid M7. It's found below the left end of the big overlap left of the Suffer Machine area. In spite of being put up with a bolt gun, it manages to retain some soul. The first pitch is a sustained rope length of traditionally protected mixed climbing, while the second features bolt-protected steep pulling on thin ice that will have you grinning from ear to ear.

Gear: Cams from #00 C3 to #4 Camalot, half a set of nuts, six quickdraws and eight shoulder-length slings. No pins or screws needed.

P1: M7, 40m. The harder-than-it-looks pitch. Scramble up and left to a broad snow ledge. Move left and climb easy rock to the base of a groove that leads up to an arching right-facing corner. Climb past a couple of fixed pins to an overhang, plug in some good cams overhead and make a few strenuous moves past the right side of the overhang. Continue up and right past another fixed pin to some thin ice in a chimney. Climb the chimney past two more fixed pins to a sloping ice ledge and a bolt belay.

P2: M7, 30m. The easier-than-it-looks pitch. Move right from the belay and climb a few metres up a thinly iced slab to the first bolt (hard to see from the belay). Continue up a right-facing corner to another bolt on the left wall. Step onto the left wall and climb steep ice-covered rock past three more bolts into an overhanging slot. Continue up the slot with great drytooling and excellent gear to easier ground and a bolt belay on a snow ledge.

Descent: Possible but awkward to return to the first belay. With two 70-metre ropes, it's best to make one long rappel back to the base.

Hypertension

December. Of the many ice routes on the mile-high south face of Mount Wilson, one that always had me slowing down and craning my neck was Hypertension. A beautiful piece of ice and in all the years I've climbed in the Rockies, I had never seen it touch down. I still couldn't tell if it was touching down last November, but it looked to have enough ice on the first pitch to warrant a closer look. As Joe Josephson wrote in the third edition of *Waterfall Ice*, "[t]he pitches above have even inspired past parties to attempt aid climbing past the overhangs." In these days of power drills and and drytooling, it sounded like a perfect candidate for an M-climb.

Hypertension on Mount Wilson. Photo: Raphael Slawinski

In December, Juan and I decided to make a long weekend of it and stay at the Rampart Creek hostel instead of day-tripping from Calgary. The first day, loaded down with nuts, cams, pins, screws and, yes, a drill and bolts, we hiked up the drainage. As we got closer, to my dismay I realized the route was touching down. Egads! Would I have to be bold after all? Somehow it seemed lame to bolt our way up the rock behind a perfectly good ice pillar. In the end, however, with the pillar looking rather fragile, I managed to rationalize to myself the murder of the impossible and we got down to work.

A short traditionally protected pitch gained a chossy ledge behind the pillar, at which point things reared up steeply. Fortunately, the roof, though steep, was short and in the span of a few hours we managed to bolt it, clean it and redpoint it. Satisfied with a good day's work, though still with some lingering misgivings about the whole enterprise, we repaired to the hostel for burritos and Argentine beers.

The next day, in spite of an overnight temperature of -20 C, we were up early and hiking by the light of dawn. The first low-angled pitch wasn't much of a warm-up, but in spite of feeling stiff and cold, I managed to pull through the burly drytooling at the start of the second pitch on the first try. The screaming barfies did not come until I was established on the ice above the roof.

The sun hit us on the twin pillars a pitch higher. However, the ice was still hard after a cold night,

Raphael Slawinski on pitch one of Hypertension on Mount Wilson. Photo: Jerome Yerly

and I had to swing my tools with conviction to get them to penetrate. Crack!!! The sound echoed from the rock walls, closely followed by my groan of terror. But a few seconds passed and the curtain I was nailed to was still standing. What had happened? I tapped my way carefully up the next few metres to a fracture running across the whole climb. It would seem the curtain, having contracted after a cold night, was releasing some of the accumulated tension. Luckily, unlike the pillar below, it was well supported.

Fortunately, the rest of the climb was uneventful. We followed the ice as it wound its way up a gully between impressive rock walls, simul-climbing the easier bits, belaying the harder ones. Before long, I was slogging up the snow bowl above, looking for a tree big enough to belay and rappel from. In the end, a healthy conifer growing in the lee of a big boulder that had shielded it from the massive avalanches provided all of that, and a fine spot for a snack to boot.

A few weeks later, a friend went up to try the mixed start. He brought back the news that the pillar on the first pitch had snapped off at the lip of the roof. A wave of guilty relief washed over me at having my cowardice at least somewhat justified. Had the pillar been climbable when we were there a few weeks earlier? Almost certainly. Would climbing it have been risky? Beyond a doubt. Would the risk have been reasonable? It all depends on where you draw the line.

The Compressor Start to Hypertension (M8+, 40m), Mount Wilson. FA: Juan Henriquez, Raphael Slawinski, December 15, 2012.
P1: M4, 15m. Climb up the left side of the cauliflowered cone below the pillar. Continue up cracks in the wall above to a two-bolt anchor on a chossy ledge. A rack of cams from #0 C3 to #.75 Camalot and maybe a few small wires suffice. Using some long slings, this pitch can also be linked with the second one.
P2: M8+ WI5, 25m. Make a few big moves on small holds past five bolts to snag the ice. The difficulty of the pitch depends on how far the ice hangs down below the lip of the roof. Continue up steep ice to the snow bowl above. Belay at a two-bolt anchor on the right.
Continue for another four or five pitches on good ice up to WI5 to a big snow bowl. Rappel the route from a tree some distance up the bowl and from V-threads below that.

Nachtmahr

January. The Rockies are a big place. Even after knocking about them for a quarter of a century, it's not too hard to find entire ranges that I've never set my eyes on. And there's something especially rewarding about filling in blanks on an otherwise well-known map.

The Dry Ranges were my latest discovery. Until last winter, I had never visited any of the empty valleys north of the popular Ghost River and Waiparous Creek areas. I suppose what I needed was a good excuse to go check the place out, and at last I got one.

"I'm not much into mixed climbing," Lyle emailed, "but I thought you might be interested."

Attached was a photo of a discontinuous drip: ice, then rock, then a bit more ice, then a bit more rock, then a final ice curtain. Now I enjoy drytooling for its own sake as much as the next person (and maybe even a bit more). However, I find that the classiest (if not necessarily the hardest) lines are the truly mixed ones, the ones that have you hopping back and forth between ice and rock. The line in Lyle's photo was one of those.

The thermometer in Lyle's truck remained stuck stubbornly below -20 C as we drove toward the Ya Ha Tinda Ranch. When it comes to ice climbing, I try to live by a -15 C rule, meaning that on days colder than that I either go climbing in the sun, go skiing or go to the gym—but I don't get on hard routes in the shade. Still, to get things done, sometimes we have to break our own rules.

We wore every layer we'd brought on the snowmobile ride in. Standing on the frozen James Lake, we looked up at the hanging dagger—blue and brittle in the deep shade. Dream On across the valley shone in the sun. However, having come this far, we figured we might as well walk up to the base of the line for a closer look. Once there, in spite of the modest elevation gain from the valley floor, an inversion made the idea of actually climbing somewhat appealing. It goes to show that sometimes you just have to try.

By nightfall, using an anything-goes mixture of ice climbing, drytooling and shamelessly hanging on gear, we'd stuck enough bolts into the rock to make trying to climb the line a reasonable proposition. I'm always on the lookout for crazy concoctions of ice and rock that go entirely, or at least mostly, on traditional gear. I find that having to fiddle in gear makes the climbing experience about more than just gymnastics. But Rockies' limestone being what it is—not risking broken bones, or worse—usually requires bolts.

Now that the bolts were in, all that was needed was to send the thing. When Alex asked me to pick a location for making a short film, I naturally thought of the unfinished Ya Ha Tinda project. Filming on an unfinished project presents a risk, as there's no guarantee that the route actually goes. By the middle of the afternoon on a thankfully mild Saturday, I was getting worried that I was wasting everyone's time. I'd been hanging on the second pitch for what felt like hours (and it must have felt even longer to Marcus at the belay), and I still hadn't found sufficient holds for getting over the crux roof. Eventually, many broken edges later, I figured out a sequence that involved long reaches on first-tooth hooks. It would have to do.

On Sunday, with Rich dressed up as Marcus at the belay, green bouldering pants and all (continuity matters in a film!), I went for the send. A cold front had moved in overnight, and even while walking in I had a hard time keeping my hands warm. But you should never underestimate what being psyched can do. Sequences that had seemed hard when I'd eked them out move-by-move the previous day felt almost easy in the crystalline air. Even when Wiktor, who was hanging from a static rope next to me, warned me that one of my crampons was falling off, I wasn't overly worried. The route was going down, crampon or no crampon. And it did.

On the walk out I felt happy about the send, but also a bit sad to be done with the project and to have no reason to return to the Dry Ranges. Then again, a month earlier I'd thought I had no reason to visit them in the first place. I expect I'll be back.

Natchmahr located in the Dry Ranges. Photo: Raphael Slawinski

Nachtmahr (M9 WI5, 85m), Dry Ranges. FA: Rich Akitt, Marcus Norman, Lyle Rotter, Raphael Slawinski, January 20, 2013.

This is a cool (I think it's cool, anyway), fully mixed route located in a rarely visited corner of the Rockies. It sits on the northeast aspect of Maze Peak in the Dry Ranges, overlooking James Lake and the prairies to the east. More than likely, you will have the whole place to yourself. The route does not appear to come in every year, so who knows when it will be in next.

Approach: From the Eagle Lake/James Pass parking, hike east on a 4x4 quad trail. Easy walking across the frozen Eagle Lake, past Dream On and other assorted Dream climbs on the left (north) side of the valley, takes you over James Pass to James Lake. Just before you reach James Lake, leave the trail and hike right (south) 200 vertical metres to the base of the route. The total approach time is two hours.

Gear: Six draws, eight shoulder-length slings and six ice screws.

P1: WI4-5, 30m. A number of lines are possible, ranging from thin-ish low-angle ice on the left to overhanging mushrooms in the centre. Belay from screws at the top left of the bottom ice flow.

P2: M9, 25m. Move right to a small pillar and the first bolt. From the top of the pillar, follow bolts left underneath a roof. Pull over the roof with a few big moves on small holds and continue more easily to a patch of ice. The ring-bolt station at its top is threatened by falling ice from the next pitch, so it's better to continue another few metres over a rock arch to a sheltered bolt belay on the right.

P3: M7 WI5, 30m. A couple of big reaches on small holds gain a dagger (harder if it's broken off) and easier climbing up the right edge of a curtain. In spite of its large size, the curtain does not appear to be very well attached to the rock. Belay at a bolted station a few metres back from the lip on the right.

Descent: Rappel the route in two double-rope raps, the first from the top station, the second from the ring-bolt station near the top of pitch two (ignore a bad bolt a couple of metres to the right).

The God Delusion

January. Familiarity breeds contempt. I found that out a couple of winters ago when I was nearly taken out by an avalanche at the base of Man Yoga at the Stanley Headwall. After more visits to the Headwall than I could count, I'd forgotten the place still had a few tricks up its sleeve. Ancient Greeks had a word for this kind of thing: *hubris* (closely followed by nemesis).

Familiarity also breeds familiarity. On my first few times to the Headwall, I had eyes only for the obvious lines: Nemesis, Suffer Machine, French Reality. But as I returned time and again, I started noticing the subtle details between the bold strokes—ephemeral, discontinuous drips, like dotted lines hinting at what might, just might, be possible.

The God Delusion on the Stanley Headwall.
Photo: Raphael Slawinski

To the right of Suffer Machine, two giant arches rise one above the other, like the eyebrows of some kind of space alien. Each time I skied up the valley, I would glance over and briefly fantasize about climbing through them, before turning away and heading toward more reasonable prospects. And so one season followed another, with the ice high above the arches remaining terra incognita.

In fall 2011, Jon and Jon (Simms and Walsh) completed Man Yoga. Their route weaves a devious path up the wall left of the arches to tag the ice topping it. Like Drama Queen, their other creation at the Headwall, Man Yoga is a route with character, using a smattering of bolts to link natural features. I had a blast repeating it, barely making it up the snowy slabs on the second pitch, locking off through the exposed roof on the fourth and repeatedly swinging blunt picks into hard ice on the fifth. I was also inspired to finally go check out the direct line through the arches.

Last fall, on a snowy November day, loaded down with ropes, screws, cams, pitons and a power drill, Juan and I plowed up to the base of the wall. A thick layer of crusted snow coated the slab below the arch, hiding any features. I picked the first likely groove through the steep rock at the bottom and started up. Arriving at the base of the slab, I was excited to find a miniature corner splitting the blankness. The vertical overlap plastered with sn'ice gave great climbing, if not exactly great protection. And so, after a few token pins at the start to satisfy my inner traditionalist, out came the drill.

By the end of the day, we'd completed the first pitch. With the giant arch looming ominously above

our high point, we stashed some gear in the snow at the base and went home, happy to be over the crux, which was starting the damn project! A couple of weeks later we were back and added the second pitch through the arch. Though still back-achingly steep for bolting, the giant roof was split by an overhanging corner that provided a natural passage through an otherwise blank ceiling. On the third visit, we added the third pitch, up ice that turned out to be thin and hollow rather than fat and plastic, and altogether not the stroll we had expected. On the fourth visit, racing shadows, we broke out left around a wildly exposed arête and connected with Man Yoga. With the route equipped, we could now try to climb it.

Otto von Bismarck is reputed to have said that "to retain respect for sausages and laws, one must not watch them in the making." He might have added mixed climbs to the list. Before going for the send, I would first have to find sufficient holds, and doing so on soft limestone with an arsenal of pointy steel tools at my disposal, I would be treading a fine ethical line. No, I'm not talking about damage to the rock. By its very nature, drytooling is hard on stone (although, in the end, all the pick and crampon scratches on the Headwall do not come close to the environmental impact of the paved parking lot at the trailhead, to say nothing of the highway used to access it). No, I'm talking about bringing the climb down to my level rather than rising to the challenge.

On the second-pitch roof, a body length of blank rock would have been more than enough to put an end to my free-climbing ambitions. On the fifth visit, however, after a couple of hours of hanging—and with a bit of persuasion from an ice tool—I found what I needed. A few days later, with a light but steady snowfall blanketing the valley, I launched up the familiar opening groove. By late afternoon I was donning a headlamp and starting up the last pitch. It was thinner than it had been a year ago when I climbed Man Yoga, but it seemed only fair that after getting off easier than expected on the second pitch, I should have to try harder than expected on the fifth.

It was pitch black when, at last, I pulled into the small cave from where the ice poured. The route was now complete. I thought it was good, quite good, in fact, but not perfect: not hard enough, not natural enough. I'd have to keep looking.

The God Delusion (M8+ WI5+, 175m), Stanley Headwall. FA: Juan Henriquez, Raphael Slawinski, January 27, 2013. Note: With assistance from Wiktor Skupinski and Jerome Yerly.

The God Delusion climbs directly through the lower big arch right of Man Yoga, joining that route halfway up pitch four.

Approach: Scramble and wallow up to a steep snow ledge and locate a two-bolt anchor on the right.

Gear: The first four pitches require eight quickdraws and six shoulder-length slings for the bolts and fixed pins. Pitch five (the pitch in common with Man Yoga) requires a rack of cams from green #0 C3 to #2 Camalot, half a set of nuts and six to eight ice screws, including a couple of stubbies. All belays are bolted.

P1: M6+, 35m. From the belay, traverse a few metres left into a corner. Climb the corner past a few fixed pitons and a couple of bolts to a small ledge. Traverse left around an arête into another corner and climb it to the slab above. Follow a right-facing vertical overlap up the slab. The tenuous crux comes just below the anchor where the overlap runs out.

P2: M8+, 20m. Climb over a couple of thinly iced overlaps to below the big roof. Traverse left on more thin ice to an overhanging right-facing corner that is the only weakness in the roof. Climb the corner to the slab above the roof. Trend up and right on poor footholds but solid tool placements to a belay on a good ledge.

P3: WI4+, 40m. Thin and snowy ice leads past widely spaced bolts to a right-facing corner on the left margin of the ice. Finish up the corner past a fixed piton and Spectre to a belay on a small sloping ledge.

P4: M8, 30m. Climb the loose corner above the belay past a couple of fixed pitons and more bolts. Trend up and left around an arête to a hanging slab. Make a tricky traverse left into the crux of Man Yoga and pull through that to a belay on the left.

P5: WI5+, 50m. Climb ice that is thin and narrow to start, but gradually thickens toward the top, to a belay in the small cave the ice pours from. A few fixed pitons protect some of the thinner ice.

Descent: With 70-metre ropes (and maybe even 60-metre ones) you can rappel the route from the anchors at the top of pitches five, four and two.

Engel

February. After Juan and I added a mixed start to the rarely formed Hypertension, I untied and breathlessly slogged up the snow bowl above, to get a closer look at the curtain dangling from the next cliff band. The limestone below the ice was overhanging and featureless, and looked unlikely to go on traditional gear. Yet, in a perverse way, the thought of putting up a bolted mixed climb halfway up Wilson appealed to me. I filed the prospect away for future reference.

Engel located above Hypertension on Mount Wilson.
Photo: Raphael Slawinski

February brought the usual spell of good weather and stable snowpack—in other words, good conditions for Wilson. I was torn between a linkup I had attempted once before and the ice above Hypertension. In the end, for reasons I can't quite remember anymore, the latter won out. Jerome and I left Calgary early on a Saturday morning, determined to devote the entire weekend to the project. The first order of business was to get up Hypertension with a pack loaded down with a drill, bolts, pitons and cams (I still hoped the rock might go at least partly on trad gear). The first pitch of Hypertension was a rude awakening. With the pillar snapped off, getting established on the ice took more power than I could muster without a warm-up. Consoling myself that what really mattered today was getting up the route as quickly as possible, I continued up sun-affected ice. The redpoint would have to wait until tomorrow.

By early afternoon we stood below our objective. After a deceptively tricky step of mushroomed ice, out came the drill. I knew we didn't have the time, hardware or battery power to correct any route-finding mistakes, so I took my time choosing a line. A couple of hours later, I was lowering from an anchor tucked immediately below where the ice bonded (or so I hoped) to the water-worn rock. With light fading, we ran down the snow slope below and slid down the rappels of Hypertension.

After a good dinner and an even better night's sleep at the Rampart Creek hostel, we were up and hiking before dawn. With the pressure of a redpoint for added motivation, I gasped my way onto the broken dagger. The rest of Hypertension was a formality, and soon we were hiking up the snow bowl

Engel on Mount Wilson. Photo: Raphael Slawinski

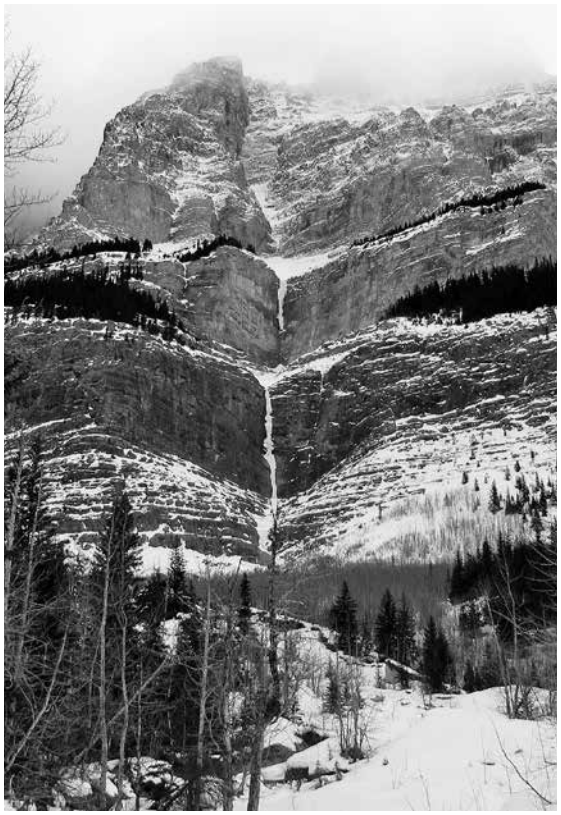
above, following in yesterday's footsteps, already partly erased by wind-blown snow.

Once again, I knew we didn't have time to waste figuring out sequences, so I was determined to send the rock first try. Fortunately, the drytooling proved easier than down below, and it wasn't long before I was tapping my way up a vibrating free-hanger. The top pitch was everything we'd hoped it would be—long and sustained, with ice that was fragile enough to require our complete attention, but solid enough to yield good screws at regular intervals. From the top of the route, we gazed at the next snow bowl and the next rock band, this one decorated with delicate strips of what we could just about convince ourselves was climbable ice. But it would have to wait for another day, or season.

Engel (M8 WI5+, 85m), Mount Wilson. FA: Raphael Slawinski, Jerome Yerly, February 3, 2013.
This spectacular line pours down a rock band halfway up the south face of Mount Wilson. From the top of Hypertension, half an hour of walking up a big snow bowl gets you to the base.
P1: WI4+, 15m. Climb a short, deceptively steep step to a snow ledge and a two-bolt belay.
P2: M8, 20m. Follow bolts up and left to a big free-hanging dagger. Gently peck your way up the left side of the dagger to a two-bolt belay.
P3: WI5+, 50m. Step right from the belay to locate a protection bolt over a small overlap just above the anchor, and climb steep, sustained ice to the top.
Descent: Rappel the route from a V-thread at the top and the two-bolt station at the top of pitch two.

Cythonna

February. At the start of the ice season, another piece of frozen water high up on Wilson caught my eye. A spectacular narrow dagger, it dangled from the rock band above Dancing With Chaos, like a skyscraper with its bottom half removed. In late December, Eamonn and I drove up the Parkway with enough technology (that is, a power drill) to get up the thing; but, once we actually contemplated heading up there, we noticed just how much rock separated the broken-off dagger from the snow below. Eamonn wrangles rocks for a living as a stone mason, and he didn't want to spend the weekend doing more of the same. While my job is less physical, consisting mainly of loudly stating the obvious, lately my weekends did, in fact, involve a fair amount of choss wrangling on a succession of projects. After only a moment's hesitation, we dumped the bolting hardware from our packs and went ice climbing instead.



Cythonna above Dancing With Chaos on Mount Wilson.
Photo: Raphael Slawinski

A few weeks later, I heard that Jon Simms and Gery Unterasinger climbed a new route on Wilson. For about a second and a half, I felt a twinge of regret that we didn't head up to the dagger above Dancing With Chaos after all, but then I realized I had more on my new-route plate than I could handle. Instead, now I could just go climb the thing without doing the hard work of putting it up.

February was slipping away, and with clear skies and warm temperatures the clock was ticking for south-facing ice routes. In spite of a less-than-inspiring forecast, I talked Ian into heading up to the route. The temperatures and the sun-crusted snow felt positively spring-like as we hiked up the drainage below Dancing With Chaos. So did the bleached ice on that route, but fortunately the dagger of Cythonna a few hundred metres higher still glowed a healthy blue.

The drytooling on the first pitch wasn't especially powerful, but the creaky holds and widely spaced bolts held my interest, proving yet again that memorable climbing isn't just about pullin' down. At the top of the pitch, standing on a ledge immediately below the huge ice roof where the dagger had broken off, I realized all the bolting I'd been doing had made me soft. With no solid ice or rock gear to be had, I dubiously eyed Gery and Jon's V-thread. It was drilled into a hump of unsupported ice and I wasn't keen to

Raphael Slawinski on pitch one of Cythonna on Mount Wilson. Photo: Ian Welsted

commit both Ian and myself to it. Mumbling something about how I'd have put in a bolted anchor, I continued up fragile ice to a cave 10 metres higher.

As is so often the case with these rock-to-unformed-ice concoctions, the rock on the first pitch may have been harder but the ice on the second was cooler. A chandeliered pillar with breathtaking exposure down to the pockmarked snow below provided a fitting finish to the route. From the top anchor, we gazed at the pale quartzite towers on the summit ridge far above, and closer to us, a large avalanche bowl baking in the afternoon sun. It was time to go down.

Cythonna (M7 WI5, 90m), Mount Wilson. FA: Jon Simms, Gery Unterasinger, January 2013.
Approach: Climb Dancing With Chaos and slog up another 20 minutes to the base of the next rock band, with an obvious broken dagger hanging from it.
Gear: Cams from C3s to #1 Camalot, small to medium nuts and ice screws.
P1: M7, 40m. Starting on the cone below the dagger, climb up and right past some gear placements to the first bolt. Continue up and left past more gear placements and the occasional bolt to a steeper headwall. Traverse right, and then head straight up toward the ice. Either belay from ice screws in an alcove just above where the dagger usually breaks off, or continue another 10 metres to a cave on the right and better ice.
P2: WI5, 50m. Climb convoluted ice in a wild position to the top.
Descent: Two double-rope rappels from V-threads.

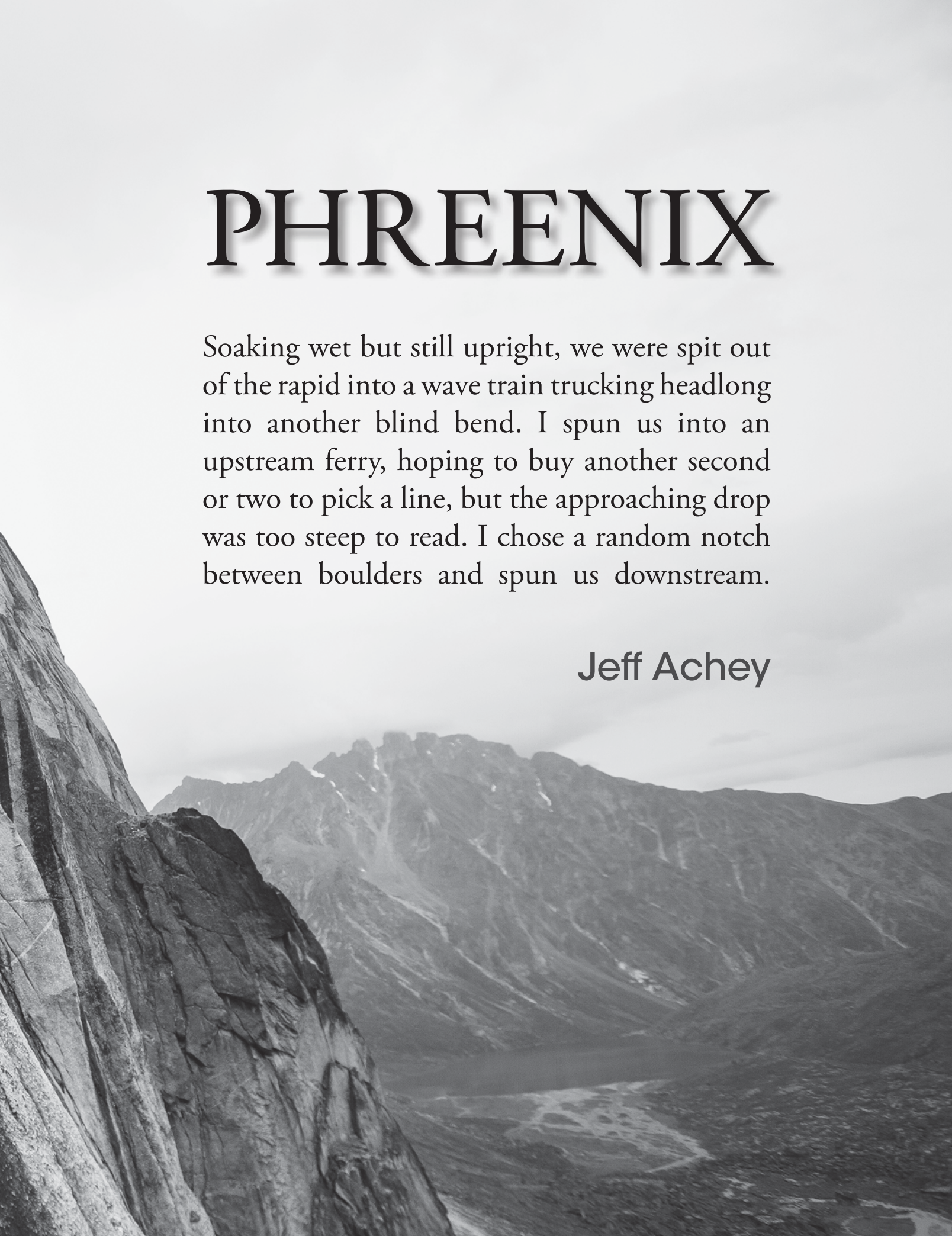
About the Author

Raphael Slawinski, doctor of physics and alpinism, originally hails from Poland, and has lived in Calgary since the early 1980s. He is married with cats and is a professor of physics at Mount Royal University. He has made multiple trips to Alaska and to the Karakoram, but the Rockies remain his favourite mountain range.

PHREENIX

Soaking wet but still upright, we were spit out of the rapid into a wave train trucking headlong into another blind bend. I spun us into an upstream ferry, hoping to buy another second or two to pick a line, but the approaching drop was too steep to read. I chose a random notch between boulders and spun us downstream.

Jeff Achey



PAT GOODMAN, JAMES Q MARTIN and I were plunging down the Little Nahanni River, not because we were expert boaters—we were not—but because we were climbers. The river was taking us to the base of the Vampire Peaks, a group of granite spires along the remote Northwest Territories/Yukon border. It's a seldom-visited area—unlike the famed Cirque of the Unclimbables (home to Lotus Flower Tower) and located a mere 25 kilometres away, "the Vamps" have only seen about a dozen climbing parties since the first technical climbs were done in the 1990s. But for Pat, our expedition leader, the Vampires were home. This would be his sixth trip.

I had met Pat five years ago at the New River Gorge, West Virginia. He lives there now, but he was a North Carolina climber at the time, and before that, hailed from Farmington, New Mexico. Pat is a strong, no-nonsense dude drawn to scrappy climbing disciplines like soft-rock hoodoo soloing, off-width roofs, 5.13X head-pointing and gnarly alpine big walls. Basically, he is a pit bull on the rock—and had secured an American Alpine Club (AAC) Copp-Dash Inspire Award that would pay for much of the trip.

Martin—known by everyone as Q—was here to focus on video and stills for the "inspire" (media) part of our grant. Q is a solid all-around climber, and he's also one of the best adventure photographers I know. I first met him when I was photo editor for *Climbing* and had long cheered the arc of his career, but aside from conversations on the phone and a dinner or two at trade shows, we had never hung out.

Our objective was simple: establish a free route on the 750-metre northeast prow of the Phoenix, one of the top three formations in the Vampires. Pat had already made the first free ascents of the other two, Vampire Spire and the Fortress, but the Phoenix was by far the biggest of the three. Pat had tried it before, but had been thwarted by the sustained rainy weather typical of the area. The only previous party to top out the Phoenix buttress, using a lot of aid, had not attempted the steep, icy scramble up the final ridge, so the true summit of the peak had never been reached. It was hard to imagine a more enticing objective.

The Vampires and Cirque of the Unclimbables are usually accessed by floatplane or helicopter. Planes carry a bigger load, but need a lake or a wide, slow-moving river for landing and takeoff. Helicopters can land almost anywhere, but they have stricter weight limits and are much more expensive. So-called fair-means, no-air-support expeditions to the Cirque and the Vamps have been done a few times using the (often impassable) Tungsten four-wheel drive road to reach Flat Lakes, headwaters of the Little Nahanni, rafting in, and then rafting out all the way to Fort Simpson. But that wasn't our deal. We would fly to Flat Lakes, use the river to transport us close to the climbing (saving some money and having a blast in the process), and then get a helicopter lift to our climbing base camp, sparing us an epic load-ferrying effort up the steep, wild Vampires valley.

That was the plan at least, assuming we made it down through the heads-up Class IV water in the Nahanni gorges. The river had started out small, with bony rock gardens and places where we had to drag the raft across gravel bars. Small tributaries flowed in from both sides and the river quickly gained power. We had a few small warm-up rapids before we hit the crux, a twisting, narrow canyon where it was nonstop action.

WE SHOT THROUGH THE ROCKS and busted through a wave at the bottom of a trough, and when the splashing was over, I saw that we were bearing down fast on a boat-flipping wave on the right wall. Impact seemed imminent. There was nothing to do but paddle like hell. Two possible scenarios flashed in my head as we stroked hard to the left: either we'd be flipped by the wave and greet the next rapid upside down, or we'd be pulled into the seething eddy on the upstream side of the wave and thrashed against jagged rocks until they shredded the raft. We all dug deep, however, and just barely managed to get enough positive momentum to spin off the wave.

Our four days on the Nahanni alone would have been worth the three-day journey north. There was not a sign of human presence anywhere: no footprints or fire rings on the gravel bars, no trails, no camps. There were a few old cabins marked on the map, but we didn't see any sign of them. We drank the clear water directly from the river. The August nights were starry and short.

On the next-to-last river day, the Little Nahanni joined the main (South) Nahanni and the water changed character. It became much bigger and lazier, and cloudy blue-green instead of clear, with widely braided channels and only the occasional run of straightforward standing waves. A hundred miles downstream, the river would leap over Virginia Falls, a cataract twice the height of Niagara and almost as massive, but up here the river was placid, and we paddled hard to cover the miles.

Pat watched the shoreline on river-right, consulting the map, waiting for a flash of recognition from his previous time here. It was big country and when viewed from the river the broad valleys all looked pretty similar. Suddenly, we drifted into alignment with a side valley that triggered a six-year-old memory, and Pat announced that we had arrived at the mouth of the canyon that led to the peaks.

Just at that moment, we heard a faint thwack-thwack-thwack of the Kluane Airways chopper descending from the base of the Phoenix after having dropped off our fourth and final team member, Jeremy Collins. We beached on a gravel bar and scrambled to de-rig and deflate the raft and separate gear. The helicopter landed on the gravel bar, and minutes later, just like that, Q and I were flying into the face of a gusty rainstorm, into the Vampires.

We flew in low, under the clouds, up a steep, rugged valley, and praised our decision not to hike in. Then we crested a rise and got our first view into the upper cirque. There was

Previous spread: Jeff Achey on pitch four of Phreenix.
Right: Jeremy Collins (leading) and Pat Goodman climbing above the bivy ledge.
Photos: James Q Martin

Vampire Lake, the site of an incident where a grizzly had trashed a climbing team's camp while they were on the wall, rendering them without food for more than a week. Looming beyond the lake was a massive rock buttress that I recognized immediately—the Phoenix— looking significantly bigger than in the pictures Pat had shown me.

Rain pelted the helicopter's windshield, and beyond the buttress, partly obscured by mist, was a hanging glacier with a monstrous hole in it that looked like a gaping mouth. I'd never seen anything like it, even in pictures, and it reminded me of the region's spooky history. The whole Nahanni valley was notorious during Gold Rush times—the otherworldly landforms in the lower canyons had added a supernatural aura to several grisly, unsolved murders that befell early prospectors. Local place names reflected the lore: The Broken Skull River, Deadmen Valley, Hell's Gate, Headless Creek, the Funeral Range, Vampire Peaks. The Nahanni was often called "the Valley of No Return." Looking at that appalling glacial hole, I wondered if perhaps there really was some sinister supernatural force at work.

We were just above 60 degrees north latitude at an altitude of 1,600 metres, and on all sides lay cirques and sub-cirques filled with small glaciers and tall granite walls, many untouched. The 750-metre Phoenix prow was the most impressive. It had one completed mixed free and aid line, Freebird (VI 5.10 A2+, Childers-Shull-Young, 1998), which went to the top of the peak's big-wall section, and another route, After School Special (V 5.10+ A2+, Christie-Stracjer, 2001), of which the complete ascent had been thwarted by ice a mere few pitches from the top. Also, incomplete is the all-female ascent of Wallflowers (VI 5.10 C2+, Caton-Patterson, 2003), which basically starts on After School Special and finishes on Freebird [see *CAJ*, 2004, vol. 87, pp. 6-11].

The prow's features didn't really match the hand-scrawled topos we had, but it was pretty obvious that the discontinuous cracks in the vicinity of After School Special promised the most feasible start for a free climb. The lower wall featured some big blank sections, however, and was crossed by long black water streaks. We had only a handful of pins and bolts for protecting any sketchy face climbing that might be required.

Pat seemed unconcerned with the terrain; his doubts revolved solely around the weather. We'd already had five near-perfect days in a row, and he surely thought that we'd used up our share. We all felt an urgency to get started, despite our uncertainty about where the route would go.

After a casual start the next morning, Jeremy and I went up for a recon. I didn't know Jer prior to this the trip. As well as a talented climber, he was an accomplished artist and filmmaker. Artistically, this expedition was part of an ambitious film project he was working on, featuring climbs from the north (here), south (Venezuela), east (China) and west (Yosemite).

Pat had told me that Jeremy climbed like a hungry little animal, and I would soon see his meaning. He'd quickly advance, retreat, and then advance again, like a mouse darting out to snatch cheese from a trap, avoiding disaster, not by strength or caution but by alertness and agility. Jeremy had a reflective and meticulous side, too, but that seemed reserved for his artwork and was completely absent from his climbing. You had to be heads-up on belay, but it worked.

Two easy pitches led us up low-angle slabs to the base of the main prow, where a series of overhanging cracks offered several options. After all the anticipation, it was great to finally come to grips with the Vampires' rock. Many sections of crack were filled with grass, but the rock was generously featured with knobs designed for free climbing. The steep pitch fell into place as I led up. After 40 metres I pulled a final overhang and arrived at a weathered rappel anchor, our first concrete evidence of After School Special.

The pitch had gone onsight at mid 5.10, and the black water streaks had been dry—an auspicious start—but the business was obviously yet to come. Jeremy headed up into much thinner terrain, jammed in a couple of small cams, and then fingered the opening moves of a committing-looking seam. Flash-pumped, he hung on his top piece—which immediately ripped, along with the one below it, sending him for an alarmingly long fall that left him wide-eyed and level with me.

Pat soon arrived, having ascended our fixed lines, and I handed off the belay and descended to camp. When Jeremy headed back up, he chose a different line up an angling dihedral and then busted back left across a line of edges. By day's end, he'd pioneered the first strategic traverse across one of the route's biggest blank sections. At about 8 p.m., Jeremy and Pat rapped from the high point leaving four ropes fixed.

And so it went for four days, Jeremy and I teaming up, and then Pat and Q, ferreting out pitches that gradually found a way up and left across the first 300 metres of the wall, occasionally finding (and sometimes using) the belay/rappel anchors of After School Special. Usually, two of us would work on the route while the other two hiked, bouldered or photographed. The leader would almost always need a few points of aid to clean grass from the cracks, which would then go free the next day at some kind of 5.10. We placed one bolt and a couple of knifeblades, but otherwise found adequate pro from cams and nuts. The cracks ran from fingers to off-width, connected by sections of face climbing, plus the occasional scary flake or moss-hummock mantel. It was stellar alpine rock climbing, and we became increasingly psyched about our line.

Any ethical concerns I had about our siege style were squashed by the benefits—precious time to wander and explore the pristine Vampires wilderness. On one of my off-wall days, I took a long hike up onto the glaciers above camp. There was no sign of human passage. Near the head of the valley, I found wolf tracks leading up and over a snowy col. I eventually summitted a peak that was one of the highest in our cirque and was rewarded with a stunning 360-degree view, including the backside of Cirque of the Unclimbables to the south. So much country. So many possibilities.

Pat Goodman (leading) and Jeff Achey on pitch five of Phreenix.
Photo: James Q Martin

Once we had all of our ropes fixed, talk turned to tactics. We would have preferred a light-and-fast ascent, but with four climbers, a single lead rack and numerous media commitments, a disaster-style assault made little sense. When no one proposed a specific plan and a chilly evening drizzle put a damper on the next day's free-climbing prospects, I loaded up a couple of bags and resolved to spend the next day hauling to the top of the lines. The weather cleared, the hauling went smoothly and I returned to camp with daylight to spare.

The following morning we committed to a summit push. It took us a good part of the day for all four of us to get out of camp and established at the top of the fixed lines, and by late afternoon, Pat finally began racking up for the first free attempt on pitch eight. Everything had gone free at 5.10+ to this point, and the weather was holding.

A highly questionable crack switch lay 10 metres up, the last blank spot on the lower wall. The After School Special team had pendulumed left from a bolt, and the rock between cracks was steep and smooth. True to the route, however, a perfectly positioned cluster of knobs appeared, and Pat lurched across the blankness at 5.10+. He then fired up a steep hand crack, which widened to fist then off-width but never slowed him down.

The pitch ended at the base of a striking 50-metre dihedral that our topo called the Dixie Crystal Corner, a four-star pitch we'd been admiring ever since we first glassed the wall. Beautiful as it was from afar, up close the Dixie was a beast—an unrelenting off-width, tapering gradually from seven inches to five. It looked like a fight, and it was my lead.

My purpose in life was suddenly very simple: lead this pitch quickly, free and onsight. Fortunately, the rock was good to me and its protruding crystals allowed me to often stand comfortably with one foot out of the crack, shaving full numbers off the grade. I pushed up our three big cams as I climbed. It was strenuous enough, and went on forever, but never got really hard.

A half-pitch higher, we scrambled up onto some terraces that would be our camp for the night. The grassy shelves sloped badly, but by peeling back the grass, leveling the dirt and gravel beneath, and then replacing the turf on the flattened terrace, we fashioned a reasonable sitting bivy. As a gentle rain fell we huddled under a hardware-store tarp, hobo style, and cooked

Phreenix on the Phoenix Wall of Vampire Mountain. Photo: James Q Martin

up a warming stew before settling in for the night.

Remarkably, the next morning dawned clear and we gunned for the top. The climbing was the stuff of dreams: free of moss with steep and continuous cracks; 5.10 pitch after 5.10 pitch; challenging but never desperate. We became ever more hopeful and elated. The weather began to close in, but we were determined. This thing was going down…today!

We hit the summit ridge. Mission accomplished. The vista opened up into a world of swirling cloud with glimpses of ice-clad peaks. The Freebird party had reached this point, but no one else. All subsequent climbers had been turned back by icy cracks before reaching this culminating platform. Yet, we were in luck. Finding nearly snow-free conditions, we were able to continue, un-roped and in approach shoes, up the last 600 metres of knife-edge to the tabletop summit.

In 35 years of rock climbing, I've been privileged to participate in many fine first ascents, but our route on the Phoenix was one of the very best. It's the size of the Northwest Face of Half Dome in Yosemite, with superb and textured rock, elegance of line and very reasonable climbing. Many unclimbed routes await future parties—on the flanks of the Phoenix itself, and on nearby formations—but if the Vamps ever get popular, I'd wager that the Phreenix gets regular repeats.

Summary

FFA of the Phoenix via the partially new route "Phreenix" (VI 5.10+, 750m), Vampire Spires, Northwest Territories. FA: Jeff Achey, Jeremy Collins, Pat Goodman, James Q Martin, August 24-26, 2012.

About the Author

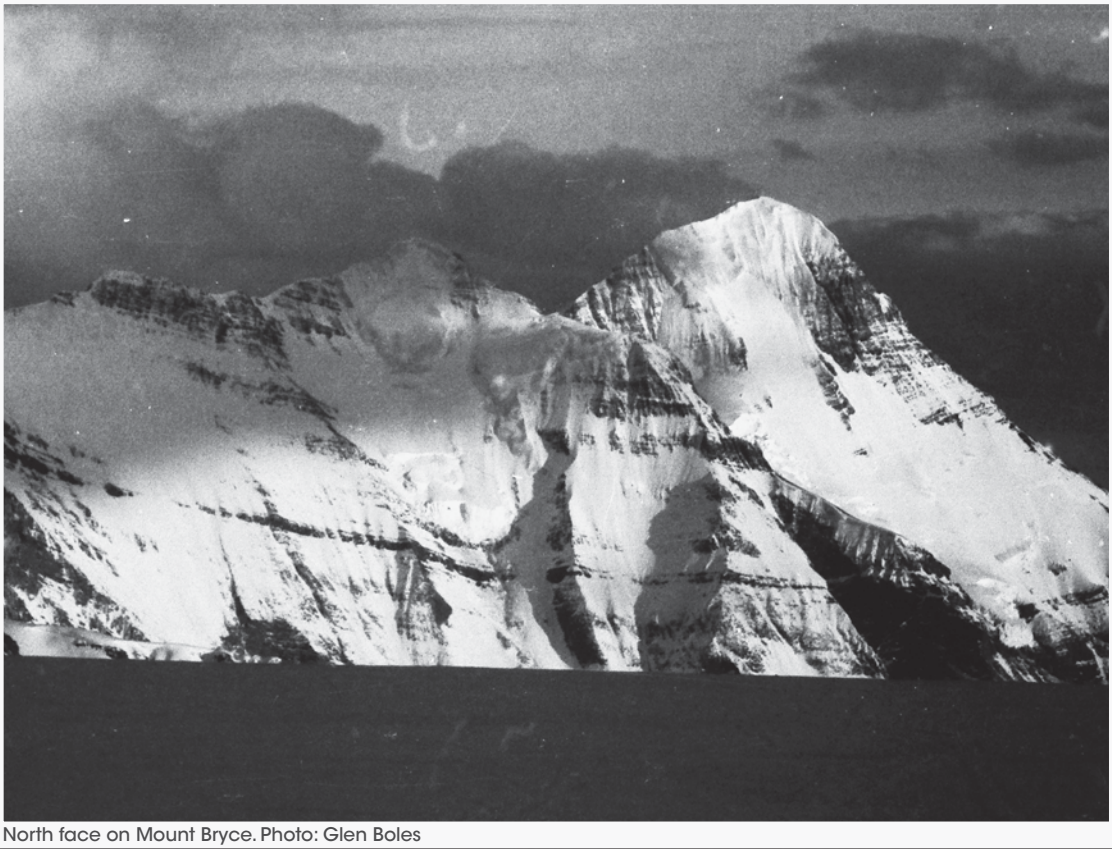
Jeff Achey has been climbing since 1974 and has accomplished numerous first ascents in Utah's Canyonlands and in Eldorado Canyon, Longs Peak and the Black Canyon in Colorado. He is also a longtime climbing journalist and former editor-in-chief of *Climbing* magazine. Other than Squamish granite, this was Jeff's first Canadian mountain climbing adventure.

Acknowledgments

This expedition was supported by the AAC Copp-Dash Inspire Award.

James Q Martin, Jeff Achey, Jeremy Collins and Pat Goodman (left to right) on the summit of Mount Dracula. Photo: James Q Martin

Grand Cours Descents



North face on Mount Bryce. Photo: Glen Boles

North face on Mount Clemenceau. Photo: Glen Boles

Northeast face on Mount King George. Photo: Glen Boles

Bryce

Chris Brazeau

She started whispering to me again near the end of the season. This past winter was already one to remember for amazing alpine ski lines. Some ephemeral and unforgettable tracks had been laid down all over Western Canada. The north couloir on Pope's Peak was one. On a classic outing with Cody Lank and Graham Maclean, it delivered great steep skiing and deep powder turns in a dramatic setting. For ambiguous reasons, we referred to the line as Peyto's Pipe. Then there was the solo descent of the west face of Mount Stephen, a line that JR had spotted years ago and often wondered aloud if it would go. It did, weaving and winding its way through small bands of rock, and then into a magic hidden couloir that continued all the way to the ridge (1,300 metres of bootpacking later). I dropped in without tagging the summit, and returned to the valley bottom just as it was getting dark.

A few days later it was the north face of the north summit of Mount Victoria—a magic day, solo, perfect conditions, with a shred-able line down through the middle of the seracs and patches of ice. This made me realize that Mount Bryce might be possible since it's about the same elevation and aspect as Victoria. Perhaps perfect conditions were waiting there, too.

She then pierced my thin defenses and cast her spell upon me. At 5 a.m. the white magic woman would wake me from my slumber. I could resist no longer and needed to see her. I drove up Bush River Forest Service Road to kilometre 76, and then skied to the headwaters of the Bush River. The north face looked good from the valley bottom, but when I returned home and zoomed in on my photos, she fervently beckoned.

After studying my old photos, some climber's reports and Sean Dougherty's guidebook, *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, I thought maybe there might be a way to head up the south side, wrap around to the east and gain admittance to the north face. It was a long shot, one I had trouble convincing myself was worth a go. My main *compadres* were either working, injured or on other missions, so the idea of solo had entered my cranium. Damn these women and dim-witted ideas of mine, compounded by my inability to refuse them! But the seed was planted, Bryce was calling, and there was no turning back.

Prepped with three days of food and mentally prepared for a reconnaissance slog, I was back up Bush Forest Service Road days later. At noon, I arrived at the Bush River and called it a day, and a lovely one at that: sunny and warm with Bryce in the convective build-up. I took out my reading material for the trip—*Canadian Dimensions* magazine—with a special issue on degrowth. It was the first I had heard of this term, based somewhat on the 1972 book *Limits to Growth* (Meadows, Randers, Meadows), which argues for zero gross domestic product (GDP) growth. It suggests that endless economic growth is not possible when resources are finite. The articles defined degrowth as a collective and deliberative process aimed at the downscaling of production and consumption, and of the role of markets and commercial exchanges as a central organizing principle of human lives. They spoke of shifting objectives away from the regime of accumulation and decreasing the importance of the GDP. The magazine also articulated that we could improve our quality of life while reducing our standard of living, being happy with less work, less energy and less material affluence. Everyone I knew was happier when they worked less. I became absorbed in the articles for the rest of the day and went to sleep dreaming of life with less work.

Day two dawned clear and cold, and provided a good freeze and travel up Rice Brook. By 9 a.m., the convective cloud had built on Bryce and I wondered if that was a good or bad thing. I also wondered if it would be possible to ski in the cloud, or if I would have to wait for it to burn off, or if it would it be too warm by then. One step at a time; even more concerning at the moment were the countless fresh grizzly, wolf and cougar tracks.

Nearing noon, I slipped while crossing Rice Brook and received two boot-fulls of fresh mountain water. It seemed like a good place to stop for the day to dry things out and read some more. The concept of degrowth had infused my thoughts. It suggests that self-sufficient, participatory local economies are more effective and humane than competitive, profit-driven and globalized concepts of growth. It is a notion aimed at

co-operation over unbridled competition—a voluntary downshifting instead of forced recessions. Degrowth makes clear that non-material exchange and poetry of life are important.

After a lazy afternoon contemplating degrowth, bedtime came early. My alarm was set for 2 a.m., but sleep declined the invitation, so by 11 p.m. I was already skinning up the valley. I wished I hadn't been so lazy and, that I had scoped out the approach, until I came across fresh bear bedding under a tree only minutes from camp. I was happy that I didn't disturb an old grizz's nap! Soon a cairn indicated the avalanche path that would lead to the south face, and up I went, getting a helping hand from some spruce boughs in the steep terrain. The trees were left behind and the big south bowl was gained, followed by the gully that leads to the south face proper. The south face looked like a fun ski and a worthy plan B, but I aimed for a col to the east that would hopefully offer access to the north side.

Looking down the north face of Bryce. Photo: Chris Brazeau

Traversing high and feeling diminutive beneath the looming cornices and seracs, I ducked under a cliff band to a safe viewing spot, and there it was—the north face. I had not expected the path to be that easy. I skied down, carving some turns to get a feel for the snow, and stopped on climber's far right of the slope, away from most of the overhead hazard. The snow felt great. I popped my skis off and studied the face, looking to the mountain for a sign, some direction of what to do. The face was incredible yet intimidating. I could barely make out one small grey icy patch, maybe half a body's length—the only blemish on the otherwise blank, perfect canvas.

I still wondered what to do. It had been a successful recon, which was really all I was looking for. But there I was with perfect conditions. A slight breeze had picked up and the way forward was becoming clear. My dad's voice rang in my head, something he said to me innumerable times: "You know, Chris, you're not getting any younger." You're right, Pops, it's time to turn a dream into reality.

The face steepened but the snow remained perfect for kicking steps. Conditions were so good that the ascent could have been pulled off without the two tools and crampons I used. The summit ridge was gained and it took only a few steps more to reach the summit proper. What an ecstatic feeling it was to be standing on the summit of Bryce, tinged with the giddiness of anticipation. The view was awesome: 360-degrees of snowy peaks and more dreams. Just then I realized and marvelled that there was no convective cloud, though the wind was howling and I was chilled despite all my layers.

I entered the face, feeling it out, digging the edges in and making a conservative first turn. I could feel an insta-smile beam across my face as the stars seemed to have aligned—confidence and conditions had come together. There was no room to open up the turns, but I skied aggressively, losing vertical fast. The wind was whistling upwards and every left turn was a face shot of snow. As the slope mellowed, the turns opened up. I had a thought of hanging a hard right and exiting the face where I had entered, but it was short-lived—since the skiing was so good, I kept cruising down through some crevasses to the small bench that marks the end of the glacier and the start of a small cliff band.

Did that just happen, I wondered as I stared back up at the face, the wind already erasing most of my tracks. It's not a place to ponder life, or degrowth, or much else for that matter, but rather to think how good it is to be alive. I beat a hasty retreat, bootpacking and retracing my track to the col. I contemplated shredding the south face, but it was getting warm and there was still 1,200 metres to descend. I continued down the short gully to the south bowl to perfect corn, where I opened it up until my eyes started to water under my goggles.

Packing up camp, I figured I could probably do one big push back to the car. The adrenaline was pumping and I had only a pack of soup and an apple left. But as I continued down, I realized there was no hurry to return to civilization, no need to spray of my selfishness. The impression of degrowth sunk deeper—slow down and enjoy. I camped again by the Bush River and listened to her song. She played it all night long.

Summary

First ski descent of the North Face (VI 55°) of Mount Bryce, Columbia Icefield Group, Canadian Rockies. FSD: Chris Brazeau, May 10-13, 2012.

About the Author

Chris Brazeau lives in Golden, B.C., where he works as a carpenter. In the summer of 2014, he will be looking to degrow in Germany at the 4th International Conference on Degrowth. This conference will focus on ecological sustainability, social equity and bridging movements.

Clemenceau

Martin Lefebvre

The first ascent of the north face of Mount Clemenceau was in February 1989 by Ken Wallator, Tom Thomas and Gil McCormick. The *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies* description reads as follows: "The FA was done over 16 days road to road, in winter with NO air support. A tremendous effort by this young team." Indeed it was. Already being mid-May and with a good weather window approaching, the only way we could get this done would be by going heavy on air support.

The trip came together in less than a week with the commitment of Kevin Hjertaas, Eric Hjorleifson and Chris Rubens. However, I was still wondering if my knee would be able to handle this type of ski ascent/descent. I had taken a bad twisting fall at work about a month earlier, but the Clemenceau descent was a chance of a lifetime, so a diet of ibuprofen would be necessary.

On the morning of May 27, we embarked on an unforgettable helicopter flight through the heart of the Rockies. As we flew further north alongside the beautiful fin of Mount Alberta, I couldn't help but think and smile about how I was crossing over the central part of the Great Divide Traverse—a task that had taken me a week to ski only a month earlier was over in 15 minutes.

We chatted throughout the flight about all the other objectives that surrounded us. The chatting was cut short when the Clemenceau face came into view. Reality set in. *It's big!* I swallowed the lump in my throat and refocused. We needed to do a quick fly-by to see if the line was even skiable. No blue ice in the guts. *Looks like it goes!* We picked a campsite on a small shoulder feature at the bottom of the lower face. Ralph quickly descended and dropped us off. Our taxi ride was over, and we watched the heli fly away.

The north face is split into two tiers: the lower tier at approximately 700 metres; and the upper, more heavily glaciated section at 800 metres, with a massive bench in between the two. It was 9:30 a.m. We decided to set up camp later in order to climb the lower face and get a feel for snow conditions, as well as put in steps for the next day's big push.

We managed to skin for about 200 metres up the face. Eric charged up the bootpack, earning him the nickname Stairmaster. Kevin and Chris were right behind him, moving at a strong steady pace, while I was way down the track struggling with my knee that was already stiff and sore. I eventually meet up with the crew on top of the bench at 2,800 metres, glad to have made it that far. It was our first real look at the crux: the obvious and beautiful snow and ice ramp that shoots directly up the middle of the face. The only unknown was how we were going to top out.

After taking photos, looking through binoculars and debating our options, there was no decisive conclusion to our dilemma. The only thing we knew was that we had to see how far we could get up the face. We skied a great run down the lower face with no real stability issues except for loose sloughing in the steep sections. We were back at camp by 2 p.m. and decided we would go for the full climb 12 hours later. We spent the afternoon reading the guidebook and looking through binoculars, still trying to work out the summit crux.

After a restless sleep, I woke up to a beautiful starry night with no wind. A quick breakfast and a few ibuprofens later, we were off. We climbed the lower face in two hours and topped out on the first bench at 5 a.m. to a beautiful orange and pink sunrise. We had a quick break and brewed up some hot water. We knew that as soon as we left the security of the plateau, there would be no real stopping until we returned to this spot. We skinned and contoured under massive seracs, moving as quickly as possible to the snow ramp. The sound of ice chunks peeling off the hanging glacier behind us hurried our pace.

We reached the first bergshrund at 6 a.m. and set ourselves up for the next crux. Chris took the lead and found a nice ramp over the bottom 'shrund and continued to kick steps up the face. We were moving at a steady pace with good travel conditions. My knee was feeling strong again, as though it had warmed up. I had full range of motion and was able to climb with confidence. Eric swapped leads with Chris, and the Stairmaster took over doing his thing out front, plowing through terrain. We came to the second 'shrund on the face at around 3,300 metres. We were at our crux decision.

The route in the guidebook angles to the right, traversing under massive seracs and cornices. We would be exposed for far too long, and although it seemed like we could find a way through the corniced ridge, none of us felt comfortable with that option.

It looked like there could be a way onto the northeast ridge,

but the gargoyles and cornices seemed an impassable barrier. Plus, we would have to lose elevation to get through. Above us were two staggered house-sized seracs that looked like they might hold the solution. We decided to continue straight up and get as high on the face as possible. If there was no way through, we would ski from our highest point.

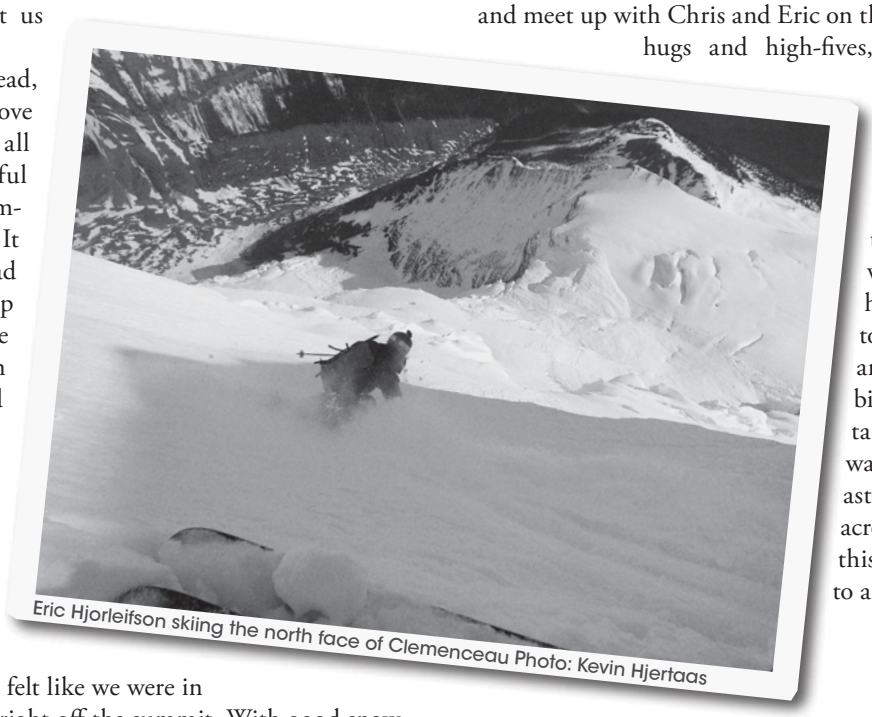
I took the lead, feeling strong and excited about the next section of climbing. As we got closer to the upper seracs, the snow became thinner and the ice thicker. Our pace slowed down as we maneuvered through the ice bulges and ramps. This 100-metre section was the only front-pointing we would do on the face. We eventually found a way to the top of the serac, which had a huge platform just below the northeast ridge. We quickly celebrated the fact that we had gotten through the most exposed part of the climb and could finally catch our breath. We were only 60 metres from the top and noticed a small ramp feature that would get us onto the summit ridge.

Kevin took the lead, made the tricky move onto the ridge, and we all followed, with a beautiful ridge walk to the summit at 3,658 metres. It was 9:30 a.m., we had found a direct route up the North Face of the fourth highest peak in the Rockies, and had enjoyed a classic summit—but we still had to get down....

Thankfully, the group of us is more comfortable with skis and poles than crampons and ice axes. Once we clicked in, we felt like we were in our element. We skied right off the summit. With good snow, we made the committing turn on the small ramp and back onto the plateau. We decided to ski onto the face and spot each other from a small bench. Eric decided to go first—I didn't object.

As he made the first few jump turns, loose size 1.5 sloughs shot off with every turn. With nowhere to regroup and ice on both sides of the snow ramp, there was no other choice but to ski the whole face in one shot. Even after 10 or so turns, Eric was still executing jump turns. Chris, Eric and Kevin have skied together for more than 15 years, so when Chris and Kevin watched Eric then looked at each other perplexed, I inquired what was up. "Well," Chris said, "I've never seen Eric do jump turns before. It must be hard!"

The lump returned to my throat. If one of the world's best skiers was finding this a challenge, then I was in for a hell of a ride.



Eric Hjorleifson skiing the north face of Clemenceau Photo: Kevin Hjertaas

It took Eric almost 15 minutes to ski 800 metres. Chris was next. He dropped in, and every turn continued to trigger huge amounts of slough. Kevin and I watched him ski; we could tell the snow conditions weren't easy. We discussed who would go next. By that point, we had been clinging to the side of the face for almost half an hour, our legs numb and with too much time to think. We agreed we could pick a line that would allow us to ski simultaneously but not slough the other out. Chris made it to the safe spot and we pushed off. The top five or 10 turns were the steepest at an angle of approximately 55 degrees. The snow was chalky and full of runnels, which meant we really had to push hard to get a good edge. It eased steadily to 50 and 45 degrees, at which point we got into a good flow.

Fighting leg burn as we descended, I tried hard to soak in this amazing place and the incredible joy of skiing such a line. After our 15-minute descent, we crossed the bottom 'shrund and meet up with Chris and Eric on the bench. We exchanged hugs and high-fives, looking back at our tracks that draped this incredible face.

We revelled in the rest of our descent down the lower face, the first turns of the day without any overhead hazard, and headed back to camp. A few hours and a few beers later, the bittersweet roar of a distant helicopter meant it was time to go. Another astounding bluebird flight across the icefields brought this 36-hour epic adventure to an end.

Summary

First ski descent of the North Face (IV 55°, 1500m) of Mount Clemenceau, Clemenceau Icefield Group, Canadian Rockies. FSD: Kevin Hjertaas, Eric Hjorleifson, Martin Lefebvre, Chris Rubens, May 27-28, 2012.

About the Author

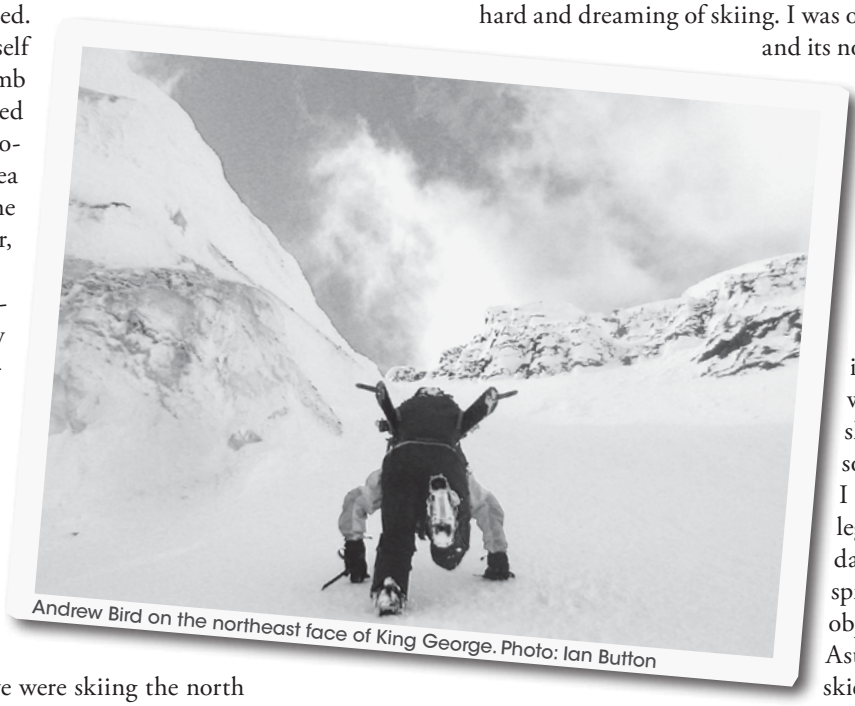
Martin Lefebvre is an ACMG apprentice ski guide and lives in Canmore, Alberta, where he works as an avalanche technician at Sunshine Village in the winter and as a hiking guide in the summer.

King George

Ian Button

The idea of skiing mount king george was formulated in March 2012. It was a day where I should have been skiing but opted for a rest day. On that lazy Sunday, my friend and ski partner Andrew Bird and I were discussing steep skiing objectives. Andrew mentioned the south aspect of King George. I grabbed my computer and found pictures of King George and the northeast face, taken five years previously when I was 20 years old. The photos were from a solo day-hiking trip on Northover Ridge in June 2007.

I remember finding a sheltered spot on the ridge and enjoying my lunchtime views. King George looked impenetrable. I was aspiring to be a mountaineer but had very little mountain experience. I did have motivation though, as well as young legs willing to hike almost anywhere in a snowy June landscape. The surrounding peaks captivated me, the north face of Joffre was stunning, and the Royal Group was huge and distant. I set my gaze on King George and its hanging glacier. I was immediately intimidated. I recall thinking to myself that I would never climb that peak. It just seemed too technical to my neophyte eyes. I had no idea how anyone, except the most extreme climber, could ascend it.



Andrew Bird on the northeast face of King George. Photo: Ian Button

Looking at the summer photos, Andrew and I deemed it possible that a ski line may fill in on the climber's right of the hanging glacier. I kept this peak in the back of my mind as a potential first descent. During a daytrip in the Kananaskis region in May 2012, we were skiing the north aspect of Mount Lyautey. We had left Canmore at 2 a.m. and approached for 11 kilometres under the stars, feeling rather groggy. Finally reaching ski terrain, we attempted the most aesthetic north-facing couloir the mountain owns. Halfway up the bootpack, the snow felt spooky and wind-loaded. This was enough to scare us, and we skied down with unfinished business. Regrouping on the remnant glacier, we began to explore lines further along the north-facing strata. Locating the summit couloir and beginning a new bootpack, we found the snow more stable and the views more plentiful. Halfway up the couloir I was high enough to see Mount King George. I took many photos, and from my view, the face looked skiable since it appeared that enough snow had filled in beside the hanging glacier.

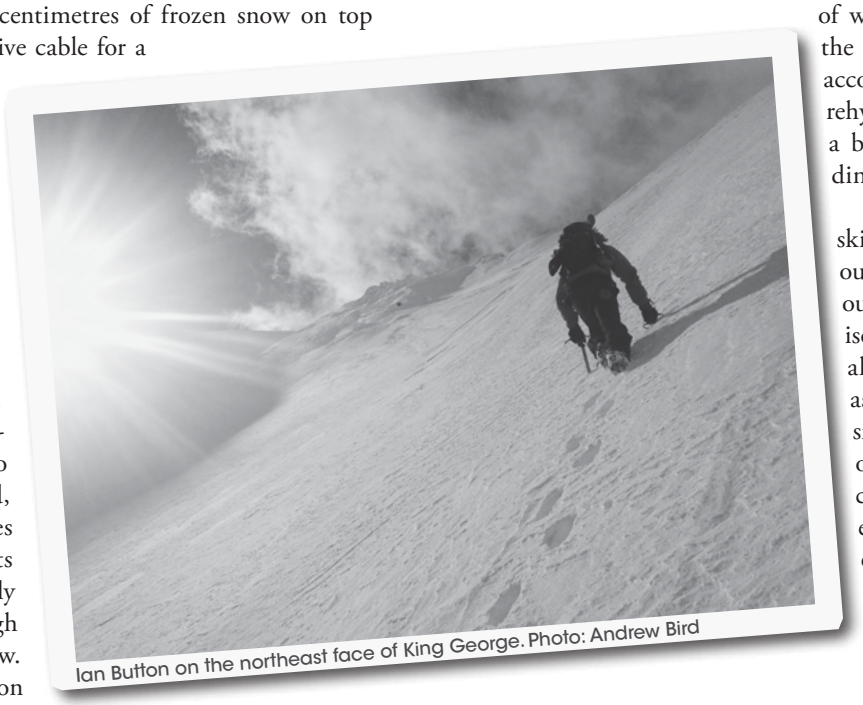
The gears began to spin and I spent my summer working hard and dreaming of skiing. I was obsessed with King George and its northeast face. I dreamed of ripping GS-style turns above a hanging glacier deep in the backcountry. I showed off my mountain dream to friends at the local coffee shop and told them not to tell anyone.

Finally, winter arrived in October 2012 and I was back in my realm—shredding great early season conditions with friends. I regained my mountain legs and treated my winter days as preparation for big spring ski-mountaineering objectives. I lived in the Asulkan parking lot and skied five to six days a week all winter long, making new friends as I went. In my mind, I was training for King George.

After a winter in Rogers Pass and two weeks of skiing Vancouver Island's coastal glory in March, I called up Andrew Bird. We agreed to finally attempt Mount King George on Easter weekend 2013. I met Andrew in Radium Hot Springs and we drove up Palliser Forest Service Road for 57 kilometres

to camp. The next morning, we used snow machines for a few kilometres and reached the flagging tape for the trailhead of the Royal Group.

As a test of our coordination with heavy backpacks, we crossed the Palliser River. A log had been planked as a bridge and there was 10 centimetres of frozen snow on top of it, with a semi-supportive cable for a handrail. After cleaning our shorts on the other side of the river, we meandered through the deadfall, using the sporadic flagging tape as our north star in cloudy weather. Following moose tracks, flagging tape and Fynn Creek, we found the route to the upper forest. The forest became constricted and it forced us to bootpack up bare ground, which isothermic slides had revealed. Using roots and wet rocks, we slowly brought our gear high enough to reattain the snow. Back on skis, we carried on for a few more hours through steep trees until we reached our base camp. At 2,200 metres, we dug a tent platform and had a great kitchen view of Joffre.



Ian Button on the northeast face of King George. Photo: Andrew Bird

We rehydrated and wondered how we would muster the energy to climb the northeast face after an arduous approach. With an alpine start at 10 a.m. (conveniently, when the sun reached our camp), we toured up the King George Glacier to approach the face. The snow was softening up to 2,800 metres as we skied up the solar oven. The temperature was tropical as we approached the face, and I wondered what the conditions would be like. Finally we were below the face, where the hanging glacier had recently calved. There were car-sized blocks of ice and debris scattered on the glacier. Needless to say, our pace picked up and we were suddenly standing below the dream line.

An accumulative 15 hours of ski touring and bootpacking put us in a position to ascend the actual face. We skirted around a crevasse below the apron and prepared for a glorious bootpack. We donned ice axes and crampons and began to climb beside the hanging glacier. We thought that once we were above the hanging glacier the slope would ease off. It didn't, and the ski run was consistently steep top to bottom. With five to 15 centimetres of boot penetration on chalky winter snow, we were atop the dream line in just two hours.

Once atop the face, we were left with three options: controlled turns; falling and sliding into a crevasse above the hanging glacier; or falling over the edge of the hanging glacier. I had the honour of the first controlled turns. I met Andrew beside the hanging glacier and we took turns skiing through the choke beside the serac.

We then enjoyed several kilometres of mellow glacier and moraine skiing on refreezing corn snow back to our sunny camp. Once at camp, we cracked open the Nalgene of whisky and soaked up the sunshine. Feeling accomplished, we slowly rehydrated and enjoyed a bountiful backcountry dinner.

The next day, we skied out the valley to our sleds. It turned out that skiing down isothermic snow was almost as unenjoyable as skiing up isothermic snow. It also turned out that we had a beer cache waiting at the end, thus concluding our adventure in style.

Summary

First ski descent of the northeast face of Mount King George, Royal Group, Canadian Rockies. FSD: Andrew Bird, Ian Button, March 29-April 1, 2013.

About the Author

Currently an ironworker apprentice living out of his Toyota 4Runner, Ian works hard all summer so he can ski all winter. For the past five winters, he has managed 100 days of touring each season, maxing out at 140 days in winter 2010-11.


Simon
Mels

The Cultural Ranges

Remembering Margaret Gold Brine

Zac Robinson

MARGARET BRINE IS A NAME that many Edmontonians are no doubt familiar with—and for good reason. During her life (1898-1985), the selfless benefactor of the performing arts smiled upon Edmonton's opera, its symphony and several of its theatre groups. The extent of her financial support remained etched onto the Art Gallery of Alberta for decades (with one room named "The Margaret Brine Gallery"). The Citadel Theatre's own Margaret Mooney cast Brine as "one of the last of the real ladies," one with "tremendous dignity and class." After her death, Brine left a major bequest to the Canadian Federation of University Women (Edmonton)—of which Brine was a long-time member and contributor to its academic awards—to endow educational scholarships. Today, female graduate students who demonstrate academic excellence at the University of Alberta (U of A)—Brine's cherished *alma mater*—hold the Margaret Brine Graduate Scholarship for Women with distinction and pride.

First Ascent of "Mount Edmonton", 1920. Left to right: Cyril Wates, Margaret Gold, and Harry Bulyea. Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies (V105-PA-7746).

And so it's hardly surprising that civic stalwarts and pillars of the Edmonton arts community remember Brine in the highest regard. What many people don't realize is that—before 1928, when she married Charles A. Brine (1888-1963), an Edmonton house builder whose financial success enabled her philanthropy—Miss Margaret Gold, as she was then called, was equally renowned for another "high" calling: mountain climbing. In fact, during the mid-1920s, her accomplishments in the alpine made front-page headlines in newspapers clear across Western Canada.

Today's climbers likely strain to recognize the name. You certainly wouldn't know it from popular histories of mountaineering in Canada, even from the few important texts dedicated to the accomplishments of women. Here, Brine, if anything, registers as the faintest blip. If there's a chief reason for the oversight, perhaps it's this: 89 years ago, Brine skipped her chance to become the first woman to climb Mount Robson, letting another make the ascent. Instead, she purportedly "partied" at the ACC's 1924 summer camp and climbed the highest mountain in the Rockies the next day. Two months later, she topped off the remarkable season by climbing the Matterhorn.

Brine was born in the last years of the 19th century—the daughter of a Presbyterian minister—in Fort Langley, British Columbia. As a young student of classics at U of A, she developed a passion for mountains, one that equalled her love for drama and the performing arts. The Edmonton Section of the ACC became a sort of surrogate family. By 1920, her tenacity and "fun-loving style" earned her a place beside Edmonton's best: climbers like the section's chairperson Harry Ernest Bulyea (1873-1976), the first dean and founder of the Faculty of Dentistry at the U of A, and "the Skipper," Cyril Geoffrey Wates (1884-1946), author of the club's then-popular "Songs for Canadian Climbers", and, later, the club's president (1938-41). Together, from the ACC's 1920 Mount Assiniboine Camp, the three demonstrated their civic and section pride with the first recorded ascent of an unnamed peak that lay on the southern side of the Simpson River valley. Brine documented their success in her field diary: "… built our big cairn, fixed Kodak with string and stone arrangement, snapped ourselves, left record of our climb and name 'Mount Edmonton' in cairn and prepared to look for an easy way home."

Days later, just before leaving the area, Brine was tapped by E.O. Wheeler (1890-1962)—the camp's manager, who, a year later, would participate on the 1921 British Reconnaissance of Mount Everest—to join a rope on the "keynote" peak of the camp, Mount Assiniboine. It was a huge honour. Despite the club's early acceptance of women among its membership (contrary to British model, which didn't permit female members until the 1970s), there existed a clear distinction between what was considered an appropriate climb for a lady and for a

gentleman. Throughout its first decades, the club relegated its female members to the easier routes at its camps, whereas the more prominent men were typically awarded opportunities to attempt the more difficult peaks for the prestige of the club. Brine noted her exchange with Wheeler in her diary: "In the evening, Major Wheeler asked me if I should like to go on Assiniboine rope on Thursday? Would I? Held myself in and as evenly and normally as possible asked if it might be sooner. After some consultation Tuesday was fixed upon. Was someone happy? Could scarcely sleep." Brine's was, perhaps, the second ascent of the mountain by a woman.

Throughout the early 1920s, Brine's education continued—both in academics and mountaineering. She travelled to Paris to study art and literature at the Sorbonne, climbed Mont Blanc in the Alps and completed a Master's Degree from the U of A. After the famous 1924 Mount Robson Camp—where she rubbed shoulders with the likes of Phyllis Munday (1894-1990) and guide Conrad Kain (1883-1934)—she assumed a teaching appointment at her *alma mater*, a post she held until 1928, as well as a position on the executive committee of the Edmonton Section of the ACC.

What Brine accomplished in the 1920s was extraordinary, and not just for reasons related to gender. The activities of the Edmonton Section were hardly what they are today. The dirt road from Edmonton to Jasper, which followed much of the abandoned Grand Trunk Railway, didn't open until 1928; the completion of the Banff-Jasper highway was another decade away. And it wasn't until well after the Second World War that the Jasper-Edmonton highway was paved. Opportunities to climb in the mountains during the 1920s were thus scarce for most section members. It required a trip on the train, usually followed by extensive backcountry travel with few amenities. For this reason, a typical summer program during this decade boasted section trips *not* to the Rockies, but to local Edmonton haunts, like the White Mud Creek, for example, which today separates neighbourhoods in the Riverbend and Terwillegar from other neighbourhoods on the south side of the North Saskatchewan River. Near the end of the decade, Edmonton was even the site of its own "alpine" hut: "the Eyrie", it was called, built near Quesnel Heights on the banks of the river. And so Brine's track record in the mountains—Assiniboine, Mount Blanc, Robson, the Matterhorn; some of the most sought-after peaks in the world—is all the more impressive and deserving of commemoration.

After 1928, Brine's climbing activities gradually ceased, although she remained a member of the Edmonton Section for her entire life. And like so many Edmonton institutions, the ACC, too, later benefited from her philanthropy. In 1971, Brine generously donated sufficient funds to build an adjoining cabin to the ACC's clubhouse on their then-new Canmore property. Equipped with a full kitchen, two washrooms and a spacious living room with a fireplace, the private, self-contained facility offered a spectacular view of the Bow Valley. ACC members from Edmonton, Calgary and Banff all volunteered long hours of planning and hard work to complete the cabin for its opening in 1978. Brine requested that the cabin be named in memory of Dr. Fred Bell (1883-1971), who served as the club's president from 1926 to 1928. Her request is hardly surprising. From 1950 to 1964, Bell served the ACC as its honourary librarian and shouldered the immense task of reorganizing and cataloguing the club's now-famous library, one of the largest collections of mountaineering books on the continent. In 1978, Bell's wife, Marcella, addressed an assembled crowd at the cabin's official opening and expressed her "deep personal gratitude to Mrs. Brine and the Alpine Club of Canada."

As the Edmonton Section celebrates its 100th anniversary, as we look back to commemorate all of the great events and individuals that have shaped our section, we would do well to shine a light upon those selfless individuals who cared little for centre stage, cared little for public praise. It's these individuals who are perhaps the most deserving of a little hero worship. They so often represent our best. Ron Chalmers, a staff writer for the *Edmonton Journal*, perhaps best summed it up. Chalmers was interested in Brine's role as an Edmonton arts benefactor. And, as his 1984 interview with her concluded among her impressive art collection, he marvelled at how Brine, then 86 years of age, turned away from the paintings and pointed to a bowl of fresh-cut flowers: "They really are all that matters," she said, "beauty, and being kind to people."

At the toe of the Robson Glacier, ACC Mount Robson Camp, 1924. Left to right: Annette Buck, Cyril Wates (foreground), Margaret Gold (background, standing), and unknown club member. Courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies (V105-PA-7746).

A Question of Grade Inflation

Paul Adam

IT WAS MAY 1971 WHEN I did my first climb of any significance in Squamish. On a BCMC trip lead by Fred Douglas, I ascended Squamish Buttress on The Chief. The most significant aspect of the climb for me was the two leader falls I took on the first pitch. The falls were largely the result of being unable to stay on small holds in mountaineering boots. In 1988, I returned to the Buttress with Scott Flavelle. This time, I seconded the pitch in sticky-soled rock shoes. Not surprisingly, it was much easier.

Interestingly, although improved footwear had made the climb easier, the guidebook rating had increased. With mountaineering boots, the pitch had been rated 5.7/5.8 in the guidebook of the day; but with sticky-soled rock shoes, the pitch was upgraded to 5.8/5.9 in the current guide. Why the grade inflation? Had the grade finally reached a consensus because of more ascents? Yes, but with improvements in gear technology, especially that of shoes and greater specialization, the pure rock climber should have been, by all logic, dropping grades.

The original grades of the Squamish climbs had long amused me. In June 1999, I purchased a copy of Kevin McLane's 1999 guide and Glenn Woodsworth's 1967 guide to compare the write-ups and grading. Finding differences was easy. Then I pulled out all my guidebooks to see when and with whom the differences arose.

The first and biggest major change occurred when the "old" Squamish grades were brought into line by adding about two-tenths of a grade. The notorious under-grading arose because the early climbers thought they were not as good as Yosemite climbers, so their climbs could not be as hard. Once the locals began to travel abroad, and overseas visitors started to arrive, the under-grading began to disappear (although it lingered for a while in the refusal to choose a higher grade if there was uncertainty).

It should be noted that Diedre was first rated a 5.6 climb, and then became a 5.4 climb. You would think once this chronic and severe under-grading had been taken care of that there would be no further changes in grading, especially on well-travelled routes. Nevertheless, look at the grading in the two most recent guides of Snake and Diedre. In 1992, Snake had pitches of 5.8, 5.6, 5.7, 5.9, 5.9, 5.9 and 5.7; in 1999, those same pitches were rated 5.8, 5.8, 5.8, 5.8, 5.9, 5.9 and 5.8. Similar thing with Diedre. In 1992, its pitches were rated 5.4, 5.7, 5.6, 5.7, 5.7, 5.6, 5.7+, while in 1999 the ratings became 5.6, 5.7, 5.6, 5.8, 5.8, 5.6, 5.8. What caused the grades to go up in the intervening seven years? One cynical possibility is that the rock became more polished.

A wonderful example of the nuanced changes is found in the description for Snake. In 1992, climbers "Walk up a well worn ramp…," but by 1999, climbers "Scramble up a well worn groove…." One could argue that going from a walk to a scramble is grade inflation. Why change a ramp to a groove? Perhaps a sudden geological event!

A generational change, of sorts, is found in the use of compass directions in the early descriptions, as opposed to the left or right of later descriptions. That may be due to the fact that many of the early climbers were mountaineers who were out to improve their rock-climbing skills, rather than some of the never-go-into-the-mountain types who dominate rock climbing today. That difference is also found in the overall descriptions where the access route summary is as important, if not more so, than the description of the actual route. In other words, finding the wretched mountain is the hardest part, and the route itself is more obvious once you get there. In defence of the short access descriptions, it must be remembered that nowadays, the trails are well worn from nearly 40 years of use.

Why have grades gone up in recent years? Is it the ego of this generation saying that since we are specialists and modern, we must, by definition, be better climbers than the old-timers? On the later point, consider Kevin McLane's comment about the Nose route on Mount Habrich: "Many were taken aback by the 5.10 difficulty, climbed originally in big boots." That is called giving the old-timers their rightful due. Watch evolution in progress—sometimes the changes are a subtle as a word or two.

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Elkhorn Centennial

Lenka Visnovska

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FIRST ascenders (who also happened to be ACC members) and 100 years later, we started to walk the Elk River trail towards Elkhorn in the clouds. Elkhorn Mountain (2,195 metres) is the second-highest peak on Vancouver Island, yet one of the most striking, to say the least. We were a group of eight, and in many aspects, very different from the group that first stood on the "Strathcona Matterhorn". We had the gear of nowadays (although David did have his vintage ice axe with him for a more authentic feel), we did not have cooks who would be waiting for us with a warm meal after the climb (this one was a bit disappointing), and as noted by Roxy, both genders were equally represented in our group (it seems that mountaineering was more of a manly endeavour back then). Yet, there was at least one resemblance that even a century could not change. We, I am sure, shared the love for mountains, a longing to spend some time in Elkhorn's shadow and a desire to stand on its summit. So, there we were leaving the trailhead behind us, feeling the excitement in the air.

Summit photograph from the 1912 first ascent of Elkhorn Mountain. Photo: Herbert Frind, courtesy of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies (V14/AC 328P/1, Alpine Club of Canada fonds)

The first hour of the hike was relatively easy but certainly deceiving. Once we reached the Elkhorn sign and crossed the Elk River (successfully, without falling in it!), we traded the roughly level Elk River trail for the steep route that approaches Elkhorn. As we were ascending on an otherwise relatively well-defined trail, I was expecting some levelling out here and there, but it never really came. It was simply a straight-up, forget-the-switchbacks kind of a trail. I think we were all grateful for the clouds as the warmth of the sun would have been quite uncomfortable at that point. However, the Elkhorn climber's trail was not only about sweating and puffing. It had some fun features as well. One for sure was the so-called "low-5th-class root." The walking poles had to be put aside and the roots of the trees became handles and steps of what seemed like a horizontal climb. Another interesting point was a slippery creek gully that required use of a rope and a few moves to gain the trail above (not always graceful rock-climbing moves, but rather what ever gets you over a slimy rock).

It took us more than five hours to reach our base camp on a shoulder of the ridge. Nestled there were several ponds formed by melted snow as our water source. As we had arrived relatively early, we could embrace a few daylight hours by exploring or resting, but certainly by enjoying the misty surroundings, a silence emphasized by echoed sound of falling water and glimpses of Elkhorn Glacier and King's Peak in the opening curtain of the clouds. Moreover, after dinner, we were entertained by Lindsay's stories, and by Lindsay and Valerie's thinking-out-of-the-box games. We stretched and strained our minds (all but Janelle, who seemed to figure a mystery of these brainteasers in a heartbeat). It was no wonder that I heard "Who are the rocks pointing to?" in my dreams that night, and I was likely not the only one. We definitely deserved a good night's sleep after a long day of exercising both our muscles and minds!

Next morning, we woke to a light drizzle that came and went all day long. We started up a small gully close to our base camp that took us to a higher ridge, which we followed until we reached the base of the Northwest Ridge of Elkhorn. From down below, the route seemed more of a climb than a scramble, but once on the rock, we got quite high up before we decided to use the rope for protection in steeper sections. When we reached the gendarme, a prominent rock formation that guards Elkhorn, we started to climb rather horizontally to the right. We more or less walked the narrow ledge to get to the back side of the gendarme, but great exposure and some loose rock made me cling to the wall and be very grateful for the rope. We scrambled up the last section of the mountain and stood on the summit of Elkhorn shortly before 2 p.m., at approximately the same time of day as the first ascenders in 1912.

After happy handshakes and hugs and a well-deserved lunch, we took a summit photo in the fashion of the very first one taken on Elkhorn and headed down, chased away by a returning drizzle. No vistas for us. We followed the same route down except that we rappelled down the steep snow (with Lindsay as our anchor!) around the other side of the gendarme. For me, this was the most unnerving part of the whole climb as the snow was way too slippery for my liking. Some scrambling and more rappelling got us down to the ridge and walking through wet heather back to our campsite.

It was such a treat not to rush down after summitting, and instead, stay for another night and enjoy more of Lindsay's stories, nice company and being in the clouds. Perhaps because of the promise of a view from the opening skies, I could not make myself get into my tent. Soon, a mighty Elkhorn peered out of the murk, at last, as did all the surrounding mountains. Alongside with Mike and Roxy, I found myself in awe of the view—Rambler Peak and Mount Colonel Foster were floating on the clouds illuminated by the last rays of light, with the crescent moon at eye level. A window of opportunity to see the surroundings went as suddenly as it came and we were again in the clouds. It was a magical ending to a great day.

Going down to the Elk River took us as long as going up. The steep trail was covered with slippery leaves and roots, and some of us slipped here and there, yet we all made it to Elk River trailhead without injury. Well, not counting a few wasp stings that made us run, tired or not, with some of us even screaming with excitement. And that's how this trip was—exciting from beginning to end, with an intensity that kept us aware of our surroundings, of our every step. It was also a trip to be shared, and it was really nice to do so with the people in our group. It seemed that without effort we became a team, in which expertise, stories and laughs were readily exchanged.

Feeling tired but happy, my last steps were slowed by the blueberries, a "gift of the mountains" as Tak called them, but more so by my reluctance to leave this special place (a reliable indicator that I had a good time). And the images of another ACC party celebrating 200 years of the first ascent of Elkhorn came to mind. They will probably be amazed by the gear we used.

Summary

Centennial ascent of Elkhorn Mountain. Roxy Ahmed, Janelle Curtis, Lindsay Elms, Mike Morris, Tak Ogasawara, Dave Suttill, Lenka Visnovska, Valerie Wootton, August 20-22, 2012.

Summit photograph from the 2012 centennial ascent of Elkhorn Mountain. Photo: Valerie Wootton

The North

Superbalance

Marek Raganowicz

A RED TENT PITCHED on arctic ice became our only shelter in the vast fjord. A bear-hunting gun lay in the corner, and outside were four haul bags with food and gear to last 30 days for two people. We switched off the rumbling stove. Amidst the sudden silence, we slurped tea and munched candy. Wherever steam accumulated, ice appeared immediately. Spilt water stiffened in an abstract white shape that reminded me of a polar bear. We put on our hoods and curled up inside the sleeping bags. The beginning of April on Baffin Island seemed like the coldest hell on earth to us, but before closing our eyes to sleep, we congratulated each other. Part one of our dream had just been realized—we had made it to the base of Polar Sun Spire.

From the moment we mounted the wall, we began calling each other Regan and Yeti. Our normal names stayed somewhere at the bottom—on the fjord, maybe even further away, at home, at work, along with everything we had been doing until then. We left the shore for the unknown vertical ocean of arctic granite. Blue faces of Internet nights, unwritten examinations of conscience, papers full of disasters and tragedies, restless thoughts and unfinished cases have all been left far behind. Behind us was all that we wanted to escape, and what we wanted to return to.

The first couple of hours on the wall were jittery and chaotic. On one hand, we wanted to climb quickly, as if we only had one day on the wall; on the other, our rhythms and commands were not harmonious. We had never climbed together before, so we needed time and patience to adapt. I was calm, constantly staring at the red cracks that ended somewhere above my upturned head, bordering the sky. The first couple of pitches in relation to the whole wall were like drawing out a handful of water from a boundless ocean.

Three days later, after a night of snowfall, we were carrying sacks whilst approaching the first fixed line. Jugging up on the rope, I thought that the toughest job was behind us, but it was hauling that really exhausted me and I was relieved when evening came. The first bivouac was like a meditational breath, thanks to which we gained peace and rhythm. The next morning, despite snow and wind, we were in high spirits. From that point, our tent, left behind on the fjord, was fast becoming a vanishing point—every day, after every pitch, smaller and smaller. The specific feeling of being detached, of being off the beaten track, of leaving the shore had finally arrived. It was like starting a trek into the wilderness—a trek that soothes with first steps marked by anxiety and disharmony. Afterward, the joy of discovery outweighed the impatience.

In the morning, Yeti clipped jumars and sped upwards. I caught up with him and we started climbing new pitches. It had only been a couple of days before that he had led a challenging M7+ pitch. When he was drytooling the crack, his pick suddenly popped and his falling body jerked the line. He narrowly escaped hitting his head against a ledge. We looked at each other tellingly, but in a moment, he batmanned back up the rope and returned to his same, steady pace without malediction.

The next day, I took over the lead, having to aid a rotten corner. Before I could set protection, I had to remove all the loose rocks and clean the cracks. The falling rubble first hit my brand new jacket then rocketed somewhere into the abyss. I think it was these projectiles that cut the rope and poked holes in the portaledge pitched below. Stones cut the ropes almost every day, but even that kind of rotten rock was unable to stop us. For security, we used almost exclusively cams and beaks. Regular pitons didn't withstand the expanding nature of the cracks. We finally set up camp two, which almost instantly seemed quite depressing to us. It was cold and in deep shadow with only 20 minutes of golden light per day.

I woke up at 5 a.m. It was light out since the polar day practically never ends. Yeti was still sleeping and I didn't want to wake him. I felt like having a bit of solitude. This need wasn't directed against anything, and especially not against Yeti. It was a longing for something of my own, a spot of privacy within the closed-off space of the portaledge.

When Yeti opened his eyes, we started the daily routine: make coffee, complain about muscle aches, eat porridge, split the snacks and discuss the plan for the day. We were about to get moving when Yeti decided to take off his socks and check his feet. It was still warm in the portaledge since we had just been cooking, so he took them off quickly after he got out of his sleeping bag. The waxen whiteness of his toes was visible at first glance. After an hour of rubbing, the circulation came back; it turned out his other foot was the same.

Marek Raganowicz cleaning pitch 29 of Superbalance. Photo: Marcin Tomaszewski

Usually, as I sipped on my last coffee, I would reserve some time for writing, or rather scribbling crooked letters in an uncomfortable position. On this day, I had neither the time nor the urge for it.

After the next few days on the Boomerang, we became fed up with rotten rock, falling stones and sharp edges. The plan for the day was to get to camp three and prepare for hauling the day after. Fixed lines hanged freely, touching the wall occasionally. Frankly speaking, jugging was the worst part of the day. From the very start, the pain of hands rubbing against the rope stopped us from moving. We hit our hands like an irate audience clapping a poor performance. The longer I waited for circulation to return, the longer I rested. We started getting hot after the third, fourth, fifth time we changed ropes. After the third change, I started to feel as if somebody was tearing my arms off. Almost every day falling rocks and sharp edges cut some of the rope sheaths, so we had to tie safety knots. These slowed down the pace of jugging and rappelling.

After an hour and a half of jumaring, we were ready for the lead. Yeti geared up and climbed over a corner edge, entering a small depression. When I got to the belay stance, I stared at his icy face with disbelief. The cold there, unlike at any other part of that wall, obstructed breathing and took away the will to climb. A light breeze made it unbearable. Yeti's chin, nose and eyelashes were covered with ice. He called that place The Fridge. I started counting whilst flexing my toes, trying to fight off the paralyzing cold. The circulation would come back after I reached two hundred. I counted endlessly until I felt pain and fatigue. I sat down on a belay seat that allowed me to unweight my harness, which pressed on my thighs and hindered circulation. Yeti's scream of off belay interrupted the trance-like countdown of toe movements and roused me from the mind-numbing cold. Jugging and cleaning was liberation from the frozen abyss. We arrived at camp three on the east ridge. From there we could see the headwall cut by two beautiful cracks. One of them was waiting for us. We screamed with joy.

Hauling to camp three reminded me of the Myth of Sisyphus. Haul bags were getting stuck. Their weight increased with every pitch and every coiled rope put into them. Increasing arm, joint and tendon aches were interlaced with the loss of feeling. Every metre of hauling was met with struggling spindrifts, the cold and stuck bags. We stopped talking to each other. I doubted that I could pull the bags out of the overhang one more time, but when I moved them just a little bit, Yeti sensed it and pushed them up by a couple of centimetres. The day lasted 21 hours. At 3 a.m., we started to set up the portaledge and cook, the beautiful headwall soaring above us.

We decided to take a day off. It happened to be a sunny Sunday. We hydrated without limit and stuffed ourselves with sweets and an extra meal. After that came the painkillers. When the arm and hand aches disappeared gradually, we started writing notes and texts and telling stories from other walls: Tatras, Alps, Patagonia, Alaska, Yosemite. The stories ignited our imaginations to a point where we began to make plans for the future. From a couple of our exuberant fantasies, we chose distant cliffs, which at the end of the day seemed like vague images dreamt somewhere at the back of beyond.

The next day's wintry and misty morning found us with frosted gear and stiffened ropes. We shook off the white rime, and attacked. It was one of the most beautiful pitches I've ever led in my life—fish hook, rivet, head, rivet, hook and many, many beaks. I was shouting out with joy at the belay stance with Yeti accompanying me from below. Strangely though, I distinguished an unfamiliar noise. At first I thought it was Yeti, but it turned out to be somebody calling up to us from the void below. We responded simultaneously, screaming into the milky whiteness, out-shouting the wind and driving the snow away. It was a beautiful moment of connection with the outside world.

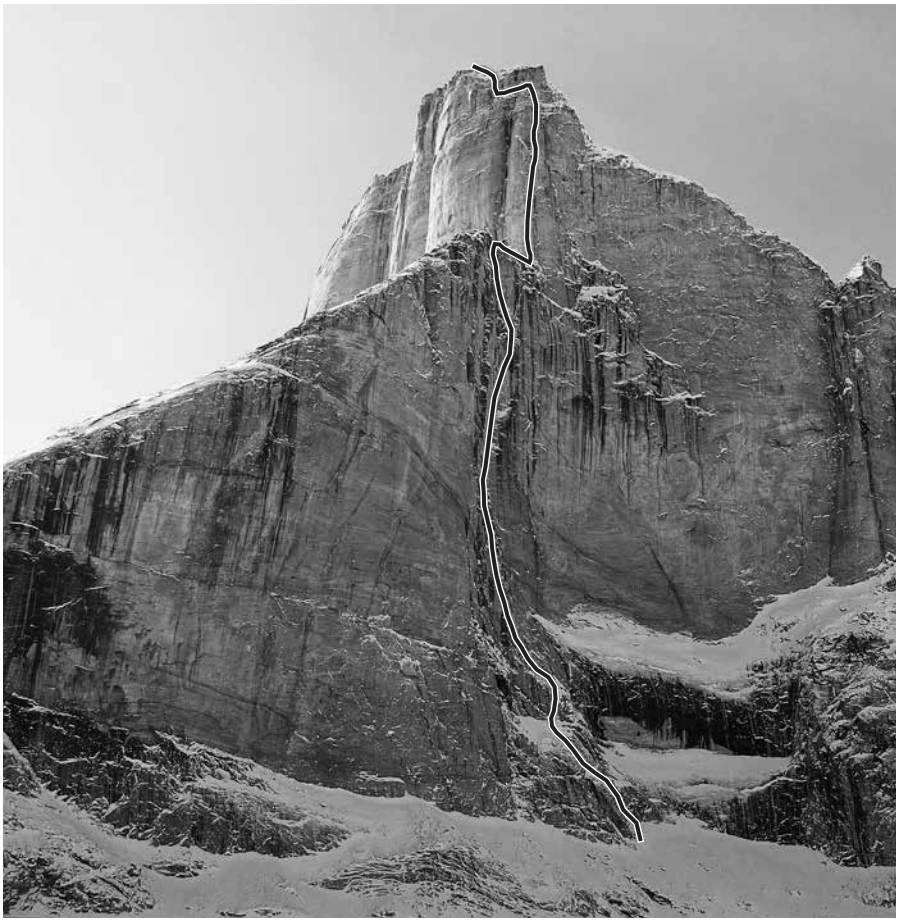
At the bivy, I took a picture of myself to see my face. The left corner of my mouth was cracked and oozing pus. I

couldn't eat. I suffered especially when sucking energy gel from their packets because it cut my scabs. My cheeks were burning, covered in a dark, hard crust. In the evening, I applied Vaseline to my tender skin and finally slept after taking painkillers, which we had every night for dessert.

In the morning, we found ourselves swinging with the wind again as it started snowing intensely. The snow embedded and froze on our faces. My cheeks were stinging unmercifully, but I stubbornly counted the movements of jumars, trying not to think about it. Yeti would say, "If it's hard, don't think. Climb!" I shook off all the bad thoughts and took delight in the void. Over our heads opened a great corner leading almost to the top. We called it The Arena. It was snowing heavily and leading through the spindrift was agony. Every time I attempted to place pro, the snow would fill the crack. After a couple of hours, I was hammering the belay bolt in when Yeti caught up carrying the gear. Covered with ice and shaking like wet dogs, we rapped down to camp three for the last time.

We started the 20th day on the wall by hauling. The wind was cold and gusty, but the hauling was much easier thanks to smooth rock. It was around 5 p.m. when we set up the portaledge and slipped into frosty sleeping bags. Yeti gave me some pills for stomach distress, not admitting he had a tooth ache himself. We took inventory of our gear. The front points of crampons hardly stuck out from beneath our shoes. The blunt and rounded picks of ice axes were only fit for replacement. The rand was ripped at the tip of boots. We sewed and patched jackets, but it stopped making sense when it became impossible to repair the holes in any way. Shreds of membrane and thermal liners were sticking out from gloves.

Superbalance on the north face of Polar Sun Spire. Photo: Marek Raganowicz



Right after breakfast, Yeti started climbing on The Arena. It was really steep, so the cracks of grey and red rock were visible even when it snowed. The line was set out evenly and I felt sleepy. Suddenly, I heard a falling stone and a scream.

"I'm gonna fall! The block is moving! My cam is slipping!" shrieked Yeti.

"Rivet! Drill a rivet!" I hollered, and instantly heard a hammer pounding.

Yeti was as fast as a sewing machine with the hand drill. He took the weight off the cam, and the big block behind where he placed it returned to its position. A moment later, Yeti pulled another block off, which made a trajectory over my head. We could breathe again, but only fully relax when the next belay was installed.

The next pitch was one of the most beautiful on the wall. Maybe it was a reward for the moving block. Yeti would say that in the mountains you get rewarded for all the suffering. I was looking at his aiders swaying in the wind and the tag line rolling away from the wall with admiration. It was like a spectacular Yosemite climb.

The top was at our fingertips, so our moods got better every evening. We goofed around and listened to music. Yeti was drawing on the wall of the portaledge. We exchanged earthly dreams: a shower, clean clothes, fresh bed, brewed coffee and walking around town looking at women.

On our last day of upwards movement, we didn't even notice when, in a blind fog, we found ourselves on a flat perch—our reflections in the clouds were waving with child-like joy. Beyond the whiteness protruded the top, which looked like the tip of an egg sitting on a white tablecloth. We were the only ones who could rejoice in this view. I think that was the reward that Yeti had mentioned. We had the wall to ourselves and we will take it with us forever.

Summary

Superbalance (VII A4 M7+), Polar Sun Spire, Baffin Island. FA: Marek Raganowicz, Marcin Tomaszewski, April-May 2012.

The West Coast

The Canadian Club

Blake Herrington

I HAD WANTED to visit the Waddington Range for several years, ever since alpine-granite guru Mikey Schaefer had described the range as offering a "Karakoram-scale experience eight hours from Seattle." So when never-ending visa delays and political chaos derailed our plans to climb in the real Karakoram, Graham Zimmerman (New Zealand), Scott Bennett and I (both USA) made plans to train together in the Cascades and head to the Waddington Range. We knew that even the surliest of Canadian border patrol agents would provide little difficulty relative to navigating Pakistani bureaucracy. Joining us on the flight in, and for some climbing in the range, was our friend Forest Woodward, Brooklyn-based photographer/climber/hipster/camp-chef extraordinaire.

On August 6, White Saddle Air flew us into the Sunny Knob base camp. Even on the flight into the range, we noticed that the glaciers were far more broken up than in any photos we had seen. Serac collapses were constant during our entire trip, and after chatting with Colin Haley, who was solo climbing during the same time period, it became apparent that travel and navigation throughout the range is becoming increasingly cruxy. However, the very warm conditions (it was never below freezing at night at Sunny Knob) meant that when we could eventually get onto the rock, temperatures were ideal for climbing.

Our first climb took us up to the unclimbed centre of the southwest face of The Blade. The approach from Sunny Knob was three to four hours of moderate glacier climbing with one or two short belayed steps of easy ice. Once on the route, we found evidence of a prior attempt and bail gear one or two pitches above the glacier. Being the constant pessimist, I was expecting each pitch to end in blankness, but the climbable terrain persisted despite the lack of major corner or crack features on the steep wall. Our crux pitch involved moving straight left beneath a series of square-cut roofs, and it was here that we used a couple points of aid (C1) on the traverse. The climbing above this, high on the face, offered some of the most enjoyable and friendly steep alpine granite I've ever been on. We summitted amid growing clouds and wind, and ended up spending all night descending via rappels down the Blade-Dentiform Couloir and the glacier. We named our route Incogneato (ED1 5.10+ C1).

We then attempted the line that had been highest on our priority list, the unclimbed south face of Asperity, to the right of the Elson-McLane 2010 route (*CAJ*, 2011, vol. 94, pp. 65-66). Unstable conditions and bergschrunds in the approach couloir compelled us to gain the rock much lower than we had hoped, and after six or seven pitches of shattered choss, we were faced with the choice of retreating or crossing a narrow hidden couloir that slanted down from Asperity's Southeast Ridge. Just as we primed ourselves to race across the then sun-exposed snow, some sedan-sized boulders began to tumble down from above. We hastily retreated to a safe rock outcropping and spent the afternoon trying to sleep, admitting to ourselves that the wet, shattered rock in the couloir would be horrible, if even possible, to cross. We waited until evening to descend and we reached Sunny Knob after just 18 hours from our start; not the expected three- to four-day trip we had in mind.

With our friend Forest, we hiked up to the Waddington-Combatant col (a few short sections of two-tool climbing involved) for an ascent of the Skywalk Buttress on Combatant in two parties of two. We descended via rappels of the rock tower that splits the col, and then traversed onto the glacier near the base of the Incisor. The four of us also spent a stormy day and night at Plummer Hut before the sky cleared for our scramble up the beautiful West Ridge of Claw Peak.

Our final climb in the range began on a phenomenal-looking series of square-cut corners on the southwest face of Stiletto Peak. Unfortunately, this line dead-ended after only three or four pitches, and the presence of more bail gear proved that we weren't the only ones to have been thwarted by the frustrating sections of blank rock between splitters. We managed to rappel nearly all the way back to the glacier and traverse rightward onto the face, where Scott lead an amazing and unlikely pitch that barely connected but got us into a major corner system.

The climbing on this wall was excellent and clean, with good protection and sharp, fresh granite. We followed the prow in the centre of the face and reached the summit by early evening. We had carried ice gear and crampons up and over Stiletto in order to rappel the much shorter northeast aspect of the peak and descend via the Tellot Glacier.

Scott Bennett nearing the summit of The Blade during the first ascent of Incogneato. Photo: Blake Herrington

Though this descent puts one on a much longer course with a return via Plummer Hut, we all vastly preferred it to a descent directly back toward Sunny Knob. We named our route The Canadian Club (ED1 5.11-), and we suggest it for groups based out of Sunny Knob that are looking for a good climb on steep and surprisingly featured stone.

We were all very impressed with the Waddington Range, finding that it offers a truly big mountain experience while still being logistically easy to access. The changing status of the range's glaciation will obviously continue to impact the climbing, for better or for worse, making it harder to access the Serra Cirque via Carl's Couloir, and creating technical challenges on approaches that were once simple walk-ups.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the American Alpine Club and the New Zealand Alpine Club for providing grants to help defray the cost of our trip.

Summary

Incogneato (ED1 5.10+ C1), The Blade, Waddington Range. FA: Scott Bennett, Blake Herrington, Graham Zimmerman, August 8-9, 2012.

The Canadian Club (ED1 5.11-), Stiletto Peak, Waddington Range. FA: Scott Bennett, Blake Herrington, Graham Zimmerman, August 18, 2012.

The southwest faces of Stiletto Peak (left) and The Blade: (1) The Canadian Club, (2) Incogneato. Photo: Blake Herrington

Victoria Peak

John Waters

THE PLAN WAS TO climb new routes on the north face or up the established Northeast Buttress on the second highest mountain on Vancouver Island. New logging activity gave us great access to the west side of Victoria Peak. We drove about 40 kilometres up the White River mainline from Sayward, and then took new roads up the White River 380 branch to an elevation of 900 metres. The logging roads lead so high up the west side of the mountain that even the technical routes can easily be done in a long day.

It was early afternoon when we arrived, so we packed our gear and set off through the large hemlock and balsam forest. After only two hours of steep forest bushwhacking and some subalpine scrambling, we arrived at the base of the west face and a comfortable bivy spot in a small patch of trees. After supper, we did a quick reconnaissance to determine the best approach to the north face.

In the morning, we fueled up with some sticky instant oatmeal and Mike's gritty black cowboy coffee. With a casual start, we hiked up the snowfield towards The Sceptre route on the west face. Near the base, we turned to the north and traversed over the west ridge and onto the north face. Instantly, we were hit by strong cold wind gusts on the shaded aspect. Donning every bit of clothing we had, we continued traversing across the face towards the Northeast Buttress. It became apparent that the very broken late-season glacier was not going to give easy passage to the buttress. A new route was our best option.

The North Face route on Victoria Peak. Photo: John Waters

We traversed across 4th-class ledges for about 400 metres until we came to a deep impassable couloir. I believe this was the couloir that Rick Johnson, Matt Luny and Don Newman attempted in January 1986. It steepened dramatically near the summit ridge, where they had to abandon their great attempt only one pitch from the summit. We took the buttress on the right side of the couloir. The ropes were pulled out for the next steep pitch. Thirty metres to our right, Zsana lead a steep groove with Curtis, while I lead up a finger crack and undercling with my brother Mike. At the top of this pitch, we all put the ropes away and continued climbing together up low-5th-class steps and cracks. We scrambled quickly over the solid rock towards the sunny warm summit. Zsana and Curtis got stuck just below the summit on a crack that proved harder than it looked. Zsana tied in and lead their steep final pitch to the summit ridge. Together we scrambled west to the sunny summit.

After a long stay, we descended the much easier south face. Curtis had been on this route 15 years earlier, but was unsure of the line, and about half way down we got off route and had to do a couple of unnecessary raps to get us back on track. We crossed the snowfield at the base of the face and climbed back up to a notch on the flat south ridge at 1,900 metres. From there, we descended northwest down moderate snow and rock back to the west side and our bivy gear. A quick slip and slide down talus and forest saw us back to the truck and to cold beers awaiting. The great access and quality rock will certainly attract more climbers to this prominent Island peak.

Summary

North Face (5.8, 350m), Victoria Peak (2163m), Sutton Range, Vancouver Island. FA: Curtis Lyon, Zsana Tulcsik, John Waters, Mike Waters, September 3, 2012.

Fire Ball

Bruce Kay

MANY YEARS AGO, my impressionable mind was captivated by a few words written by Tobin Sorenson in an old issue of *Climbing*. At the time, the full meaning of his title "Witlessly Bold, Heroically Dull" escaped me, but his more literal tale of survival and enlightenment on the north face of Kitchener in January was all the fuel I needed to lever me out of my teenage wasteland. Winter alpinism became my preferred proving ground, which persisted against all odds for a ridiculously long time. The south coast is particularly low odds for such a pursuit with its crap access, way too much snow and practically no one else interested—not to mention the usual career and family pressures. Against such a stacked deck, witless and dull gradually overruled bold and heroic. The cost-benefit factors don't change much, but like any aging process, the weight does. Decades later, as grateful as I am for the experience, I'm done with it. I think.

Until January that is, when Damien dragged me out for a jaunt up his favourite ice gully on Garibaldi and the old psych suddenly sprang back to life. A great day on the hill amidst spectacular glaciation, blue skies and home by sundown. That was rad! What else can we do? The old conundrum is confronted and puzzled over, and with patient persistence, coaxed into a miracle of potential just like the good old days. A route is discovered and not just some run-of-the-mill snow-plugged grovel fest either. Access? Check! Schedules? Massaged. Conditions? By God's grace, it's a go. Is it a slam-dunk? Only one way to find out….

A long sled ride and there it is. It looks cool. We skin up for a closer inspection, but it's still no slam-dunk. The lusty first pitch of water ice has melted out and there is no obvious alternative. Next morning, we are none the wiser until a well-hidden slim possibility reveals itself up an angling ramp. The climbing is… rather good! Protection? Adequate. Thin ice leads to a groove full of featured stemming and, next thing you know, we are in the line that goes all the way. Five pitches of intricate thin ice and drytooling sweeps into a dead vertical ice hose threatening to melt off as the sun swings around. Damien slays it with heroic boldness and all that is left is the hump up to the summit in evening light.

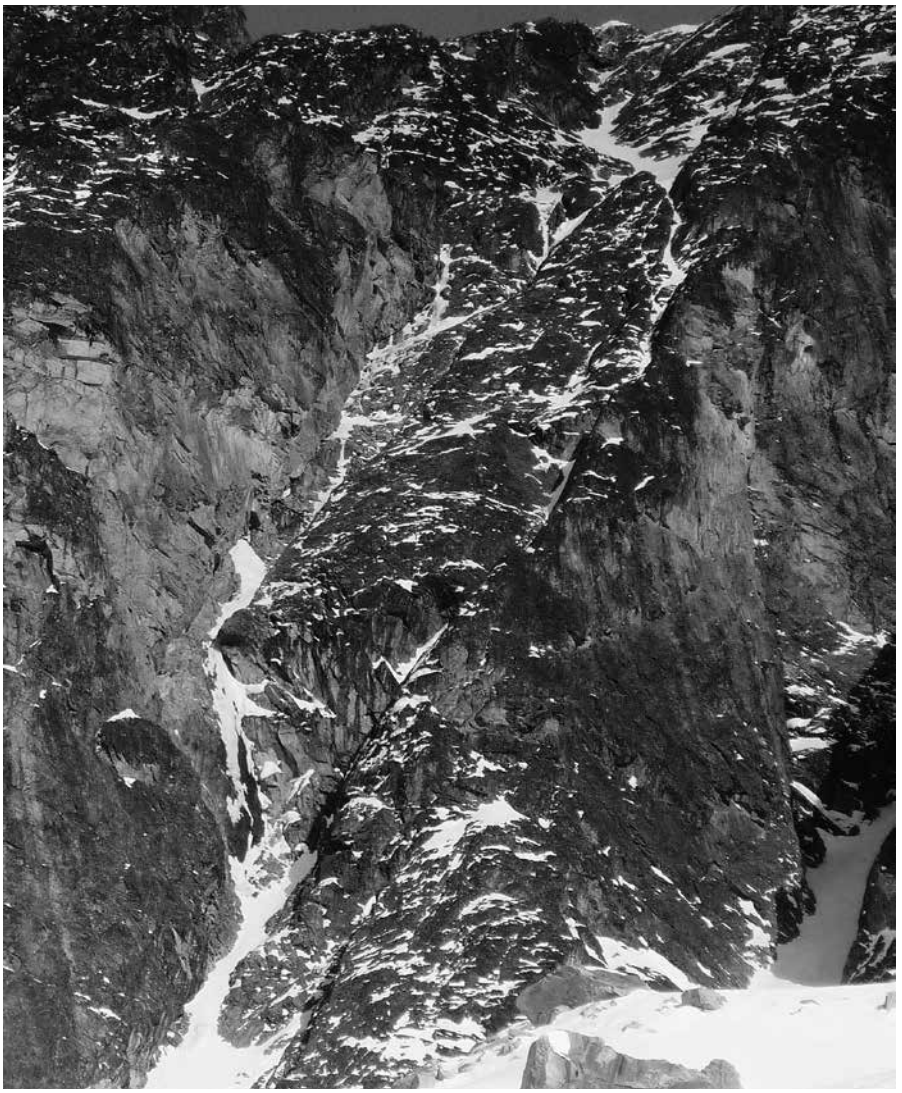
So it turns out, it's still the same as it ever was—generally a royal pain in the ass, usually miserable and terrifying, rarely resulting in anything remotely qualified as a success; yet, every now and then, completely, utterly and fantastically worth it. I must have lost a few pounds. Where's the next one?

Summary

Fire Ball (IV WI5 M5, 600m, 9 pitches), west face, Mt. Athelstan, Coast Mountains. FA: Bruce Kay, Damien Kelly, February 2013.

Right: Damien Kelly on pitch five of Fire Ball. Photo: Bruce Kay

Fire Ball on the west face of Mount Athelstan. Photo: Bruce Kay



Tuff Nanni

Francis Bruhwiler

LOCATED LESS THAN 15 kilometres from the Pacific Ocean, Triple Peak is within a small range of mountains that forms one of British Columbia's first lines of defence against the pacific frontal systems that pound the western province. The west side of the small range is bordered by the Kennedy River valley and Highway 4, which leads to the coastal towns of Ucluelet and Tofino. To the south are the open waters of Barkely Sound, to the east the Effingham River valley, and to the north a bunch of central Vancouver Island peaks. To say the least, this is a relatively moist area that tends to have rapid weather changes.

As the crow flies, Triple Peak is only 12 kilometres from Henderson Lake, the wettest place in B.C., and one of the wettest in North America. Henderson Lake boasts a yearly average rainfall of 6.6 metres and in 2007 received 9.5 metres of rain! Nonetheless, by mid-summer to September, there are loads of opportunities to find dry alpine rock objectives in the area. Overall, the entire range sees minimal traffic, and that's mainly parties who have intentions to reach technical terrain.

In 2011, John Kristian and I had made it halfway up the last unclimbed north face of Triple Peak but bailed due to seepage at the crux pitch. On the night of September 7, 2012, Matt Coady, Luke Clarke and I were camped on the Marion Mainline logging road with plans to try that face again the next day. John was unable to make it to the Island this time, and as much as I wanted to complete the route with him, I jumped on the opportunity to give that face another try with other partners. I will admit, I did have a slight feeling of betrayal, but also accepted that this is just how it goes sometimes. To add to the Triple Peak onslaught, our friends Mike Davis and Conor Mackenzie had plans to meet us in the alpine the next day and get the second ascent of the North Buttress route that Randy Mercer and I put up in 2009.

At around midnight, I was jolted awake by a Subaru flying past our camp in the direction of the Triple Peak trailhead. Being a weekend, I presumed Victoria folks were on a mission to hike to the lake or scramble to the summit the next day. I tried to get more sleep.

Matt Coady on the crux pitch (pitch four) of Tuff Nanni. Photo: Luke Clarke

Early in the morning at the trailhead, we chatted with the late arrivals. It turned out that Stefan Gessinger and Shanda Lempcke were there to try for the second ascent of the North Buttress. If Mike and Conor were to show, that would make two parties jockeying to get a second ascent on the same day. I know in some areas of the world this is probably common, but on the west side of the Island, this is a rarity.

After a fast approach hike to the alpine, Matt, Luke and I were close to the base of the unclimbed north face of the northwest peak. The route up the face would be steep, so we made a last-minute decision to go even lighter and leave the aluminum crampons and ice axes near the base. Having good knowledge of the descent route off that summit, I knew this decision could have consequences but favoured the idea of small packs, thus more enjoyable climbing.

Soon after, I was within 10 metres of the moat wishing I had my crampons on! It would be a wicked slide if I had lost my balance. Up to there, kicking steps in the firm snow had worked fine. To continue, I used my pin hammer to cut steps into the very firm steepening snow and ice. With patience, it worked and eventually I was able to straddle the moat lip, throw a rope down to Matt and Luke, and go through a funky sequence of cutting more steps, counter-balancing rope antics, and spotting to get us all on the rock. We lost a bunch of time dealing with that, but felt good about the climbing that lay ahead.

On mostly good-quality rock, we climbed seven pitches in total that included a short traverse. At around pitch two, we could see our buddies below approaching the base of the North Buttress. They were about 15 minutes behind Stefan and Shanda and had lost their chance to get the second ascent. Instead, they gave a shot at climbing a new route to the east of the buttress, but

bailed and made an ascent of the regular main summit route instead.

On our route, pitch four was the crux (5.10). It climbed the steep face, traversing slightly right to negotiate a small roof, and then trended slightly back left to reach the vegetated slope and small trees above. At the top of the pitch, the three of us noticed a fogbank starting to roll in from the coastline and into the valleys below, but the climbing consumed our minds and we ignored the approaching fog. I should mention that Matt delicately lead the crux pitch in style and was rewarded by multiple wasp stings to the hand while belaying Luke and me up. Except for the crux 5.10 pitch, most of the route went at a 5.8 to 5.9 grade and finished with some 3rd-class scrambling near the summit of the northwest peak.

To descend, we scrambled towards the main summit and weaved our way down towards the col between the main Triple Peak summit and the northwest peak. It was dark by the time we had finished the descent-route rappels and reached the snow slope below the col. Stefan's party was successful in bagging the second ascent of the North Buttress, and they were about 15 minutes ahead of us on the descent at this point. I had made the journey down the snow slope back to the lake in the dark before, but this time I felt a little uneasy about the fog line that lay less than 100 metres below us.

The next six hours consisted of less than five-metre visibility in a world of white that played hard with our depth perception. This made for difficult negotiating of moats, rock bluffs and icy sections on the snowfields. The lack of crampons made the travelling that much more difficult, and I internally cursed myself for not taking them on the climb. While I will not admit we were completely lost, I will admit that we were highly disoriented up there that night.

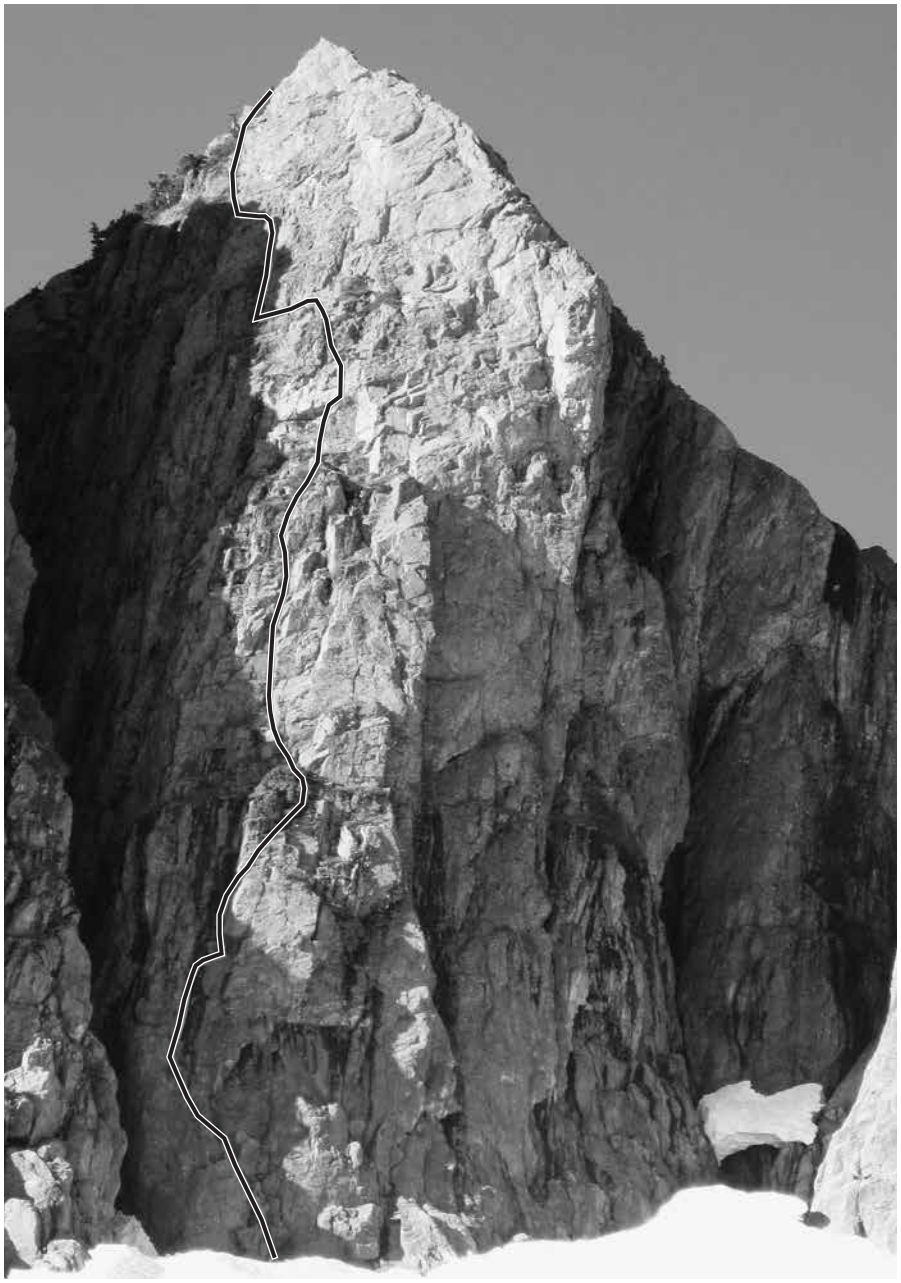
Eventually, it started to rain. Not long after, we found ourselves hidden with Stefan and Shanda under the large bivy rock above the lake. Their experience was similar to ours, having wandered around in the dense fog, somewhat off route. A good piece of news was that our buddies had left us beer at the bivy rock. As cold and exhausted as we were, the beer tasted great and gave us the strength to continue an additional hour of zombie-walking through the fog to the location of our stashed gear. In a steady (heavy) coastal rain, we hiked out, and a couple of hours later, reached our vehicles. We were soaked to the bone—a classic way to finish off a mountain trip on the West Coast.

The route name, Tuff Nanni, has nothing to do with a nanny. None of us could afford one at this point in our lives anyways. Instead, the name stems from the communities we reside in, Tofino (Tuff City) and Nanaimo (Nanni).

Summary

Tuff Nanni (5.10, 300m), northwest summit of Triple Peak, Mackenzie Range, Vancouver Island. FA: Francis Bruhwiler, Luke Clarke, Matt Coady, September 8, 2012.

Tuff Nanni on the north face of the northwest summit of Triple Peak. Photo: Francis Bruhwiler



Good Leftovers

Mathew Coady

SOON AFTER ARRIVING on Vancouver Island, I was introduced to Philip Stone's *Island Alpine* guidebook. While there are many inspiring route descriptions and photos in the book, the image of Greg Shea on Mount Tom Taylor's Indian Summer was an eye-catcher. Even more appealing was the description of the high-quality granite and opportunity for many more routes on the mountain. I knew at that moment that Tom Taylor was a climbing destination I would have to visit.

It was a couple of more years before this opportunity presented itself. In early July 2012, my friend Francis Bruhwiler sent me an email containing some photos of Tom's south face from a recent work trip to the region. An extended period of warm weather had cleared most of the snow from the ledges of the south face. With dry weather and an extended long weekend, we quickly organized and set off for Strathcona Provincial Park. We arrived at the trailhead in the late evening on July 13 and decided to hike under the full moon in an effort to get a head start on the approach. We plodded on in the dark to eventually reach Baby Bedwell Lake near the base of the southeast ridge of the mountain, set up camp and gaze at tomorrow's approach fully illuminated in the moonlight.

The next day we set off through the wet snow and quickly ascended the ridgeline. After setting up camp, we scrambled down from the col to the base of Tom. We reconned a small portion of the south face, being the region we thought had the most potential from the photographs we viewed. Early into the recon, we stumbled across a beautiful pitch comprised of two parallel finger cracks just to the left of the climb Indian Summer. Gazing upwards, the wall seemed to present an obvious line. We settled on the route and headed back to camp to enjoy an afternoon of excessive sun and scrambling around scree in an effort to catch a photo of the not-so-elusive white ptarmigan.

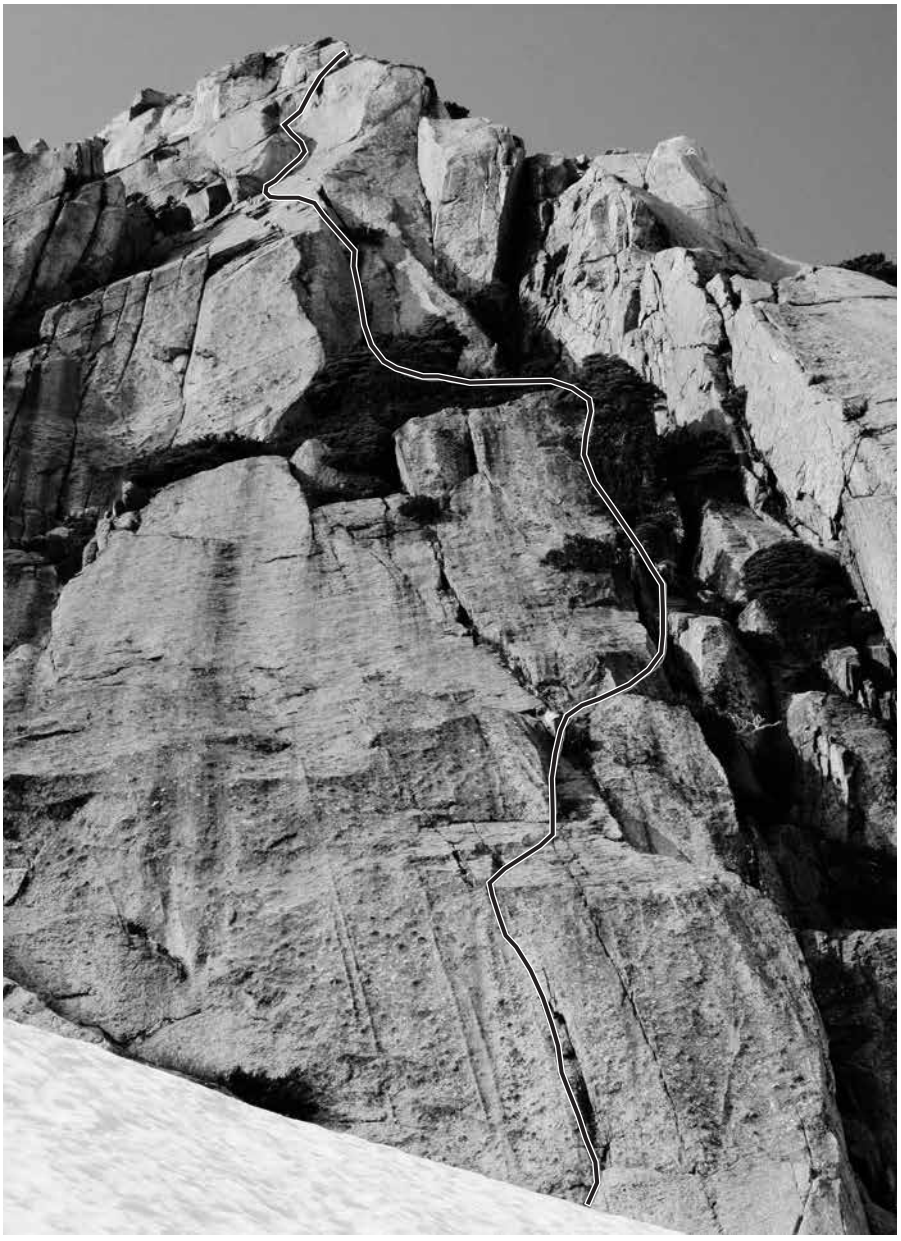
The next morning, the point of the piton tossed into the snow decided in my favour—Francis would climb first. While the first pitch would most likely be the money pitch of the route (and it

Good Leftovers on Mount Tom Taylor. Photo: Philip Stone

was), fear or too much coffee amped my nerves to new levels. Francis made fast work of the tricky pitch. I quickly followed, apparently anxious to do battle with a six-metre section of dense cedar growing out of a dirt seam. Normally, the sight of a tree on a route brings me joy and calmness; however, the beating that the "tree ladder" inflicted left me anything but joyful and calm.

When Francis finally emerged from the Tree Pitch, I bombarded him with reasons why I should lead the next one—a beautiful dihedral with a fist-sized crack for 20-plus metres. Weak from blood loss, Francis submitted to my insistency. The pitch was stellar and came equipped with a wonderful little cedar tree perch growing out of the vertical wall. Cedars were back in my good books. One more half pitch climbed up and left towards the van-sized egg-shaped feature perched high above us. We set the "egg" as an objective early in the climb since it seemed to provide the opportunity for shelter from the intense sun. I was regretting yesterday's decision to sunbath, which, in combination with the days climbing, had given me a mild case of sunstroke.

When we finally reached the base of the large oval feature, it was apparent that this time of day would not afford a break from the sun no matter where we were on the face. We decided upon an obvious line that leads to the right of the roof, following a 30-centimetre-wide crack that traced the full aspect of the feature. From there, one more short, scrambley pitch brought us to an oasis of cedar shade and snow on a large ledge. After a substantial amount of time eating snow and resting in the shade, we made way for the large ledge that lay above us. The next few pitches consisted of scrambling up steps, gullies and ledges to the summit, which we reached late in the afternoon. After a quick reprieve in the shade of the boulders on the summit, we took one last view of the surrounding mountains in the reddening sky and glassy waters of the Pacific before making our descent back to camp.



Good Leftovers on the south face of Mount Tom Taylor. Photo: Francis Bruhwiler

Summary

Good Leftovers (5.9+, 300m), south face, Mount Tom Taylor, Mackenzie Range, Vancouver Island. FA: Francis Bruhwiler, Mathew Coady. July 8, 2012.

P1: 5.9+, 45m. Climb left finger crack to easier ground near base of a vegetated crack. Avoid the dirty crack by trending up and right, belaying at a tree near a shark-fin feature of rock.

P2: 5.6, 30m. Struggle up tunnelling between a tree and the rock. Break through to easy terrain and belay at a good ledge with trees below a dihedral.

P3: 5.9, 30m. Follow the fist-sized crack in corner and belay near flake on the left wall.

P4: 5.8, 30m. Continue up towards a wide crack then hand traverse it across the face to an exposed belay.

P5: 5.8, 30m. Climb a nice hand crack to a chockstone, and then head left onto the face as the crack widens. Belay on a comfortable ledge.

From top of pitch five, scramble up climber's right about three metres to a large treed ledge. From here, it's one full low-5th-class pitch to the exit ledge below summit block. Follow ramps, ledges and a gully to get to summit.

Mount Rexford

Drew Brayshaw

A NARROW COULOIR SPLITS the north face of Mount Rexford from bottom to top, branching out of the much more obvious Priest-Coupe Couloir. It isn't easily seen from many vantage points, although the summits of the neighbouring Nesakwatch Spires give a good view of the line. I first noticed it as a possible winter/spring line in the mid 2000s, and a few years later got a better view of it while flying around as a passenger and assistant cameraman in John Scurlock's plane. I added it to the list of intriguing things to try one day.

Over the next couple of years, I made a few attempts to get in there and climb stuff in the winter, but nothing really came to fruition. The aspect and distance from the car in winter suggest that you need to make the approach at night to do this one in a day trip, so all of those attempts involved long walks by headlamp. One time, Jesse Mason and I walked up Centre Creek at midnight as far as the third bridge before we decided that the snow was too soft and we should turn around. On another solo trip a year later, I crossed the creek too early in the dark and found myself almost below The Bastion on the shoulder of the Illusion Peaks when the sun came up. In the face of a declining weather report that had me decide not to go, Shaun Neufeld and Al Davis also made an attempt in winter 2011-12 that had them bivy at the creek, only to wake up to rain in the morning and a wet slog back down to the car.

Finally, near the end of May 2012, Shaun and I decided to get the lead out and get this thing done. The weekend before, Al had made an ascent of the North Couloir on neighbouring Slesse and reported ideal conditions. We recruited Max de Jong to be the third member of our team. In between sewing parachutes for Mars landers, he managed to find time to accompany us on the climb.

On May 27, we left Max's home in the Chilliwack Valley just before 4 a.m. We left Shaun's truck parked at the Mount Rexford trailhead in Nesakwatch Creek, and then left Max's truck parked at the gate where the Centre Creek road splits off from Nesakwatch Road. Max unloaded his quad from the truck. Shaun and I and all our packs were carefully balanced on the bumpers while Max drove the quad up the Centre Creek road. There were a couple of sections that we had to get out and walk through, and even use our ice axes to cut limbs off low-hanging fallen trees. Eventually, higher up in Centre Creek, the number of alders pushed over on the logging road by the winter snow made travel impassable. We left the quad and started walking. We crossed Centre Creek on avalanche debris at around 7 a.m.

The approach to the route was on solid snow, and we made good time cramponing and kicking steps all the way to the bergschrund at the bottom of the Priest-Coupe. When the bergshrund is melted out, it is sometimes possible to climb rock on the right-hand side to get past it, but for us, it was bridged close to the rock on the right edge. We racked up but left the ropes coiled, and tiptoed across the bridge and began climbing the lower Priest-Coupe. There was a beautiful runnel carved into the snow that offered firm and icy climbing, but the sun was doing its thing to the snow mushrooms and cornice remnants

Looking down the second pitch of the North Couloir. Photo: Drew Brayshaw

up above on South Nesakwatch Spire. Inevitably, these came barreling down the runnel when they reached the couloir, so we stuck to deeper and softer snow out left.

Midway up the Priest-Coupe, we came to the spot where the unclimbed couloir splits off and rises to the left. This narrower couloir was also steeper. Max kicked steps to a convenient stance against the rock and built a rock anchor while we dug out the ropes. Shaun led a pitch upwards through a narrowing of the gully and a short bit of ice to a stance beyond. Above, I took the second pitch, which moved left at a discontinuity onto a shoulder below the upper couloir. Max led through on the third pitch. After climbing partway up, he yelled down that there were no obstacles and that we could simul-climb. We continued in this fashion for the remainder of the line and topped out on the upper northeast ridge about 50 metres from the summit. Clouds had been building throughout the day and now were blowing about and between the summits, making for an atmospheric top-out.

We descended the standard route down the west ridge, rappelling once off the summit (20 metres) to reach the ledges by the false summit, and then making a full 55-metre rappel from the false summit to reach the west ridge ledges. We scrambled and down-climbed to the basin below Rexford and the spires, and enjoyed a glorious continuous glissade on firm snow all the way down to treeline. Then a final quick tramp back out through the forest and the regenerating plantation below to Shaun's truck. We picked up Max's truck at the gate and were back at Max's house drinking beer by 5:30 p.m. Max hiked back up Centre Creek on his own the next day to recover his parked quad.

All in all, this was a fine, aesthetic and reasonably easy-summit route under spring conditions. We carried, but did not use, a couple of ice screws and a picket. Rock gear (a few nuts and finger- to hand-sized cams, plus a Tricam) were useful for belays. The steepest section of snow reached around 60 to 65 degrees for 20 metres or so, and most of the climb was in the 50- to 55-degree range. The total elevation gain from Centre Creek to the summit was around 1,350 metres, of which the distance from bergschrund to summit was about 400 metres, and the new ground (after breaking off from the Priest-Coupe) was around 180 metres.

Summary

North Face Couloir, Mt. Rexford, Cascade Mountains. FA: Drew Brayshaw, Maxim de Jong, Shaun Neufeld, May 27, 2017.

The North Couloir on Mount Rexford. Photo: Drew Brayshaw

Blew My Wadd

Colin Haley

LAST SUMMER, I HAD planned to spend most of my time rock climbing in Squamish, and little of it in the mountains. However, I was back in Squamish for only a few days after an alpine road-trip with my friend Dylan before taking off to the mountains again. This past winter, at the Vancouver International Film Festival, I met Scott Pick from Surrey, British Columbia, who has a passion for photographing mountains. He was heading into the Waddington Range with his wife, Marina, and they had a spare seat in the helicopter. Well, in that case, back to the mountains!

Scott, Marina and I started the drive from Surrey to Bluff Lake on the morning of August 11. On the long drive, I poured over Don Serl's excellent guidebook to the range and considered my options. The two objectives that interested me most were to attempt a solo ascent of Mount Waddington or a solo ascent of Serra 5. I brainstormed what might be the best ways to access each climb, and soon came to the conclusion that the best plan would be to climb one of them, and then, rather than return to the Plummer Hut to rest and resupply, simply make a high traverse to the other one along a portion of the Waddington Traverse (especially considering that we had only one week to spend in the range). In 2004, on my only other visit to the Waddington Range, Mark Bunker and I had made the second ascent of the Waddington Traverse, so at least I knew roughly what terrain I would encounter. I decided that the mighty Wadd was most important to me, so I would go there first.

The weather forecast on August 11 was quite good, a rarity in the Coast Range, so I hoped to start as soon as possible. On the drive, I planned what equipment I should prepare myself with for a five-day odyssey. We managed to fly into the range that evening, arriving at Plummer Hut at 7 p.m. I packed as quickly as I could and passed out by 11 p.m.

Stormy self-portrait on the summit of Mount Waddington. Photo: Colin Haley

On the morning of August 12, I took off from Plummer Hut at 8 a.m., descended to the lower Tiedemann Glacier, and then began to work my way up towards the Waddington-Combatant col. Although it was a big snow year, the glaciers in the Waddington Range continue to shrink and fracture rapidly (the differences from 2004 were readily apparent), and getting up to the col was much trickier and nastier than I had expected, with lots of intricate crevasse navigation and some significant icefall hazard as well. On the upper portion of the way up to the col, I started to follow footprints, which at least made my route-finding decisions easier. I reached the col in mid afternoon and ran into the only climbers I encountered on my journey—three Spanish alpinists who were traversing the entire Waddington range (see page 82).

I spent the afternoon of August 12 resting and acclimatizing at the Waddington-Combatant col, and studying the north side of Waddington. My prime goal was the Flavelle-Lane route, but I was also considering the Rowat-Richards route (a.k.a. the Kiwi Route), the Angel Couloir and the Angel Glacier as less-intimidating options. The next morning, I left my tent at 6 a.m., and after walking only 10 minutes towards the base of Waddington's north face, I made a final decision to climb the Flavelle-Lane route.

The first portion of the Flavelle-Lane climbs sustained AI3 runnels and gullies before opening into a more broad ice couloir. Although Serl's seriousness rating of TD+ feels accurate, the description that the lower portion is 55 degrees and the upper portion less steep than that is definitely inaccurate. The lower portion of the route had many sections of ice to 75 degrees and averaged at least 60 degrees. The upper portion of the route kicked back to about 55 or 60 degrees. The lower portion of the route is serac-threatened (in fact, the upper

part is as well, but to a lesser extent), so even on merely 60-degree blue ice, I was quite stressed, trying to move as fast as possible while still making sure every placement was solid. The original Flavelle-Lane route veered right at the top to climb a few pitches of rock, and then continued to the northwest summit. I really wanted to reach the main summit, so I veered left instead.

At 10:15 a.m., four hours after crossing the bergschrund of the Flavelle-Lane, I joined The Stroll, a route which connects the main summit and northwest summit. There, I took a short rest in a bergschrund, relieved to be above the seracs, tired from trying to move so quickly and a bit concerned that it had started to snow. Soon afterwards, I traversed to below the summit tower and started up the standard chimney route. Unfortunately, by that point, the snowfall had changed to rain and the wind had picked up. By the time I reached The Notch between the main summit and The Tooth, it was extremely windy and raining hard. The climbing from The Notch up to the summit was by no means easy for free-soloing, and the weather was getting worse by the minute. Nonetheless, at times I'm known to be stubborn, so I kept inching my way along.

I finally reached the summit at 2 p.m., very wet and in strong winds a couple of degrees above freezing. The summit chimneys and the Wadd Hose below the notch had turned into waterfalls by the time I was rappelling them, and when I reached the glacier again, all my clothing and both my boots were 100 per cent saturated. My descent past the northwest summit and down the Angel Glacier felt fairly epic because of the atrocious weather, tricky crevasse navigation and the fact that if I had stopped for long I would have surely become hypothermic.

I finally reached my tent at 7 p.m., 13 hours after departing, and crawled in for a rough, stormy night. Because my clothing was completely soaked—and thus, despite stripping off almost all of my layers, so was my sleeping bag—I was too cold to sleep all night, so simply re-warmed a Nalgene of hot water once every 40 minutes or so.

At 7 a.m. on August 14, the sun finally hit my tent and I was finally warmed up enough to fall asleep, passing out until 11 a.m. When I finally woke, I spent a long time trying to dry out my gear, and didn't leave camp until 2 p.m. In windy and partly cloudy conditions, I ambled up the west slopes and northwest ridge of Mount Combatant to the northwest summit, and then descended to the notch between the two summits and up to the main summit. I downclimbed and rappelled off V-thread anchors to Chaos Col, and settled in for my third night in a bergschrund at the base of Combatant.

On the morning of August 15, the forecasted good weather had returned, and I climbed Mount Tiedemann via the West Face route. The descent down the east ridge of Tiedemann was long and tedious, like I had remembered from 2004, with one section of unbelievably loose rock. I didn't start up the West Ridge of Mount Asperity until mid-afternoon, but it went well. I am generally more comfortable soloing on ice than rock, particularly with a heavy pack, so I veered from the West Ridge proper onto the upper northwest face. The descent down the northeast face of Asperity was mostly on V-thread anchors with some downclimbing. I was soon settled into my fourth bivouac at the Asperity-Serra 5 col.

On August 16, I started up Serra 5 and climbed to the base of the first steep rock pitches before hesitating. I had essentially blown my "Wadd"—psychologically speaking—during my epic day on Waddington. Finding the motivation to climb Combatant, Tiedemann and Asperity had been easy. Since I absolutely did not want to reverse the icefall below the Waddington-Combatant col, traversing those peaks was my best escape route. Now, at the Asperity-Serra 5 col, I had my first reasonable descent option to the lower Tiedemann Glacier, and the temptation to return to safety was greater than my desire to throw myself at Serra 5. I had unfortunately carried a pair of rock shoes, a chalkbag and extra hardware all this way just to try Serra 5, but I suppose it could be considered training weight. My decision to bail from Serra 5 can be explained by a quote from German super-badass

Sunny self-portrait on the summit of Mount Tiedemann. Photo: Colin Haley

Frank Jourdan, from the excellent report of his 2004 Canadian alpine soloing blitzkrieg: "The stress of being alone in a lot of scary situations had blown my mind, and I decided to not go: I was not motivated or calm enough any more. I started the car, anxious to get back to life, to my friends, to share my beloved red wine...."

After bailing on Serra 5, I returned to my camp at the Asperity-Serra 5 Col and relaxed until late afternoon. At 4:30 p.m., I decided the southeast face of Asperity had been in the shade long enough to make rockfall unlikely, so I started down Carl's Couloir. The descent down Carl's Couloir was much easier and much less steep than I had expected; in fact, it would make a great ski run and not even qualify as extreme. I made three rappels, all over bergshrunds, and reached the lower Tiedemann Glacier a bit before nightfall. I trudged up to Plummer Hut by headlamp, and at 11 p.m. finished an excellent five-day solo odyssey.

Although some of the solos I have done in the past were significantly more technically difficult, I think this was one of my best solo climbs due to its remote, committing nature, and for the psychological stamina it required, being an extended solo as opposed to just a short single-push one.

The Flavelle-Lane route had been soloed to Waddington's northwest summit by Jourdan during his 2004 visit to the Waddington Range, but I believe mine was the first solo ascent of Mount Waddington. Jourdan also made solo attempts on Mount Tiedemann and Mount Combatant, but after communicating with him, it seems I may have made the first solo ascents of Combatant, Tiedemann and Asperity.

Summary

Five-day solo of part of the Waddington Traverse. Colin Haley, August 12-16, 2012: FSA of Mt. Waddington, the Flavelle-Lane route (TD+, 70 degrees, 5.7 mixed), August 13, 2012.
FSA of Mt. Combatant, the North-Northwest Ridge (AD+, 45 degrees, low 5th class), August 14, 2012.
FSA of Mt. Tiedemann via the West Face (AD+, 5.7 mixed), August 15, 2012.
FSA of Mt. Asperity, the Northwest Ridge (AD+, 50 degrees, mid 5th class), August 15, 2012.

Looking down from above the last crux in the chimney on Mount Waddington's summit tower. Photo: Colin Haley

A Kitlope Meander

David Williams

IN 1994, THE BRITISH COLUMBIA government designated the Kitlope River drainage the province's newest park just days before my wife, Tanya Behrisch, and I departed for our first Kitlope adventure (*CAJ*, 1995, vol. 78, pp. 70-71). I returned to Kitlope country in the summer of 2001 with Peter Celliers and Greg Statter (*CAJ*, 2002, vol. 85, pp. 102-103). We meandered through remarkable terrain at the head of Kalitan Creek in atrocious weather. Although our views of the surrounding environment were limited, we vowed to return to this land of majestic sweeping granite slabs.

Together with Peter and Denise Hart from Berkeley, California, we planned our return for summer 2012. From the start, the trip was fraught with access difficulties; this being the Kitlope Heritage Conservancy, mechanized support for getting in and out of the park is limited to operations holding an official park permit, which severely restricts options to choose from for flying in or out. The initial plan was to be dropped off by boat, float plane or helicopter at the head of Kitlope Lake on the delta at the junction of the Tezwa River and Kalitan Creek (52°49.5' N, 128°03.4' E), where a broad ridge leads north, Kitlope Lake lying to the east and tributary valleys of Kalitan Creek to the west.

Although park officials were adamant that only a permitted operator would be allowed into the park, the majority of operations holding permits were not returning calls. I began to feel serious doubt that the trip would be possible. Getting up and out of the valleys in this part of world on foot is no easy task. I studied the maps again and again, searching for alternative approaches. Eventually, we felt that a compromise approach should be possible by starting a little north of the park boundary. On the morning of July 12, 2012, we were dropped off by West Coast Helicopters out of Bella Coola in the Gardner Canal at the mouth of a creek (53°16.1' N, 127°57.0' E), two drainages north of aptly named Icy Creek. We guessed that trekking up this unnamed old growth valley would provide us with a feasible route into the high country from where we could commence our proposed, though slightly shortened, ridge traverse.

With the departure of the helicopter, the silence of wilderness enveloped us. We took our time getting on our way, snapping photos of this delightful estuary, cramming all our supplies into our packs. Initially, open old-growth forest made for easy travel, but the avalanche swaths became more frequent and the alder and salmon berry grew dense as we progressed. In July 2012, the ground was only just clearing of snow, and evidence of bears awakening was everywhere. As we prepared to break for lunch in a clearing at the toe of an avalanche chute, we walked into a large black fellow foraging around in avalanche debris. After standing on his hind legs to give Peter a good sniff, the animal wandered off casually in his endless search for food.

By late afternoon, we were all "bush thrashed" and decided to camp in the bottom of the valley on metre-deep snow (53°14.8' N, 127°59.7' E). The next morning, after a little more bush thrashing, we were on continuous snow. We travelled southwest up valley until we reached a snow-filled gulley system that we felt would provide us with an efficient route up and onto the main divide to the east. Snow-choked and sometimes only six metres wide, a wonderfully direct route to the alpine, the gully system eventually petered out, leaving us with a few hundred feet of elevation to scramble among bluffs covered in dense foliage. Before the steepness started to ease, the bush vanished and the ridge crest rolled back. We spent the afternoon plodding to the ridge crest with the wintry-looking valley spread out below. We made camp in the late afternoon and wandered over to the summit of peak 5500 (1,666 metres, 53°13.6' N, 127°58.4' E) to the north of camp.

Overnight wind and rain created socked-in morning conditions. We dozed the morning hours away waiting for a clearing, which arrived around 11 a.m. We moved camp 2.5 kilometres north along the ridge crest to a small icefield at 4,350 feet (1,320 metres, 53°11.9' N, 127°58.7' E), and then spent the rest of the day climbing peak 6000 (1,818 metres, 53°11.0' N, 127°56.2' E). We descended southeast to the col at the head of Icy Creek and continued up the steep west flank of the peak to the upper southwest ridge to the summit. We all felt tired after the long walk back up to camp, and the threat of approaching rain made us tie everything down snuggly for the night. We retired to the tent to cook a late, well-earned dinner before finally settling in for the night. The peaks to the west of camp sat silhouetted by a glowing sunset.

The following day was perfect for ridge walking. Heading southwest, then west, we went up and over one peak after another with a northern tributary of Kalitan Creek laid out below to our south and the upper reaches of our approach valley to our north. We camped at the T-junction on the ridge (53°10.5' N, 128°03.4' E) and spent the next day in incredible surroundings on a delightful side trip heading north along the divide between the Kowesas River and the approach valley, during which we climbed peak 6100 (1,850 metres, 53°13.5' N, 128°04.0' E).

We picked up our packs the next day and snaked south in warm weather to camp on the ridge above the head of the Kowesas River valley (53°06.2' N, 128°02.1' E). That evening, we needed to make a decision regarding the route. Camped at our perch, we had good views of the crux section of ridge. The map showed that getting around the divide between the Kowesas River and

Kalitan Creek would be problematic; and the terrain itself appeared problematic to the point of not being passable. The granite walls that sweep down around the head of the Kowesas Valley were topped by a ridge crest with alarming gaps. We went to bed wondering what the next day would hold.

The next day, we traversed south to a 1,515-metre summit (53°05.0' N, 128°01.2' E). Fortunately, the views from there showed us a viable route down into the head of Kalitan Creek from the col one kilometre southeast of this summit (53°04.7' N, 128°00.6' E). With this knowledge I was able to relax and thoroughly enjoy the rest of the day, particularly the views of the wild Kalitan country that I had glimpsed back in 2001. The descent south from the col was steep, but the avalanche snow choking this small side valley helped to ease the difficulty of a 1,200-metre descent with easy steps down. As we reached the valley floor, still covered in deep snowpack, we picked our way through mature spruce forest up the valley to the terminal lake at an elevation of 400 metres. That night, we camped on dry lichens and moss at the foot of a moraine (53°03.4' N, 128°02.7' E), a delightful spot surrounded by sweeping granite walls and water cascading in every direction. I had dreamt of returning to the Kalitan since 2001 and here I was relaxing in the evening

Unclimbed granite slabs and walls at the head of Kalitan Creek. Photo: David Williams

sun, being soaked up by the place—just perfect.

In the morning, the frozen lake provided an easy approach to the toe of the glacier. Initial attempts to get up the left-hand side failed with the ice being much steeper and more broken than anticipated, but we soon found a route up to the right that led to the glacial flats above. After lunch, we roped up to weave our way though a maze of seracs and slots. We made camp early that day in what felt like a safe spot surrounded by the sound of roaring water (53°01.8' N, 128°04.3' E). This small glacier is fed by the avalanches that pound down from the slopes above. These had left monstrous bulldozer troughs more than a metre deep with massive piles of debris. There was still plenty to come down in the hot afternoon July sun with the collapse of any remaining cornices.

The next morning, we travelled up and over the headwall to the col (53°01.4' N, 128°05.0' E) and joined our ridge and the 2001 route. We placed a satellite phone call to West Coast Helicopters to check on the weather, which would determine our plans. The clear and stable conditions sounded like they would hold for a day or two, so we decided to head north from there for the remainder of the day with the packs. We spent that evening perched above the pristine Mussel River valley (53°02.7' N, 128°06.6' E). The head of the valley is a mass of cliffs and crumbling glacier remnants with coastal peaks above.

The next day, we wandered along the ridge to the peak sitting directly above the head of the Mussel River valley—Mussel Peak (53°03.7' N, 128°10.6' E). It was a delightful day of views with one tricky six-metre pitch of awkward ice and snow that required the rope and a belay. By lunchtime we were on top of this superb summit, the meeting point of four pristine valleys that radiate outwards from that spot. We received "Greetings from the 20th Century!" in a message that John Clarke had inserted into the summit register in 1994 (*CAJ*, 1995, vol. 78, p. 73), along with greetings from the 21st century from Mark Grist and Roger Linington from 2004 (*CAJ*, 2005, vol. 88, pp. 96-98).

On the summit, I had felt a connection to John, a pioneer mountaineer, friend and mentor who died of cancer in 2003. A huge raptor circled as we walked back to camp through the hot afternoon. By the time we reached camp, the wind had swung around and was blowing strongly out of the southwest. We discussed moving camp before the weather deteriorated, but being tired, we opted to stay put and enjoy another evening perched above the Mussel River.

Visibility was limited to a few feet by morning. However, shortly after lunch, the rain had stopped, and in spite of poor visibility, we broke camp. With the aid of the compass, we trekked south along the ridge towards the head of the Mussel River. We made steady progress up and over peak 5500 (1,666 metres, 53°02.0' N, 128°05.5' E). As we descended below the clouds, though damp, travel was pleasantly straightforward as we joined our route from 2001. We made camp that evening in a land of slabs, slightly north of the 1,300-metre summit (53°00.4' N, 128°04.5' E).

This summit looks innocuous on the map; however, in 2001 we had found that scaling this peak was far from straightforward. Two good pitches of roped and protected climbing on steep snow got us to the top. This time, though cloudy, water was not pouring down the sleeves of our raised arms into our armpits as we ascended. The weather improved as we walked the ridge. We encountered goats and looked in wonder at the country surrounding the Mussel River valley. As far as I know, as yet, this ridge has not been travelled by anyone but us.

That night, we camped in the sun above treeline (52°57.9' N, 128°00.8' E). Mussel Lake sat below us to the west. To the south, we could discern where the valley veers to the southwest where 600-metre glacier-polished walls act as a giant gateway to Mussel Inlet. As the evening turned to dusk it occurred to us that an enormous amount of melting was happening around us. In 2001, days of intense rain had raised the levels of the lakes and creeks considerably and created a harrowing exit to the coast as several creeks have to be crossed. Turning into bed, we all felt this time we would encounter similar difficulties.

The insects were waiting for us in the morning, and it became a mad panic to pack up and start moving. The day started dry, but the rain arrived after lunch. As expected, the journey down was the typical coastal salmon berry, alder and fern bush thrash. At times we followed an ancient bear trail, wallowed in water and mud to our waists, and were scared senseless by the power and fury of the creek that drains the lake coming in from the northeast. In the end, the crossing of this creek proved easy. A 100-metre logjam in a flooded swath of forest allowed for a safe and easy crossing. After a long day, we spent our final damp night camped at the mouth of the last significant creek draining from the east into the Mussel River (52°55.8' N, 128°01.0' E). I fell asleep reminiscing about a creek bed that the bear trail had led us into. Moss-covered slab paved the way leading us into a misty enclosure housing an isolated garden of skunk cabbage that likely never sees direct rays of sun—a beautiful primordial place.

On our 14th and last morning, we travelled for a few hours, fighting immense walls of salmon berry, until we reached Mussel Bay. As previously, bear prints covered the mud flats at low tide, but this time we saw no bears. We, like John Clarke before us, spent hours wandering "all-around the delta photographing the explosion of greenery that drapes every surface of this quiet" beautiful fjord (*CAJ*, 1995, vol. 78, p. 73). Marvelling at the "tiny hanging gardens on every ledge" of the glacier-polished walls, the silence of the place was eventually broken by the approach of a Pacific Coastal Beaver.

Summary

Summer alpine traverse from a creek mouth in the Gardner Canal (53°16.1' N, 127°57.0' E) to the head of Mussel Inlet (52°55.0' N, 128°01.8' E). Fourteen days, 99 kilometres, 9,900 metres of elevation gain. Peter Celliers, Denise Hart, David Williams, July 8-21, 2012.

Waddington Traverse

Javier Virués-Ortega

AFTER MONTHS OF PREPARATION, we finally met at a small hotel in Richmond, B.C. I arrived a few hours earlier from Winnipeg where I work as an assistant professor in the psychology department at the University of Manitoba, specializing in applied behaviour analysis and neuro-behavioural effects of altitude. Gustavo and Lozano came all the way from Southern Spain. We had not seen each other for more than six months. The atmosphere was full of excitement and tension for the trip to come. For all of us, the attempt to complete a traverse through the Waddington Range was our first alpine experience in North America. Over the years, we have shared a number of mountaineering experiences in Sierra Nevada, the Pyrenees, the Alps, the Atlas, le Massif du M'goun and the Andes, but the adventure ahead had no parallel in our prior experience. We would undertake a 180-kilometre traverse from our air-drop location at Ghost Lake to Glendale Cove via the Northwest Ridge of Mount Waddington, Canyon Lake and the estuary of the Klinaklini River. The trip would involve a 10-day traverse through the range and a long paddle with a folding canoe.

On the morning of August 8, 2012, we arrived at the Campbell River Waterdrome. Wes, our audacious HC-2 Beaver pilot with more than 40 years of flying experience in the area, deemed conditions appropriate at 3 p.m. and off we went. Hours later, after a stop at Canyon Lake to leave paddling gear and supplies, we made a breathtaking approach and splashdown on Ghost Lake. Our original plan was to hike towards the Tiedemann Glacier by heading directly from our start point. Instead, the rugged terrain and, at times, impenetrable bush and spruce forest forced us to gain altitude and to parallel the course of the glacier through the foothills of Mount Jeffery, where we set the first camp at 1,500 metres.

Early afternoon the next day, we were relieved to spot the Tiedemann Glacier and to start our way down toward Tellot Creek and through the narrow junction of the Claw Peak and Mount Jeffery. Through this narrow passage we would reach the glacier. We sped through the logs of a recently burnt spruce forest and camped at the foot of Tiedemann's northern moraine. I found my face painfully swollen due to the mosquito attacks I had sustained over the past two days.

Early the next morning, we rappelled through the moraine's dusty and rocky 60-metre drop and started our passage through the central section of the glacier. During a midday break, Lozano spotted scattered cirrus clouds in the clear blue sky, which proved to be a bad omen for what was to come. We set up our camp that evening at Sunny Knob and were ready for some rest.

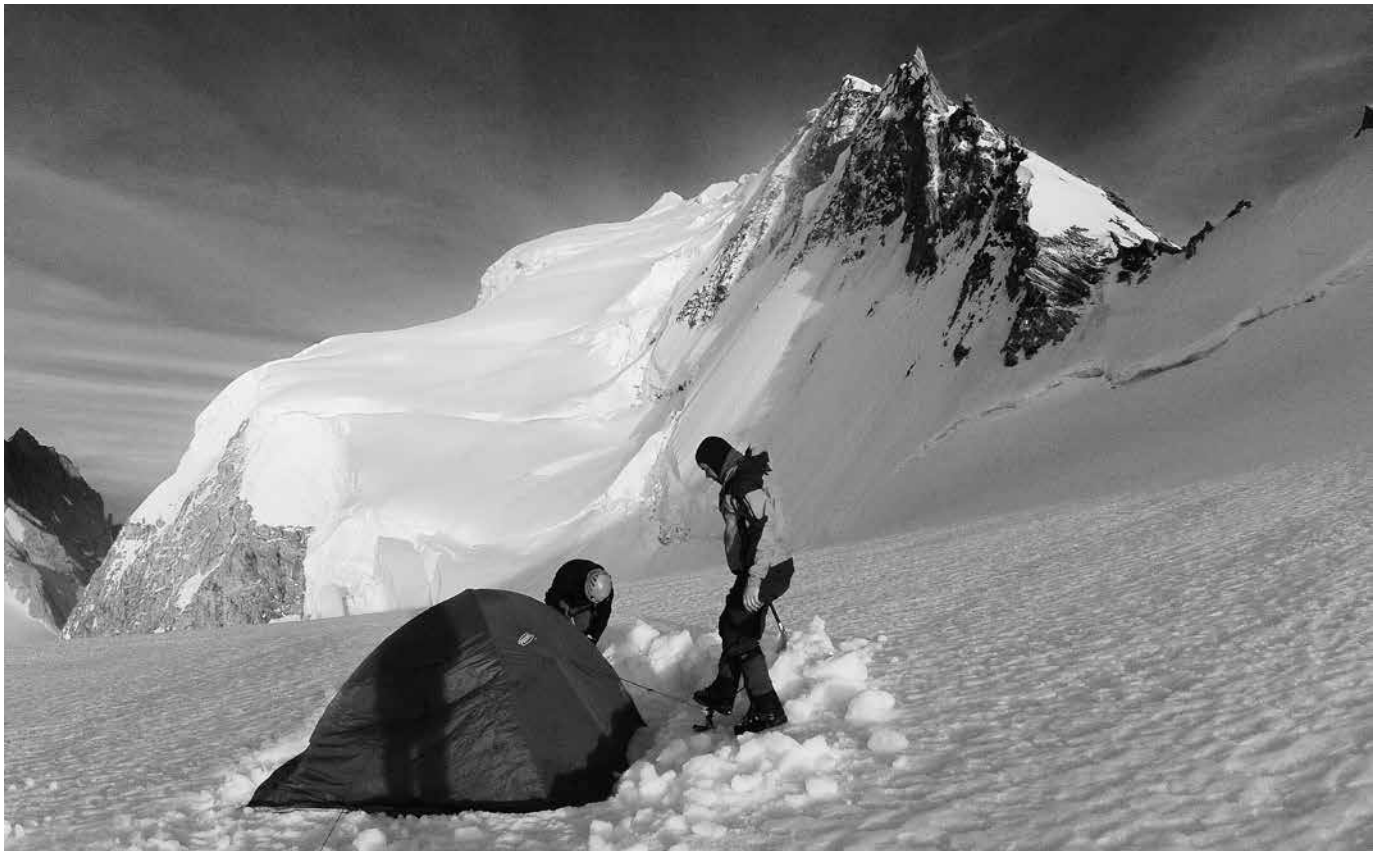
The next morning we initiated the strenuous ascent to Combatant Col. We were startled by the roaring avalanches above our heads, a sound that would become familiar over the next few days. The conditions of the snow worsened over the course of the day. The route was fractured by massive crevasses and seracs, forcing us into lengthy roundabouts and over precarious snow bridges. A few hours into the afternoon, the snow conditions had deteriorated to a point that it seemed more practical to leave the snow and approach the col along the rock of Mount Combatant. Unfortunately, the rock was brittle and sizable boulders stormed the side of the glacier every few minutes. The intense rockfall made us scramble for safety. We decided to retrace our tracks and use the last few hours of light to find a way through the isothermal snow of the upper icefall.

We resumed circumventing the serac field until a massive crevasse preceding the col rendered any detours impossible. We anchored two pickets, and Gustavo rappelled five or six metres into the crevasse and carefully negotiated his way through the upper perimeter leading to an area of seracs just before the plateau. Unfortunately, the pickets did not withstand a second traveller and Lozano fell 10 metres into the crevasse. Gustavo, belaying him from below, prevented him from slipping further. Lozano soon got back on his feet, but fearful memories of the episode would accompany him during the days to come.

Reaching the col and setting our third camp was a true milestone for us. Even if the summit of Mount Waddington was to fall beyond our reach, we would be able to continue our traverse through Fury Gap. We got into our sleeping bags and shared the vivid memories of the day. I listened to a Carl Sagan Cosmos episode on the radio and went to sleep thinking of distant planets and galaxies. They all seemed so close from this unusual balcony.

The roaring noise of an approaching avalanche got us out of our tent with speed the next morning. Luckily, our camp was safe at the highest point of the col. After a lazy morning, we got back to our route with the goal of setting up our fourth camp near the Dais Couloir. There, it took us a good hour of digging to set up a reasonably flat footprint for our tent, which we accomplished an hour before sunset. The weather was fair and if conditions permitted, we would attempt the Northwest Summit via the Angel Glacier the following morning.

At 3 a.m., the alarms went off after a restless night. Already delayed in our schedule and with vague reports of deteriorating weather, we had only one chance at reaching the summit. Still dark, we initiated the daily struggle of fitting our frozen boots and crampons. As the morning broke up, northwesterly winds ascended from the Scimitar Glacier while translucent clouds gradually built to the north. Lozano, still shaken from the drop on the way to the col, decided to stay back at the last



Camp next to the Dais Couloir with Angel Glacier and the northwest summit of Mount Waddington in the background. Photo: Gustavo Virués-Ortega

minute. It was not possible to connect from our camp to the lower end of the Angel Glacier, so we retraced our tracks in the snow until an ascending route became possible through a now familiar section of crumbled seracs. The snow conditions were excellent. Lightened by our small backpacks, we made our way swiftly. We soon came across a series of transversal crevasses, but progressed without delays thanks to solid snow bridges. On the rim preceding the Northwest Summit, the thickening skies allowed only a fading sight of the main summit. Gustavo climbed the last 20 metres from the rim to the pyramidal tip.

The failing weather prevented us from taking any pleasure in the day's achievement. We were eager to lose height before the conditions exacerbated. By the time we were back below the false summit, we could barely see beyond our limbs. We were soon lost in overwhelming whiteness and gusting winds. Our tracks having disappeared and with no visual guidance, we took a chance at waiting for a break in the clouds. Conditions were deteriorating rapidly and with no knowledge of what was to come, we had to descend immediately, even if we had to risk plunging into one of the crevasses. Gustavo improvised a route down and we were soon in thinner clouds that revealed our camp with Lozano waiving franticly. Before we could reunite at camp, a wind-powered rain took us by storm. We arrived at the tent soaked and frigid.

Lozano's decision to stay in the camp proved to be a prophetic one. The winds were so strong throughout the day that our camp would not have withstood the weather unguarded. The storm continued to gain momentum. The heavy rain blended with blows of savage wind threatened to tear our tent apart. I bailed gallons of water out of the tent and drilled a drainage hole, but in spite of our efforts, clothes and sleeping bags were soon dripping with water. At sunset, the winds gained in their fury, and the rain gave way to a cold night to be faced with wet clothes. During the night, Lozano became hypothermic and non-responsive. Gustavo and I placed him between us, shaking him violently to keep him from deteriorating further. We struggled to keep the tent from imploding and took turns going outside to make repairs. We were able to contact our weather liaisons over the satellite phone and learned that the storm would be clearing at dawn. Indeed, the light of day brought an end to the hammering winds.

The tent was broken in so many spots that it was barely usable. We packed our gear and headed toward the ridge of the Men at Arms Peaks. We soon connected with the descending scree between the Lightening and Fireworks glaciers and made our way to Fury Glacier. We camped that night next to the Regal-Dais-Franklin junction.

After much discussion, we decided to abandon our plan of connecting to Canyon Lake—our initial estimates had proven to be overly optimistic. Our original plan of crossing through the Finality Mountains to Hoodoo or

Lomolo creek below seemed highly unlikely if terrain conditions around the creeks were similar to those found at Ghost Lake. Canyon Lake could have taken at least four or five more days, but we only had three days' worth of food and supplies. We decided to reach the Knight Inlet by the Franklin Glacier instead and coordinate an airlift from there.

We descended the Franklin snowfields but were soon faced with massive seracs. Progress became slow and perilous. On countless occasions, we had to retrace our tracks, rappel and ice climb through what seemed a boisterous frozen ocean. We were overwhelmed by the aftermath of several recent landslides that had plunged massive amounts of rocks and trees to the icefields below. In the evening, we found a flat dusty spot for our camp in the southern moraine at 1,150 metres.

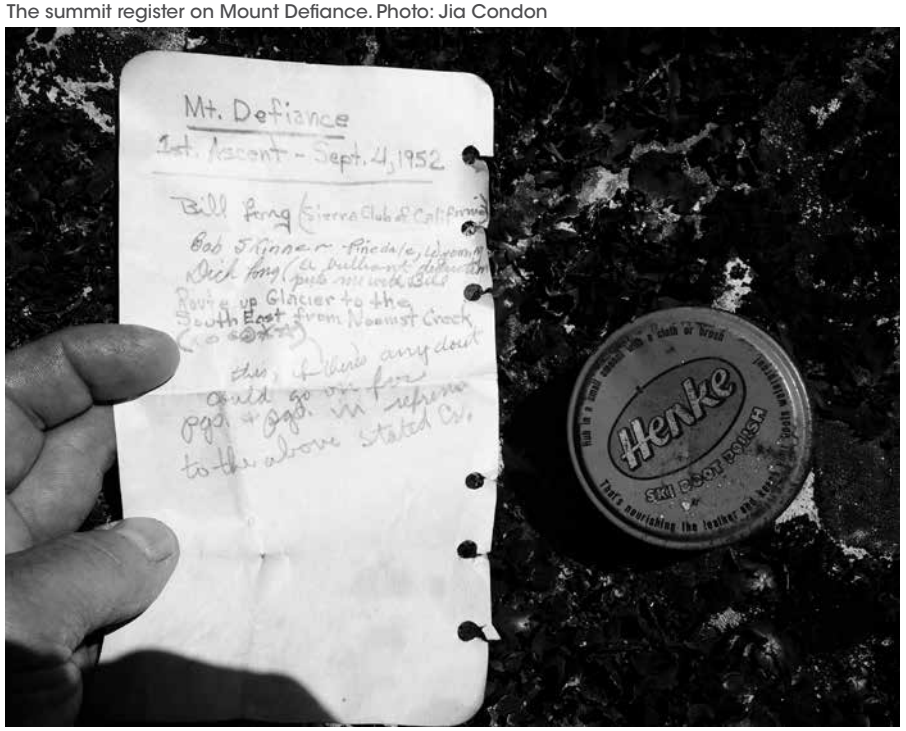
We continued our journey east down into the glacier the next morning. Around 8:30 a.m., by the southeast ridge of Mount Jubilee, Lozano fell into a crevasse with a howl of pain. As the ultrasound would later reveal, he had sustained a 20-centimetre rupture in his left calf. The wound was completely incapacitating—he couldn't even stand up. After a few minutes of deliberation, we contacted the Campbell River police through the satellite phone to initiate a rescue operation. Soon after we received a call from an officer of the 442 Transport and Rescue Squadron at Comox. Less than an hour later, the CH-149 Cormorant helicopter made a majestic entrance from the lower Franklin Glacier. It circled over our heads, perching graciously over the terraces of the lateral moraine. Everything was soon engulfed in a cloud of dust. As the rotor slowed down, two figures in orange suits emerged. Our adventure had ended.

Defying Choss

Grant McCartney

WITH THE STARS aligning, most of Team Father was together again, ready for yet another first in the Bella Coola Valley. Mount Defiance is in the Central Bella Coola Valley, to the south, up the Cacoohtin and Glacier Creek valleys. The original ascent was from the bushy Noomst Creek, three days being required to reach timberline on the east flank of Defiance, about 10 kilometres from the Bella Coola River. The first ascent party (W. Long, D Long, R. Skinner) climbed a steep glacier on the east side of the mountain and through cliffs at the head of the glacier (*CAJ*, 1953, vol. XXXVI, p. 100). It's a dominant coast mountain feature from the highway, and also from Alex's living room windows. You could say that we've stared at it from time to time.

The summit register on Mount Defiance. Photo: Jia Condon



From Alex's house, the Cacoohtin FSR ascends to 900 metres on a very bushed-in four-wheel drive road. At the end of the road, the North Glacier is in your face, only two kilometres away. We have skied this glacier a few times, so we knew the approach well.

From the end of the road, the flooded-out glacier creek drainage ascends 600 metres to slabs, which were easily scrambled to the glacier. Snowpack was good, so the walk up the glacier to the col at 2,000 metres was relaxed. There, we camped at the base of the north ridge on a semi-level rock ledge. Amazing vistas and a fresh glacial drip saw us through the night. From the col, you can see up and down the Noomst Valley where the first ascent party ascended from. The mountains in the Noomst are very rugged, heavily glaciated peaks and very challenging to approach since the signs of logging in the Noomst are now far overgrown.

Sleep was short, and it was a quick

walk across snow until we were on the rock. In anticipation of the climbing challenges later in the day, we began a steady pace, scrambling 4th to low-5th class up and along the north ridge. Where the ridge steepens, we were forced to abort the high ground due to broken, steep terrain, and thus were pushed onto an exposed east-facing snowfield. A long traverse across the snowfield brought us to another col where the first sign of doubt began to set in. The terrain ahead appeared to be an ocean of broken-up cliff bands separated by steep slopes of shattered, unstable rock with no sign of relief. We tested out the ridgetop and quickly gave up, deciding instead to side-hill on its south side. The going began slowly, and thoughts of afternoon beers at the truck seemed a wiser idea than braving the mountain ahead. One can only assume that we saw neither the truck nor the beer until the sun was no longer with us, and we were much, much thirstier.

WE ARE SOMEWHAT getting used to the terrain on Bella Coola Valley's south side. The mountains, though loose, are difficult to resist with their visually aesthetic coastal nature, keeping us searching for solid alpine stone year after year. Fortunately, with all this searching, we have formulated a good equation for this terrain. It goes like this: You take one hard-headed Frenchman nicknamed "Choss King", for whom giving up is rarely in the cards, add a seasoned mountain guide who can move extremely quick over difficult, diverse mountain terrain, and then divide them by me, who always holds summit glory in a fine balance with the safety of the beers back at the truck.

So on we went, a fine-tuned choss-scrambling machine, stepping ever so lightly across boulder, pebble and cliff band until a gully brought us back to the ridge and a small col at the base of the headwall. We roped up there, and after a few pitches of easy climbing on loose rock, the summit pinnacle was in view. With an intimidating distance separating us from it, and what appeared to be similar terrain all the way to the top, proceeding up the route was still slightly in question, with no relief from the broken terrain anticipated. The time had come for Choss King to make his speech. "It's not that bad. Lets just try one more pitch," he beckoned. Well, needless to say, we've heard that before, and from then on, any thoughts of turning back were replaced with a complete summit commitment. With much of the same—scrambling broken rock with periodic roped pitches—we found ourselves on the summit of Mount Defiance, praising the King for motivating his people. In the cairn on top, we were wowed by an old ski wax tin containing one entry from the first ascent in 1952 (back in the days when our roped terrain was called 3rd class and mountaineers didn't complain about loose rock as much as I have here).

After much downclimbing, some stuck ropes, boot skiing and a scary log-over-rushing-creek balancing act, we eventually made it back to the truck around dark with a sense of relief for being on solid ground again. Oddly, my wife reminds me of how many times I told her I loved her that night. Obviously, I was delirious from dehydration, and so, repeating myself.

Summary

Defying Choss (IV 5.7), north ridge, Mt. Defiance (2669m), Bella Coola Valley. FA: Alex Boileau, Jia Condon, Grant McCartney, August 5, 2012.

Grant McCartney low on Mount Defiance's north ridge. Photo: Jia Condon

Vancouver Island Report

Lindsay Elms

THE HUDSON BAY COMPANY (HBC), Royal Bank of Canada (RBC), Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) and Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) are just a few Canadian institutions that can be considered *venerable*. These institutions command respect by virtue of their historical association with the people of Canada, but they have also come to be internationally well-known and respected. However, each of these institutions are made up of numerous stores, branches, stations and sections all across Canada, which have helped shape their history, because without them they would be just a small hill in a big mountain range.

The first alpine club was created in England in 1857 by active climbers during the Golden Age of Mountaineering. Countries to follow suit in the next 18 years were Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Austria and France. South Africa and New Zealand formed clubs in 1891, and Japan in 1905. Canada established its alpine club in Winnipeg in 1906 (co-founded by Arthur Wheeler and Elizabeth Parker).

Today, the ACC currently consists of 22 sections across Canada, with several of them having celebrated their centenary in 2012, including the Vancouver Island Section. Founded in the winter of 1912, this section, originally known as the Victoria Section, has seen 29 chairpersons over the past 100 years in its leadership role, beginning with William "Billy" Foster. Each chairperson has brought their own unique leadership qualities to the section, which has helped promote new ideas and directions every few years. It was only during the war years, 1942 to 1945, that the section lacked any leadership.

By the end of the 19th century, only a few explorers had travelled through the central mountainous region of Vancouver Island, but all had written glowing reports of what they had seen. In 1910, the provincial government of Sir Richard McBride sent Minister of Lands Price Ellison on an exploratory trip into the mountains to assess the potential for creating a park. In 1911, Strathcona Provincial Park, British Columbia's first provincial park, was established on Vancouver Island. In the winter of 1912, McBride's Deputy Minister of Public Works William Foster founded the local section of the ACC and organized meetings with the provincial government. The idea was to obtain funding to outfit an expedition to the newly established Strathcona Provincial Park. As experts in the field of mountaineering, the ACC was considered to be well-qualified to give their opinion on the alpine attractions of B.C.'s first provincial park.

With funding secured, an expedition was put together and the large party left Victoria in August 2012. On August 21, a whittled-down party of nine ACC members, under the leadership of Edward Wheeler, made the first ascent of Elkhorn Mountain, the second highest peak on the Island. The second part of the expedition, led by Arthur Wheeler, travelled through the park to Port Alberni in the south. In Arthur Wheeler's 1913 *CAJ* account, he summed up the new park: "Strathcona Park is a splendid possession and a wise and safe reserve for the great future that lies ahead of Vancouver Island."

In the past 100 years, the Vancouver Island Section's membership number has gradually increased to today's figure of 397. Members have been successfully leading trips, instructing courses and organizing socials and functions, including the Banff Mountain Film Festival, the AGM, slide shows and workshops. However, with 2012 being the centennial year, the section was looking to have a number of special initiatives.

The first event, which would be carried out over the entire year, was called Climb the Island. Section members were set with the collaborative challenge of seeing how many Island peaks could be climbed during the centennial year, with progress being tracked via an online summit register and interactive map on the section's website. The second initiative was a new book to celebrate a century of climbing on Vancouver Island. *Above the Bush: A Century of Climbing on Vancouver Island 1912 – 2012* was written by Lindsay Elms and was published in May 2012. The third was a centennial ascent scheduled in August for Elkhorn Mountain. The final undertaking was by Judith Holm. Her project was to index all the Island Bushwhacker annuals, updates and newsletters, and incorporate them into the database of the section's website.

The Climb the Island campaign began on January 1 with an ascent of Mount Arrowsmith, and the numbers continued to steadily increase until the summer when the figures shot up. November was the only month when no peaks were added. By December 31, a total of 118 peaks had been climbed. This figure does not represent all the repeat ascents of many of the peaks, climbs on the mainland, south of the border or overseas, and there were a number of more obscure peaks climbed on the Island that were also not on the list.

In August, the section had its summer camp located at Nichol Lake in a remote basin north of Tahsis on the west coast. With the assistance of E & B Helicopters out of Gold River, 15 people were flown into the camp on the first week (two others eventually joined a few days later after traversing the ridges into camp), followed by 15 more on the second week and another 15 on the third week. Although the weather wasn't always cooperative, all the peaks surrounding the basin were climbed—some being first ascents. Judith Holm and Ken Wong took an inventory of all the plants in the area, which included some unique species. Although this basin is not in a park, it is not likely to be logged because of its geography; however, the

section chairperson, Rick Hudson, has taken on the task of applying to have the 1,400-hectare basin added to adjoining Woss Lake Provincial Park.

There were several significant climbing achievements on the Island in 2012. In March, John Waters, Lawrence Floucault and David Deluco made the first winter ascent of Mount Filberg during a brief window of opportunity. There are now only a few remaining 2,000-metre Island peaks without winter ascents. On August 21, a party of eight reached the summit of Elkhorn Mountain 100 years after the first ascent. About one week prior to that centennial ascent, Zsana Tulcsik made the first female solo ascent of Elkhorn. On September 3, John and Mike Waters, Curtis Lyon and Zsana Tulcsik made the first ascent of the North Face of Victoria Peak (see page 67). Five days later, near Port Alberni, Francis Bruhwiler, Mathew Coady and Luke Clarke put a new route up on Triple Peak, which they called Tuff Nanni (see page 70). And finally, Coady and Bruhwiler climbed a new route on Tom Taylor named Good Leftovers (see page 72).

Although Vancouver Island may not be considered a climbing destination like the Rockies, it has made a valuable contribution to the history of the ACC in the past 100 years. It has produced a unique breed of climber who takes pleasure in negotiating the steep primeval vegetation to reach the alpine where a wonderful West Coast playground exists—a playground where it is not only possible to see the ocean, but occasionally, from the summit of a peak overlooking a bay or inlet, a whale.

The north face of Triple Peak: (1) Standard Route, (2) North Buttress, (3) Tuff Nanni. Photo: Francis Bruhwiler

The Interior

White Bread and Christ

Joshua Lavigne

MY FIRST TRIP to the west face of the North Howser Tower was in 2003 with my long-time climbing partner Simon Meis. The trip was, for both of us, a stepping-stone. The length of the route, consistent difficulty and level of commitment were exactly what we were looking for. That ascent of the classic All Along the Watchtower became one of those unique climbs that expanded our horizons and shaped our future adventures.

The west face of the North Howser Tower is hidden, tucked away in the wild reaches of the Purcell Mountains. It sits above East Creek where it has been thrust skywards and rests suspended somewhere between earth and sky. The base of the wall dives towards the valley and is accessed by descending into a dark chasm—a place that quickly separates the past from the present moment. The granite rises from the darkness of the valley and breaks into sharp pillars and dihedrals. It stands strong and proud with drastic architecture, and for these reasons the west face is a beacon to the alpine rock climber.

Our strategy for climbing the Watchtower was based on the style in which the route was first free climbed. Keenan Harvey and Topher Donahue set the bar pretty high, free climbing the entirety of the route at a sustained grade with no fixed gear. We felt that if we could emulate their style, we would have exceeded our expectations.

We left Applebee late in the morning on a clear August day and made our way across the Vowell Glacier towards Pigeon-Howser Col. We slid down into the East Creek drainage, below the turrets that rise to form the walls of the Howser Towers. We continued along the foot of the South and Central Towers, feeling insignificant and small, until we arrived at the rim that overlooks the west face. The wind and deep hum of the valley rose up sending a cool breeze across our faces. We pulled back from the edge as a shiver of apprehension swept across our skin. Swallowing our reservations, we picked up our packs and committed downwards.

We immediately became lost. The descent was a maze of exposed down-climbing and hard-to-locate rappels. We continued without speaking, sticking to our planned strategy so we would not shack our resolve. Once at the bottom, we set ourselves to the task of climbing the lower section of the wall, fixing our two ropes that would help guide us in the morning dusk. We finished as the sun slipped behind the horizon and descended to our bivy in the boulders below. As darkness settled in, ash from the nearby forest fires flickered and illuminated in front of our headlamps. We laid down and looked for sleep, only to find cold stones and a restless night. At first light we stretched our stiff limbs and hiked back up the moraine to our lines, climbing the remainder of the lower wall. Just before noon we arrived at the main event—the dihedrals that comprise the upper face.

The west-face dihedrals rise up uninterrupted for 300-plus metres. White granite walls speckled with perfect stemming, splitter cracks and natural gear protection. They are home to a series of pitches that stand out for their sheer longitudinal lines, expansive exposure and dramatic beauty. We started up as the sun turned the corner and to our dismay the face quickly became too hot. After only two pitches we could no longer keep our shoes on—the rubber too soft and our feet too swollen. We decided to descend to a ledge system that would work as a bivy. We settled in as the heat started in earnest, the "blazing saddles" as Simon likes to call it. Even with a tarp set up as an umbrella we baked for hours, depleting our water and energy.

The next day we summitted. We had tried our best but the free ascent eluded us. No matter, our style was a success and the route was a progression for our climbing careers. Also, for me it was the beginning of a love affair, my first sustained relationship with a mountain. Over the next 10 years I would return seven times, and without fail, the west face continued to provide adventures that helped me grow as a climber.

FAST-FORWARD to the summer of 2012 when Chris Geisler and I made plans to look for adventures in the Bugaboos. Again I found myself on the west face, knowing it would provide.

Spicy Red Beans and Rice (established by Eric Greene and Cameron Tague in 1997) is a bold line put up in a simple style. Cameron was a visionary climber, endowed with natural talent and a desire for the purest form. He died young and his routes are a legacy to that style. They are timelessly etched on the surface of the wall with his actions in plain view for the future to emulate. This particular route is composed of exposed,

Chris Geisler following the second pitch of the headwall on White Bread and Christ. Photo: Joshua Lavigne

sustained and aesthetic climbing. It is a seam of splitter cracks that weave up a floating wall of granite.

We began our journey with a leisurely pace: first, scoping out the wall, and then descending the bolted rappels at the base. We decided to start climbing from the lowest point, directly to the right of the Seventh Rifle gully following a series of unclimbed corners. We would then aim for the bivy below the main dihedrals on the west face and climb up the continuous corners of the Warrior. We travelled light so the second could climb more readily, but with enough gear to sleep out and stay comfortable—the best strategy for keeping the bivy civilized and for staying fresh. Once we arrived below the headwall, we settled into our perch with warm food, a sleeping pad and tarp. The west face rose at our backs and the darkness fell away below us. We were suspended in space, accompanied only by the stars.

We left late in the morning to allow the sun to warm the stone. After only one pitch we arrived at the business, but our intentions of free climbing the Warrior were quickly shut down. Fifty metres of wet crack had us lowering out and switching our objective. We started up the first 5.11R pitch on Spicy and continued for three more pitches, all sustained 5.11 to 5.12 with committing moves and tricky gear. I had climbed them before in 2011 with Jon Walsh when we did the first free ascent of the route. They felt just as exciting as the first time. Above the crux pitch (the fourth of the headwall) Spicy traverses left into the Warrior. Here, we were faced with a decision: either traverse left towards the known or up into the unknown.

We knew that we would arrive late to the summit, even if we followed the path of least resistance; if we continued straight up and the climbing was too slow we would spend a second night out. We both agreed that we were there to find an adventure and that a little suffering was well worth it. The climbing continued in the same theme as the previous pitches—steep, clean and with continuous hard crack climbing, pitches that felt like they had been transplanted from the deserts of Utah. The line continued for another 100 metres before breaking into lower-angled terrain. We summitted with the sun well below the horizon, but knew we would make it back to Applebee in a few hours.

The North Howser continues to be a mistress to me. Every time I visit her, a story unfolds with no certain outcome, expanding the boundaries that frame my horizons. So I will continue to go back, and I am sure I will again find adventure.

Summary

White Bread and Christ (5.12a, 16 pitches), West Face of North Howser Tower. FA: Chris Geisler, Joshua Lavigne, August 18, 2012.

Joshua Lavigne leading the headwall splitters on White Bread and Christ. Photo: Chris Geisler

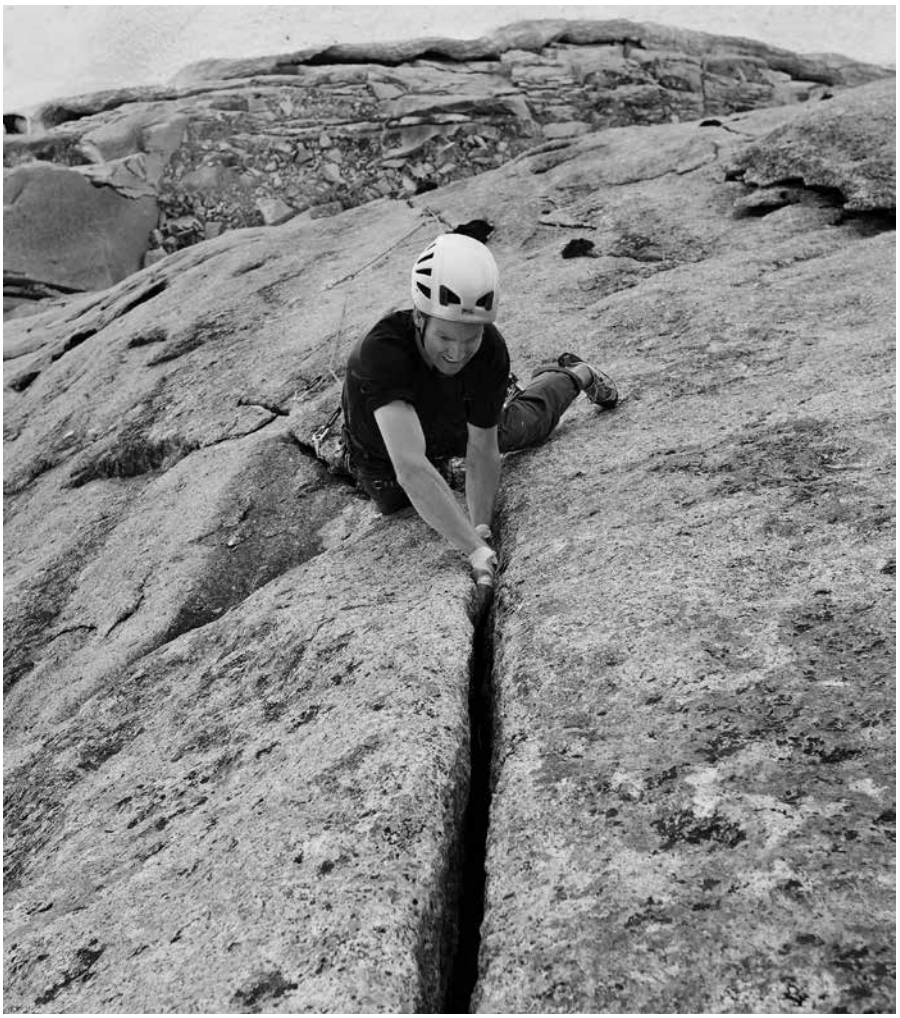
East Columbian Indirect

Chris Brazeau

A CRACK SYSTEM to the right of Hobo's Haven—on the Tom Egan Wall on the east face of Snowpatch Spire—had long been eyed from Applebee Dome campground. The first pitch to access this line was uncertain, and would be the key to unlocking this aesthetic route. Jon Walsh first spied (and tried) a traverse in from the right.

It wasn't soon after Jon mentioned this attempt to me that Cody Lank and I were scooping and scoping the line. Cody climbed the 5.10 slab, hand drilling on lead. Two days and six bolts later, we made it to the base of a beautiful overhanging hand crack in a tight left-facing corner. This went onsight at 5.11+. The next pitch took some figuring out as a 1.75-inch crack tapered to nothing. Some edges out right looked inviting and would eventually lead to a steep hand crack to finish the pitch. We came back later and hand drilled another bolt to facilitate the crack switch. A short 5.8 brought us to Hobo's Haven ledge, where we finished ourselves off on The Endless Struggle pitch of The Power of Lard.

Influenced by both the Columbia Valley and some Gorman Gold, we christened the line East Columbian Indirect. Working the route with Cody provided some of my most memorable moments in the Bugs.



Chris Brazeau on pitch three of East Columbian Indirect. Photo: Jon Walsh

Summary

East Columbian Indirect (5.12-, 5 pitches), east face, Snowpatch Spire, Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains.

FA: Chris Brazeau, Cody Lank, August 2012.

Approach: As for Sunshine on the north face of Snowpatch, scramble left to the ridgeline and a set of rappel anchors. Scramble up the slab for five metres to a one-bolt anchor and the start of the route. From here, it's possible to lower your packs and boots on a 30-metre loop to the ledge where the descent rappels will bring you. Alternatively, approach directly from the Crescent Glacier via a nice finger crack that leads to a rappel anchor (5.10, 30m). Extra gear can then be left on this ledge. The second approach pitch climbs the chimney (better than it looks) to a corner and another anchor (5.10, 30m).

Gear: Double set of cams from purple TCU to #2 Camalot (a triple set may be useful), double 60-metre ropes, 10 quickdraws/runners.

P1: 5.12-, 50m. Downclimb behind the block until it is possible to climb directly up on nice edges to the first bolt. Put your dancing shoes on to traverse across to the steep flake system. Up and left on more flakes past another bolt to the arête. Cryptic moves pulling around the arête lead past two more bolts to a small stance and fixed station.

P2: 5.11+, 40m. Fire up the beautiful splitter to a two-bolt belay on the left, just under the roof.

P3: 5.12-, 60m. Pull the roof and continue up the splitter until it narrows to fingers. Clip a bolt out right and make a hard move past this to nice edges, which lead up and back left to a steep hand crack and a two-bolt anchor.

P4: 5.8, 30m. Scramble up and left to Hobo's Haven and gather your guns.

P5: 5.12-, 30m. Finish off The Endless Struggle pitch, which is the final pitch of The Power of Lard.

Descent: Rappel The Power of Lard.

Dark Side of the Moon

JT Croston

In the winter of 2010-11, I was researching the Valhallas online, trying scope out new route possibilities, when I came across a photograph of the west face of Mount Gimli. In the photo, there was a predominant crack in a shallow left-facing corner that appeared to extend from the base of the wall almost all the way to the top. I knew some of my friends had been in that area and may have seen this line, so I enquired about the possibility of this new route and gathered as much beta as I could. The comments I received ranged from "That crack doesn't go the whole way and the grade will be hard," to "You'll need a ton of bolts," to "Too much work cleaning all that lichen," right up to "The entire west face of Gimli is garbage so don't waste your time." All of that advice just made me want the route even more.

Armed with a fistful of pitons, a bag of bolts and hangers, a drill with two bits and, of course, my alpine buddy Shawn Tasker, we set forth on July 27 to get 'er done. From the base of the route, we could see that the crack was indeed continuous all the way to the skyline on the headwall. The rock was dark—almost black in places. The first 15 metres of crack was seeping water and the moss was thick in spots, but beyond that, the route appeared dry and easy to protect. I stepped up for the first pitch and cleaned as I progressed on lead. Shawn had to pay attention to my efforts or he was liable to be hit with a clump of moss. At the top of the first pitch, I found a perfect belay spot to set up my anchor.

Shawn followed and established the second pitch. He continued up the crack for about 30 metres to where it steepened, and then stepped left onto a small ledge to a semi-hanging belay at the base of a thin crack that led back to the main corner. Shawn hammered in two pitons on the second pitch—probably just for show because I don't think they were required. The third pitch was mine and I must say this 65-metre behemoth was the best on the route. I followed the thin crack back to the main corner crack and moved over ever-steepening ground. About 15 metres up, the crack became wide and flaring and required a waist-level hand-over-hand layaway to surpass it. Beyond that, it became vertical with big jugs and stemming possibilities everywhere. The third pitch ended with a huge alcove created by a left-facing flake, which required some unprotected chimneying to a mantle onto a small ledge at the belay below a thin crack.

Shawn Tasker following pitch three of Dark Side of the Moon. Photo: JT Croston

We were nearing the section of the face that reportedly required bolts, but based on our previous experience, Shawn and I knew that Gimli was covered with discontinuous cracks. We were hoping that the west face would not let us down. Shawn stepped rightwards into another crack. As he moved up the fourth pitch, I could tell that he was giving it some serious thought. Left? Right? Straight up? The steepness of the wall lessened, but the further Shawn moved up, the obvious crack disappeared and he found himself relying on his alpine instinct. He opted to go right—with success.

I was happy for Shawn, but my joy was short lived due the fast-approaching monsoon and lightning storm. I seconded his pitch and as I started up the fifth pitch, the rain hit hard. I reached out to grab onto the rock and water poured into my sleeves and down my body. But even worse, I could barely see, given all the splashing on the rock. It's a good thing the climbing was easier or else that rainstorm would have been a show-stopper. As I topped out, the sun decided to shine on us. My spirits lifted (meaning, I stopped swearing) and Shawn and I enjoyed another successful ground-up attack on Mount Gimli.

We named our route Dark Side of the Moon, in keeping with the space theme on Gimli and due to the dark, clean, lichen-free, bolt-free rock. Solid stone, plentiful gear placements and nominal route-finding, this route is recommended for anyone who is looking for a fun alpine-climbing experience at a moderate grade.

Summary

Dark Side of the Moon (5.10a, 5 pitches), west face, Mount Gimli, Valhalla Range. FA: JT Croston, Shawn Tasker, July 27, 2012.

Gear: Double rack of Camalots from #0.3 to #3, one #4 Camalot, single set of micro cams, full set of nuts and a 70-m rope. If using a 60-m rope, the second belay can be moved up to shorten the third pitch.

Approach: Continue along the main hiking trail past the "beach" toward the col into Mulvey Basin. After the trail descends steeply then starts to climb again, look for the obvious shallow corner crack in dark rock.

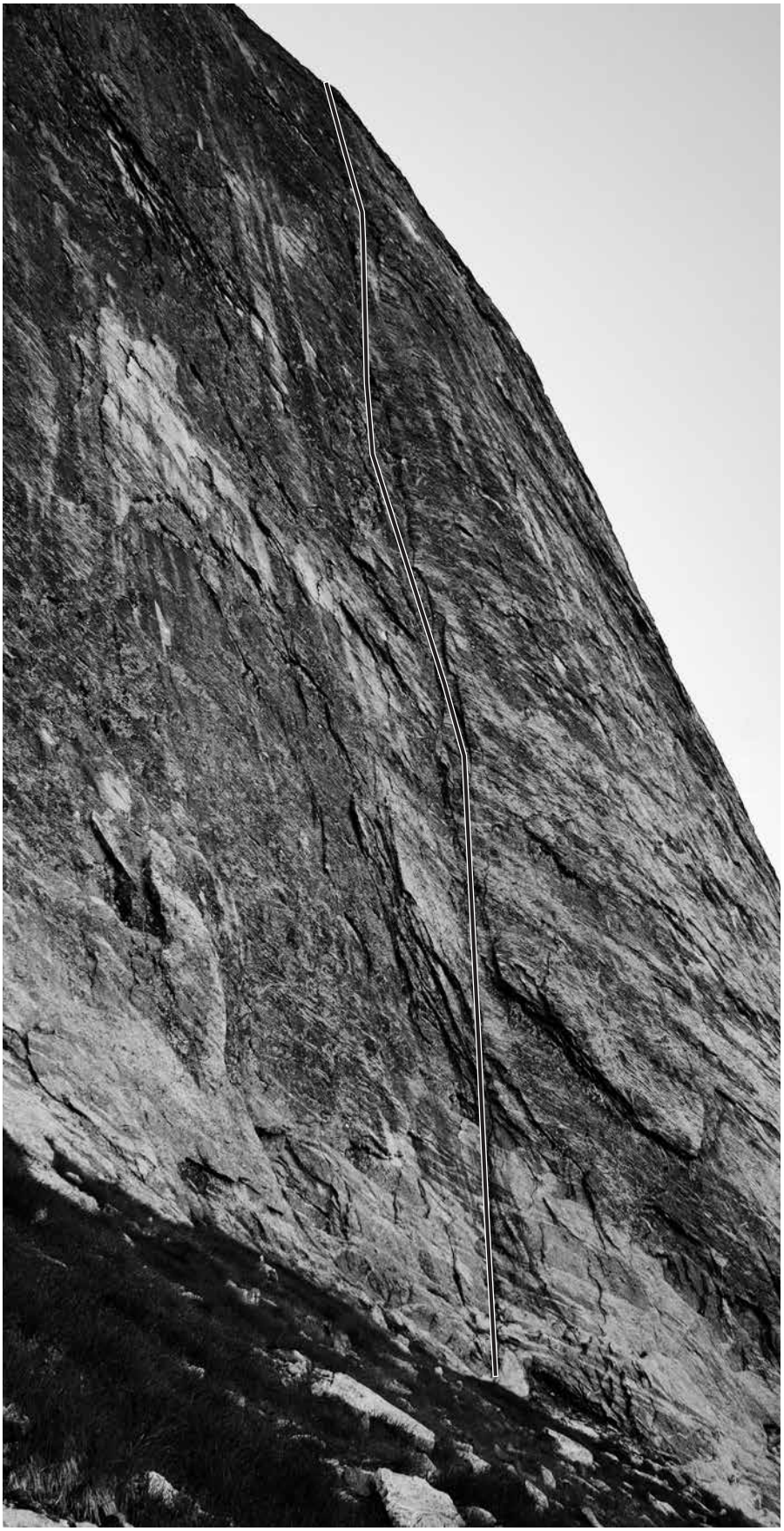
P1: 5.8, 35m. Start at the base of a shallow corner crack on the west face. Follow the crack to a bolted belay station in a shallow dish. It is possible to rappel to a ledge at the base of the climb. We went back the day after our ascent to scrub the first pitch and install the bolted belay.

P2: 5.10a, 30m. Continue up the crack past two pitons to a small ledge (five metres above the second piton) below a steep mossy section in the crack. Transition left to the belay at the base of a left-facing flake, which is not visible from the corner.

P3: 5.10a, 65m. Start up the flake, which trends right back into the corner crack. Continue past the flaring corner (crux) up steep terrain, stemming and moving toward a large alcove/chimney behind a left-facing flake. Squeeze through and up (#4 Camalot fits perfectly at the top), and then step right to a small ledge and belay.

P4: 5.8, 50m. Move right into a left-facing corner and follow it to the top of the headwall. Continue up and slightly right through discontinuous cracks. As the angle lessens, look right for an obvious belay ledge below a small roof. Small gear is useful on this pitch.

P5: 5.7, 35m. Pull through the roof and move up through slabs with small vertical sections until the ground eases, and then scramble easy 5th class to the top.



Dark Side of the Moon on the west face of Mount Gimli. Photo: JT Croston

The Wandering Direct

Matt McCormick

IT'S FUNNY HOW on expeditions, challenges can manifest from the most unexpected of places. Having arrived at our granite-encircled base camp in the East Creek Basin, Jean-Pierre Ouellet and I hiked up to scope the west face of the South Howser Tower, home to a collection of unclimbed crack systems that are altogether untouched. Stashing our rope and rack under some boulders, we returned to base camp ready for a pre-dawn start.

Arriving by headlamp at our cache the next morning, I eagerly reached under the boulder and pulled out the thin dry-bag containing our rope and tag line. In the bubble of LED light, I saw what more resembled a piñata than the intact brand new bag we had stashed the night before. Strands of purple rope sheath and white core flapped about in the early morning breeze. Who new that the infamous Bugaboo snafflehounds liked brand new climbing ropes so much? Good thing we had decided to bring an extra rope.

After power hiking back to base camp and returning with our spare rope and tag line, JP and I continued our approach to the base of the wall. The opening pitches poured with water, but were fortunately not too difficult and gave way to some beautiful hand cracks. We continued following the obvious features, which continued to push out farther right up and across the wall. One pitch before we intersected the classic Beckey-Chouinard route, I belayed down and to the left of JP as he delicately balanced around a golden arête 20 metres above. As he transferred his weight rightward around the arête, the huge edge under JP's foot peeled back several inches in one door-size flake. "Aaahhhh!" JP exclaimed with genuine terror as the flake continued to tip and crashed down the face toward the glacier below.

With the burnt smell of trundled granite in the air, we reassessed the situation, and JP decided to attempt to climb leftward and past a vertical off-width choked with three microwave-sized blocks that teetered on top of each other. Managing to place a few marginal pieces, he knee-barred past the block, and with a grunt, pulled over the bulge and out of sight. We were finally onto the Beckey-Chouinard…or so I thought. Ten minutes later, the alpine air was broken with a guttural scream as if someone was losing a limb.

"Are you OK?" I yelled upward.

"No!" JP replied, followed by silence. Suddenly I heard the rumble of falling rock and tucked myself safely in the corner of the belay. A huge flake of granite, larger than the one trundled before, flew into my field of view and crashed down the face below. After a few minutes I heard, "I'm OK," and shortly after, a call of "Off belay!"

It turned out that as JP was chimneying up the end of the pitch just below the Beckey-Chouniard, an enormous flake had slid down on top of his knees, pinning him in place. Somehow he was able to rotate the flake off his legs and finish the pitch pretty much unscathed.

We joined the Becky-Chouinard at the base of the Great White Headwall and continued up its upper pitches without incident, descending in the growing whiteout. We named the route The Wandering Direct for obvious reasons. There may be a more direct finish to the route that could offer more solid rock, but it was extremely wet at the time of our ascent. Despite the looseness of the final pitch, the majority of the climbing was solid and enjoyable, offering an interesting alternative start to the Beckey-Chouinard.

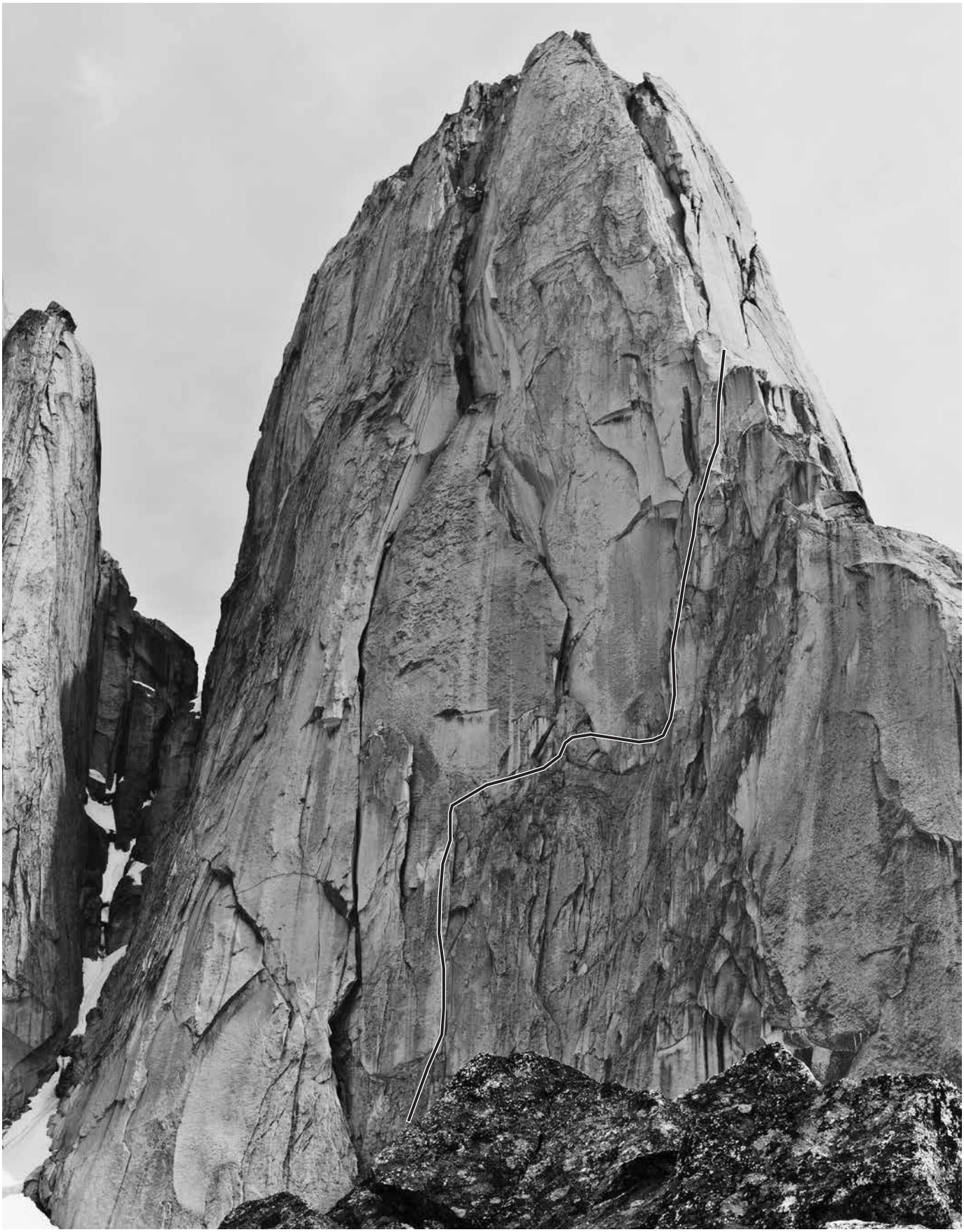
Matt McCormick starting up pitch four during the first ascent of The Wandering Direct. Photo: Jean-Pierre Ouellet

Summary

The Wandering Direct (V 5.11R, 7 pitches), west face, South Howser Tower, The Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains.

FA: Matt McCormick, Jean-Pierre Ouellet, July 2012.

The Wandering Direct on the west face of South Howser Tower. Photo: Matt McCormick



Crossroads

Tim McAllister

AS YOU DRIVE into the Columbia Valley from Kootenay National Park, Farnham Tower pokes up like a sore thumb amongst the highest summits of the Purcells. It's dark and steep and only visible from select vantages in the Rocky Mountain Trench. In 1914, nearly 100 years ago, Conrad Kain climbed it first via McDonald Creek. He spoke of "rock to my liking" and it was one of the more interesting summits he climbed that summer. More than 20 years ago, I thought of climbing Farnham Tower, but the easy grade and big hike deterred me. The Bugaboos and Adamants beckoned instead.

Fast-forward 15 years to 2007. A renewed interest in Kain's first ascents had my wife, Tamela, and I bumping up McDonald Creek for an easy send of the original line up the South Ridge. We bivied at the end of the logging road and woke up early to thrash our way up the dew-soaked cutblock. Emerging at treeline, we saw that the tower was lit up like a torch in the early morning sun, and we figured this would be a fun and straightforward day. We noticed remnants of Kain's campsite on a nice saddle of alpine larch. Three hours later, Farnham Tower finally appeared to be getting closer. We had the rope on for all kinds of 3rd-, 4th- and 5th-class terrain and the rock quality had us nervous.

We reached the base of the tower then traversed hard left on a huge crumbling ledge where we had our first glimpse of the South Ridge that Kain had climbed, as well as the south face. It looked terrible. Maybe he had snow for steps, or was just that much more seasoned in choss, but we didn't like the idea at all and looked for alternatives.

Looking up the south face, I spied a crack system near a big corner that looked okay. We scrambled up and quickly started climbing steep, well-protected, marbled quartzite. Three quality pitches had us on a big ledge with no obvious way to go. A massive chimney up and left looked promising, but the overhanging terrain was foreboding. It was late so we started to rap, hike and downclimb for many, many hours. We arrived at the truck in the dark and fully worked. Tamela wasn't entirely convinced to return, but I hoped time would heal all memories of endless hiking. It didn't.

In mid-September 2009, I was psyched to try again, so I recruited Mark Read from Radium. As in 2007, we bivied at the truck and started hiking by headlamp in the wee hours. Snow mottled the approach ridge but Farnham Tower is steep enough to not hold snow. Without even getting to the tower itself, we bailed due to an abundance of early season snow and lack of time.

So in 2010, without learning any lessons from the previous attempt, my friend Pat O'Sullivan and I headed up the now familiar terrain with a bigger rack and even larger visions of grandeur. Snow and blisters turned us back once

Crossroads on the south face of Farnham Tower. Photo: Tim McAllister

again without even getting to the base. Tamela, of course, was amused at my dogged determination and failures but still not that interested in the hike up to the tower.

TIME FLIES AS TIME does and all of a sudden it was 2012. My daughter graduated. I was old. During the summer, I had guided Mount Robson, Mount Louis and Bugaboo Spire—all via Kain routes. David Jones and I had just climbed the third ascent of Monument Peak (see page 98) in the Jumbo drainage. Conrad Kain, of course, had made the first ascent and spoke of the descent as being one of the worst of his career. With that, I felt ready for Farnham Tower. Pat had forgotten all of the bad bits, so with renewed energy I picked him up Friday evening at work and we drove west from Radium towards Horsethief Creek.

The first crux was getting through the huge RCMP roadblock at the crossroads, which we managed expertly with a smile and a wave and no shortage of high-fives. In order to give us a better chance, we opted to hike up in the dark and bivy at Kain's old camp amongst the alpine larches. A huge fire of ancient grey wood goaded us into staying up late, fueled with the spirit of Kain.

A perfect darkness greeted us early, and on and on we went up the approach ridge. It still took more than three hours just to get to the base. Skirting around to the south, we set our sights on the line Tamela and I had tried five years ago. We climbed the three steep pitches and ended up on the big ledge. I headed up and left towards the massive gash that splits the summit of the tower. Everything else looked too hard.

I yelled down to Pat that things were about to get interesting, and headed for the chimney. Inside was filled with ice, but I managed to stem and chimney around the ice (no crampons or tools) and headed for a large chockstone wedged between the walls. As I brought Pat up, I looked around for the next and, hopefully, last pitch to the summit. Several marginal options revealed themselves, and I knew it wasn't going to be straightforward.

The ice-choked chimney wasn't an option, even though it looked like a fun ice climb to the top. I picked the wall to the right of the ice and tried to patch a safe passage together, but optimistic gear and ability got the better of me. I returned to the chockstone where Pat and I looked at the poor options. Crumbly aid climbing, chipping ice holds, or an unprotected nine-metre-horizontal traverse to the edge of the arête of the chimney to possible gear and upward motion.

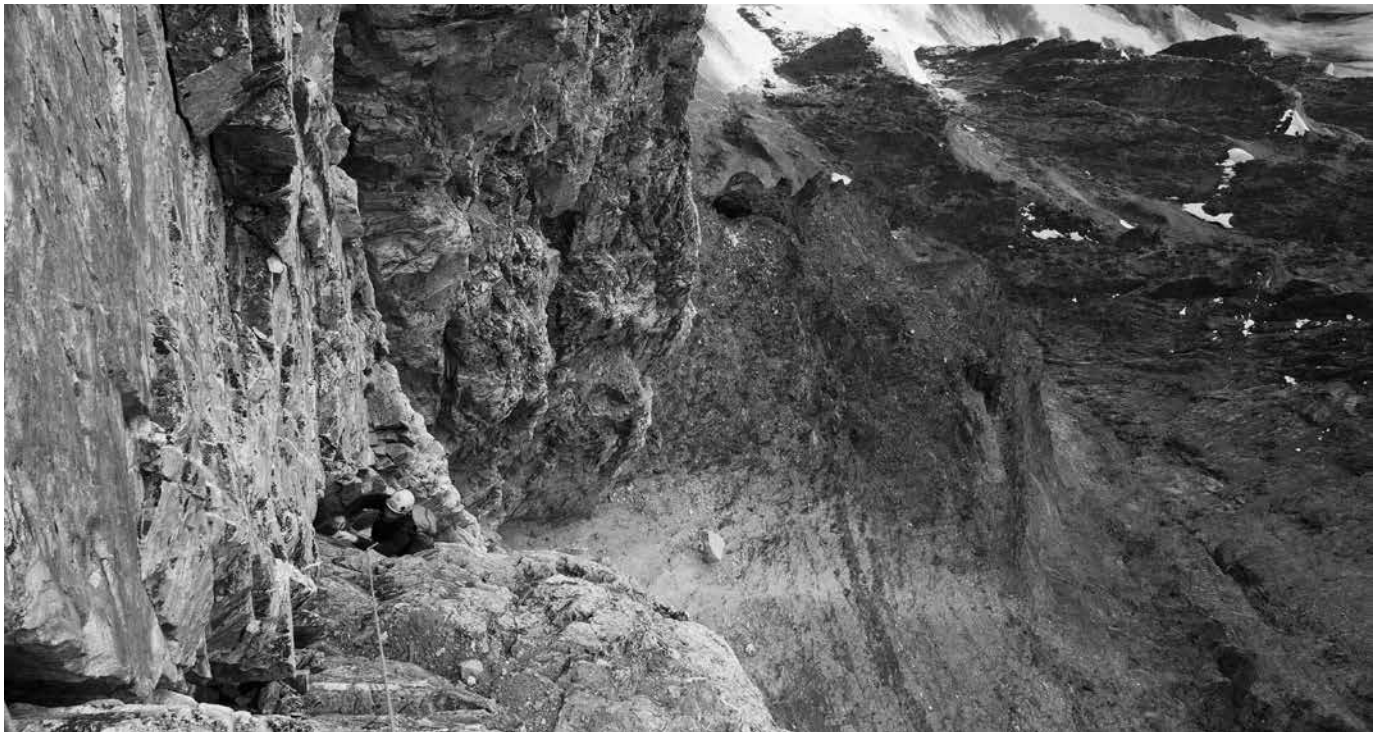
I guess the fourth attempt in five years and that brutal approach gave me the desire to climb out the traverse and finish the climb. Pat's uncharacteristic silence throughout the lead made me climb cautiously and mindful of the consequences. Like Kain, we had no radio or phones or bolt kit. We did one more pitch to the east summit then rapped down the chimney. Three more 60-metre raps had us at the base where we began the long and arduous descent to valley bottom.

I agree with Conrad Kain—rock to my liking.

Summary

Crossroads (510 R, 6 pitches), south face, Farnham Tower (3387m), Purcell Mountains. FA: Tim McAllister, Pat O'Sullivan, September 29, 2012.

Pat O'Sullivan on pitch two of Crossroads. Photo: Tim McAllister



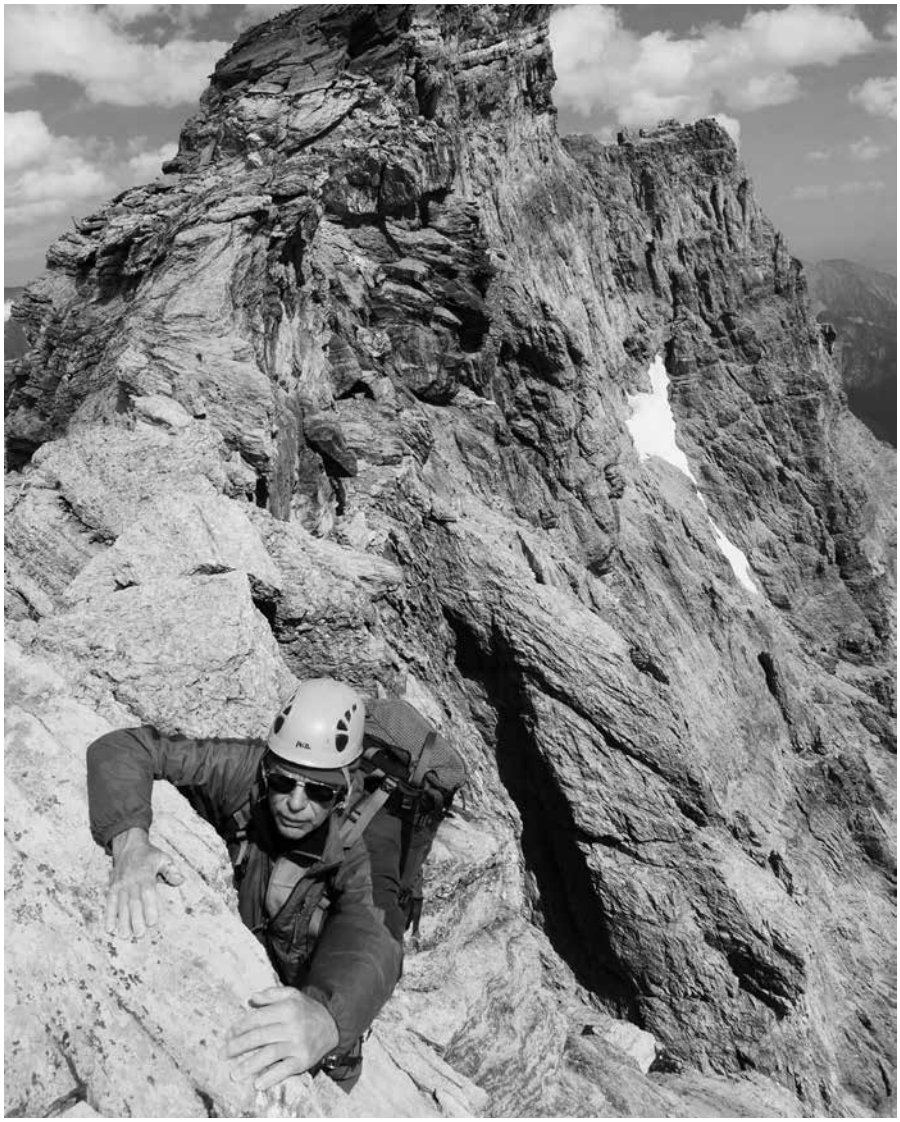
Monument Peak

David P. Jones

MONUMENT PEAK is a prominent 3,103-metre mountain located in the Southern Purcells that overlooks the confluence of Toby and Jumbo creeks to the south. Three narrow ridges in the shape of a giant T support a summit block with near vertical walls on all aspects. In 1910, a geological survey party, studying the extensive zones of mineralization in the area, viewed the formidable appearance of the summit block and suggested it was shaped like a typical survey monument, hence the name.

Conrad Kain with clients Albert and Elizabeth MacCarthy and Winthrop Stone made the first ascent on July 30, 1916, via the northwest ridge, followed by a harrowing descent of the northeast face, in a 19-hour tour-de-force. Later, Kain would consider the descent of the northeast face one of the most arduous and demanding climbs of his career. The peak received a second ascent via the northwest ridge in 1975, but this party chose to retrace their ascent route rather than deal with the uncertain prospects of the northeast face.

David P. Jones on the South Ridge of Monument Peak. Photo: Tim McAllister



I became aware of Monument Peak as a result of several trips to the Toby-Jumbo creek valley, including solo ascents of Paramount and Paradox peaks immediately to the east. I had contemplated a solo ascent via the unclimbed south ridge, but the precipitous nature of the terrain and uncertain quality of the rock led me to seek a climbing partner. After several attempts to organize an outing, finally in late August, the prospects of fine weather coincided with a free day for Tim McAllister, so we decided to make a concerted effort to investigate Monument's south ridge.

After a late supper, Tim and I drove up Toby Creek Forest Service Road and via Tailings Pond Road to a high landing southeast of the peak. Following a quick breakfast the next morning we set off early, hiking up the last of the skid road then up steep, forested slopes with mature timber and negligible undergrowth. In less than an hour we reached remnants of an old trail, which we followed west into the large south-facing bowl between Monument and Paramount peaks. We kept a sharp lookout for grizzly bears for there was ample sign of them in various avalanche paths that we traversed on route to the lower slopes of the south ridge. Excellent goat trails lead up into the high alpine and onto the ridge proper where we could change our focus from spotting grizzly bears to considering the quality of the rock in front of us.

From our viewpoint on the shoulder of the south ridge, we examined our options. The right flank of the ridge was near vertical and offered no practical route while a west spur across a bowl was well populated with spires, which would be very time-consuming to traverse. The most practical route led up the centre of the bowl over broken slabs and rocky ribs to a false summit. Tim and I picked our separate ways across the slabs and ribs, the quality of the rock varying from firm

Monument Peak from Mount McCoubrey: (1) 2012 Jones-McAllister route, (2) 1916 Kain route. Photo: David P. Jones

limestone to broken, rotten garbage in a matter of a few metres. With judicious route-finding we were able to avoid most sections of poorer rock, so that after an hour, we had gained the false summit and a close-up view of the narrow ridge leading to the summit tower. It was a narrow staircase with precipitous drop-offs on either side. The risers were made of firm enjoyable limestone while the treads were formed by slabby, fractured shale that required care. We scrambled up this staircase for close to an hour to the base of the summit block.

The summit block towered vertically above us with no obvious weakness that would provide a line of ascent. The vertical to overhanging face to the right was even more forbidding. Fortunately, the left (west) side offered a potential line of weakness along an exposed, fractured and narrow shale ledge, between a band of vertical limestone below and vertical headwall above. We climbed carefully across the line of weakness for about 50 metres to a small cave-like feature at the base of the headwall. Further progress across the west face looked increasingly difficult and technical. Fortunately again, above the cave-like feature was a convoluted corner system with cracks that offered a potential route to the summit ridge.

Tim made an initial attempt on the corner, but it quickly became apparent that the pitch was going to be difficult to solo because of the awkward moves required to negotiate over minor overhangs. Hence, the first order of business was to don harnesses, establish a belay anchor and sort out the rope in the small, confined area—all without knocking gear or ourselves off into space. With a suitable belay, Tim offered to take the sharp end. After some interesting contortions and sketchy moves in mountain boots, he was able to wedge himself under a shelving flake and work in some protection before tackling the remaining obstacle between us and the summit ridge. Following the pitch a few minutes later, I was glad not to be soloing as the shelving flake required delicate, off-balance moves to gain easier ground. Twenty easy metres from the top of the pitch was the summit cairn, which unfortunately only contained a record from the 1975 party. Some minor older scraps of metal hinted at an earlier ascent, presumably that of Kain in 1916.

Due to the sheer walls surrounding the loose rocky summit, it was very difficult to peer below to see any other climbable features. Even our line of ascent was not obvious from the summit cairn. Lunch was soon in hand; after which we both took several rounds of photographs for it was unlikely we would return in the foreseeable future. We then carefully downclimbed loose rock to the top of our ascent corner and established a rappel anchor. The various pitons Tim placed simply contributed to the quantities of shattered rock. I was able to find a suitable crack in which to wedge a rock and create an anchor for a rappel sling. A 25-metre rappel brought us back to the base of the summit rock band. We retraced our route across the sketchy shale ledge (it wasn't any easier) to regain the main ridge crest where we could relax a bit.

A few clouds had formed during the day but the weather continued to hold, so

we were able to enjoy the scramble back along the ridge to the false summit. The amount of loose rock in the bowl we had to downclimb was much more apparent when viewed from above, but again with judicious route-finding, Tim and I were able to avoid most sections of poor rock. Nearing the bottom of the bowl at the end of the semi-technical downclimbing, I momentarily lost focus and in the next instant found myself dancing over near-vertical rock steps to avoid a face plant—or worse. My reflexive response saved the day and I eventually fell on my backside and came to a full stop. With a slightly bruised ego, some missing skin and a complaining ankle, we decided a short rest and suitable dose of "vitamin I" were in order. After a few minutes, the ankle stopped wailing and we were able to continue down the goat path keeping an eye out for grizzly bear. Several hours of bushwhacking and a steep descent through heavy mature timber brought us back to the truck 11.5 hours after we had departed.

Later at home, I was able to study photographs of the west face of Monument Peak that I had taken the previous year from the summit of Mount McCoubrey to the northwest. One photo clearly shows two weaknesses on the west face of the summit block. The southern weakness is the corner we climbed. A short distance to the north is a second weakness that appears to be a chimney, which is presumably Kain's route to the summit. Based on our observations, a traverse between the two weaknesses on the west face (probably only 25 to 30 metres apart) appears difficult and unobvious.

Summary

South Ridge (AD- 5.8) of Monument Peak, Purcell Mountains. FA: David P. Jones, Tim McAllister, August 28, 2012.

The Black Cone

Paul Geddes

THE LURE OF UNCLIMBED peaks in the Cariboo Mountains led us to plan a July 2012 trip into the northeast corner of British Columbia's Wells Gray Provincial Park. This wilderness park was created in 1939 and is the province's fourth largest park covering 1.3 million acres.

A heli-port in Valemount provided us with the only access option for our remote mountaineering camp. Since no mechanized transportation is allowed within this area of the park, our destination was a small glacial pond located in a pass just outside the northeast park boundary. Two spectacular flights over the Premier Range (2004 camp) and the Raush River valley brought our Alpine Club of Canada (ACC) group of six onto the shores of Turquoise Lake (2,130 metres, NTS 83D/12, GR975482). Below us, in the distance to the west, we could see beyond the Clearwater River to the 35-kilometre-long Hobson Lake. Three of us had explored this Wells Gray group of mountains before, in 2005 and 2006, but there was still some unfinished business.

Before our friends first discovered this beautiful campsite in 2005, it is unlikely that anyone had been through this area in the summer for at least 65 years. The last person to walk at Turquoise Pass could well have been a licensed trapper named Ella Frye. Today, only Canadian Mountain Holidays (CMH) helicopters pass through the area with their heli-ski clients onboard in the winter months.

This location afforded us climbing opportunities in all directions. Over the length of our stay, when time allowed, we were able to wander off towards a line of eight minor snow summits jutting out of Steeple Glacier. Four first ascents of these peaks had been documented from the 2005 and 2006 trips, and we were able to add peak 2610 (#5) and 2474 (#8) to the list. Though not very serious climbing, those were rather fun days out enjoying the spectacular landscapes southwest of our camp.

Immediately above camp and outside of the park boundary jutted a spectacular-looking peak, which we had tagged The Steeple, an unclimbed 2,774-metre peak (Google Earth labels it as Pivot Peak). Not high, but unclimbed. And this mountain did not even show up on earlier federal NTS maps! As a group, we explored its approaches via the Steeple Glacier on three separate outings. Its steep north face was Eiger-like in appearance and the visual impact was stunning. The south ridge looked promising, and Bill and I gave it a go on a day when we thought the weather might hold. An airy 5th-class scramble led us to a tall quartz pinnacle at the end of the long ridge. This was an amazing and worthwhile photo-op, but the 70-metre headwall beyond proved too steep for our preferred style of climbing, un-roped and with ice axe in hand.

The next major objective we turned our attention to was Mount Goodall, a 2,930-metre peak with an intriguing history. It was named in memory of Trooper W.H. Goodall of McAlister, B.C., killed in action in WWII on April 1, 1945. It was located many kilometres from our camp, inside the park. The first mountaineer to realize that Goodall was the highest mountain wholly within Wells Gray Park was our mountaineering mentor and climbing companion on this trip, Roger Wallis.

The federal government's 1:50,000 scale Mount Winder map 93A/16 first edition (1974) and second edition (1982) distributed into the late 1990s had labelled the elevation of the very prominent Black Cone, a subsidiary summit of the Mount Goodall massif, at 2,861 metres. This is 15 metres lower than Garnet Peak at 2,876 metres located to the southwest in the relatively

easy-to-access area of the park. The Black Cone was simply a more precise landmark as well as being more central on the ridge, which the Dominion Survey crew used during their 1960 field surveys for their resecting work from the triangulation site on Mount Hobson, now Mount Hugh Neave. With this elevation marked so conspicuously on the federal maps, no one bothered to carefully study the contour lines of the Mount Goodall ridge. This oversight by earlier climbers meant that no one recognized that Mount Goodall's main summit is, in fact, higher than that of Garnet Peak.

Garnet Peak was first climbed on August 29, 1974, by Hugh Neave, Tor Schmid and Barb Hargreaves from the shores of Azure Lake after several attempts over a number of climbing seasons starting in 1966 (*Exploring Wells Gray Park*, 5th Edition, 2004, Roland Neave, pp.188-194). Garnet Peak continues to get a few mountaineering ascents, but due to its remoteness, Mount Goodall's many summits had been ignored all these years until the ACC Toronto Section arrived in 2005.

For clarity, one must have an understanding of the geography of Mount Goodall. It is a high, isolated ridge some eight kilometres in length with 11 defined sub-summits and up to 1,300 metres of relief. Its northeast face rises above the expanse of Goodall Glacier in an unbroken rock wall plastered with snow and ice. The Goodall Glacier, a remnant of the Fraser Glaciation of the last ice age, is the source of the Clearwater River, which eventually flows under the Yellowhead Highway at the town of Clearwater on route to the North Thompson River.

The first ground exploration of Mount Goodall took place in 2005 and resulted in the first ascent of Far South Goodall (2,710 metres) by Don Chiasson, Bill McKenzie and Roger Wallis. But finding a route to Goodall's main summit required a return trip in 2006. Even with a helicopter fly-by, it took three experienced mountaineers four days (with one day's worth of food) to bag the highest summit and return to base camp at Turquoise Lake (*CAJ*, 2006 p.152 and *CAJ*, 2008 p. 116-119).

We garnered much information from Roger's previous experiences in the Wells Gray Group of mountains, and over the course of several days, familiarized ourselves with the area and pieced together our plan for the first ascent of the Black Cone. We desperately wanted to avoid a bivy since during many of the previous nights we had experienced violent thunderstorms that shook our camp. An afternoon's scramble familiarized us with the initial route out of camp and upslope to the first snowfield. A large cairn still standing from their 2005 trip confirmed this leg. We studied the route beyond as far as we could see.

On July 30, we were up at 3 a.m. and out of camp by 4 a.m. Bill, Norm and I travelled north across the landscape executing our memorized route plan. We contoured around a glaciated cirque and at the base of the cliff bands we knew to just follow the goats' tracks to turn the corner. And there they were: the mountain goats high on the ledges of the southeast end of Mount Goodall. We followed the prominent snow ramp for a couple of more klicks. But these are the mountains and nothing is flat—it was an up-down cycle on repeat. The next glacial cirque was guarded to the west by the Sphinx. We stayed to the east, cutting the corner, and followed a steep snow gully through cliff bands in order to save some time. From the top of the gully we could see several of Mount

The Steeple (a.k.a. Pivot Peak) still remains unclimbed. Photo: Roger Wallis

Goodall's summits in front of us. And the unclimbed Black Cone towered directly above us a short distance away.

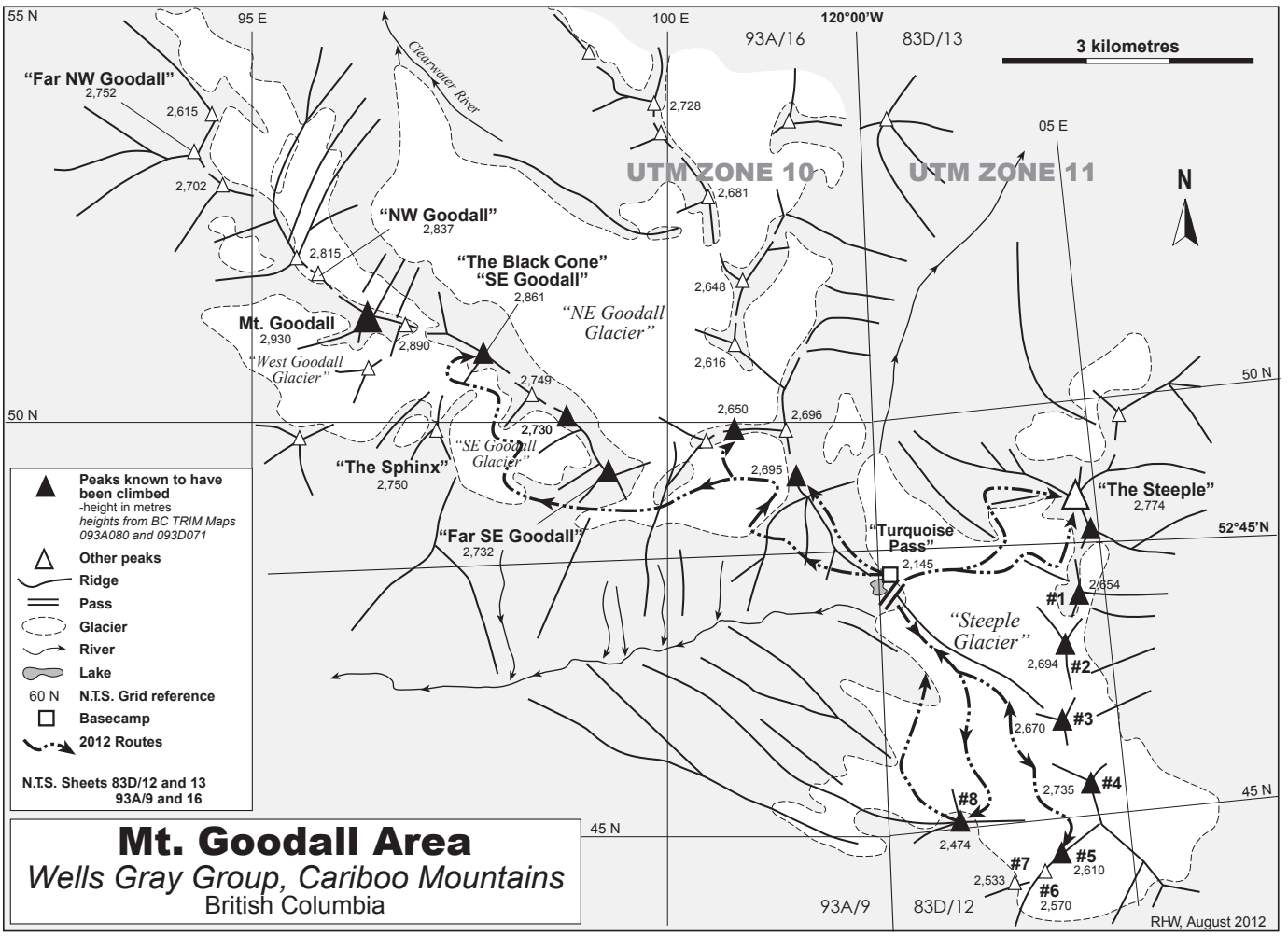
A couple of kilometres of undulating terrain further stood the main summit of Mount Goodall. Though it is the highest mountain entirely inside Wells Gray Park, we decided to leave it with only the one 2006 ascent. The unclimbed Black Cone of Mount Goodall, the reference point marked on the NTS 1:50,000 maps for all these years, was reward enough for us. We wrapped around the shoulder of the Black Cone and climbed the 4th-class edge of the northwest ridge. By 9 a.m. we were standing in sunshine on the 2,861-metre summit. We studied the terrain and realized there are so many climbing and skiing options in the Cariboo Range. We could clearly see Garnet and its adjacent high peaks in the central area of the park. If access was easier then the northern park could become a popular spot, but Wells Gray Provincial Park is doing an excellent job of fulfilling its mandate of protecting this area. After taking various photographs of ourselves playing around the melting summit cornice and building a cairn, we headed down at 10 a.m. We knew that lower down the snow was getting soft and the crevasse bridges would be starting to weaken. The way up is not always the best return route so we raced down an untracked section of the glacier after we tied into our rope for the first time that day.

We continued our tramp along the shelf with no tracks to follow since the morning snow surface had been too firm to leave any imprint of our earlier passage. By more or less following our ascent route, we reached the grassy meadows leading down to Turquoise Pass and our base camp. Happy with our first ascent, we were back to our camp cooking shelter by 2:30 p.m. in time for afternoon tea and, more importantly, before the afternoon rainstorms arrived. Our camp mates, Willa Geddes, Gary Norton and Roger Wallis, who were out exploring new terrain, would not be so fortunate. But they were able to add peak 2650 to the climbed list for the area.

The Black Cone was a memorable climb with my good friends Bill McKenzie and Norm Greene. The guidebooks will catch up eventually and invite climbers to come and experience this remarkable area.

Summary

The Black Cone (4th class), Cariboo Mountains. FA: Paul Geddes, Norm Greene, Bill McKenzie, July 30, 2012.



2012 Sir Sandford GMC

Zac Robinson

ONE HUNDRED YEARS after the famous first ascent of the highest mountain in the Columbias—the so-called "King of the Selkirks"—Mount Sir Sandford (3,519 metres/11,545 feet), the ACC's General Mountaineering Camp (GMC) committee felt it was only fitting to hold the annual GMC at the foot of the grand, and still very remote, peak. Remarkably, it was a new location for the 106th camp. And, unsurprisingly, a wonderful summer ensued.

The location was spectacular. From a base camp (GR 385275; 2,090 metres) near the toe of the Haworth Glacier, a wide variety of climbs existed for participants of all skill levels. Many were quite close to the camp, and so there were few, if any, grumblings about long plods that past locations are, err, well-remembered for. The objectives varied—some rock, some snow, some involving glacier travel. There was something for all tastes, from the Northwest Ridge up big "Sir Sandy" itself to pleasant afternoon hikes to the nearby Great Cairn Hut.

Over the course of five weeks, 193 people were placed under the canvas. A great mix of newbies and GMC veterans, participants came from all corners of Canada—with a particularly vocal contingency from Winnipeg in week five—and as far away as the United States, Great Britain and Germany. Highlights were, of course, the climbing, the hot showers (we had a new, fail-safe system this year), an amazing rock-climbing crag near the toe of the Silvertip Glacier, and above all else, the people.

Thanks to all those who made the GMC such a success this past summer, from the excellent setup and teardown crew, to the camp managers, the GMC committee, the mountain guides, the kitchen staff, the office staff and all the volunteers. Good times are a tradition, and I hope to see you all at the 2013 Scotch Peaks GMC.

2012 GMC Ascents

Objective	People
Citadel Peak (2,923m)	61
Azimuth Mountain (2,563m)	82
Belvedere Peak (2,978m)	80
Vidette Peak (2,907m)	52
Silvertip Mountain (2,880m)	83
Palisade Mountain (2,647m)	44
Mount Redan (2,894m)	73
Ravelin Mountain (2,725m)	6
Mount Sir Sandford (3,519m)	18
Alpina Dome (2,386m)	46
Picture Peak/Dome (2,835m)	20
Blackfriars Peak (3,226m)	2

2012 Sir Sandford base camp near the toe of Haworth Glacier. Photo: Zac Robinson

The Rockies

North Twin

Brandon Pullan

THE SINISTER WALL beckons: first eyes, then thoughts, then imagination, and finally, the soul. Have you ever seen it? If you have then you embrace that beckoning; surely you must. If you have not seen the wall then you and I had something in common. However, under blue skies, that commonality changed last summer. A silent pulse sunk below consuming layer after layer of rubble as I marched to the pass known as Woolley Shoulder. We were greeted by a thrilling spectacle of ice tumbling from the hanging glacier sending waves of chilled air in our direction.

I had never climbed with Ian Welsted—the Winnipeg native turned alpine nomad—who I happened to be standing on Woolley Shoulder with, both of us staring across at the North Twin. My pack gripped my shoulders and my leg hairs stood on end from the breeze. Ian and I were silently captivated by the awe and grandeur of the panorama from our gained vista. To the right was Mount Alberta our attentions were fixed, locked into a gaze blurring peripherals. If it was staring back, it was with an evil eye, deadlocked on encroaching dreamers.

From Woolley Shoulder we contoured the jumbled scree towards the Lloyd MacKay Hut. Two fellow alpinists, Raphael Slawinski and J. Mills, had just finished their foray on Mount Alberta's South Buttress (see page 112).

"We made it up the south ridge but not to the summit. Well, it wasn't easy. It was actually quite scary. We'll have to return to do it properly to the top," said Raphael standing outside of the hut while J. stirred the warming soup on the stovetop inside. Ian and I adjusted our attire as Raphael retreated into the hut. Ian turned to me and said, "Wow, I have climbed with Raphael many times. I have never heard him say something was scary. It must be really something." After warming our bellies with soup courtesy of our friends, we bid them adieu and regained our strides.

Following the pristine alpine meadow away from the Alberta Glacier, we descended into the belly of the Black Hole. "Right there you can see how high we got," Ian said, pointing to a ledge high on the wall where he was hit by rockfall years previous. The incident forced Ian into a two-day retreat with Chris Brazeau at the helm. Chris weaved a tightly strung and well-instrumented retreat off the sinister wall. Ian then traced his hand along where he remembered Chris leading them down to safety, his finger wobbling as details were forgotten.

In the bottom of the abyss, looking up at the true scale, the wall washed over our senses, the beckoning numbed. Paralyzed, all that was left was the soul to react, and mine reacted as such: "Holy shit!" It was not awe I was experiencing. It was something else. It widened my eyes but my teeth grinded. It heightened my excitement but cocoons opened in my belly.

Ian knew the way because he had attempted our proposed route the week previous. In 1965, Henry Abron and friends humbly climbed the north ridge of North Twin.

"Rick Millikan, Pete Carman and I approached the north side of North Twin last summer on the theory that where there is a face, there is a ridge… The ridge is almost four thousand feet high, very straight, and about as steep as the north ridge of the Grand Teton. The route appeared to present three problems: First, Canadian Rockies rock is notoriously rotten… Second, most of the ridge was plastered with snow… Third, there is no safe way to get onto the ridge… As we climbed toward the summit, it was pleasing to think… it was a fine adventure in the good sense of the word." –Henry L. Abrons, *American Alpine Journal*, 1966.

We had not come to tempt the main wall for she was awake in the summer's heat—the warm air bevelling the ledges and icy seracs meeting gravity's awaited desire. The ridge loomed above our approach up the hanging glacier that we would need to climb. Two roped pitches right of the calving serac brought us to an icy labyrinth within the glacier. "Wow! The big chunk that was there last week is gone!" Ian said, shocked at the size of the missing serac feature. Travelling roped, we climbed the ice fins to gain a snowy plateau. A 12-hour approach and we were ready to sleep. Luckily, a gaping moat where the glacier meets the rock offered sanctuary. I made a boo-boo that day by forgetting my sleeping bag at home. Ian, my faithful buddy, rallied and found me a foamy for sleep time. I had a bivy bag and it would have to do. Nylon and foam between my pale-white ass and million-year-old ice left me thinking one thought: next time, let's bring the down, Pullan. Ian snored peacefully away adding insult to injury.

The next morning, we climbed an

Brandon Pullan near the top of North Twin during the second ascent of the Northwest Ridge, with Mount Alberta in behind.
Photo: Ian Welsted

ice couloir—whistling stones bouncing past, aching calves from bulletproof ice and squeaking front points penetrating frozen névé. We gained rock and climbed a staircase of stone. Higher and higher, the metres drifted beneath us. Across the way, Mount Alberta drew us in for a visual treat.

"Jim and Cian are on the Northeast Ridge?" Ian asked. I affirmed. We peered towards our friends, too far to see, of course.

After hundreds of metres, we reached a plateau. We did not know for sure, but through our queries have come to understand our ascent was becoming only the second of the route. It would be the fifth ascent out of the Black Hole to the summit of Twins Tower, and as we were climbing it was becoming the fastest anyone had left the car and neared the summit via the Black Hole.

This plateau was last stood upon by Barry Blanchard and Dave Cheesmond after their ascent of the North Pillar, which was the last summer ascent out of the Black Hole some 27 years before Ian and I stood there. Our eyes gleamed down the gnarled face of rubble where Barry and Dave climbed up.

"Yikes, I can see where the rock came from that hit my arm. What a mess!" Ian said.

All I could creatively conjure up was, "Holy shit!"

Thousands of feet below the forth face, the silent pulse stilled. The summit tower stood tall between us and the snow-capped glory we imagined. From Woolley Shoulder, the summit tower seemed an afterthought from the ridge—maybe a few ramblely pitches. Hanging out, wind screaming, rock cooling and ice growing, we inched up and over and up and over the tower, no longer a silly afterthought. Pitch after pitch of traversing and angling up broken ground, Ian had finally had enough.

"I am going straight up! We can't keep going over. This is too exposed!" Ian admitted.

I cautiously bowed out of my leads giving Ian the chance to go again, knowing he was faster and far braver than I. With a setting sun, he wrangled upwards. Stemming between tippy stones balanced on tippy stones, he managed to reach the upper ice and dig through deep, sugary snow to a rewarding summit mantle.

Silently, we sat, again transfixed by the distance from Woolley Shoulder to our perch and the space from us to everywhere else. Ian laughed with euphoric delight and I nearly shat myself from the experience of what we had just ascended—a euphoric shit, of course.

Wasting no time, we left our hard-won throne where few had stood. Ian showed me the way. We descended the Twins Tower and climbed to the summit of North Twin, and then descended North Twin and climbed to the summit of South Twin. Ian was a force to be reckoned with, breaking trail kilometre after kilometre, summitting peak after peak. After descending the South Twin, we hiked across the Columbia Icefield under a Roman-candle sky. Dizzied by meteors, the mountains burst into flames.

At 3 a.m., 23 hours after leaving our last bivy at the bottom of the ridge, we finally bivied again. Atop the Athabasca Glacier on a desert of ice between the giants of the Rockies, I managed to rest my weary quads. The cold air meant sleep was a much-to-be desired dream, all the while, Ian snored away at the night sky.

The sun broke the black night open, and we descended the jumbled Athabasca Glacier. At the visitor centre, Ian stood with thumb up on roadside as I guarded our bags, finally catching some warm shuteye under blistering valley sun. Awakening an hour later with burnt lips, Ian pulled up and we went home—a fine adventure in every sense of the word.

Summary

Second ascent of Northwest Ridge (V 5.7), North Twin, Columbia Icefield. Brandon Pullan, Ian Welsted, August 24-26, 2012.

North Twin with the Northwest Ridge route following the sun-shade line up the righthand edge of the north face. Photo: Ian Welsted

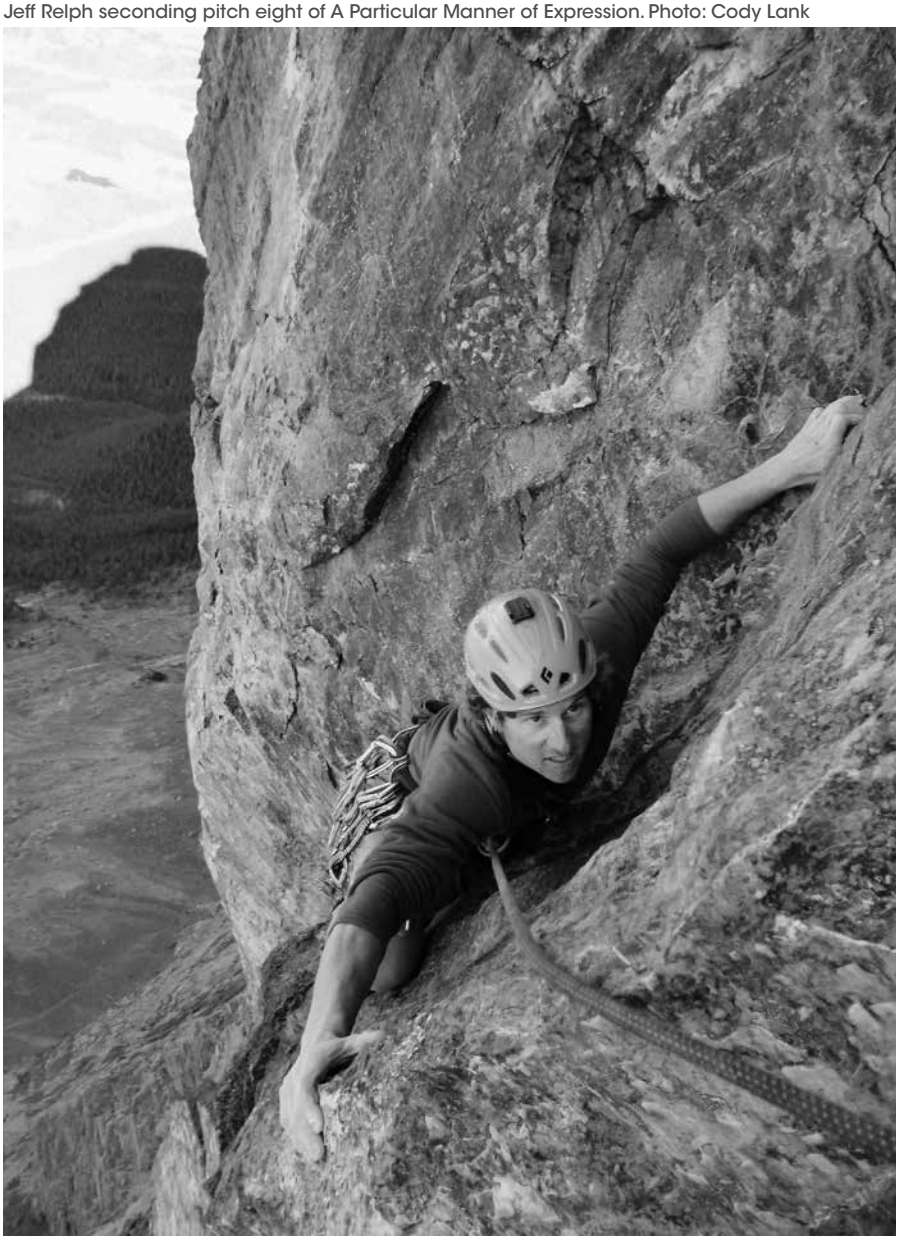
Language

Jeff Relph

IN AUGUST 2009, as I walked along the base of Ha Ling Peak above Canmore, I found myself staring at this series of overhanging corners, roofs and arêtes immediately left of the obvious and classic corner systems of Quick Release and Premature Ejaculation. I rerouted my glance to my partner, who was directly behind me and half joked that we give it a go. Being smarter than me, he returned my focus to the task at hand and reminded me that our chosen route that day would be much better than screwing around on some uncharted ground while ill-equipped. I fully concurred and continued walking, but my thoughts kept returning to that steep piece of stone, at least until we reached our route and I began to rack up.

As pitch after pitch of Orient Express passed under our fingers, I was continually impressed by the vision and boldness of the 1976 first ascentionists, Jack Firth, Chris Perry and Mike Sawyer. Given the run-out nature of the climbing, imposing angle of terrain and the equipment of the day, it was obvious that these guys were both really skilled and super psyched. I thought about the adventure they must have had on that big north face. Three days on the wall, never certain if the next pitch would even go, and getting more and more committed by the minute.

Jeff Relph seconding pitch eight of A Particular Manner of Expression. Photo: Cody Lank



After topping out, my partner and I revelled in the feeling, and commented on how much we enjoyed the climbing and the style of the route. As we sauntered down the descent trail, I once again brought up the subject of the unclimbed chunk of stone we had gawked at earlier in the day. I asked if he was keen to come back and try it. He told me he couldn't get involved as he was sure he didn't have the time to commit.

So, on a not-so-warm October day, Mike Trehearne and I stood below the line that had occupied my thoughts for the past couple of months, racking up with all the necessary accoutrements, including pins, drill, big gloves, down booties and balaclavas. The first four pitches climbed some slabby ground with corners, cracks, jugs and rubble-strewn ledges. We managed to get up these easy pitches fairly quickly, bringing us to the fault line running the entire width of the face. Above this was the business district—the wall turned steep. We cast off into the adventure above, mostly freeclimbing with the drill, and drilling from natural stances whenever possible. Unfortunately, any ground-up new routing is a time-consuming process, and October days are short, so we rapped off from the top of pitch five happy with our progress and glad to have finally begun.

Later that week, I ran into a good friend, Andrew Langsford. He was

Cody Lank on pitch six of A Particular Manner of Expression. Photo: Jeff Relph

my neighbour in Golden, B.C., fellow mountain guide, a very accomplished climber, skier and mountaineer, and an all-around good person. He was also a very funny man who had the most brilliant way with words and a very quick wit. In fact he was so known for this extraordinary gift that it earned him the nickname Language.

For example, he was once teaching an introduction to ice climbing program to a group of very attractive young women. Upon reaching a safe spot to gear-up near the base of the crag, he proceeded to give instructions: "OK, so this is where we will leave the packs, put on helmets, harnesses, crampons and change into tighter pants." His co-workers had to try hard not to burst into laughter, while most of the women were so out of their element they didn't even catch it.

As Andrew and I chatted, I told him about the route I had just started. He was super psyched to hear about it, especially being the type of guy who appreciates that level of exploration. I suggested that he should come out for a day and work on it with me.

He said he would love to but he had just had surgery to remove some lymph nodes from his left armpit and couldn't really climb yet. I paused for a minute and thought about what he had said. A few months previous he had melanoma removed from his back. Suddenly I felt very different inside, but Andrew was very nonchalant about the whole thing. I asked if he was alright and he said, very positively, "Yeah, no problem. It's just sore." He told me that he was going on a road trip with his girlfriend, but he was just going to belay and spend time with her since climbing was out for a bit.

The following summer was another busy one for both Mike and me. Our schedules never worked out. The window of comfortable climbing weather on a big north-facing cliff in the Bow Valley is fairly short, and life made it hard to find the time to commit to the project. I did manage to get up there a few times, usually when it was cold, and push the route a couple of pitches higher into the crux corner on pitch eight. Rapping down was getting more challenging and time-consuming as the angle of the wall increased. The leaning nature of the terrain would leave you hanging out in space if you didn't strategically back clip. Summer was over, and the project was still not done.

I saw Andrew only a few times that summer. He was busy guiding, climbing and hanging out with the woman he loved. I asked about the cancer and he said it was going OK. He was on a strict diet and said he was feeling good. As always he had me in tears with his sarcasm and wit. He said he was looking forward to ski guiding that winter. Sadly, his optimism was far more positive than the cancer, and his physical condition deteriorated until he finally left this world on March 2, 2011.

Summer came around again and I really wanted to get back up on the route. I talked to Mike, but he had lost interest and couldn't really commit the time. So I called a friend who is a big proponent of high adventure. Joshua Lavigne was stoked.

Pitch eight was a bit of a brute and took about seven hours over two trips to equip. Since we had no ropes fixed, we would always climb to our high point before we could begin working. We were getting low on time, so we deviated out to an alternate pitch that was considerably easier, hoping to at least top out to avoid rapping. No such luck. That day, we didn't quite finish, but we established a belay below the final pitch.

As Josh couldn't go the following day, and I was motivated to get the route finished, I hiked up the backside and rapped down the final pitch to equip it—a deviation from the style I wanted to maintain, but it seemed the only realistic option for finishing.

The following week we were back at it, climbing the route with the drill for the tenth time. Pitch 10 went in, and the last pitch was climbed. Josh had freed every pitch, so we could now call it a free route, but I had to return one more time.

In the end, I found what I was looking

for. We had a huge adventure, established a really cool line and stayed true to the flavour of the cliff. Hopefully, the hardmen that came before, and anyone who repeats the route, will appreciate our own Particular Manner of Expression. I know Language would.

Summary

A Particular Manner of Expression (5.12-, 500m), Ha Ling Peak, Canadian Rockies. FA: Joshua Lavigne, Jeff Relph, September 2011. Note: Mike Trehearne helped on pitches one to seven.

Rack: 60-metre rope and tagline, #0 TCU up to #2 Camalot (doubling up on finger-size pieces, #3 Camalot is useful but not necessary), half set of small to medium wires (a couple of micro nuts are useful), 12 draws, including at least five long slings (a couple of extra double-length slings are handy in a few sections).

Approach: Locate the start just left of the obvious corner of Premature Ejaculation (the second major corner from the right). Just past this corner, the trail will almost touch a ridge that leads down from a small buttress. Immediately before this intersection, switchback right and go along 50 metres to a small cave with a cairn in it, 10 metres left of the start of Premature.

P1: 5.8, 50m. Climb directly up from the cave and head slightly left on easy terrain, aiming for a clean right-facing corner about 25 metres up. Climb up into the corner and clip a bolt (first piece of protection on the pitch). Continue stemming, palming and laybacking up the corner on good gear until you can step left to a belay.

P2: 5.10b, 50m. Traverse a short ways left from the belay to a bolt. Continue up, passing five more bolts to easy ground. A bit of a space leads to a poorly drilled bolt. The belay is up to the left. It is possible to ease the run-out with some small gear, but it's marginal and unnecessary.

P3: 5.7, 50m. Head rightwards up a ramp for approximately 10 metres to a short corner with a nice crack. Climb this then head up and left on good holds to a bolt. Continue up the weakness above, clipping one more bolt before steep exit moves. Be careful of loose rock on the top out.

P4: 5.10a, 55m. Step right from the belay and climb easily up and left to the arête. Place good gear then step up and clip a bolt. Fun steep moves lead to a scree-covered ledge. Walk up the ledge, careful not to knock rocks on your belayer. Head for the obvious corner on the left side of the pillar. Don't climb this corner. Instead, go right up the pillar and follow good cracks to a bolt near the top (long slings on your first few pieces will eliminate rope drag). Step up and left to a belay atop the major fault line running across the cliff.

P5: 5.10c, 25m. This is where the climbing really starts. Climb up on technical sidepulls and good jugs, passing two bolts to a good rest. A perfect nut crack protects the next moves up to a bolt. Reach up left to good holds and step up to a nice cam crack. Continue up to belay at a blocky ledge.

P6: 5.11b, 45m. This pitch is protected with eight bolts. From the belay, some classic slab climbing leads up to a dubious flake. Climb gently onto, up and over this feature and continue up to a small pillar on the right end of a large roof. Technical moves up the corner lead to easier ground and a belay.

P7: 5.11a, 40m. Step right from the belay and climb a steep slab past two bolts to gain a short corner. Gear in the corner leads to three more bolts. At the fifth bolt, step right around the corner on good holds with wild positions. Continue up past three more bolts to belay (eight bolts total).

P8: 5.12-, 55m. This is an excellent pitch that requires delicate climbing to start then becomes powerful higher up. It is protected with eight bolts and small cams. From the belay, traverse horizontally right and up to a bolt. Step up and either climb straight up, protecting in a very thin crack, or step right to bigger holds, and then up. Follow cracks that become increasingly better past one more bolt to a ledge below the upper corner. Technical cryptic moves up the corner (bolts) lead to a shallow V-slot. Past this slot, clip one more bolt, and then make a move right around the arête to a belay stance.

P9: 5.10b or 5.11c, 27m. From the belay, you have two options. After climbing up and clipping the bolt you can: 1) Step left to a beautiful steeper-than-it-looks crack that is climbed to a blocky sector where you move right to another steep crack (5.10b); or 2) Climb the technical thin crack directly above the belay (very thin gear at first) to join into the same crack (5.11c). Continue up to belay in an alcove on the left.

P10: 5.10c, 50m. Move easily up right on a cracked slab to a bolt on a short, steep wall. A couple of steep moves lead to easier ground and good protection cracks. Climb up to a bolt just right of a small roof. Step around right and continue up and right, and following good holds passing three more bolts. At the last of these bolts, step back left, passing thin gear placements to a small stance with a bolt. Continue up a ways on good holds to a bolt that, at first, you won't see. Clip this and trend up left to belay atop a small pillar (seven bolts total plus small to medium cams).

P10 Alternate: 5.8, 50m. After clipping the first bolt and scaling the short steep wall, work up left of the roof and follow the obvious weakness. Pull over a short, steep section into an easy 5.3 crack, which is followed to the same belay.

P11: 5.11c, 58m. Step down from the belay and move right to the base of a slot. Climb up steeply, passing two bolts to a stance. Continue up the wall above; pass a good protection crack to a bolt. Here a difficult boulder move leads up past another bolt to a short corner capped by a small roof. Committing moves out the right side of this roof lead to good holds and another bolt. Step right at this bolt and climb easily up the corner and cracked rock. Five metres up this corner, you will come to a cracked grey face with an obvious corner up left (optional belay on gear). Don't climb this corner. Instead, step around right into a better corner and continue, passing one last bolt to the top of the cliff. There is a single bolt and perfect nut crack about five metres back from the edge at ground level.

Nophobias

John Freeman

THERE IT IS ON PAGE 60 of the second edition of *Mixed Climbs in the Canadian Rockies*, simply labelled, "Unclimbed mixed route in the Waiparous." I had walked the base of the cave years ago. The sense of vertigo that came over me while looking up at the huge roof of pitch two had me wondering if it was worth the effort to even start to attempt a new route. I knew at that point I wasn't even close to knowing where to begin. Pat Delaney and Will Mayo didn't suffer from the same affliction. They started bolting the next season, in 2009. It was a lot of work just to get equipment into the base. Off-road four-wheel drive for an hour, if all goes smoothly—which it often doesn't. Partially frozen river crossings, muddy ruts on narrow tracks and deep snow drifts all add up to uncertainty. Once you drive as far as possible, there is still an hour of hiking through the bush into the basin. Things progressed slowly due to the location and size of the project. Will Mayo is based south of the border, so his time here was limited. After an initial strong effort that saw the first and second pitches mostly finished, Pat and Will took a break and the route sat dormant for two years.

After a close call near the end of the 2012 ice climbing season, due to an 18-metre ground fall when a free-standing pillar collapsed, I was more interested in clipping bolts than testing the limits of the ice-gravity equation. Not a problem since there are so many quality multi-pitch mixed routes in the Rockies; I had plenty to choose from. The number of routes is a real testament to the vision and hard work of a core group of talented climbers. If you look at the back of the guidebook, it's as if Y2K was some sort of catalyst for the mixed revolution.

As the season began, I contacted Pat to see what his plans were for the project. He was keen to have new energy working on the rig but wanted to check in with Mayo first. Before we could coordinate our efforts to start work, Will Gadd and Will Mayo met up at the Bozeman Ice Climbing Festival and started talking along the same lines. What better way to ring in the new year than with a big multi-pitched mixed climb. I rang up Gadd and coordinated a plan for all four of us (plus Melan, my canine co-pilot) to load into my Ghost Buster (a modified Toyota Tacoma).

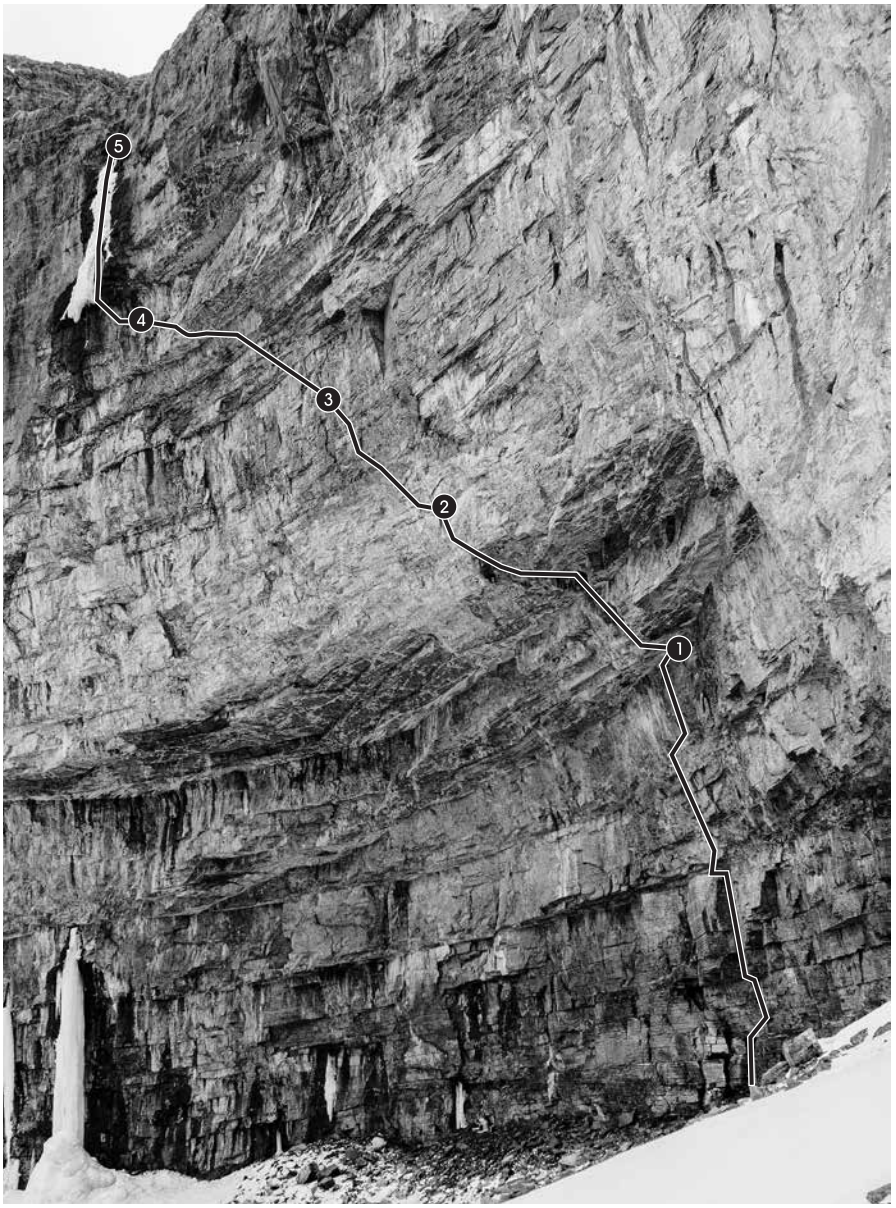
Will Gadd finds a rest on pitch two of Nophobias. Photo: Tim Banfield

It's truly amazing what can happen when you connect four highly motivated and skilled climbers together. The build went like clockwork, thanks partly to great weather. On the first day, the two Wills and I carried in huge loads of steel and ropes to sooth the beast. Each morning at 7 a.m., the crew would arrive at my place and load into the truck and make the 1.5-hour drive from Canmore to near the base of the route. With the route being so steep, it was possible for two of us to bolt high on the wall while the other two worked the moves or cleaned down low. In six days, we had the route bolted, cleaned and every pitch redpointed. The hard work was truly a team effort and we had a fun, big new route.

A few weeks later, I headed in with Will Gadd again for my redpoint attempt. Things got off to a shaky start when I had a tool pop near the end of the first pitch. Mixed-climbing falls are often explosive and unexpected—that's the only thing to be expected. The double core shot to Will's 80-metre rope as it scraped over an edge, while I was swinging and spinning in the air, was sobering. Will lowered me so I could adjust the rope length with a knife. We took the time to move the draw to another bolt so others wouldn't suffer the same fate. Since I had already redpointed the first two pitches, opting to jug a fixed line to try to finish the rest of the route seemed like a good plan. Things flowed better from that point on. I flashed pitch three and the pumpy pitch four. Pitch five started well, and then just before the ice, I was flying for a second time. Fortunately, I didn't drop tools and I was unhurt. I clipped into the anchor again, pulled

the rope and tied back in for another go. This time I reached the ice without any drama.

In the weeks since we had first been to the area, the ice had sublimated and delaminated considerably. While climbing, I complained to Will how bad it was, but kept climbing higher, looking for the safety of the anchor. As I got to where I expected to see the bolts, the ice was running out and there was a ledge. *Where are those damn bolts?* I called down to Will to confirm where he had seen fit to place the anchor. I didn't like his answer. The bolts where on the ledge above, which would mean climbing a smooth rock slab where there had been ice a week earlier. I carefully scratched up to the anchor and was lowered back down to Will. I told him about the run-out and lack of ice. With a smile, he said it would have been fine, since he had paid out about 10 metres of slack in a big loop so that I would be sure to clear the roof if I fell. As he put it, "nothing but net" (alluding to a basketball swooshing though the hoop without touching the rim). The Ghost and Waiparous are always full of adventure.



Nophobias in the Waiparous. Photo: Tim Banfield

Summary

Nophobias (M10+ WI4 130m, 5 pitches), Waiparous, Canadian Rockies.

FA: Pat Delaney, John Freeman, Will Gadd, Will Mayo, January 2013. (Note: Freeman, Gadd and Mayo have each redpointed all the pitches, but not in a continuous ascent.)

Gear: Two 80-metre ropes are recommended. All draws fixed and wooden belay seats are installed at all stations. Ascenders are useful if choosing to belay pitch two from the ground. Consider putting a third tool in the haul bag as a backup.

P1: M9, 30m. Start on right side of massive cave that overhangs by 50 metres below right-facing dihedral that contains a hand crack. Follow bolts to a two-bolt anchor just below the start of the big roof. The crux is at the end of the pitch.

P2: M10+, 25m. Consider belaying this pitch from the ground. Reach up into the first hueco and pull into the big slot for a no-hands rest. The climbing stays steep after that. Edges then seams connect multiple huecos in the roof. With creative footwork, good rests can be found. This pitch is very three-dimensional.

P3: M8, 20m. This is the easiest pitch but still packs a hit. Initial long moves are hard to see over the bulge before you can get your feet under you again.

P4: M9, 30m. A sustained endurance pitch that follows a rising traverse through several roofs with nothing but air below. The crux arrives at the final roof before the end of the pitch.

P5: M8 WI4, 25m. Step left from the belay and climb cracks through a roof. Follow more cracks to the right side of the ice (which can be dry and detached, requiring delicate climbing and a steady head). The final station will be visible on a bench on the right. The winds common to the area can sublimate the ice and leave only a smooth slab of rock before the two-bolt station.

Descent: From the last station you can be lowered to the belay. Rappel from top of pitch four with two 80-metre ropes to ground. It is possible to rappel from top of pitch three with two 70-metre ropes, but this will require some shenanigans, plus fixing a tag line to reverse the traverse on pitch four.

Choss Wrangling

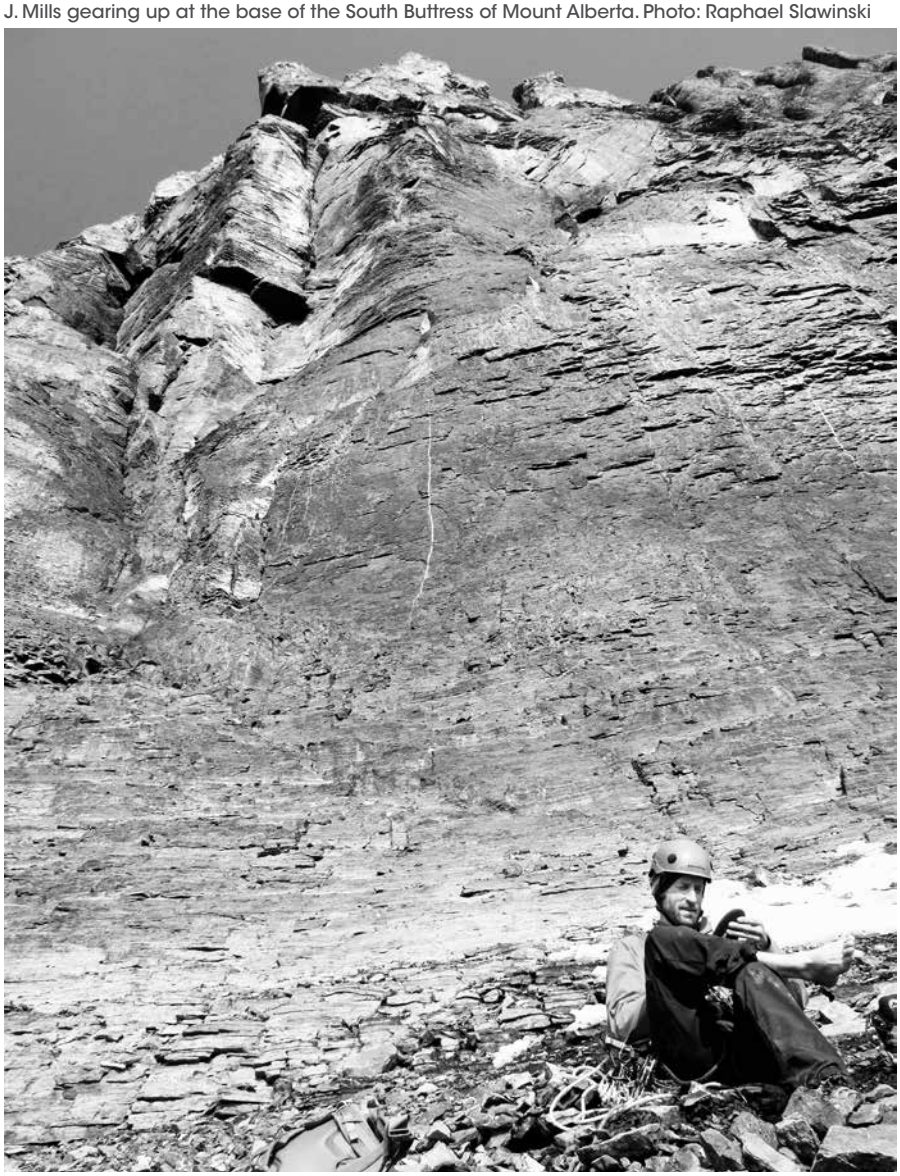
Raphael Slawinski

YOU WOULD THINK I'd have learned my lesson by now. After all, I've been climbing in the "Chossies" for more than 20 years. Yet a few times every year I manage to convince myself that, somehow, this buttress or that face will be different. I envision clean corners soaring upward, splitting acres of solid limestone. In my fantasies, I'm not scared to pull on loose rock above questionable gear; I'm merely, pleasantly challenged. Unfortunately, reality rarely bears much resemblance to such optimistic dreams. Most of the time, that reality is loose rock, bad protection and shitty climbing. But there's one thing I find up there every single time: adventure.

By the time August rolled around, I'd done nothing but clip bolts for two months. Sport climbing is addictive—it's fun and athletic, and the occasional success keeps you persevering through otherwise nearly constant failure. I'd managed to send a few projects and was getting close on a few others, so it was tempting just to keep at it. But I knew that eventually I'd regret it if I didn't head up into the bigger hills at least a few times. After all, August comes to the Rockies only once a year. And so I resigned myself to losing some hard-earned rock climbing fitness and went off choss wrangling.

"[T]he vast majority [of routes in the Rockies] are piles of crap that have few, if any, redeeming features." –Sean Dougherty, *Selected Alpine Climbs in the Canadian Rockies.*

J. Mills gearing up at the base of the South Buttress of Mount Alberta. Photo: Raphael Slawinski



MOUNT ALBERTA IS ONE of my all-time favourite peaks. For a few years, I had a streak going where I'd climb it at least once a year. I was shocked to realize this summer that it had been five years since I'd last slogged over Woolley Shoulder. It was time to remedy this situation.

On a pleasant afternoon in early August, J. Mills and I forded the muddy Sunwapta River and headed up Woolley Creek. The forecast was for a hot, sunny day, so it was an unpleasant surprise a couple of hours later to find ourselves hiking through freezing horizontal rain. I consoled myself with the thought that it could have been worse—we could have already been on the route. Fortunately, the rain and lightning let up while we crested the shoulder, only to return with fresh violence as soon as we shut the door of the hut behind us.

But at 5 a.m. the next morning the sky was full of stars. We choked back our oatmeal, washed it down with black tea and stepped out into the predawn chill. I was keen on the north face, but every single one we'd seen on our drive up the Icefields Parkway had been a mess of lingering winter snow and wet rock. That, plus Jay had already done it. Instead, we hatched a plan more in keeping with the midsummer heat. We would climb the steep south buttress and follow the entire ridge all the way

to the summit. Fun in the sun on good rock and all that.

Our first reality check came as we stood below the south buttress, craning our necks in search of a likely line. Each one looked overhanging, blank or loose—or all of the above. In the end, we settled on the least unlikely possibility, geared up, tied in and started up. Two pitches higher, we stood on a gravelly ledge and once again craned our necks, wondering which way to go. Getting to this point had been harder than expected, the black limestone proving both looser and steeper than it appeared. But now it looked like the relatively easy going section had come to an end. Lacking better options, we headed up the overhanging dihedral straight above. At least there was protection to be had.

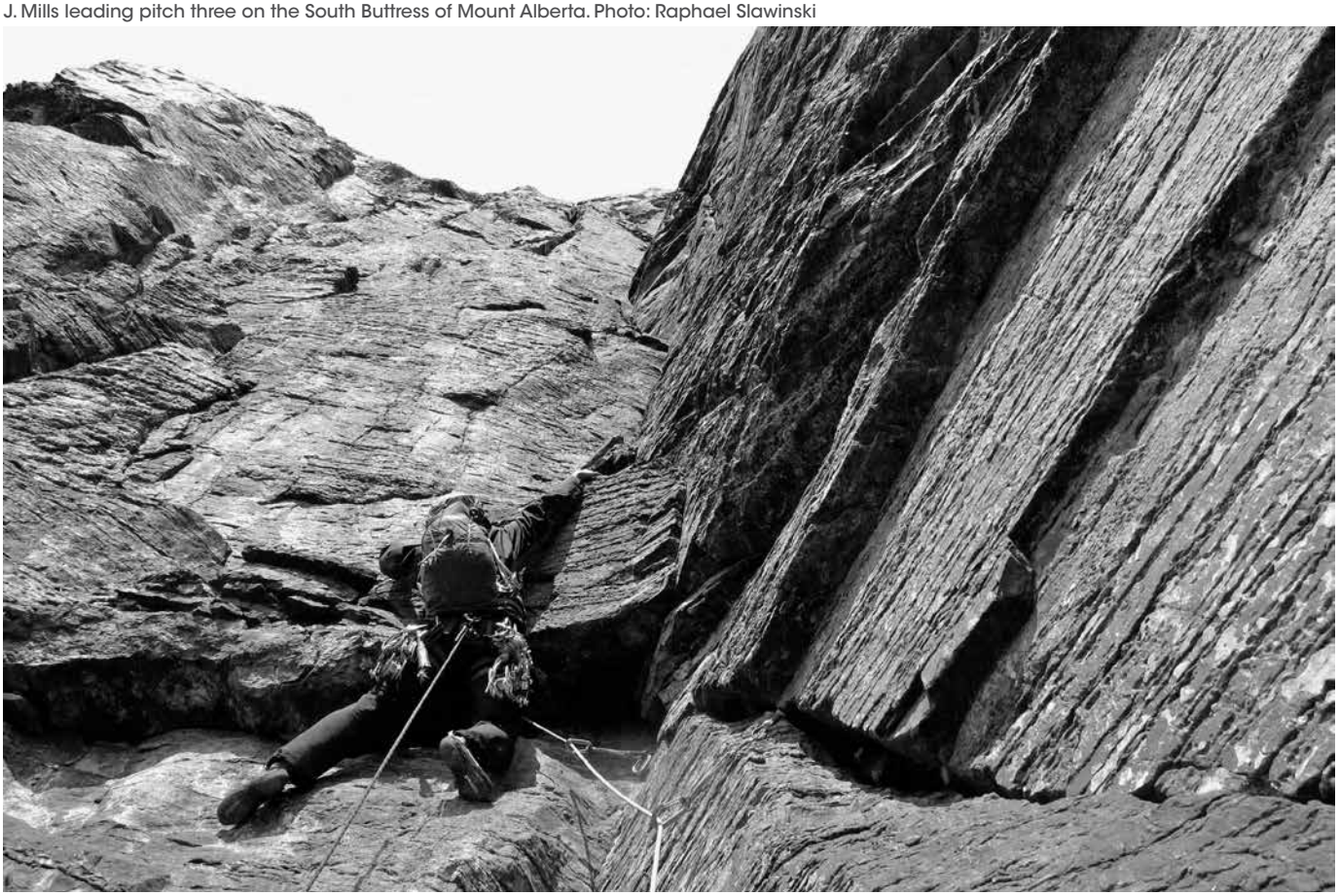
J. had the first charge, but after battling halfway up the unrelenting pitch, he pumped out and lowered off. I toproped to his high point, back-cleaning as I went. Promptly after I got out on the sharp end, a handhold crumbled and I sailed off for a spectacular (but clean) winger. This wouldn't do! Back on the rock I continued stemming and jamming with a little more discrimination. The climbing was actually proving to be surprisingly good, but this was the Rockies, not the Bugs, and the corner soon degenerated into loose blocks. Making a hard-to-reverse move out left, I headed off into no man's land. The remainder of the pitch was frightening and I'd rather not talk about it. When I finally hung back on the anchor, the sights and sounds of the icefalls, moraines and streams rushed back in, filling the silent void of complete concentration.

The angle kicked back above, and for a while we were treated to some spectacular but moderate travel up Mount Alberta's spine. Our enjoyment came to an abrupt end a short way before where the normal Japanese Route gains the crest. A blank overhanging step blocked further progress up the ridge. A couple of diagonal rappels landed us on the normal route. To our dismay, it was already six o'clock. Three hard pitches had taken us an embarrassing eight hours to climb. We contemplated ditching the packs and making a dash for the top, but neither of us relished the prospect of stumbling down in the dark. Instead we threaded the ropes through the bleached tat and continued toward the valley. We even made it back to the hut and a freeze-dried dinner before dark. But the creature comforts, while initially satisfying, soon gave way to gnawing regrets—regrets of cheating ourselves out of skipping along the summit ridge while the sun disappeared in the west.

Summary

First ascent (not to summit) of the South Buttress (IV 5.10+R), Mt. Alberta. FA: J. Mills, Raphael Slawinski, August 9, 2012.

J. Mills leading pitch three on the South Buttress of Mount Alberta. Photo: Raphael Slawinski



The McKibbin Route

Brandon Pullan

THE AA BUTTRESS of Mount Athabasca is sort of a strange cliff. It is back-dropped by some of the most photographed peaks in the Rockies. Athabasca and Andromeda soar from the Columbia Icefield with classic lines, such as the North Face of Athabasca, Andromeda Strain and Asteroid Alley. This is what makes the West Buttress sort of strange. Climbers have been walking past it for decades, likely not paying much attention to its potential, while plodding off into bigger terrain.

Raphael Slawinski and Pete Takeda climbed the West Chimney route back in the day, and then Sean Isaac and Shawn Huisman climbed a chimney/crack system (named The Abdominal Drain), which went left instead of right from the base of the West Chimney.

Having finally noticed this outstanding crag, and with rumours circulating of repeats of both routes, I headed up with Jim Elzinga. It was a poor choice for my first route back after a wounded wing. We went down. On the way, I noticed another line/gash starting at the base of the gully system. Two weeks later, I returned to check it out with Darren Vonk. Since my first climb with Darren on the South Face of Mount Robson in 2010, I noticed his drive and stoke, not only for alpine climbing but for adventure and getting up high in the Rockies. Urs Kallen always says, "If you want to do good climbs, you have to climb with good guys." That's one reason I always manage good climbs when with Darren.

A mutual friend of mine and Darren's recently passed away on Mount Hector in March 2013. Niels McKibbin was an active skier and climber in the Rockies, and a friend to many in the community. I had only shared a few moments with him at crags around the Bow Valley, but on a Bugaboo trip last spring, we had planned to climb The Big Hose. Weather had turned for the worse during our plan-making and the trip was cancelled. My impression of Niels was of a man who not only cared dearly about his family and friends but of his time in the mountains.

The AA Buttress of Mount Athbasca: (1) The McKibbon Route, (2) The Abdominal Drain, (3) The West Chimney. Photo: Brandon Pullan

Since moving to Canmore nearly a decade ago, I have known more than 10 people who have passed away in the hills from Alaska to Patagonia. Each is mutually exclusive from the other and it never gets easier. What never gets easier? Losing a friend. Trying to understand why such great people are gone so young. The hollowed-out moment of recognzing the reality of my passion, sport and lifestyle and its dangers. This winter seemed to be bad for injuries, from ears torn off, concussions, broken bones, to shattered hips, dislocations, infections and paralysis caused from icefall, paragliding, travelling, climbing frozen waterfall, snowboard crashes, bike wipeouts, crevasse falls, and so on. The year's list of patients grew longer by the week. We all play outside in extreme environments and dangerous arenas, and no matter how much we want everyone to come home OK, at the end of the day, sometimes they don't.

When Darren and I topped out on our new route on the West Buttress, we sat silently atop. I gazed off in the direction of Snow Dome where, three months prior, I had fallen into a crevasse and dislocated my shoulder. Darren murmured, "That was my first new route. What should we call it?" The route was impeccable and the weather was the best of the season. The day was perfect. I thought about the trip Niels and I never took to the Bugaboos. I refocused to the present and answered, "McKibbin. The McKibbon Route." He laughed to himself and nodded, "I was thinking the exact same thing."

In all my years of climbing new routes and losing friends, I had never named a route in honour of someone. The place, the climb, the timing and the partner all lined up perfectly, and we both had Niels on our mind.

Darren Vonk traversing on pitch four of The McKibbin Route. Photo: Brandon Pullan

Summary

The McKibbin Route (II M5), the AA Buttress of Mount Athabasca, Columbia Icefield. FA: Brandon Pullan, Darren Vonk, April 22, 2013.

Approach: Hike up open scree and snow slopes directly above the Snocoach station to the base of the narrow snow gully the reaches into the upper AA Buttress and is the start of The Adominal Drain and the West Chimney. From the bottom of the main gully, climb left 30 metres up a snow slope to the base of an obvious crack.

P1: M3, 70m. Start left but then traverse into the main crack, ending at a snow slope.

P2: M4, 70m. Avoid snow gully left and climb up the chimney/crack on right to a snow slope. Traverse left to the base of upper corner.

P3: M4, 35m. Climb up the corner on small holds to an interesting chockstone that deposits you in a cave. Belay at the back.

P4: M5, 35m. Avoid the steep, loose-looking corner by taking the aesthetic face out left. Clip a high fixed piton then commit to a thin traverse left (crux) into a right-facing crack up to ridge.

Descent: Climb directly downslope heading for the road until a rappel anchor on a ledge is found. Rappel down 35 metres to the slope below.

Gear: Three KBs, cams to #3, 70-metre rope.

Roza Ridge

Glenn Reisenhofer

MARC AND I SCHEDULED a day to climb. Where to climb, we did not know—but that mattered little. A day climbing with an old buddy is always fun; the climbing would sort itself out. By the time our day arrived Marc had ventured up King Creek and had scoped out a line for us to try. Our objective would be the unclimbed northwest ridge of Mount Brock. As it turned out, mystery climbing comes with its surprises.

Many times on our approach we found ourselves crossing King Creek. Being June, the average height of the fords was above my knees. Being of less height than me, Marc was soaked to the crotch. We soon found ourselves heading up a low-angled grassy slope towards a narrow gully that contained a long snow slope leading upwards. The piton hammer soon became an ice axe. The slope eventually led to easy scrambling terrain near our intended ridge. At a convenient ledge, the rope came out and the game started.

The first pitch followed an easy corner to the buttress edge. Marc found great protection on the second pitch, which took the only viable line to the left of the buttress. I stubbornly refused to put on my rock shoes. Five metres into the pitch, I prayed for sticky rubber. The third pitch was similar to climbing easy routes at Wasootch Slabs, but the rock was in a deplorable state and the protection was becoming sparse and difficult to obtain. I was glad my toes were now covered in stealth rubber.

The fourth pitch brought us to the openness of the ridge. A smooth, flat face reared above us—a sport climber's dream, if it were laced with bolts. We, however, had to climb where protection was offered. Marc carefully linked the sections of features and tiny cracks on pitch five. The protection was skinny but manageable; however, the useable holds consisted mostly of decaying rock. One had to determine which handhold to use and how to wisely use it. At some point higher up, Marc was getting pumped. The fragile environment was starting to extract a price.

"I don't think I can lead this pitch, Glenn," he admitted. I was silent. Marc eventually continued upwards. A few metres higher, the old wrench-cum-bolt driver started carving a tiny hole in the rock in preparation of becoming part of a belay station. A few more minutes and pitch five was complete.

Looking up at the sixth pitch, Marc nonchalantly stated, "You've done this before, Glenn, you can do it now."

Appearing above us was an easy-looking corner, but its decoration of loose rocks and blocks didn't have me revelling in joy. I balanced the stuffing of protection with careful movements so as to not drop limestone directly on Marc. Above the short roof, the quality of the rock remained low but the angle kicked back. We had made it to a false summit.

Pitches seven through nine weaved along fangs of rock with remnants of snow. Down climbing and ridge traversing delivered us to a tiny col. The summit was just above us now. This was very fortunate, for the clouds above the cairn resembled a ready-to-burst aquarium.

We had only ventured 50 metres away from the summit when the rain started to fall. This was no Rockies' shower but a torrential downpour. We could see no more than a few metres ahead in the thick cloud cover. Which way to descend was anyone's guess. In my mind the descent was easy. I had been to the top before with Jeff Everett in 1995. We had climbed Mount Blane first and had decided to run up Brock, too. We even left the rope at the col. Now, we had all the gear money could buy, but hadn't a clue as to which way was the best to descend. Marc and I looked at each other. Time to get into survival mode.

Metre by metre we wormed our way along and down the south ridge, sometimes downclimbing, sometimes rappelling. Our cold numb hands had difficulty with the gear. Our bodies began to shiver to stay warm. At one station, Marc stated, "We're going to be OK," as if to reassure himself, but somehow I felt that he was questioning our situation.

After several hours of descent, the heavy deluge stopped just before we arrived at the Blane-Brock col. We were slightly wasted from our effort, but smiles returned when we packed the rope up and headed down the grassy slopes towards King Creek. Marc had worn a pair of leather gloves during our entire descent. The rain-soaked gloves had lightly stained his hands a yellowy-brown colour. As we toasted each other with our preplaced beers, Marc's hands looked like they had been stuffed up a cow's rear end. This added greatly to the mirth we were now experiencing back down at the creek.

The Northwest Face route was climbed in June 1977 by Glen Boles and party. Their route followed a large snowy bowl and topped out between the summit and a minor false summit to the west that we had reached via our northwest ridge. They descended the tight couloir/gully immediately south of the col, whereas we descended the south ridge. I'm not sure which descent is better, but ours was the most memorable part of the route.

Summary

Roza Ridge (III 5.8), Northwest Buttress of Mount Brock, Opal Range, Kananaskis Group, Canadian Rockies. FA: Glenn Reisenhofer, Marc Schaller, June 22, 2012.

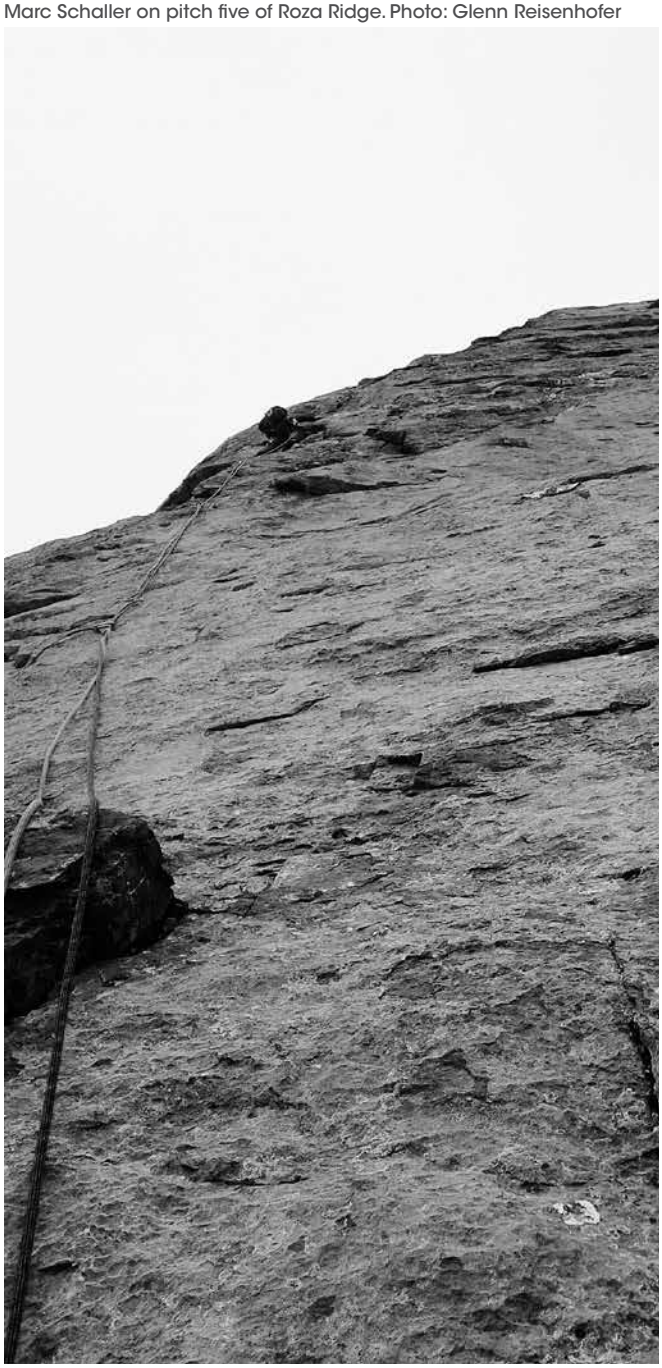
P1: 5.2, 50m. Climb up largest corner to belay on the edge of the buttress.

P2: 5.7, 40m. Climb the corner to a bulge, which is passed on climber's left (excellent pro) to gain upper corner system. This leads to a large detached block below small wall. Piton and nut belay.

P3: 5.6, 40m. Climb over a small wall to a slab trending climber's left to a poor belay (pitons) in a hanging corner with a large, loose block located on the right. It is hard to find good anchor gear.
P4: 5.5, 35m. Continue up the corner on better gear until a break to the right leads to the buttress edge then back left to a short corner below a large slab (gear belay).
P5: 5.8, 40m. Ascend the slab following climbable features, first leftward then straight up to broken, orange cracks to a single bolt and small cam belay. Basically, climb up 40 metres connecting any available pro while avoiding poor rock.
P6: 5.7, 55m. Climb a corner and crack though a very rotten bulge directly above belay. Gain a steep wall higher up then finally ledges and a false summit.
P7: 4th class, 30m. Scramble past the false summit along the ridge until above an obvious downclimb with exposure (cam belay).
P8: 5.4, 45m. Downclimb the ridgeline then across, up and over various fins and fangs until at the col between the summits (fixed pin to protect second on the downclimb).
P9: 5.3, 70m. Ascend from the col directly to summit over various slabby terrain.

Roza Ridge on Mount Brock. Photo: Marc Schaller

Marc Schaller on pitch five of Roza Ridge. Photo: Glenn Reisenhofer



Yin and Yang

Glenn Reisenhofer

THE BOW VALLEY PARKWAY is an amazing road in Banff National Park, with convenient pullouts to view the scenery. One of these particular stopping points is unmarked by conventional exhibition and picnic signs. The white north face of Mount Stanley is your marker. This is the only paved stopping point along the Bow Valley where one can witness the grandeur of this face. For many years my sights were constantly focused on the scene across the river. Behind me stood Castle Mountain, lonely and ignored, until the day the binoculars finally broke free of Stanley.

This part of Castle differs from its well-known counterpart to the east, for it has no lower cliff band. As I scanned the rock above, a large chockstone kept grabbing my attention. Eventually, I noticed an interesting line running up left of the chockstone. It looked like a pleasant face merging into a ridge with a headwall at the top. I suppose this is one of the features of climbing that make our sport fun. Would the route go or not? Will that headwall allow us to sneak around the right side? I suppose we'll have to go look and see.

From that point on, my gaze no longer viewed across the valley to Stanley but focused on Castle instead. First, I would have to find the chockstone welded into the bottom of the gully to the right of the route. This was my marker. This chockstone would be easy to find once up against the cliff. Now an adventurous partner was needed. Marc Schaller and I had climbed on Mount Brock in June (see page 116). How about Castle in August? Marc agreed and it was off to scan the route.

From the pullout, we started up in the dark through thin lodgepole pines, encountering no difficulties to the base of the climb. The large corner that I had spied for the start of the route was somewhat loose. We chose to climb on the open face to the right of the corner. Good protection and decent rock delivered us to an easy open corner with a short, easy overlap. To our left was a slab that Marc traversed left to an open bay. Marc found the rock suspect above the bay. He did not fancy that area and climbed up its left side to a good open stance out of view.

At this point we hit the ridge below the headwall. I led off climbing easily along the left side of the ridge to a very large leaning block that was perched directly on the ridge. Then the headwall started to rear up. I poked my nose over the ridge. My heart sank. The terrain on the far side of the ridge was steeper than anticipated. One option existed. A ramp led around the right side of the headwall. Perhaps this would take us to the top. We hoped it would, for it was our only chance. Marc's lead found that the ramp worked like a charm and snuck us perfectly around the overhanging headwall. Luck was on our side today.

As I belayed Marc up the sixth pitch, my mind began to wander. This route was quite different from our last climb together. The climbing on Mount Brock was difficult, if not dangerous. A dark element, just like the clouds, hovered over the route that day. Today was sunny and dry, the rock was relatively sound and we were enjoying ourselves. The rope paid out and I continued to reflect on Brock. Contrasts abound. On Brock, we relied on years of experience to properly deal with crappy, insecure rock. On Castle, most of the rock was pleasant, if not somewhat clean. There was never a serious moment on Castle. As the ropes reached the end of the pitch, the yin and yang of new routing became more apparent. Sometimes you find a new line that has the positive elements you're looking for, sometimes not.

Easy terrain led to a very clean and obvious corner with whitish rock. The last rope-stretching pitch dumped me onto the scree above the corner. An easy low-angled gully led to the summit block above. We chose the simplest way up the summit blocks via a gully to the right. The line had worked like magic, and within minutes we stepped onto the highest and holy summit of Castle Mountain. The blue copper-stained rocks that lay near the cairn matched the colour of the sky. As we relaxed and enjoyed the view, our eyes took in the many familiar peaks that we had played on for so long. With the prospect of an easy descent ahead of us, peace reigned.

A glacier no longer exists in the bowl to the north, only a snow slope that is easy to descend. A short rap dropped off into the exciting bowl between Castle and TV Peak. Exquisite scenery ruled the descent. Every aspect of the descent is surrounded by huge impeccable walls of grey limestone—a rock climber's dreamland. Marc and I speculated that this would be an excellent location for a future hut. We saw very little evidence of others passing this way. We knew that a variety of high-quality mixed and ice climbs surrounded this awe-inspiring arena. Somewhere high up, a secretive Brian Webster route clung to the impressive walls of Castle Mountain. We could only guess to where the route had travelled.

Summary

Yin and Yang (II 5.7), southwest face, Castle Mountain. FA: Glenn Reisenhofer, Marc Schaller, August 10, 2012.

Approach: Park at an unmarked pullout on the Bow Valley Parkway (Highway 1A), with great view of Mount Stanley's north face. Travel easily through light trees, aiming towards large chockstone wedge in bottom of gully. The route starts to the left of chockstone, approximately five metres to the right of corner.

P1: 5.7, 50m. Climb an open face with cracks on fairly decent rock to a stepped ledge.

P2: 5.4, 60m. Climb an easy gully to a

slight overlap. Beyond this, climb the natural line upwards.
P3: 5.3, 20m. Traverse left easily across the wall to large bay with a sloping ledge and scree. The top of the wall gets steeper.
P4: 5.6, 50m. Climb the left side of the bay to avoid precarious blocks. A short, difficult bit leads to a good ledge out of sight on the ridgeline.
P5: 5.5, 50m. Climb the cracked wall above the belay and easily follow the left side of the ridge to a huge leaning block on the ridge. Belay higher up on a steeper wall.
P6: 5.4, 60m. Above the belay is a steep headwall. Sneak right to an easy ramp around and out of sight.
P7: 5.7, 70m. Easily climb up and slightly right to a very obvious clean corner (good protection). Belay on top of corner on scree and blocks to right. An easy gully to right leads to the summit ridge.

Yin and Yang on Castle Mountain. Photo: Glenn Reisenhofer

Obscure Climbs

Eamonn Walsh

WHEN HANS FUHRER, AJ Osthiemer and Jean Weber summitted Mount Quincy on July 26, 1927, they were amongst the first mountaineers to explore this vast and untouched mountain range known as the Canadian Rockies. Initially, they summitted the northwest peak, and after building a cairn, the weather cleared enough for them to realize that the true summit was the broad snow dome a little ways to the east. Unfortunately, we did not know this on our ascent of the Northwest Ridge. With gorgeous weather we could see the main summit, so we stayed low bypassing the northwest summit. We had hoped to find a 75-year-old cairn with perhaps a note, unlikely as that may have been, from the first ascensionists. Of course, we never found any sign of it.

Mount Quincy (3,160 metres) is an impressive massif of a mountain rearing 1,800 metres above Fortress Pass and the large Fortress Lake. Carl Diehl, Dana Ruddy and I did the 24-kilometre approach on September 21. We used bikes to speed up the process, which allowed us to reach our bivy for the night by late afternoon. The rest of the day was spent lounging in above-normal autumn temperatures with beer cooling in the cold waters of the Chaba River and a great view of our ridge soaring high above us. We hit the hay early in anticipation of the next day.

We left well before first light, bushwhacking steeply for approximately 340 metres to an incredible amphitheatre of purplish quartzite and hanging glaciers. It is in places like these where one often wonders if any person has ever visited this spot before. Who knows, but for sure it would not have been many. We scrambled up to the crest of our ridge, reaching it at about the 2,000-metre mark. From here we began scrambling in earnest; the solid quartzite was now way below us and from here on in it was more typical going. The positions were great. There were several exposed low-5th-class sections and higher up we pulled out the rope for two pitches. Below the final and impressive gendarme, we took a ledge system left to the snow slopes of the upper ridge. A 45-degree snow slope brought us to the snowy ridge crest. We followed the now broad and gently rising snow spine upwards all the way to the summit, reaching it 8.5 hours after leaving our bivy.

Dana Ruddy on the upper ridge of Mount Quincy, Chaba Group. Photo: Eamonn Walsh

On our descent, we found it difficult to tell which choss gully was the line of the first ascent so we just picked one and ended up having to do only one rappel. A traverse to a snow gully followed by a knee-jarring affair through an impressive boulder field finally brought us to treeline. It was here that we found an old rusted can that made us wonder if it could belong to the first-ascent team. In re-reading Osthemier's account of their climb, they did indeed stop in the vicinity for a late evening meal and to dry out their clothes by a small campfire.

We finally made it down to the Chaba River after a four-hour descent and finished with a simple flat walk back to our bivy site. It should be mentioned that Carl almost disappeared while negotiating a narrow but much deeper-than-it-appeared channel of water. The unfolding scene gave Dana and I our best laugh of the trip. The next morning we departed early, allowing us to be back in Jasper to enjoy beers in summer-like conditions later that day.

About two weeks later, Steve Holeczi and I visited the obscure northern end of the Royal Group to a mountain called Mount Queen Mary (3,235 metres). We almost did not go as an autumn storm had dumped a bunch of white stuff on the mountains above Canmore—but Steve figured it was upslope, so we decided to take a look.

We left town very early for the long drive up logging roads to the Ralph Lake trailhead where our day of slogging would begin. It was a steep hike up to the lake, 850 metres in 4.7 kilometres. As the day started to dawn and we neared the alpine, it became obvious that Steve had been correct—there was very little new snow on the west side of the Divide. Once at the lake, we continued up to a col above and to the east. The col was at 2,340 metres, an elevation gain of just more than 1,000 metres from the trailhead. Not bad for a morning's work. Our objective was obscured in cloud leftover from the storm, but we knew we had to go down about 150 metres to the base of the face and our gully.

The gully was good névé, which allowed us to move quickly, and at the top of the gully, an easy mixed pitch slowed us briefly but gave access to the basin of the upper face where we could continue our brisk pace. We did a rather unaesthetic traverse left to reach the upper part of the northeast face, which was first climbed by F. Beckey, D. McCarty and J. Kanzler in September 1975. This ended up being the nicest part of the climb—a 450-metre slope of 45-degree snow and ice. We topped out at the col between Mount Prince John and Queen Mary in whiteout conditions. There, we dropped our packs and continued up the south ridge to Queen Mary's summit. We descended the west face, slogged over a col, ran into a grizzly and her two cubs (which forced us to take a highline detour to reach the lake), and then on downwards to the truck. It had been quite the slog—15 hours on the move in a beautiful and remote-feeling area.

Summary

Northwest Ridge (IV 5.6,1100m), Mount Quincy, Chaba Group. FA: Carl Diehl, Dana Ruddy, Eamonn Walsh, September 21-23, 2012.

North Gully/Northeast Face (IV 5.7, 1000m), Mount Queen Mary, Royal Group. FA: Steve Holeczi, Eamonn Walsh, October 9, 2012.

Steve Holeczi after the traverse and at the start of the Northeast Face/Beckey Route on Mount Queen Mary, Royal Group. Photo: Eamonn Walsh

Climbs South of Tsar

Art Maki and Roger Wallis

SOUTH OF TSAR MOUNTAIN there is a group of peaks that are not very high, but offer some challenging climbs for those who like to explore seldom-visited regions. This is an area that is difficult to access, so most visitors today arrive via helicopter. The area encompasses at least 20 peaks higher than 2,500 metres, along with several small glaciers and the larger Odell Glacier, which is located just east of the highest peak, Mount Odell. In this account, elevations and grid references are taken from the British Columbia 1:20,000 scale TRIM maps 083C001 and 083C002.

Prior to 2010, the region near Mount Odell had been visited by only two groups: Vic Bell and Doug Miller in 1992 when making the first ascent of Odell; David Jones and party in 2007. Both groups climbed a few other lesser peaks. The second ascent of Odell was made by a party from the 2011 GMC camp northwest of Tsar (see *CAJ*, 2012, vol. 95, p. 119).

For the past three years, the authors have played tag among the peaks south of and within 12 kilometres of Tsar Mountain. It all began in 2010 when Art Maki, his daughter and grandsons, and guide Conrad Janzen prearranged a meeting with Roger Wallis and Bill McKenzie at a camp located above and east of the Odell Glacier (GR 475652). Their climbs from that trip were described in an article titled "Not Rooked This Time" in the 2011 *CAJ*. That article provided a map of the northern part of the area with most of the peaks being numbered. Those numbers are also referred to in this article. In 2011, Roger and a group of Toronto climbers ascended Mount Joyce to erect a memorial for their friend and Alpine Club of Canada member Wally Joyce. The team's approach was from a different camp (GR 434648) than in 2010, 7.5 kilometres due south and one kilometre west of Tsar (see *CAJ* 2012, vol. 95, pp. 122-124). In spite of inclement weather, the Toronto climbers also made two other first ascents, as described in that article.

The weather cleared somewhat just as they were turning the campsite over to Art Maki, his family and Conrad Janzen. The Maki group made ascents of two of the peaks that had been climbed by the Toronto group, and added two more first ascents.

In summer 2012, Art Maki and guide Tom Wolfe flew into the same general area, setting a cache for a camp on the terraced hillside about 300 metres above the lakes at the terminus of the Odell Glacier. They then flew a reconnaissance around peak 4 and landed on the glacier south of that peak at an elevation of 2,390 metres and above the Odell Glacier (GR 452651). Originally, they had thought that the ridge south and southwest of that peak would be the easy route, but after a brief inspection from the helicopter they decided that the southeast ridge would be easier. The next day, July 22, they left the glacier and started up the southeast ridge of the peak. Since that ridge had lots of loose rock and 81-year-old Art Maki was moving slowly, they turned back after ascending more than one-third of the ridge. By making an early descent, the two were able to strike camp and head down the glacier to the cache camp (GR 477631) at an elevation of approximately 2,000 metres.

The next two days were marked by torrential rain that required moving the flooded tent to a dryer location. Then followed three days of excellent weather that allowed Maki and Wolfe to make three more first ascents as described below. The best climb was made on the last day before the helicopter came in as scheduled, in spite of worsening weather, on July 28.

Shortly after the Maki party left the area, Roger and Jim Lundy flew into a campsite several kilometres west of the Maki camp and alongside two lakes (GR 433628) at an elevation of 2,290 metres. Roger and Jim made four climbs, three of which were first ascents. They attempted two other climbs, but they were discouraged by the friability of the rock and the consequent lack of protection.

The western-most mountains, peaks 2822 (#14) and 2436, are formed of massive quartzite, which provides fine climbing. To the east of these hills, there is a zone of interlayered thin units of quartzite, shale and shaley limestone. This is found at its worst on peak 2731 (#18). To the east lies an exceedingly friable unit of brown limestone found at peak 2716 (#13). Further east lie massive units of grey and black limestone, which form Mount Odell and Joyce and the remaining mountains lying immediately west and southwest of the Odell Glacier. These hills have sharp ridges in some places and steep snow elsewhere. Sometimes the rock forms ledge systems that are easily climbed but exposed and not easily protected. We found that various sizes of cams were often useful for providing good belay anchors. The climbing that was accomplished was mostly 3rd- and 4th-class scrambling. The rock is easily broken and therefore the ledges often held loose stones and required some effort at gardening. The friable nature of the rock also required careful testing of holds.

Summary

Peak 2686 (F, GR 428656, #17). Climbed via snow-filled southeast couloir that culminates just a few metres southwest of the summit. FA: Don Chaisson, Paul Geddes, Willa Harasym. Bill McKenzie, Roger Wallis, July 24, 2011. 2nd ascent: Conrad Janzen (guide), Jonah Joughin, Art Maki, Holt Maki, Mai Maki, July 31, 2011.

Peak 2822 "The Tantalizer" (F, GR 445621, #14). First ascent via the glacier draining northwest from the peak and thence following the ridge in

a southeasterly direction to the summit, by Conrad Janzen (guide), Jonah Joughin, Art Maki, Holt Maki, Mai Maki, August 1, 2011. Second ascent by Jim Lundy and Roger Wallis, August 8, 2012, from the twin lakes camp via snow slopes on the southwest face of the peak, and then following the first-ascent ridge to the summit.

Peak 2830 "The Courtier" (F, GR 454638, #6). First ascent via the glacier flowing northwest on the west side of the peak, and then up snowfields on the southwest side of the peak to the south ridge, which was followed to the summit. FA: Conrad Janzen (guide), Jonah Joughin, Art Maki, Holt Maki, Mai Maki, August 3, 2011.

Peak 2716 (F, GR 446633, #12). First ascent via the glacier flowing northwest on the east side of the peak. The first-ascent party ascended in fog on snow and then rock to the top of point #12a, and then proceeded on snow then rock to the higher point. FA: Paul Geddes, Willa Harasym, Bill McKenzie, Roger Wallis, July 29, 2011. 2nd ascent: Conrad Janzen (guide), Jonah Joughin, Art Maki, Holt Maki, Mai Maki, August 5, 2011. Note: The second party bypassed #12a.

Peak 2,570 (F, GR 463632). From camp, ascend snow to the base of the southeast buttress. Cross the bergschrund and gain upward right-trending rock ledges, which are followed to the upper snowfield that was ascended to the top of the ridge. The ridge was first followed southeast to the top of the buttress, and then reversed and followed to the northwest to the highest point on the ridge. Beyond the summit, the ridge was followed to the col just northwest of the summit, and then the glacier below the east side of the ridge was followed back to camp. FA: Art Maki, Tom Wolfe (guide), July 25, 2012.

Peak 2666 (F, GR 480617). From camp, ascend glacier lying to the northwest of the peak and ascend to col northwest of Peak 2,550. The southwest ridge was followed to the summit going over several high points. FA: Art Maki, Tom Wolfe (guide), July 26, 2012.

Peak 2734 (PD, GR 456643, #5). From camp above the terminus of the Odell Glacier, follow a higher-level glacier to base of the southeast ridge of peak. Climb the knife-edge ridge to the summit snowfield on the southeast side of the peak. Ascend steep snow to the summit. FA: Art Maki, Tom Wolfe (guide), July 27, 2012.

The east aspect of peak 2666. Photo: Mai Maki

Peak 2530 "Col Peak" (F, GR 436618). From twin lakes camp, ascend the second couloir to the south and continue to the col. Climb the northeast ridge to the summit. FA: Jim Lundy, Roger Wallis, August 7, 2012.

Peak 2436 "Black Sphinx" (F, GR 429620). From twin lakes camp, take the first couloir to the south then traverse to the base of the east ridge, which is followed to top. The descent made use of the second couloir to gain easier access to camp. FA: Jim Lundy, Roger Wallis, August 9, 2012.

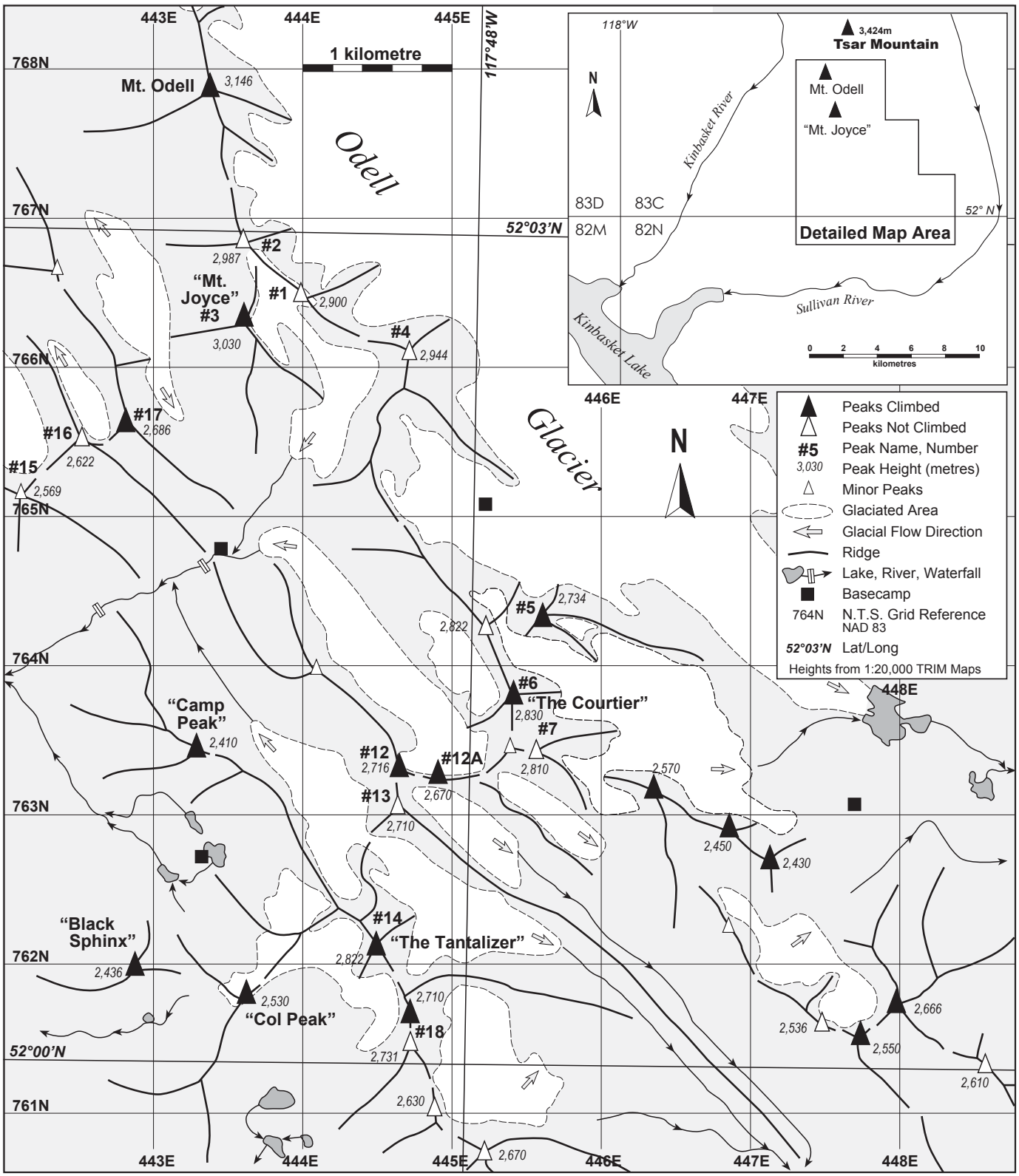
Peak 2410 "Camp Peak" (F, GR 432635). From twin lakes camp, head north to southeast ridge of the peak and follow ridge to the northwest to top. FA: Jim Lundy, Roger Wallis, August 10, 2012.

Peak 2731 (GR 447615, #18). Attempted on August 11, 2012, by Jim Lundy and Roger Wallis. Ascend the first couloir south of the twin lakes camp, cross below the southwest slopes of peak 2822 (#14) to the col beyond its southeast ridge. From the col, climb the ridge south towards peak 2731 along a spectacular, steep ridge with multiple towers and gaps. However, beyond the main subsidiary summit ("The Brown Tower", 2,710 metres), the rock becomes increasingly friable, shattered and broken, and lacked good protection, so we did not continue.

Peak 2710 (GR 447631, #13). Attempted on August 12, 2012, by Jim Lundy and Roger Wallis. From the twin lakes camp, cross the ridge to the northeast and descend to the glacier leading southeast to peak 2822 (#14). Follow the glacier to the col at its head. We attempted the southwest ridge. The initial ridge consists of disaggregated shale, above which is an overhanging cliff of shaley limestone. We were unable to organize any reasonable protection so abandoned the attempt.

The highest peaks in this area that seem to remain unclimbed are: peak 2900 (GR 439664, #1); peak 2987 (GR 435668, #2); peak 2944 (GR 447661, #4); peak 2810 (GR 456634, #7); peak 2710 (GR 447631, #13); peak 2569 (GR 421651, #15); peak 2622 (GR425655, #16); peak 2731 (GR 447615, #18); peak 2670 (GR 452607); peak 2630 (GR 449610); and peak 2610 (GR 486613).

The view looking north from near the summit of peak 2716: (1) Mount Joyce, (2) Mount Odell, (3) unclimbed peak 2944, (4) Tsar Mountain. Photo: Art Maki



RHW, October 2012

South of Tsar

Rocky Mountains

British Columbia (83C/4)

Mount Mary Sioui Circuit

Glenn Reisenhofer

"How did you guys come up with the name Mount Mary Sioui?" asks Steve. Liam and I look blankly at each other. Neither Liam nor I could remember. Long ago we investigated the upper reaches of the Waputik Glacier. At the top of the glacier we had to ascend the northeast ridge of this unnamed peak for a few hundred metres to access the Balfour Glacier. Somehow, this peak became known to us as Mount Mary Sioui.

Three times I had skied past the lower reaches of this fine peak. The top lay only a few hundred metres away, but we were always in a hurry with other plans and dreams in our noggins. The first time we tried to ascend this peak, conditions wouldn't allow us to get anywhere close. The easiest way to get to the summit would be from the Scott Duncan Hut, over a pass and across the Balfour Glacier. We, however, had to find a new path, a special way in which to commemorate the peak.

We put our minds together and came up with a plan for a direct assault. We would ski across Hector Lake and up Hector Gorge to near the top of the Balfour Glacier. Right near the top of the glacier sits a lonely peak waiting for skiers to visit. Mary would love to have your company.

With considerable luck we managed to get our acts together and start the trip. The avalanche hazard was stable, the overnight temperatures were cooler and we had a strong team of four ski bums. Skiing across the never-ending Hector Lake took its toll on Liam's ankles. Regardless as to how well-prepared he was for blisters, Liam started to suffer. No taping job would work to fix his heels. The snow became quite sloppy once we reached the far end of the lake. As we struggled along the flat braided area, two ptarmigans greeted us and quickly hurried away. In the timber, Steve found the exact spot where we camped on a previous trip.

Kevin woke us up at 4 a.m. the following morning. Ouch! After a couple of cups of coffee and breakfast, I was out of camp before the others. The travelling was incredibly fast at that time in the morning. The snow surface was bulletproof. I could see the gang behind me as I pulled into the tight canyon of Hector Gorge (GR 393142, Hector Lake 82 N/9). I was at the top of the canyon crux just as Kevin entered. Once we were all above the crux, I almost got schmucked by a large hunk of frozen snow. Above me was a small gully packed full of snow. A section of the gully had released and landed a few metres away from me. Liam helplessly witnessed the entire event as if in slow motion.

We didn't need to put on our harnesses for we never ventured onto the Balfour Glacier. We mostly followed a lateral moraine feature, which turned into an open, easy slope all the way to the summit of Mount Mary Sioui (GR 422115). We dropped the packs and headed up, celebrated and enjoyed the extensive views. A wondrous ski back down to our packs was followed by an even nicer one down to the col (GR 426122). Not willing to let up too soon, the skiing remained great all the way down towards Turquoise Lake. We had to take care as the snow was getting wet and heavy again. Time to take a break from the sun. Once we reached the far end of the lake, none of us could move, all quite tired from the baking sun.

Camping at noon had certain benefits. We had plenty of time to relax in the sun and check out our descent route. Our plan was to rappel down the headwall towards Margaret Lake. We could easily walk to a fresh water source and scope out the rappel. Kevin was weirded out by being near the cliff edge. After all, we were at the edge of a cliff with a big slope above us. Nice place to sneak a view though. The descent looked promising.

The alarm went off at 4:30 a.m. —another early start. My body automatically took steps to get the stove going in the vestibule. Why couldn't we have a coffee maker with a set alarm? Wouldn't the mornings be easier and friendlier? After breakfast, the ball got rolling and we started to rap. If we had crampons we wouldn't have needed the rope for our first rappel. The next rap was over slightly steeper terrain to the cliff's edge. A big tree brought infinite security; however, our skis didn't enjoy getting involved with its protective branches. Kevin checked out the cliff edge and headed north for 60 metres to a good tree. Unfortunately, the temperature became much hotter when the clouds decided to let the sun through. Kevin and I started to get a bit nervous. "Come on, Steve! Come on, Liam! Let's move!" Conditions warranted haste, especially since the terrain wasn't technical. Finally, we were all at the tree together.

Our plan was for me to rap first to check everything out. We fixed the line so we could achieve a full 60-metre rap on our skinny eight-millimetre rope if needed. Down I went, and once at the bottom of the rock, I figured we could get down by doubling the rope and thus saving it by pulling it through instead of abandoning it fixed in place. We only had a few metres of iffy downclimbing to reach the steep snow. I shouted to Kevin to set the rope up as per normal, but then I noticed the halfway marker was way higher than I thought. I imagined Steve halfway down with the ropes nowhere near the bottom. He'd freak, as would I in the same position. We really needed to get out of there because it was getting hotter in the full sunshine. I must admit I was quite tired. Maybe I was tired because Kevin kept waking me up all night by poking me with his finger, stating, "You're snoring."

We already agreed that we might have to leave the rope behind. I yelled

up to Kevin to leave it fixed and proceeded to get off the snow. I worked my way over to a scree slope that had recently run to the ground. I had a small pedestal to stand on and view the situation. Kevin came next and he quickly took off down to the lake. It was neat to see him standing on a small island near the shore of Margaret Lake. Steve rappelled next. He had to psyche himself up to step over the edge, for he hadn't rapped for several years. I forget these small details. Good thing Liam was still up top since he had to lend Steve his belay device. Liam truly loves to descend using a Munter hitch.

An axe would have been handy, particularly for Steve. When I went first across the snow, I hit a few spots that were quite tough to kick in; maybe they were enlarged by Kevin's traverse across. Steve managed to stick his entire arms into the snow like personal snow stakes. Liam came down last and as he moved away from the rope, I thought about saving the last bit by cutting the blessed cord. I kept my mouth shut though, for it would have been hard for him to do, particularly on the steep snow slope. So as a professional wanker, I left another rope in the hills.

The hill down to the lake was steep. Numerous avalanches had left their mark on the nearby terrain. Two rather large ones had crashed into the lake's edge causing the ice to buckle and send out concentric crack marks towards the centre of the lake. We, having been up early in the morning, had good stability snow conditions. Still, we wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible. I simply slid down the slope on my skis trying hard not to crash into the avalanche debris. At the lake I couldn't relax until Liam was down. Once we were all together, bliss spread among the group. All we had to do now was navigate some tree traversing down to Hector Lake. Then another break was in order.

Finally, Steve grabbed his pack and headed off into the light mist towards the highway. Our skis slid easily across the lake's surface. The light was exquisite. The lake, the sky, the massive clouds heading our way and the sound of our skis all merged into a tight collection of inseparable memories. For a brief moment, time did stand still.

We recommend this outing as an exciting loop, which requires bomber stability. Other folks have ventured this way before. An Appalachian Mountain Club article appears in an 1898 report describing a summer descent between Turquoise and Margaret Lakes. In 1986, Rusty Bailey and Douglas Chabot climbed the remote and little-known ice climb Senior Project. Rick Collier went up this way to climb Pulpit Peak in winter. The latter two groups must have had ice to rappel from during their descent. We couldn't rappel the waterfall since there was no ice, only running water. Having neither rock gear nor ice, we used the trees to descend. An axe and crampons would have been useful.

Summary

Mount Mary Sioui Circuit. Kevin Blades, Liam Kavanagh, Steve Morris, Glenn Reisenhofer. April 27-29, 2012.

The headwall descent (rappels) to Margaret Lake. Photo: Glenn Reisenhofer

The East

Alternative Approaches

Paul Berger

I was excited to move to Thunder Bay and I looked forward to ice climbing in Orient Bay, but I've only climbed there twice! The ice is, of course, spectacular, but there is so much other ice to climb in the area, and I've found that I like long approaches to get to see new ice up close.

My first season in Thunder Bay was a banner year. In late November, I looked out and saw ice gleaming from the east face of Mount McKay. In the following months, my partner Helle Møller and I hiked in again and again to watch the huge daggers grow closer to the ground. On March 5, 1997, we finally put up Speaking With Crows (WI4, 40m)—a mixed route that was out of our league and probably should have been called Delusional. That year, we found new ice on the south face of Mount McKay, the Raven Lake East climbs, and a north-facing spring route we called Penguins (WI4, 60m). I was addicted.

The land where we climb is the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe, who have inhabited this area for thousands of years. I record new climbs with some trepidation. It's impossible to know for certain whether someone else has ascended a route, either recently or in the distant past. I got a big surprise that first winter on a route I struggled with terribly. At the belay stance a message was scratched onto the rock wall: "Good Job Hard Man."

Helle and I like to be out on foot in the winter, and we've discovered a number of climbs that way. We first saw Zone of Proximal Development (WI2+, 15m) returning over the ice from Spar Island on Lake Superior, but it took two attempts and four years before we finally got in to it. That was enough time to dream a lot about what the route might be like.

Friends have sighted some of the new ice. Graham Saunders took us to the Raven Lake climbs. Andrew Haill told me about Arrow Falls and a stream near Mink Mountain that led this year to Elusive Mink (WI4, 33m). The jewel of new areas came from Julian Holenstein and Janet Dyment after they paddled into the Upper Nipigon River Valley. The river parallels the Orient Bay corridor a few kilometres to the east. In a four-kilometre stretch there are now more than a dozen routes ranging from WI1+ to WI4. Since most are on the east bank and the road is on the west, getting there can be half the fun. On one occasion, Rod Brown arrived at my place on his mountain bike with climbing gear tied to the back rack. We then drove to the end of Highway 595, dragged a canoe 700 metres to the river, paddled across and climbed Bike'n'Ice (WI4, 25m).

Paddling has helped us with other interesting approaches. Rod and I climbed Throne Room (WI3+, 60m) in late March 2011 after paddling a double kayak 13 kilometres around the toe of the Sleeping Giant and slogging up scree for an hour. Sea kayaks got Julian Holenstein and me to Pie Island in 2002 to climb Piece of Pie (WI2+, 25m), what we believe is the first route on this beautiful island. The year before, we

Paul Berger approaching Pie Island ice climbs. Photo: Julian Holenstein

Paul Berger on the first ascent of Chronic Optimism at Ice Station Superior. Photo: Rod Brown

crossed the ice to camp and scout from the north side of Pie, but found no ice. In 2006, we were wind-bound for two days at the east end of the island after climbing Pie for All Eternity (WI2+, 40m). On another trip, Julian and I crossed the ice pulling his canoe, and then paddled open water and climbed Another Piece of Pie (WI3+, 60m). Coming back, I fell through the ice, but a change of clothes and a dry suit helped with the rest of the return.

We've also managed to scout on skates, finding Lookout Cathedral (WI2+, 30m) on the way to Clavet Point from Amethyst Harbour, and spying Jumping Wolf (WI2+, 15m) with binoculars. Andrew Haill and I returned by bike across Lake Superior to climb the former, and used snowshoes another day for the 12-kilometre overland approach to find the latter. Rod Brown and I also used bikes on a seven-hour approach to Picicle (WI1+, 50m) on Pie Island, a beautiful yellow route in a stunning location. We laughed about the effort expended to climb such an easy route—but we didn't regret the journey.

Sometimes success takes repetition. Rod and I hiked in past the Ice Station Superior area to climb Tunnel Vision (WI3, 22m) in January, not the route we had expected. Helle and I returned soon after to see if another new route might have formed. It had not, but more rain followed by cold fixed that and sent Rod and I back to climb Chronic Optimism (WI4+, 35m).

The highlight of the late winter was three climbs about half an hour west of Thunder Bay on a north-facing escarpment we dubbed The Butte, just off Sturgeon Bay Road. After an hour's approach we climbed Separation Anxiety (WI3+, 28m) in late February. We returned in April to climb The Ties That Bind Us (WI4+, 30m), and once more for Across the Divide (WI4, 25m), which was bare rock the first time we were there. I've driven past this butte many times over the years and have never seen more than a few icicles.

I love poking around having to find new ice, with safety being paramount in case something happens when we're far from the road or out on Lake Superior. If you like to explore, approach something you've seen from a distance. Go back more than once as the route grows. Go back again just in case. Turn the corner for another view. Most of the ice climbs that are easily visible from a road near Thunder Bay have probably been climbed, but there are a lot of cliffs around there that you won't see from the car.

The Butte off of Black Sturgeon Road: (1) Across the Divide, (2) Separation Anxiety, (3) The Ties That Bind Us. Photo: Paul Berger

The Real East

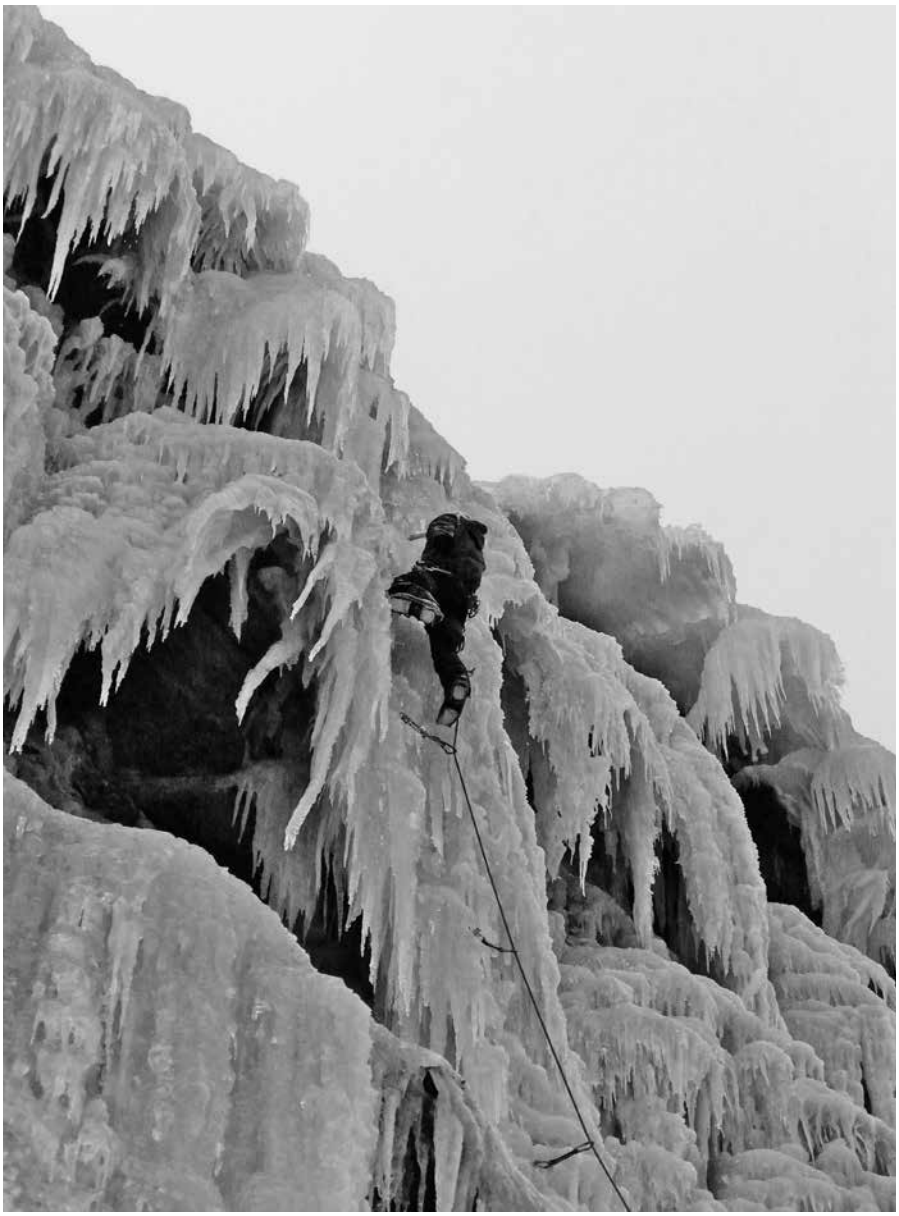
Max Fisher

WINTER IN THE MARITIMES isn't for the faint-hearted. It is cold most of the time, and we commonly get wind, rain, sleet, hail, snow and more rain all in the same day.

Rock climbing here consists of a strong, small community of motivated individuals that are actively putting up new routes and looking for new areas to climb. The ice climbing community is even smaller, yet doing the same thing. There are no WI6 routes that have been led in the Maritimes, but that said, there is a rich sandbagging tradition, so proceed with caution.

The coast of the Bay of Fundy is home to some of the most spectacular ice climbing in the Maritimes. There are rumours of huge coastal lines just waiting for ascents. Some of the classic areas include St. Martins, Dorchester Cape and Grand Manan Island in New Brunswick, and Joggins, Halls Harbour and Cape Split in Nova Scotia. If you can't make it to the coast, or the 15-metre tides are not co-operating, then check out Parlee Brook, Grand Falls and Welsford in New Brunswick, or Moose River and Folly River in Nova Scotia.

Luc Gallant on the first ascent of Central Pillar at Joggins, Nova Scotia. Photo: Max Fisher



Often times, partners are hard to come by, but when partners do line up and goals are similar, good things can happen. So when my ankle healed up and I called my buddies Luc Gallant and Marty Theriault and said we needed to get out and swing the tools, plans began to form.

Due to Marty being in Quebec, Luc and I started without him. We had talked about heading to Joggins to check out the coastal cliffs. What we found were numerous lines of high-quality ice ranging from 20-metre WI3s to 50-metre WI4s. Most of these routes are topped with two- to four-metre ice roofs that are formed by the wind blowing up the cliffs. Topping out through these can often be awkward and scary. To our knowledge, we were the first to ever swing our tools into that ice.

As weather and the season started to taper off on the coast, we again ventured from New Brunswick to Nova Scotia in search of the infamous mythical ice in the Moose River valley that the Nova Scotians talk about. Five years ago, Chris Eager had shown me a photo of a huge pillar, and I had yet to get there. Fortunately, partners lined up and we went on the search.

This time it was Marty, Luc and me. We met in Moncton and arrived at the little community of Moose River around 10 a.m. Moose River is six to eight kilometres east of Parrsboro, Nova Scotia. Once we figured out where we were going to park, we started our walk up the river. After about an hour, the canyon started to steepen and ice was

showing up on the walls. We continued for about 25 more minutes. As we exited a tight slot canyon, things opened up and there it was.

We reached the base and looked around. Ice from fun WI3 to WI5 was everywhere. Marty drew the first straw and began to climb a spectacular 50-metre WI5 that we called New Brunswick Pillar. Cory Hall, who has climbed a lot of ice in New Brunswick, said it looked to be one of the Maritimes' best lines.

After Marty, Luc climbed the right-hand side of the same pillar. I climbed up and to the left on a 50-metre WI4 that we called Bagtown. After our climbing adventure in Moose River, the weather warmed and we became limited to inland ice, which was fun for sure, but I missed the uncertainty of going to find new features to climb.

Joggins has numerous more routes to be climbed, and Moose River has tremendous hard ice and mixed-climbing potential. You never know what will happen during the next Maritime winter, but I'll tell you this, the wind and cold always show up and the ice often follows close behind. It is worth the trip!

Mont Chaudron

Andriy Kolos

LAST YEAR I DIDN'T KNOW what to expect. I simply recalled an emailed description of a deep cleft that split an upside-down cauldron-like mountain called Mont Chaudron. An alpine experience indeed, if linked to a slog up the summit slopes. La Fracture on the west face was described to me as a classic ice line, so we figured we'd see what else this geographic phenomenon of a mountain far from the Rockies had in store for us. Pascal put his truck in four-wheel drive and drove down the deep snow-covered fire road, crossing a stream or two that flooded over. This road essentially marks the Ontario-Quebec border. A scene from *Bon Cop, Bad Cop* came to mind: if something happened, would authorities squabble over jurisdiction?

As we crested a hill and saw the face, our jaws dropped. Immediately, there were no other worries, there were no other lines—just this glistening natural weakness on the south face. Without even speaking, we knew we'd found what we were looking for. Giddy as school children getting ready for their first school dance, we loaded our packs and set forth to get a closer look.

Pascal started off up an alpine ramp that was harder than it appeared. He then opted for a dry variant rather than the delaminated ice pillar, and committed to a few exciting moves to end up in a roof-capped corner. Placing a rat's nest of gear, he lowered off mentally exhausted and handed over the sharp end. I climbed up to his high point and tucked myself under the roof, triple checking that the cams and nuts in the icy cracks were solid. Leaning leftwards, I hooked a precarious block frozen into place and decided to place a bolt above the lip of a roof to keep things reasonable.

Higher up, having turned the roof, we swapped rope ends again. Pascal climbed to a natural belay spot. It wasn't at the 60-metre mark, but it just felt right. We climbed back up to our high point a day later and I led through, pushing the line higher, past a mantel, past an anemic pillar and finally to the to the base of a blank groove, just as the angle was to kick back. Placing a pin up high from a tied-off tool would enable my retreat. This would haunt me for the next year. The foreshortened top was within sight, but I had had enough. And so had

Self-portrait while trying not to get skewered by crampons on Mont Chaudron.
Photo: Pascal Simard

Pascal, shivering at the belay. Down we went, vowing to return next year.

This past December, we returned. There's no going home. Yet I couldn't help wondering if it would be the same, if we would be the same. Pascal had a daughter now. I had started a "real" job. He found the ice more inviting this year on the first pitch. Good thing, too, as what little ice there was the year before wasn't in the right spot on the dry variant he had climbed earlier. He adapted, pulled the roof and climbed strongly all the way to the belay. Could a home gym where you have to focus on a hold with only one eye as the other keeps track of a child make a person that strong? Or was he simply hungry for climbing?

I followed cleanly. The next day, we returned and I led through the wobbly opening bit of pitch two. I sure didn't want to skewer my partner, so I focused positive thoughts on the dry tool placements. They seemed solid. The protection piece I'd found last year didn't fit this year. After fiddling a bit, I reached the security of a big flake and was able to use my thinly gloved hands to sweep off the offending snow that had accumulated overnight.

Higher up, on the mantle ledge, as I was clearing out placements for gear, a feeling of disappointment flooded over me. *Do I not want it bad enough? Hands! Come back to me! Warm up! Why am I looking downwards? Don't you know you got to look where you want to go? Your body will follow!* I stitched together a few pieces from which to lower off, and in the interest of the team, I handed Pascal the sharp end.

Not many words were spoken. It's hard to function when hands don't co-operate. But my hands could hold a rope and I could shout encouragement. Upwards Pascal went, surpassing my high point and getting to last year's high point. Committing to a high foot, Pascal established himself in the precarious groove, but soon edges and slots appeared and he was climbing past a string of loose, blocky chockstones, each requiring attention. The top was now within our grasp.

There is no "I" in team, although it sometimes feels like your ego wants it to be there. You want to ensure that you contributed. But when you're with the right partner, you're not afraid to ask for help, admit you're spooked, drained or downright frozen. When you're with the right partner that "I" doesn't come into focus. The more I learn while climbing, the more I can share with the people around me.

Simard-Kolos route on the southwest face of Mont Chaudron. Photo: Andriy Kolos

Summary

Simard-Kolos (M6+ R, 55m), south face, Mont Chaudron, Quebec.
FA: Andriy Kolos, Pascal Simard, December 15-16, 2012.

Southern Ontario Ice Report

Nathan Kutcher

OVER THE PAST few years, there seems to be a trend in Southern Ontario—winter keeps arriving later and later. Despite this setback, mixed climbing keeps gaining more and more participants, and the development of Southern Ontario mixed climbing continues to grow. Perhaps the most exciting thing to come of the 2012-13 season was the growing interest in mixed climbing. There were so many new people trying it out and enjoying it. In February, I had the great pleasure of leading a Toronto Section beginner's mixed clinic and was rather surprised with how quickly it filled up. There was even a waiting list! Seven years ago when I moved to Ontario, there was a small but healthy ice climbing community. However, it was one that shied away from pick-dulling routes and often looked with much suspicion at the few climbers who were drawn to the lines without nearly enough ice to be a legitimate route. Now it seems that every ice crag has at least one mixed route or a section of cliff used for drytool practice.

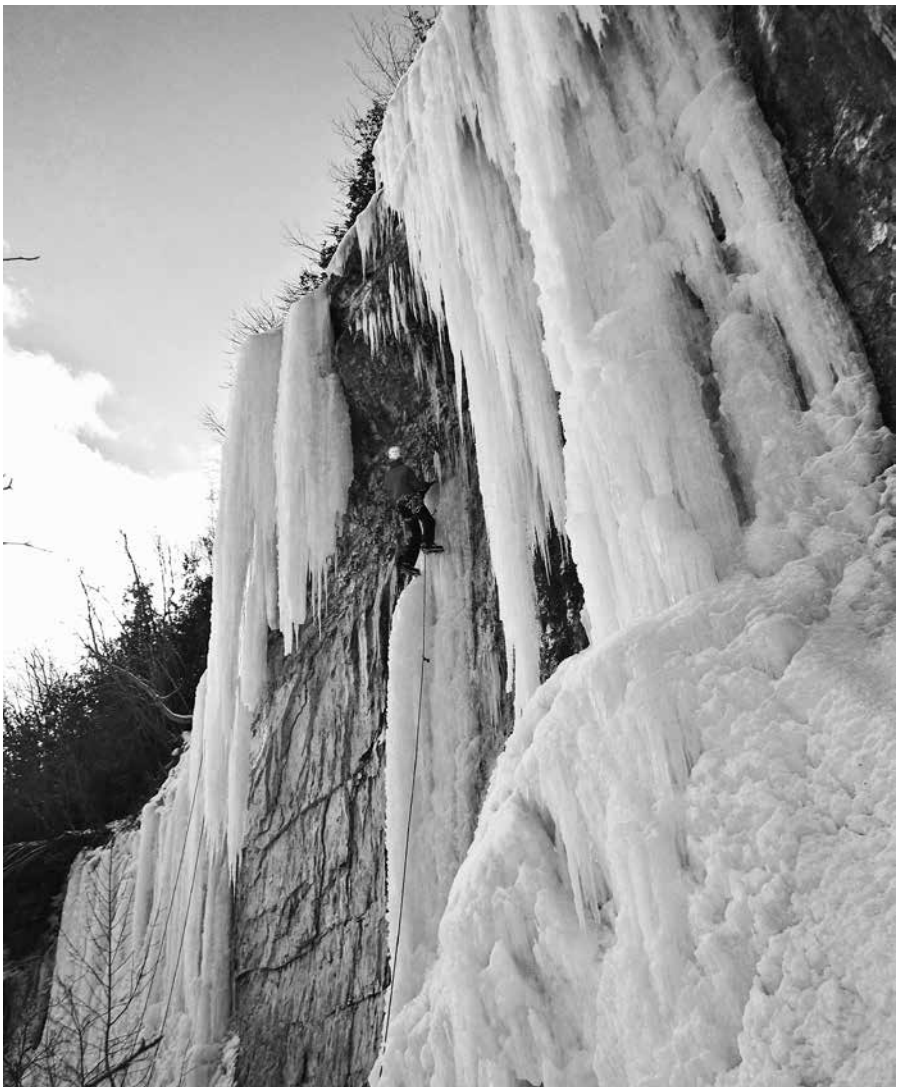
For most of this winter, I was away from Ontario travelling as part of the Canadian National Ice Climbing Team, participating in the Ice Climbing World Cup. While that put a halt to my new route activity, I was pleased and excited to see there was a dedicated crew making the most of what our moderate winters give us, with an addition of a number of great new routes.

What was once an adult-only pursuit is drawing in a younger crowd. Sam Eastman (16) is gaining mixed skills and is already motivated to put up new routes of his own. This winter, along with his friend and mentor Jim Elzinga, they established the traditionally protected Gunslinger (WI4 M5, 20m) and Jimmy and the Kid (WI5 M6, 15m). Located at Papineau Lake, Gunslinger climbs a slender smear, taking good screws until you can reach the first of a few horizontal cracks and finish on rock above. At Bark Lake, Jimmy and the Kid climbs an approach pitch of easy ice to a small cave. From the cave, you climb out a thin crack to a dagger hanging from the lip.

Andriy Kolos, one of the earlier Southern Ontario mixed pioneers, put up two-bolt protected routes Space Jam (M7, 20m) and While (WI4 M6+, 35m). In the past few years, I've had my eye on (but never made time for) the black water streak at McCauley Lake, which is now Space Jam. The streak flows down the gently overhanging wall and is split by small seams that hook nicely down low and disappear near the top, but are replaced by small edges. There are just enough holds to get you to the short smear of ice that spills over the top of the cliff. While this is a two-pitch route, rumour has it that it will be a while before the ice will reform like it did this year. It drytools up steep rock to a large mid-cliff seep before drytooling to the top of the cliff.

Along with helping Kolos on Space Jam, Josh Smith climbed Water Wings (WI5, 47m) with Jon Gullett. Water Wings is a rare-forming flow of drips

Nathan Kutcher on the first ascent of Back to Basics at Spirit Rock. Photo: Rebecca Lewis

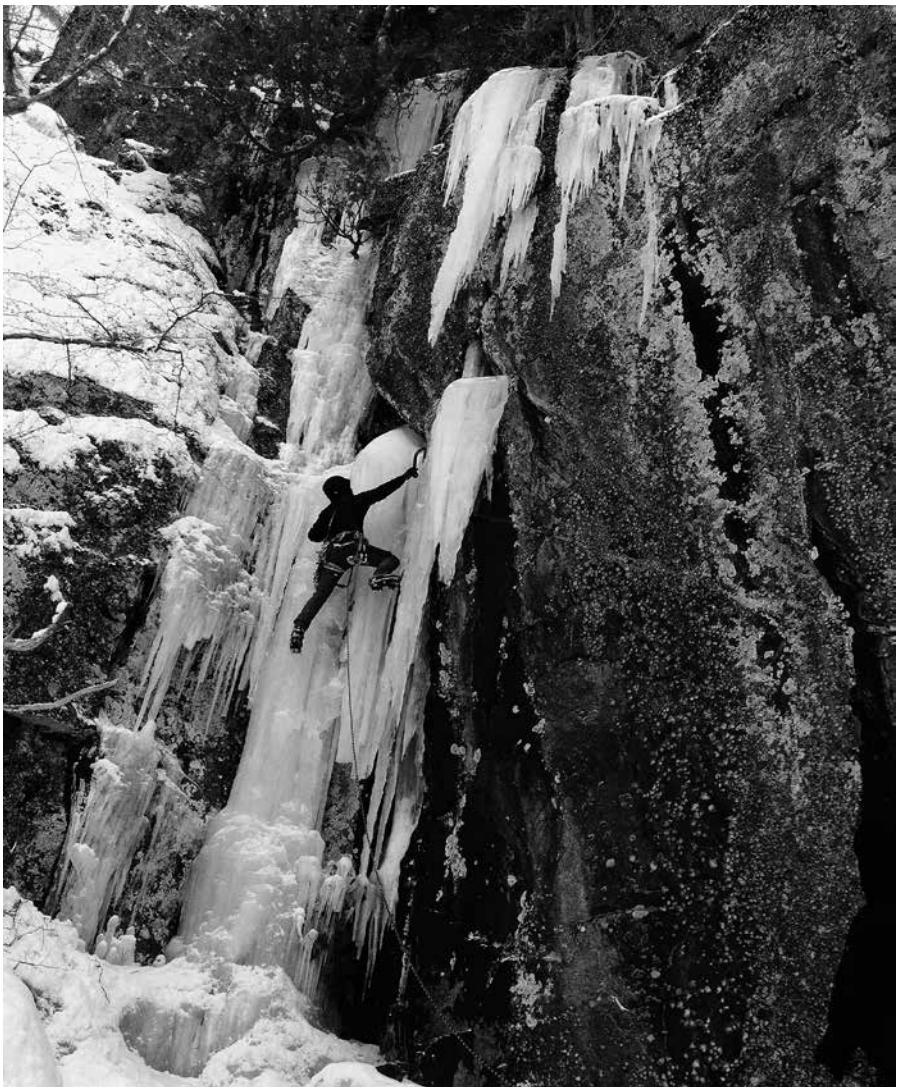


accessed by a few awkward moves to gain a stance below the lower dollop of ice. Moving up and right, a few thin moves gain the main streak. After climbing the steep and sustained thin vertical pillar, the bulge is pulled through the obligatory Ontario shrubbery. A few days later, Smith and Gullett returned to Mill Lake to link together a few icicles and a short, steep crack to climb J-Cubed (M6, 18m). It starts up the steep iced-up corner and climbs rightwards onto the first dagger of ice. After drytooling up a few sinker moves in the crack, the last gear is placed before cranking onto the second dagger of ice.

Once again, Danylo Darewych was busy searching out new cliffs and climbed what seems like more new ice routes than everyone else put together. Each year he finds a couple of very moderate (and exceptionally fun) traditionally protected mixed routes. This year his favourite was Meet the New Boss (WI3+ M3, 30m). It climbs a thin slab of ice to a corner system where thin ice, turf sticks and drytooling lead you upward. Near the top of the cliff the final corner isn't too steep, but it doesn't have much, if any, decent gear, making for an exciting exit.

At Kushog Lake, Dave Broadhead was finally able to finish off The Exorcist (M6, 23m). He had been trying the line for the past few years, and finally, after multiple ground-up bolting efforts, it all came together. The Exorcist stems and drytools up a left-facing corner to a few dribbles of ice that lead to a thin vein of ice near the top.

Josh Smith on the first ascent of J-Cubed at Mill Lake. Photo: Jon Gullett



Between trips away to compete, I didn't have much time for establishing new routes. Fortunately though, I was able to find a line at Spirit Rock that didn't take much time. Back to the Basics (WI5) is an ice route that thinks it's a mixed route. A steep smear of easy ice leads up to a rock overhang with a large dagger dripping from the lip. The rock is blank, but with some thoughtful climbing, the dagger is accessible from the smear without needing to hook the rock. Two bolts protect the climbing onto and up the dagger, making it one of the more reasonable routes for those breaking into leading hanging ice.

After a dismal start, the season stretched late into March, which is a rare occurrence. The extended season was just long enough to start chasing up new rock towards fickle dribbles of ice. Once again, we all have enough undone routes to dream about until winter makes its return.

Summary

Gunslinger (WI4/M5, 20m), Papineau Lake. FA: Sam Eastman, Jim Elzinga, January 31, 2013.

Space Jam (M7, 20m), McCauley Lake. FA: Andriy Kolos, Josh Smith, February 10, 2013.

Meet the New Boss (WI3+ M3, 30m), Bark Lake. FA: Dave Britnell, Danylo Darewych, February 10, 2013.

Water Wings (WI5, 47m), Mill Lake. FA: Jon Gullett, Randy Kielbasiewicz, Josh Smith, February 13, 2013.

J-Cubed (M6 18m), Mill Lake. FA: Jon Gullett, John Rigg, Josh Smith, February 15, 2013.

The Exorcist (M6, 23m), Kushog Lake. FA: Dave Broadhead, Josh Burden, February 17, 2013.

Back to the Basics (WI5, 18m), Spirit Rock. FA: Neil Gowan, Nathan Kutcher, Rebecca Lewis, February 17, 2013.

While (WI4 M6+, 35m), Livingston Lake. FA: Andriy Kolos, Richard Massiah, Joe Palma, February 23, 2013.

Jimmy and the Kid (WI5 M6, 15m), Bark Lake. FA: Sam Eastman, Jim Elzinga, March 30, 2013.

Foreign

El Zorro

Sarah Hart

On June 29, 2012, I worked my last day of honest employment. I was 32 years old, and the desire to go rock climbing had finally outweighed my need for a healthy RRSP and life insurance. I took out a line of credit to…uh… "go back to school", put all my belongings into a five-by-five-metre storage locker in Squamish, and started what I hoped would be a very long absence from reality.

Climbing a full season in Squamish without the stress of work helped to relieve fears about my accruing debt. A short trip to the Waddington Range with Jasmin Caton and Kinley Aitken and the month of November spent bouldering in Bishop were thrown in for good measure. Then, it was on to Newmarket, Ontario. Ontario, you ask. Not exactly a hotspot on the climber's list of preferred destinations. I had used up all my excuses for avoiding an extended return to my homeland. My mother had finally wizened to my game, and now that I was unemployed, there was no more hiding from the truth—I needed to go home for a really long visit.

After December in Ontario spent visiting family, old friends and holding a lot of babies, it was time for me to hit the proverbial road and make haste to southern Patagonia. El Chalten, Argentina, to be exact—the main event of my dirt-bag climber itinerary, and where my boyfriend had been hiding out for the past two months.

I arrived just in time for a very long good-weather window. On January 11, Colin and I hiked into the mountains to "warm up" (read: not a warm-up for me at all!) on Mate, Porro y Todo lo Demas. The route follows the northwest side of Fitz Roy's beautiful North Pillar, with 1,250 metres of climbing to 6c. We climbed the route in perfect weather over four days. Well, with my ultimate prize ticked within the first two weeks of my two-and-a-half-month stay, it was time to rework the list.

Sarah Hart on the upper headwall of Mojon Rojo during the first ascent of El Zorro. Photo: Colin Haley

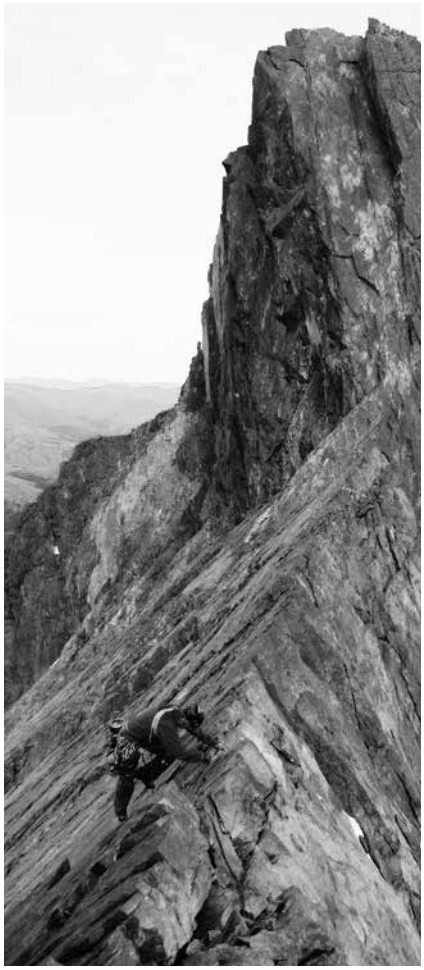
After Fitz Roy, I made a brief three-week trip to the Northern Patagonian town of San Carlos de Bariloche to hone my Spanish skills while Colin climbed badass things. On February 9, I returned to El Chalten and more typical weather patterns, so time was passed in the usual way by sport climbing, bouldering, eating and checking the weather forecast.

Finally, another window of good weather arrived, and on February 20, Colin and I headed back into the mountains. The unclimbed west face of Mojon Rojo, the oft-overlooked tower along the Fitz Roy skyline, was our mission. Mojon Rojo (2,170 metres) sits at the southern edge of the Fitz Roy massif; in fact, Mojon *en Espanol* means "boundary". The Red Boundary is a fitting name for this little mountain. The peak from its east side is a tiny 4th-class scramble from the glacier to the summit, but from its west side, 700 metres of 5th-class climbing is encountered. Colin assured me that many a Patagonian climber had eyed the mountain's red-tinged west face while hiking up the Torre valley bound for Niponino, the climber's bivy at the base of Cerro Torre.

The rock on the mountain is a beautiful shade of sun-touched red, but at the same time, this colour difference offers a warning. The rock is of a completely different composition than the remainder of the Fitz Roy group, which are all a safe shade of yellowish-grey granite. We would have to find out for ourselves if this foreign red rock was climber-friendly, or if it would simply disintegrate in our hands.

From our bivy at Niponino, on February 21, we woke again at the most

Colin Haley traversing towards the summit of Mojon Rojo. Photo: Sarah Hart



ungodly of hour of 3 a.m. and began hiking to the base of the massive scree slope that would lead us to the start of the route. Armed with a healthy selection of leaver nuts and 16 pitons, we finally began roped-up climbing around 8 a.m. The rest is a blur of red rock and whoops of joy. The rock was incredible, the climbing engaging on perfect splitter cracks. We felt like we were getting away with something.

The route up the headwall was nearly all free climbing, except for the occasional move of French free. On the final headwall pitch, Colin needed to hammer in a few pitons and make a few real aid moves. At the top of the headwall, we climbed a few more low-5th-class pitches, which brought us to an incredible knife-edge ridge that lead us onward to Mojon Rojo's true summit.

It was while traversing this sharp ridge—and finally getting a chance to look down at what we intended to descend later that day—that we made the last-minute decision to descend the other side, via the mountain's east flank, and down the Glaciar Rio Blanco to Laguna Sucia and town. We'd be primarily walking down scree slopes as opposed to enduring time-consuming and sanity-fraying rappels down the west couloir. I was sold!

After tagging the summit, and as darkness fell, we began our race for the lake. Unfortunately, our rapid change in descent plans meant that we'd have to cross the Glaciar Rio Blanco and descend about 1,000 metres of loose scree in our approach shoes. So it goes.

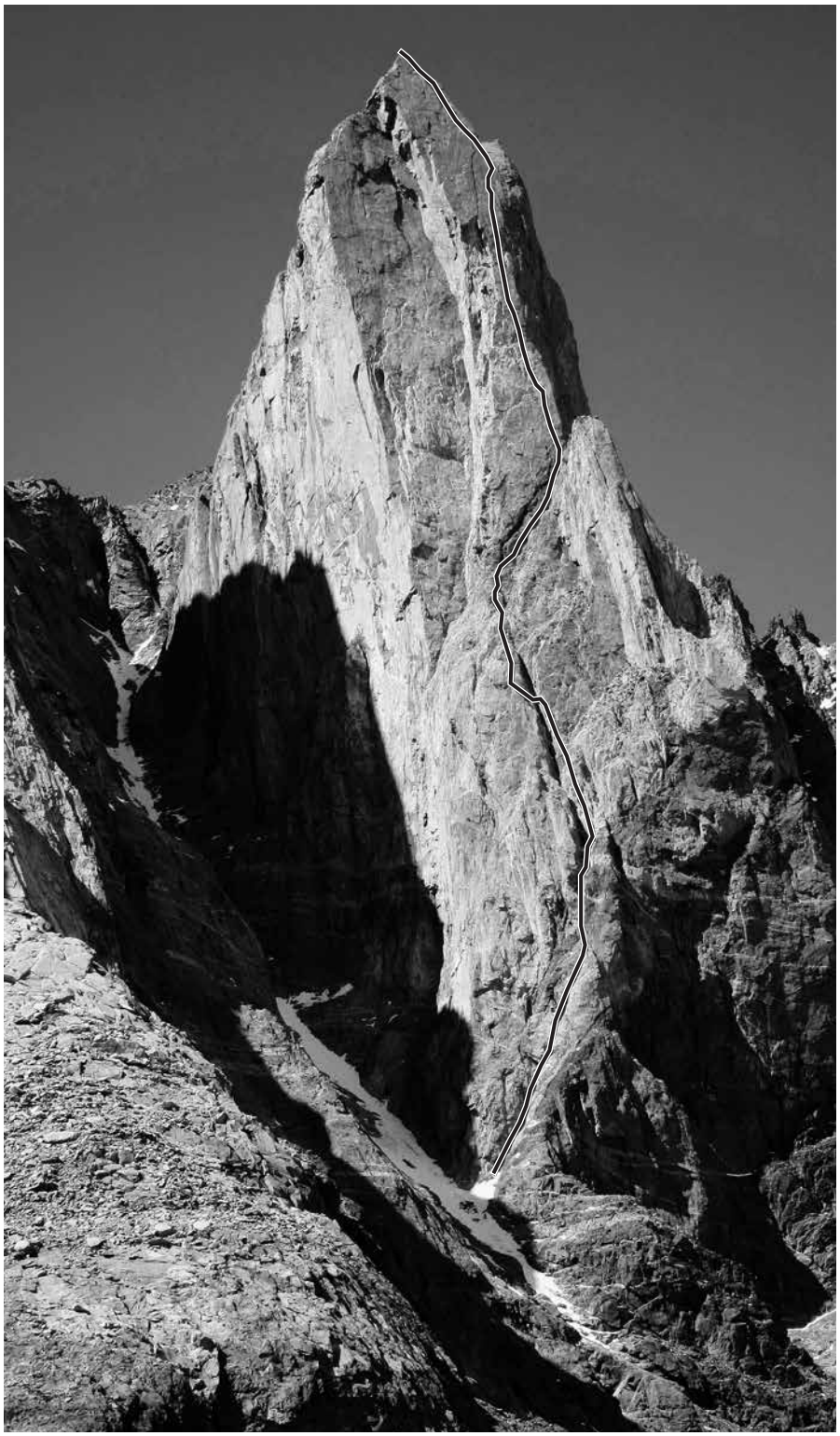
Since neither of us knew this descent, and it was by then the middle of the night, we took a while to find our way. We didn't make it to the lake until 6 a.m.—a full 26 hours after leaving our bivy at Niponino the day before. I couldn't walk in a straight line at that point, and we stumbled to a little patch of heather where we slept until 11 a.m., only to begin the long slog back to town.

And now, you might ask what El Zorro has to do with any of this. Well, it turns out Niponino is home to not only climbers, but also to a wily little fox. S*eñor* fox has been known to steal various pieces of climbing gear, food, etc. that have been left around camp by lazy climbers. It seemed only fitting that Colin and I pay homage to this ingenious little creature with our route name.

Summary

El Zorro (5.10 A1, 700m), west face, Mojon Rojo, El Chalten Massif, Patagonia, Argentina. FA: Colin Haley, Sarah Hart, February 21, 2013.

El Zorro on the previously unclimbed west face of Mojon Rojo. Photo: Sarah Hart



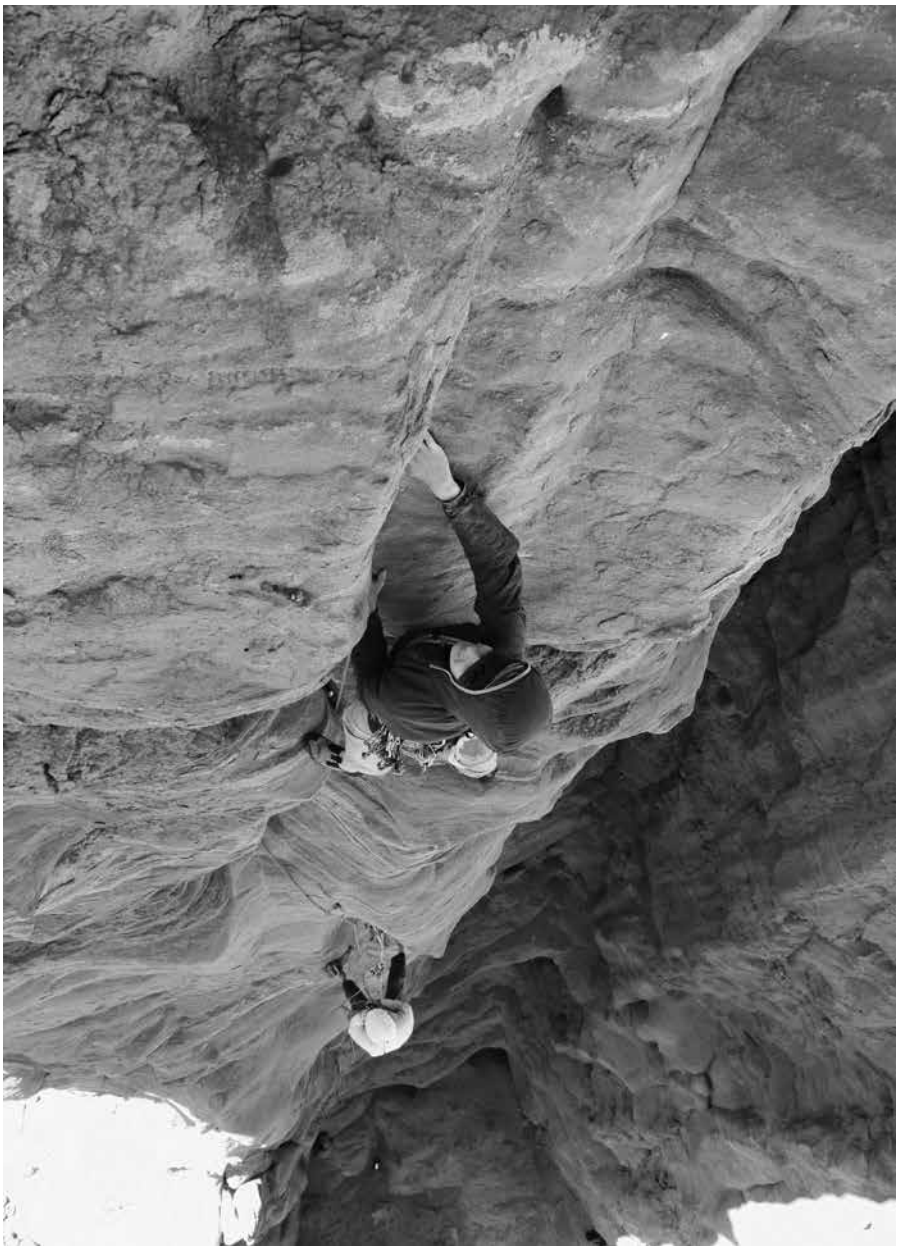
The Finger of Fate

Will Stanhope

I first read about The Titan in *Alpinist* (#8, autumn 2004). There is a picture of Stevie Haston slumped against the rock at a hanging belay looking pretty knackered, the lead line clenched between his toes. Stevie, visionary British climber, came to the United States and freed the Sundevil Chimneys in 2002. In 2005, Pete Robbins and Ben Bransby freed the Finger of Fate.

My friends Coleman Blakeslee and Jesse Huey (both from the US) joined Paul McSorley and me (Canadians) to travel to the Fischer Towers this past spring to free The Titan. I don't really know what drew me to the feature. It's an iconic tower, perhaps the tallest pile of mud in the desert. Tales of loose rock and sandy footholds added to the mystique. Why does it always seem that it is British climbers that come up with the most whacky ideas? Paul and I piled into his rusted-out green Dodge Caravan in the slashing March Vancouver rain to see The Titan for ourselves.

Will Stanhope on pitch two of The Finger of Fate on The Titan. Photo: Paul McSorely



After arriving in Utah, we circumnavigated The Titan to see which line looked most feasible. We were gobsmacked at the Sundevil Chimneys. Its line looked insane—an incipient seam leading to an endless decomposing chimney system directly on the very prow. It's the most impressive line I've seen in the desert. Intimidated, we kept walking to the Finger of Fate, which we decided would be our focus.

We spent a few days pre-inspecting the route for free climbing. It was somewhat loose but manageable after we scrubbed off the dirt. After a few days, I led the route entirely free with the rest of the team succeeding to free big portions of it.

The highlight of the trip was climbing the upper arête in raging gale-force winds. I heel-hooked on mud blobs and threw to side pulls, all the while getting splattered with chalk and desperately trying to keep my balance.

I recommend the route to others who seek a challenge out of the norm, on some (fairly) solid mud. Next year, I hope to attempt the Sundevil Chimneys now that I'm more attuned to the esoteric art of mud scaling. Beyond the climbing, the whole Fischer Towers area was a wild place to be—sort of like Dr. Seuss-on-acid meets giant-dripping-sandcastle land.

Summary

Third free ascent of The Finger of Fate (5.12), The Titan, Fischer Towers, Utah. Coleman Blakeslee, Jesse Huey, Paul McSorley, Will Stanhope, March 2013. Note: Stanhope was the only person to free all pitches.

Rongdo Valley

Joie Seagram

WE WERE A MODEST group of four climbers: three Canadians from Golden, British Columbia (myself, Dr. Jeff Dolinsky and his wife, Joan), and one American from Bishop, California (Andy Selters). In addition, we were accompanied by climbers Kunzang Sherpa (Sirdar) and Arvind Raman (liaison officer), two climbing staff (Danuru Sherpa (Dawa) and Nangang Bhote), and three camp cooks/support staff (Raj Kumar Rai, Mu Gombu Rai and Chamu Singh).

Our climbing objectives were located at the head of a beautiful and remote valley called Rongdo, in the Nubra area of Ladakh, lying between the east and west arms of the Shyok River and north of the Indus. Tom Longstaff travelled close to what is Rongdo village today, while exploring the Siachen Glacier and Saltoro areas in 1909. It gave me quite a thrill to look across the lovely, wide meandering Shyok and imagine Longstaff moving slowly up the opposite shore on his way north—to be so close to his footsteps!

We jokingly dubbed the area in which we climbed "The Canadian Cirque". Many nationalities climbing in Ladakh name a pass reflecting their presence, but cirque was appropriate for us.

I initially called the four peaks (all just over 6,000 metres) forming the natural cirque, Rongdo I to IV, but we have since applied local names indicative of Tibetan culture, which forms the foundation of Ladakhi society. These names are officially registered with the Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF).

Upon arrival in Leh (3,500 metres) on July 31, we settled in comfortably at the Kanglhachen Hotel, and over the next few days performed the usual acclimatisation routines and busied ourselves with last-minute preparations. Despite following said acclimatisation routines, Jeff developed a serious case of pulmonary edema that required he spend the better part of three days with an oxygen tank. Being a dentist, Jeff came suitably prepared to represent his profession with lots of floss to give away; however, he and Joan did not expect to become intimately familiar with Sonam Norboo Memorial Hospital. They greatly appreciated the effective medical intervention provided, as well as the comfort of the hospital visitor room, which they occupied for two nights. Jeff and Joan remained in Leh an extra five days for acclimatisation purposes on the very sound advice of Chewang Motup and Yangdu Goba, owners of Rimo Expeditions, our excellent outfitters.

While Jeff and Joan remained in Leh, Andy, myself and support staff proceeded by jeep to cross the Kardung La (5,602 metres) and make our way over the mighty Shyok River to Rongdo village (3,000 metres). All was well in

Rongdo III at the head of the glacier and the steep northeast face of the unclimbed Rongdo IV to the right. Photo: Joie Seagram

Several unclimbed peaks (c. 6,200 metres) northeast of Rongdo I (Ngapo Kangri). Photo: Joie Seagram

charming Rongdo (a dozen dwellings) except for one minor problem—a shortage of horses and attendant pony-men to transport our loads up the valley. Most villagers and valley folk were engaged in a visitation by the Dalai Lama in Leh, while the remaining very friendly locals appeared quite perplexed by our presence indeed, being unaccustomed to seeing tourists in Rongdo.

A few quick calls to Motup in Leh and problem solved. He would send six horses over the Kardung La in the morning. I was horrified since I couldn't imagine how any beast would survive such a long and circuitous mountain journey. Nonetheless, six horses arrived intact, looking healthier than most of us. These six, in addition to a few scattered local horses and ponies along with the odd donkey, made our domestic hauling team complete.

On August 5, we slowly began our walk up Rongdo Valley, heading northeast following the south side of the Rongdo River. It was truly a joyous experience. For five days we wandered past ancient stone dwellings and eroding Buddhist chortens and stupas, well-tended barley fields aside rich potato patches, finally culminating in a visit to the well-preserved Rongdo Gompa—a small Tibetan Buddhist monastery located in this very remote valley for well over 100 years. Most astonishing to witness as we wandered along were the gigantic (hundreds of metres high) solid-looking walls jutting up both sides of the valley—a rock climber's paradise (indelibly added to "the list"). In addition, the understated beauty of dry valley hillsides dotted with sprays of green and scattered with healthy *dzos* (hydrid of yak and cattle) unfolded before us, while steep snow-clad peaks towered in the backdrop.

We continued to be intrigued and deeply touched by our encounters with the local herdsmen and farmers of Rongdo Valley. They, in turn, seemed to share our curiosity and mutual comfort with strangers. Andy's advanced linguistic skills proved to be invaluable in helping everybody communicate and enjoy each other, for we were as foreign to the Ladakhis as they were to us. Rongdo has seen virtually no tourism, save one Indo-American climbing team in 2005, which descended the valley in two days from the Satti area due north of Rongdo Valley (*The Himalayan Journal*, 2006, vol. 62; *The American Alpine Journal*, 2006, vol. 48).

Upon reaching the head of the valley, we pushed onward to establish base camp (4,802 metres) on August 10 at a comfortable green area with handy water and ample feed for our hard-working horses. Over the next few days, we explored higher, trending southeasterly toward the cirque in search of a suitable advanced base camp. Our focal point was a large glacial lake draining the unnamed glacier around which Rongdo peaks I to IV are situated. I was relieved when we eventually found this lake (just where the map indicated) as sly comments were beginning to surface, like "There's a lake!", with group members smiling and pointing to tiny tarns. With my credibility restored, we all looked down from huge boulders, askance in silence at the vast lead-grey liquid expanse, all feeling the same awe and incredulity. Nobody had stood by this lake before (to the best of our knowledge). Talk about a bonding moment!

By late afternoon on August 14, we happened upon a perfect green patch just below our main climbing objective Ngapo Kangri (Rongdo I, 6,350 metres), which we designated advanced base camp (5,181 metres).

From this glorious grass-covered camp, suitable for casual football and Frisbee, we could see the unnamed glacier and cirque with the Rongdo peaks (Rongdo I to IV clockwise). After briefly resting and relishing in our find, we returned to base camp to behold yet more good news. Upon arrival, we could see small specks in the distance moving slowly up the trail from the valley below. It could only be Jeff and Joan making their debut. How exciting for everybody, as we had all quietly begun to see ourselves as a much smaller group. We had no way of knowing whether they would make the journey or not. Now, we were complete again.

After several reconnaissance trips around Ngapo Kangri, and up the main glacier to view the cirque of Rongdo peaks, on August 18, Andy, Jeff, Joan, Kunzang, Dawa, Nangang, Arvind and Gombu climbed the west sub-summit (6,000 metres) of Balden Lhamo (Rongdo III) via the col between Rongdo III and Rongdo IV, and then up the southwest ridge (10 hours return). I took a rest day after reconning the northwesterly slopes of Ngapo the two previous days to 6,000 metres.

August 19 brought a minor setback as it became clear throughout the morning that Andy was unfortunately suffering from a minor case of cerebral edema, likely due to dehydration and over-exertion the day before. He had spent an especially hard day making steps in deep snow and staying in front for most of the time above the glacier. After careful observation and ongoing group communication throughout the day, at 4 p.m., Andy finally agreed that he was indeed experiencing cerebral edema, and he and I descended with Raj and Nangang to base camp for some oxygen.

After only two hours at lower elevation and oxygen at four litres per minute, Andy's appetite returned and he felt 100 percent better. Patience, communication and determination for prevention had helped us all avoid a more serious situation. Andy has vast and wide Himalayan experience and this can make it difficult for anyone to understand why at relatively lower elevation one should get sick. Andy was a model patient and we were a model group effort.

On August 22, Jeff, Joan, Kunzang, Dawa, Nangang and Arvind climbed Chamba (Rongdo II, 6,170 metres) via the southeast glacier (10 hours return). On August 23, Nangang and I climbed the exhilarating upper west rock ridge of Ngapo Kangri to 60-odd metres below the corniced summit (12 hours return). At the same time, Andy and Arvind ascended Ngapo Kangri via the southerly slopes, first on talus and rock ledges then (with care) up the avalanche prone southeast aspect to easier-angled summit slopes, finally gaining the corniced summit (14 hours return).

On August 27, Kunzang, Dawa, Arvind and I headed up the main glacier to establish a high camp at 5,690 metres to be in position to attempt the true summit of Balden Lhamo (6,120 metres). An early departure the next morning got us up the icy headwall to the col (6,060 metres) by 9 a.m. where the steep west ridge curves south to become the long exposed summit ridge. We deliberated in the chilly col and finally decided, disappointed, to retreat in the face of poor weather and more technical ice than we were prepared to climb.

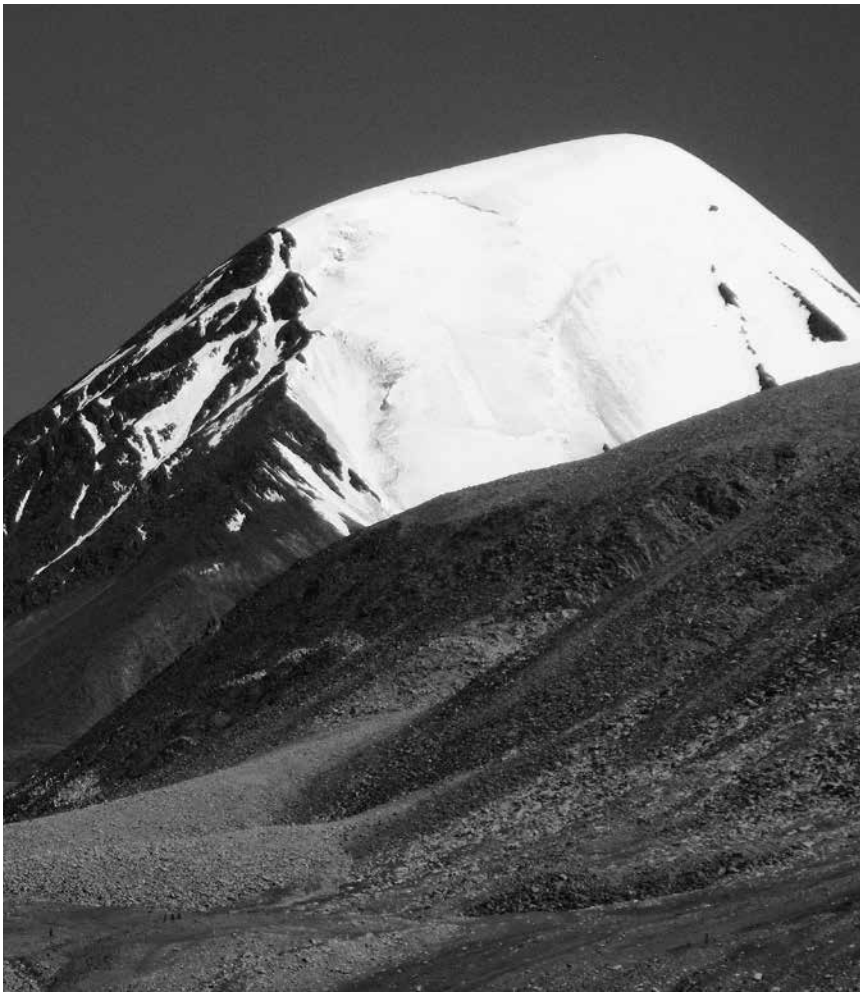
On August 29, Andy and Nangang left a high camp at 5,181 metres, several kilometres northeast of our advanced base camp, to climb Gazgazri (6,160 metres). They ascended the southwest ridge, and then traversed onto the icy south face, after which several short

The unclimbed Rongdo IV (c. 6,300 metres) in the centre with its steep northeast face. The Grand Jorasses-looking formation (behind and to the right) is unclimbed. Photo: Joie Seagram

pitches—the last being up to 70-degree hard ice—led them to a ledge at the edge of the summit dome, whence they ascended to the highest point. Descent was via the west face. (14 hours return to base camp).

Next morning, on August 30, we awoke to chilly temps, steel grey skies and several centimetres of snow. Regrettably, it was time to leave our magic hidden playground. By August 31, we were all ensconced at base camp, looking forward to the upcoming evening's full-moon celebration. We enjoyed a close and memorable time, singing freely together around a huge dung fire—a well-harmonized international climbing group. The next day, we began our descent of the long enchanting valley, taking two days to arrive back at Rongdo village. We returned to Leh via the Kardung La on September 3.

As we savoured our journey and modest climbing achievements together over our last delectable dinner in Rongdo village, we had a collective sense of pure amazement. That we had had the incredible fortune to spend a month in an untouched valley—climbing unclimbed peaks and reliving our childhoods—such was our freedom of the hills.



The southwest ridge of the previously unclimbed Gazgazri. Photo: Joie Seagram

Unclimbed peaks (c. 6,000 metres) northwest of advanced base camp in the Rongdo Valley. Photo: Joie Seagram

Reviews

Above the Bush: A Century of Climbing on Vancouver Island, 1912-2012

by Lindsay J. Elms

In the early years of the Alpine Club of Canada, several influential members lived on Vancouver Island. The Vancouver Island Section started in 1912 and many early climbs were made by that fledgling group. But through the century to today, other climbing clubs and individuals have shown daringness and creativity, developing Vancouver Island into a climbing destination increasingly recognized nationally and abroad.

Lindsay Elms, himself an immigrant from New Zealand, has taken on the task of cataloguing mountaineering on the Island, embellishing the story with much of the early history of exploration. Elms arrived already a mature climber, and he made it his mission to summit most of the Island peaks, often searching out remote and lesser-known mountains, climbing them and writing their history.

What is different about this book is the extensive use of quotations (often entire chapters) in the voices of historical figures, such as Don Munday, Arthur Wheeler and his son, Edward, and locally known adventurers, such as Harold Banks, Geoffrey Capes, Ferris Neave and Ben Hughes. The vernacular of the day lends credibility to the Wheelers' accounts of the 1912 climb of Elkhorn, the so-called Island Matterhorn, as does Munday's amusing story of the first winter ascent of Mount Albert Edward.

Surveyors often were the first to the high summits. The history of the Golden Hinde includes the first ascent by surveyors Urquhart, Kent and Anderson in 1914. Originally called the Rooster's Comb, it received its second ascent only in 1937 by more surveyors—Stewart and Harris—who instigated the name change to the flagship of Sir Francis Drake, who visited the Island in 1579.

Above the Bush combines history with more recent exploration. The efforts of the Island Mountain Ramblers to climb and name Rambler Peak, the exploration of Mount Conuma by Syd Watts and John Gibson, and the continuing commitment of Sandy Briggs on Rugged Mountain are all recounted. The story of Mount Colonel Foster itself is compelling, as the initial traverse of the mountain was done in 1968 by Walsh as part of a reconnaissance. The mountain's east face later provided challenges for Dick Culbert's first ascent, Joe Bajan's solo ascent and Rob Wood's winter ascent in company with Greg Child and Doug Scott.

The 1980 discovery of what locals refer to as the Alava and Bate Sanctuary by Robie Macdonald and Paul Erickson, and the development of the Mackenzie Range by a whole spectrum of local climbers ensured a continued excitement. *Above the Bush* displays the significance of Island mountain history and the current vitality of mountaineering on Vancouver Island.

—Gil Parker

Everest: High Expectations

by Pat Morrow and Sharon Wood

Two skilled climbers and talented writers, two distinctly different expeditions and one very big mountain comprise the key ingredients of the innovative "coffee tablet" book, *Everest: High Expectations*.

Written by Pat Morrow, who summitted Everest as a member of Canada's 1982 expedition two days after teammate Laurie Skreslet became the first Canadian to reach that pinnacle, and Sharon Wood, who became the first North American woman to reach that same point in 1986 with teammate Dwayne Congdon via a difficult new and never-repeated route, the book itself represents several firsts.

In a narrative sense, it's the first publication to tell the story of how the preparation, unfolding, tragedies and successes of the 1982 expedition spurred the particular planning, execution and triumph of the 1986 expedition. But its production as an electronic book designed specifically to take advantage of the iPad's unique technological capabilities sets a new standard for illustrated books by combining the tradition of splendid coffee-table books with multi-media innovation.

With 142 full-colour photographs illustrating its 140 pages, the book contains chapters by both authors. Each describes their personal histories and apprenticeships that led to their inclusion on their respective teams in an era when the only people climbing Everest were highly skilled climbers invited by their peers. Subsequent chapters detail their respective climbs, and the book concludes with afterwords by each of them, in which Wood and Morrow share insightful comments on the mostly lamentable state of Everest as overcrowded and disrespected, with Morrow writing, "Adventure tourism has turned one of the world's great mountains into a crowded playground. Admission is costly, and sometimes fatal."

Both Morrow and Wood's writing styles are engaging and captivating as they describe the adventures and experiences that defined and celebrated that particular chapter of each of their life

stories. At the same time, the book's equal triumph is in its multi-media 3-D presentation facilitated by the iPad's technology. A flick of the finger on any photo expands the image to fill the screen. Numerous photos have two, three or as many as 10 full-colour and sharply textured images accessed as interactive slide shows, each bearing captions that share additional details about the climbs' events, personalities and state of the mountain.

Not stopping at still photos, the hybrid book also incorporates video and audio footage from both the '82 and '86 expeditions, which literally bring the story to life—including breathless commentary by Skreslet as he films an avalanche thundering down a not-very-distant slope, adding an extra dimension of drama and depth to the story. You can feel the cold in Skreslet's voice.

The book also incorporates links to external resources, including a one-hour documentary, as well as electronic footnotes providing valuable information of key people and story elements that can be accessed later without interrupting the text.

Beyond the high-tech bells and whistles though, *Everest: High Expectations* masterfully shares a story from a perspective that has never before been recorded. How the circumstances of the 1982 expedition—during which a large team intent on making a uniquely Canadian stamp on Everest by climbing a new, technically challenging route, fractured after the tragic deaths of three Sherpas and a cameraman—regrouped and ultimately succeeded in its goal of placing the first Canadian on the summit. The 1982 expedition also inspired and guided the planning and execution of the self-sufficient, smaller Everest Light 1986 expedition.

To produce the publication to coincide with the 30th anniversary of the '82 climb, Morrow teamed up with publisher Frank Edwards, with whom he first worked in 1975 when Edwards was editor of *Canadian Geographic* magazine. And with both the '82 and '86 climbs being ground-breaking Canadian mountaineering accomplishments, it's only fitting that the book that links their connection should be too.

More than just a book, *Everest: High Expectations* is a well-written, introspective and thoughtful story artfully told in a 3-D multi-media experience.

—Lynn Martel

Outdoor Safety & Survival

by Mike Nash

Simple and humorous words of wisdom comprise the opening sentence of one of numerous "Reality Checks" in B.C.-author Mike Nash's new book, *Outdoor Safety & Survival*. "Don't do what I did once and melt the soles of your boots after falling asleep with your feet close to the survival campfire!"

Beginning this book with a cautionary note reminds readers that "knowledge, combined with planning, preparation, practice and common sense, are keys to having a safe and enjoyable outdoor experience." Nash sets the tone of this enormously helpful and generously packed volume by deliberately adding, "in the end, you use the outdoors and the information contained in this book entirely at your own risk." That said, readers who pay serious attention to this formidable collection of professional-level, hard-won knowledge, interspersed with numerous entertaining anecdotes, will be far ahead of the game when it comes to embarking on safe, enjoyable backcountry trips.

A resident of Prince George, British Columbia, Nash draws on his own prolific experience gained largely in spectacularly remote Northern B.C., including as a volunteer member of the Prince George Search and Rescue team and as a leader of organized outdoor trips. With more than four decades of wilderness travel and related work experience under his boots, he is well-qualified to share valuable facts and thoughtful advice on an extensive range of topics, from basic first aid items to safety procedures to navigation, electrical storms, frostbite, hypothermia, ticks and Lyme disease, equipment for an unexpected overnighter, safety around bears, becoming lost, the psychology of survival, and much, much more.

With 34 chapters, Nash's research is thorough and deep. The chapter on emergency shelters covers such focused topics as bush shelter, ventilation and carbon monoxide, snow caves, snow block shelters, snow holes, snow trenches, powder snow shelters (also known as quinzhees), and fire and snow.

A crisp, easy-to-navigate design is sprinkled with colour snapshots that helpfully illustrate the message. Without doubt, it's the enticingly boxed "Reality Checks" that capture the reader's eye and imagination with their variety of subject matter, story-telling value and occasionally, their sobering bluntness.

No matter the outdoor pursuit, from backpacking to snowshoeing to canoeing to forest jobsites, Nash drives home the undeniable reality—risk is an inescapable and invaluable component of outdoor activities, particularly in remote wilderness such as the Canadian Rockies, and efforts to thoughtfully mitigate that risk facilitate safe, enjoyable and rewarding experiences amidst nature's beauty and wonders.

With a lifetime of experience gained through outdoor exploration, arguably Nash's penchant for straightforward and practical solutions is his best talent, as exhibited in this keeper: "Duct tape and a brilliant case of improvisation got the crew of Apollo 13 safely back to Earth from the moon after an explosion in their outbound spacecraft. A similar combination of ingenuity and improvised equipment might get you safely out of the backcountry."

—Lynn Martel

John Clarke: Explorer of the Coast Mountains

by Lisa Baile

John clarke was an unusual figure to become pre-eminent in the world of West Coast mountaineering at his point in time. He emerged onto the scene in Vancouver just as his great predecessor, Dick Culbert, was easing into retirement from climbing, and although Culbert's most noteworthy companions—Glenn Woodsworth, Paul Starr and Fred Douglas—continued to climb at some level, their most noteworthy ascents were largely behind them.

The later climbs of Culbert and his circle set the new tone in the Coast Mountains, which, in keeping with alpinism in the rest of the world, was tilting dramatically towards the technical and the difficult. Although he would likely have performed well in this arena, Clarke chose a different path. Turning his back on technical climbing, he embarked instead on a series of long traverses through remote and usually unexplored country, ascending the many unclimbed but often easy peaks on route. For the first dozen or so years, Clarke generally travelled solo, not, as this new book makes clear, because he shunned company, but because it was simply not possible to find companions who were prepared to devote weeks of time on such uncertain projects, where one streak of bad weather could keep a party tent-bound for a week.

Also, what Clarke was doing was simply too far out of the mainstream of climbing development to be of interest to many of his contemporaries. In one of his earliest pieces published in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* of 1972, he opened his account of his recent traverses in Garabaldi Park with these words: "By 1971 one way to describe any remaining unclimbed peaks in Garabaldi Park was to say they were pretty difficult to reach, not terribly high and technically very easy to climb."

This modest statement of the exploration opportunities available for his Garabaldi expeditions might have equally applied to many of the other trips, which Clarke undertook during his prolific career. Many of the areas he was the first to visit have still seen no further exploration, and the vast number of his first ascents were not technical. His passion was to return to the exploration ethos of his lifelong heroes, Don and Phyllis Munday. As Baile says, "If there is gene for exploration, then John Clarke inherited it."

When I began Lisa Baile's new biography, however, I was curious about how the author would deal with some evident difficulties inherent in documenting the life of this unique individual. Firstly, there was the problem of geography. Clarke's explorations unfolded in places with names like the Ha-iltzuk Icefield, the Whitemantle Range, the Kitlope, the Klite River, the Tahumming—places only a handful of devotees have ever heard of. Clarke shied away from the big-name peaks like Waddington and Monarch, and the geography of the Coast Mountains is so mysterious to most readers to begin with that I was certain the author would face challenges just placing the journeys on the map, so to speak.

Secondly, there was the issue of the primary sources—the written record left by John Clarke himself. Prior to reading this book, I had read pretty much everything John Clarke had published in the *Canadian Alpine Journal* concerning his travels—more than 35 articles. Yet, I would still have had difficulty saying which were the real highlights of John's career.

Clarke himself wrote in a very muted style. His voice was essentially documentary. It is not untypical to find numerous passages in his writing such as this: "Then I climbed the two 7800 ft peaks on the ridge to the east and the 7600 ft peaklet between them; and then two days later the 7500 ft peak 2 mi. east of the 3700 ft contour on the main glacier. This peak has the best views of the main glacier and all its tributaries I have seen." ["Klinaklini Country," *CAJ*, 1987, vol. 71, p. 37]

Don Munday, in some ways, had a similar style, workmanlike rather than dramatic. Yet one still finds throughout Munday's work sentences such as the following: "On this exposed rock face the full fury of the storm smote us, the wind nearly pinning us to the rocks; lightning and thunder now came simultaneously, flash following flash so closely that the alternate brilliance and blackness left us almost blinded; rain, hail and snow lashed us in turn." ["The Apex of the Coast Range," *CAJ*, 1927]

John Clarke would never have written such lines, even though he certainly endured storms as ferocious and unrelenting. Perhaps to too great an extent, he tended to brush aside and underplay the more exciting episodes of his travels. His greatest writing is really not about mountain heroics but about the incredible splendour and beauty of the mountain world. But as Yeats says in another context, and speaking of literature in general: "Processions which lack high stilts have nothing that catches the eye." So I wondered how Lisa Baile would sort through the multitude of journeys to illuminate those that were the most important, and how she would bring the necessary drama and emphasis into the tale.

And finally, there was simply the sheer volume of the climbs he completed, and the fact that the majority of the peaks he climbed had no names. One could easily see the author slipping into the trap of reciting the ascent of one peak after another, so that each trip came to sound much the same as the previous.

Baile has overcome these potential difficulties by focusing on John Clarke, the man. In taking this approach, she crafts a highly readable and surprisingly fast-paced account of a powerfully driven climber who was also (some might say notwithstanding) a great human being.

The problem of dealing with the sheer quantity of trips and the enormous expanses of geography Clarke traversed is deftly handled. The author

was fortunate to have travelled with John Clarke and to have known him well. The journeys that Baile chooses to emphasize are introduced by explaining the context in which they occurred. Firstly, there was simply the desire to bag unclimbed peaks. Later, a more pure attachment to exploration entered the equation. Finally, it was simply the desire to soak up the vastness and beauty of the wild mountain country, which drove the agenda. Baile has interviewed pretty much everybody who shared a journey with John Clarke, and drawing on these interviews, unpublished letters and her own conversations with Clarke, she is able to supplement his written accounts with many additional details that are not found in the journals—ranging from encounters with bears and wolves, the destruction of air drops by grizzlies and hair-raising flights into the mountains in bush planes. We learn how Clarke chose his objectives, planned his food, acquired his trip companions, and we share his wonder as he rounds the next corner in the mountains to discover a new vista beyond imagining.

For example, the chapter "Mount Mason Mania" begins as follows: "John's heroic efforts to climb Mount Mason in the spring and summer of 1990 illustrate key elements of his character: his focus and determination and his patience in the face of obstacles.... John was smitten with Mount Mason the first time he saw its prominent dark rock horn curving into the sky... he didn't know for sure if the peak was virginal... but he just knew the horn was too tempting to ignore."

So Clarke recruits Sandy Briggs, a strong mountaineer from Vancouver Island, following an Alpine Club of Canada slide show, and the pair, never having climbed together before, is off for a three-week trip. They romp through some previously unvisited mountain country before the inevitable streak of bad weather sets in. We share Briggs commentary on Clarke's camping skills ("John was the first person I really ever met for whom camping was an art form."), taste in novels ("…really cheap…useful for soaking up condensation and spilled soup."), and style of jokes. The pair is joined by a third climber, Lewis Kaiserseder, who helicopters in, but the poor weather continues. We follow the story through John's diary entries: Clarke is relieved when the other two, both heavy snorers, move into an igloo and he can spend a silent night in the tent. After numerous days of confinement the trio head for the valley without ever getting a good look at Mount Mason, but no sooner is he home than "John's mind seethed with plans for phase two of seige of Mount Mason." We follow the story through two more attempts before the prize is finally attained.

Knowing myself something of both men, I was especially intrigued to see what Baile would make of the partnership between John Clarke and John Baldwin, who was by far Clarke's most important and regular companion. Her chapter entitled "The Two Johns" contains an entertaining account of their first meeting and deft character sketches of each protagonist. It seems that Baldwin and Clarke formed the perfect partnership, a union of minds to rival that of Tilman and Shipton. As Baldwin puts it: "We got along instantly. We were totally on the same wavelength and wanted to do the same things. It was fantastic." Though Baldwin acknowledges differences in character between them, the two never seem to have fought or argued, and although one knew they were always out there, in retrospect it is quite astounding how much ground they actually covered together. This chapter also recounts the story of the traverse around the headwaters of the Tahumming River, the expedition that both men considered their most magical trip of all.

Also of interest to many climbers will be the trip to the Klattasine with Peter Croft. As Clarke said, "If you want to climb a remote peak and need someone to lead a short 5.8 traverse—then Peter is definitely the man to have along!" Peter's discussion of the dynamics of what might have seemed a somewhat improbable duo confirm that Clarke's competence and enthusiasm for the mountains charmed even the greatest of technical climbers.

But the book is about much more than Clarke the explorer of the Coast Mountains. We learn of John Clarke, archivist of the heritage landscape of Vancouver, rising early to systematically photograph the old buildings of Vancouver before they disappeared, and then investigating the story of the vanishing architecture he documented. We learn of the many women who shared parts of his life, and of his relationship with the Squamish First Nation. And, of course, extensive coverage is given to his important and lasting work in conservation and wilderness education. I found particularly interesting the story of Clarke's high school years and his early introduction to climbing. He was fortunate to be included in the 1967 B.C. Mountaineering Club expedition to the Manatee Range, where he found himself in the company of an exceptionally strong group of mountaineers, and as a young climber to have roped up with Esther and Martin Kafer, who provided sound mentoring.

The chapter entitled "Family Matters", which discusses John's relationship with Catherine Stafford and her two teenage sons, and the final chapter "The Last Traverse", are deeply affecting and both certainly brought a tear to my eye.

I think most mountaineers who read this book will finish it down with the thought that if they could have had only one last mountain journey in their lives, they would wished to have spent that journey with John Clarke. It is a very fine thing that Lisa Baile has written, such a heartwarming biography of one of the greatest figures in Canadian mountaineering, and it is a great achievement to have so fully brought John Clarke to life.

— Bruce Fairley

Remembrances

Marjory Hind
1925-2012

At many of the GMC campfire gatherings, a woman wearing a broad-brimmed straw hat with two dark eye-holes masking most of her face appears in many photographs. The mystery lady was, of course, Marjory Hind. Marjory Grace Hind (nee Bugler) died in the Foothills Hospital in Calgary on October 27, 2012, after a brief illness at age 87. She was a rare breed, an original Calgarian, born, bred and educated in Calgary. She graduated with a degree in nursing from the Calgary General Hospital Nursing School in 1947, and after extensive travelling, returned to the General to become head nurse of the Maternity Ward. She was a keen supporter and benefactor of the ACC Canmore Clubhouse and the library at the Canadian Alpine Centre at Lake Louise. At the time of her death, she was honorary president of the ACC.

Marjory was an active member of the Calgary Section and joined the ACC as a full member in 1952. She became a Life Member in 1980. While working in the United Kingdom, Marjory travelled to Zermatt, Switzerland, where she hired a guide to climb the Matterhorn. Not enamoured with climbing the standard tourist route (The Hörnli Ridge), Marjory's guide suggested they try the Furggen Ridge, the most difficult of the Matterhorn ridges. The guide soon discovered he had a great client and they climbed the ridge in record time. Marj was the first woman to climb this route, a fact of which she was very proud. She was passionate about the Matterhorn and her home was festooned with tapestries, paintings, photographs and sketches of it. It is fitting that the Matterhorn was featured on the cover of the program celebrating Marjory's life. Marjory was a strong climber and ski mountaineer in those early days of the 1950s when few ski lifts existed in the Rockies.

In 1956, Marjory Bugler married Robin (Bob) Hind, who later became president of the ACC and, ultimately, honorary president. She raised five children, three of them with Bob and two from Bob's previous marriage. One of the children, Peter, is an active member of the ACC.

Marjory's first love was nursing, and she was diligent in keeping in touch with her classmates of that 1947 graduating class. She arranged reunions every five years, making sure that no one was ever forgotten. She also must have had a remarkable address book because she never missed sending a card to recognize a friend's anniversary or birthday. She was a world traveller, visiting most of the continents, missing Antarctica only because the ship on which she was booked sank prior to the trip. While travelling, Marjory took thousands of colour slides and has many photo albums of her beloved mountains, family and friends.

I owe her a personal vote of thanks, as it was she who introduced me to mountaineering through the Youth Hostel Association and the Calgary Section of the ACC where I met many of the people I am privileged to call my friends. Marjory loved people and was a superb cook and hostess. I can remember many times sharing their dinner table and enjoying the company of their many friends. For several years, Marjory also ran a gourmet catering business for executives of the TD Bank, located in a private dining room at the bank and reserved for special occasions.

She was a major participant in our annual "78 Weekend," a gathering of mainly Calgary ACC members who were keen classical music collectors of 78 rpm records. We shared our favourite recordings in each others' homes while enjoying the flavours of some remarkable pot-luck meals complemented by a good selection of wines of the world. Sadly, with her death, almost all of that group have departed this life to listen to, I hope, "heavenly music" firsthand.

—Bruce Fraser

Victor Henry Heller
1918-2012

Victor henry heller passed away September 8, 2012, at the age of 93, just a month before his 94th birthday. Victor, or better know as Henry, was born in Vancouver on October 11, 1918. He lived many years in Abbotsford, worked in his father's newspaper plant and continued the trend in newspaper plants in both New Westminster and Edmonton. Before World War II, where he served in the Royal Canadian Air Force, Henry attended college in Bellingham, Washington, to study logging. After the war, following a stint of logging and prospecting, Henry trucked several tons of newspaper equipment to Campbell River where he operated from 1946 to 1950 before acquiring the *Hope Standard*. In 1953, he started a printing business in North Vancouver and remained there until retiring in Vernon.

His passion for skiing and climbing took him to Austria and Switzerland several times, but his real loves were the mountain ranges of British Columbia, Alberta and the northwestern US. He was also a Life Member of the Alpine Club of Canada.

—Alma Heller

David Lewis
1920-2013

David james lewis, an intrepid psychiatrist, artist and intellectual, died January 1, 2013, in his 93rd year. His family was present as he passed peacefully on to his next adventure.

David was born in Montreal in 1920, the eldest of three children to Dr. David Sclater Lewis and Evelyn Ross Lewis. David initially chose to study liberal arts at McGill University, while pursuing his love of photography by working as a reporter for his Uncle PD Ross of the *Ottawa Journal* during his summer breaks. Soon after graduating in 1941, he joined the Royal Canadian Navy and served as an officer with Combined Operations, surviving beach landing invasions both in Normandy and Sicily. Many years later, he and his naval colleagues compiled a two-volume photo essay of their war years. The collection of WWII photographs he took with his precious Zeiss camera proved invaluable. As Lieutenant-Commander, he returned with fellow Canadians to Normandy and the Combined Operations at the 1997 reunion of the Dieppe raid of 1942.

After earning his medical degree at the University of Toronto in 1950, David completed his internship of psychiatry at Sunnybrook Hospital, Toronto, the Phipps Clinic at Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, and the Maudsley Hospital and Bethlem Royal in England. He then returned to Toronto to practice at St. Michael's Hospital and also teach at the University of Toronto. In 1964, his career took him back to McGill University and the Royal Victoria Hospital. In 1971, political turmoil in Quebec impelled him to move his family and career to Calgary, where he taught and practiced at the University of Calgary and the Foothills Hospital. By this time he had earned the Fellowship of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, and membership of the Medical Research Council in Psychiatry. David was curious about all sorts of ideas and how they related to the spiritual and psychological landscape. Throughout his formative years, he was inspired by his meetings with Carl Jung, JBS Haldane and his sibling Naomi Mitcheson, R.D. Laing and others. David was an early adopter of new methods in psychotherapy and took part in early research into the therapeutic uses of hallucinogenic drugs. His creative and progressive approach was reflected in various undertakings, including the establishment of the Mood Clinic at the Foothills Hospital.

David always had a sketchbook with him and recorded his impressions of the world and people around him with startling insight. He had an eye for art and built a significant collection of paintings, Inuit carvings and writings, many of which have been donated to the University of Calgary. In spite of his loss of hearing, music delighted him to the end of his life.

David's final years were spent on Salt Spring Island where, sadly, his mental faculties diminished due to Alzheimer's disease. He lived at the Greenwoods Extended Care facility for four years where he was much loved and cared for by the staff and was visited daily by his wife and family.

David was a lifetime member of the Montreal Section of the ACC. His photo albums depict his climbs from 1946-47 in the Bugaboos and 1949 in the Freshfields where I was introduced to the sport with the first ascent Mount Skene. We also participated in camps at Lake O'Hara and the Saskatchewan Glacier. We returned years later to the Saskatchewan Glacier with our children, and were shocked to see it had receded beyond recognition.

—Catherine Lewis

Phyllis Katherine Hart
1915-2012

Alpine club of canada Life Member Phyllis Katherine Hart was born on March 7, 1915, in Stettler, Alberta, and grew up in nearby Gadsby. She began her career as a school teacher, and proceeded to work as a telegraph, then teletype operator for the Canadian Pacific Railway, working in Medicine Hat during the winter and at the Chateau Lake Louise in the summer. According to her family, her happiest years were at Lake Louise where she climbed just about all the area's peaks with the CPR's Swiss Guides. She finished her career at the CPR as a communications instructor and customer liaison in Calgary. Following her retirement, she enjoyed travelling to many international destinations, hiking in the mountains she loved and also volunteering in her community. She participated in the Alberta Wilderness Association's annual tower climb, which now presents the Phyllis Hart Award to the oldest female climber. As an ACC member, Phyllis is fondly remembered as an active mountaineer and also for her generous donation to the rebuilding of Fay Hut. Phyllis Hart died at the age of 97 on April 9, 2012.

—Lynn Martel

Sarka Spinkova
1920-2012

As an alpine club of canada Life Member, Sarka Spinkova made a lasting impression on Canada's mountain community. Born in Prague, Czechoslovakia (as the country was then known), in 1920, Spinkova immigrated to Canada in the early 1950s. Educated at Paris's Sorbonne, for many years she worked as a highly respected teacher of French and German at Toronto's Leaside High School. She was a talented pianist, choir member, and supporter of arts and theatre. A keen skier and adventurous traveller, she visited China and hiked in the Alps and the Tatras. But it was in the Canadian Rockies where her passion for the alpine blossomed after meeting Hans Gmoser. With him, she climbed Mount Assiniboine and Mount Hungabee, and in 1957, Mount Robson. At that time, the peak had not been climbed for many years, and had not been guided since 1939. The following summer, Gmoser guided Spinkova to the summit of Mount Alberta; it was only the third ascent of the peak, and the first by a woman. An enthusiastic supporter of the ACC, Spinkova contributed to the *Canadian Alpine Journal* and donated to the construction of the Boswell Cabin at the Canmore Clubhouse. She died in March 2012 at the age of 91.

—Lynn Martel

Rick Collier
1941-2012

The world is a different place. A constant has been removed. This is to Canadian mountaineering what John Lennon's death was to popular music.

Rick Collier was a marathoner in the original sense; giving it all, one peak at a time, to bring the message. There are wild nooks and crannies in the Canadian Rockies that he travelled (sometimes just one valley off route) that may never see another human footstep. Rick was a tireless witness to nature, ever willing to invest in the price of getting there, and ever willing to report on the wonders, great and small. He spent the time in the mountains that we all wish we had, and he spent it so well.

Rick was a man of mountain lists, so it is appropriate to enumerate some of his accomplishments in a career that spanned 32 years—a tally of more than 1,350 summits (most of them in the Canadian Rockies). The second person to ascend all of the 11,000-foot summits in the Canadian Rockies (as that list was accepted at that time), and the first to do so without using helicopter or fixed-wing flights for access and egress. The first person to climb all of the 572 named summits in the "green book"—*The Rocky Mountains of Canada South* (1979 edition). The first person to climb all of the named peaks on the Continental Divide, south of the North Saskatchewan River. The first person to climb all of the near-11,000ers in the Rockies—the peaks between 10,935 feet and 11,000 feet—some of which have since been, and others of which will likely be, added to the 11,000er list. Just to cover his bases, Rick was expanding this latter list to include all the peaks between 10,850 feet and 11,000 feet. He was three-quarters of the way there.

First in many things mountain, Rick was the last to call attention to himself. He was more willing to elaborate on the companionship of an outing; on the (ahem) occasional blunders along the chosen route (usually "shortcuts" on the way down); on how a particular day often turned out to be not long enough for a particular objective; or on how the days were not in numbers enough for the objectives remaining. The summits mattered but the journeys mattered more so. As he moved toward and past age 70, Rick admitted to slowing down, tagging "only" 30 to 40 peaks a year instead of the 60 to 70 he had summitted in some years past. This was doubly remarkable because the longer he climbed, the more remote and difficult of access most of his mountaineering objectives became. By 2012, Rick was still climbing at a pace that would leave many of those four decades younger in the Rocky Mountain dust.

On receiving an invitation from Rick to join an outing, the first question from the invited was often "Where's that?" Rick possessed an encompassing knowledge of the Canadian Rockies that probably will never be duplicated. A great deal of this was simple (but hard-won), boot-borne wisdom—the product of endless miles of side-hilling on scree, of mantling over limestone ledges, of cat-walking along pinnacled ridges. But Rick also possessed an organic knowledge—partly studied, partly intuitive—of how this valley connected to, or didn't connect, to that; of where the essential break in that map-depicted cliff would likely be; of where and how to approach a peak for which there was no written record of approach. Finally, as he began to write his own verses in Rocky Mountain history, Rick came to possess a near-encyclopedic knowledge of the accomplishments and efforts of those who had gone before.

Rick's trip reports have become a primary resource for novices and the experienced alike. When he finally went digital, Rick began to fully document his climbs with photographs whose gorgeous details match his written accounts. His online photo essays are

rich with depictions of vegetation and rock strata, of snowy ridgelines snaking under magical skies, of lonely tarns in deep mountain pockets. Hero shots are all but missing.

When Rick's requests for partners went unanswered, as they often did, he ventured solo. Those who did accept an invitation to ramble with him soon realized how bold those solo outings must have been, for they had forged a mountaineering ethic that many found outright humbling. Rick's physical appearance belied his phenomenal ability as a climber on rock. He routinely soloed grotty steps, chimneys and double-fall line slabs that were mid-5th class, revelling in the exposure, always in mountain boots and wearing a pack, and often in dreadful conditions. He almost always found a line and would push it to upper-5th class when there was no other way. You followed because you were there with him and trusted that it would all work out. When the rope came into play, Rick always offered to take the sharp end, and again, you sighed with relief and trusted.

Rick was well accomplished in other athletic fields: distance running, trans-continental cycle touring and orienteering among them. He was a tireless advocate for social justice and environmental respect, unafraid of making himself unpopular in service to those causes. His environmental efforts were key in the preservation of several wilderness areas in Alberta. He ran for office in the 2012 Alberta provincial election. A professor of English by trade, Rick was also a champion of language, of ideas and debate, and of creativity in general. His critiques of manuscripts typically offered better reading and were more insightful than the content to which they were directed. His desert-dry humour and razor wit pervaded his intellectual efforts.

Courage. Yes, Rick had it in the mountains, but he also walked with courage every day. Rick was arrested on February 1, 2012, for protesting clear-cut logging in the Castle Special Place in southwestern Alberta. It was widely reported that he was one of four apprehended that day, but the manner of Rick's protest was not. While the three other protesters admirably gave up their freedoms by standing on a roadway where they had been court-ordered not to stand, Rick sat down beside a running feller-buncher to make his statement. He was, he later stated, terrified—perhaps more so than he ever had been in the mountains.

When Rick emailed in early August 2012 to say that he and a group were headed for Mount Geike (a peak that is a hair shy of qualifying for the near-11,000-er list), I instinctively typed a reply saying, "Please, don't go." I didn't send it, more out of self-consciousness than out of wondering how he would consider it. When the news came a few weeks later, it was as if I already knew. In his account of a summer ascent of Mount Cromwell in 2008, in which his party narrowly escaped annihilation in an avalanche during the descent, Rick wrote: "I guess that saying about old climbers is true: it's not enough that they're good at mountaineering; they've also got to be damn lucky."

Rick, your luck held long—long enough for you to weave a precious tapestry from your passions for life and the mountains. Each of us who knew you is now part of that fabric; blessed for you having been here. Good-bye, friend. Climb on.

—Graeme Pole

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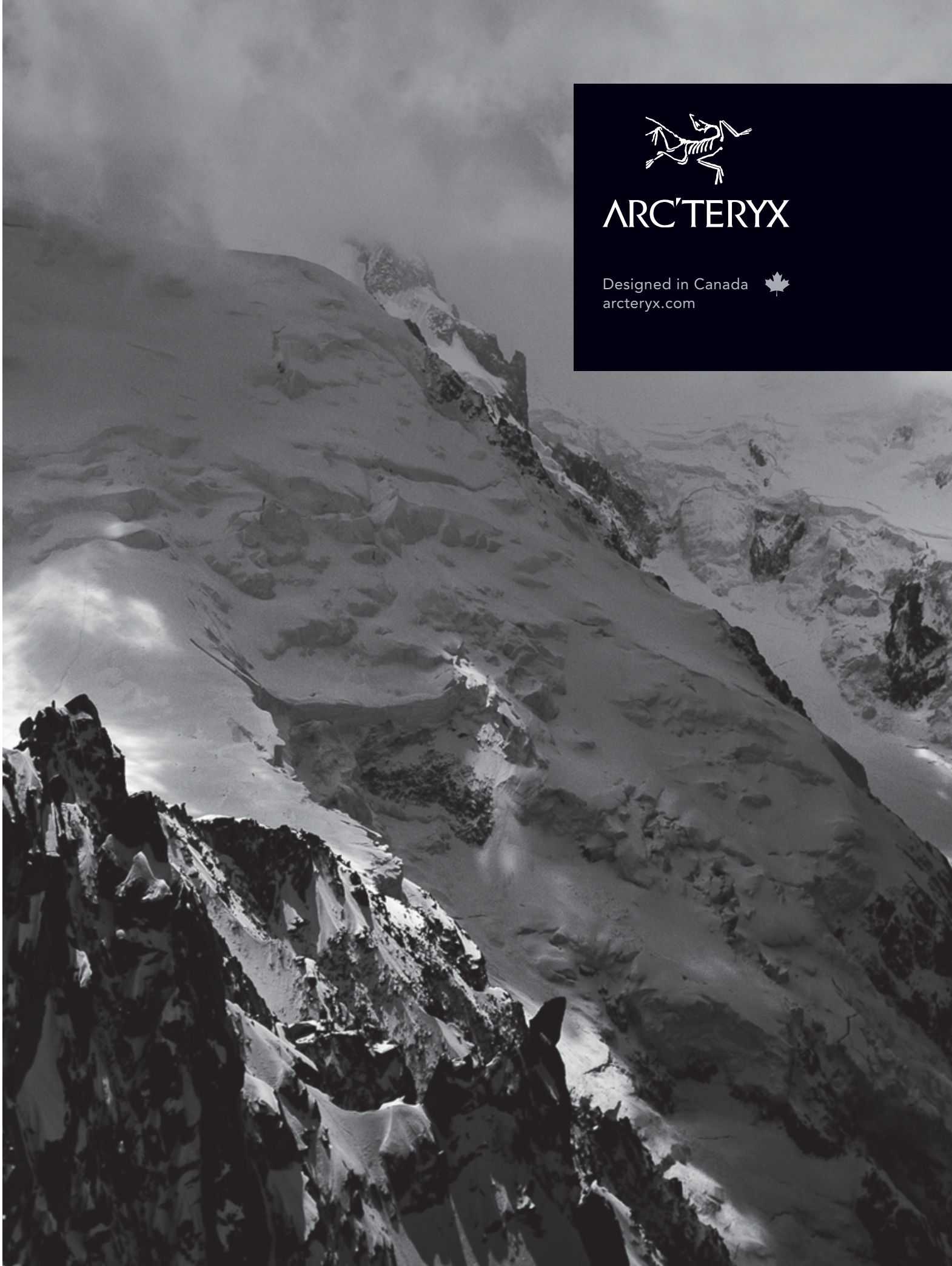

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Josh Wharton stems his way up the Greenwood-Locke on the North Face of Mt. Temple in the Canadian Rockes. This route capped an impressive trip to the Rockies for Wharton with ascents of Mt. Chephren and Mt. Robson MIKEY SCHAEFER

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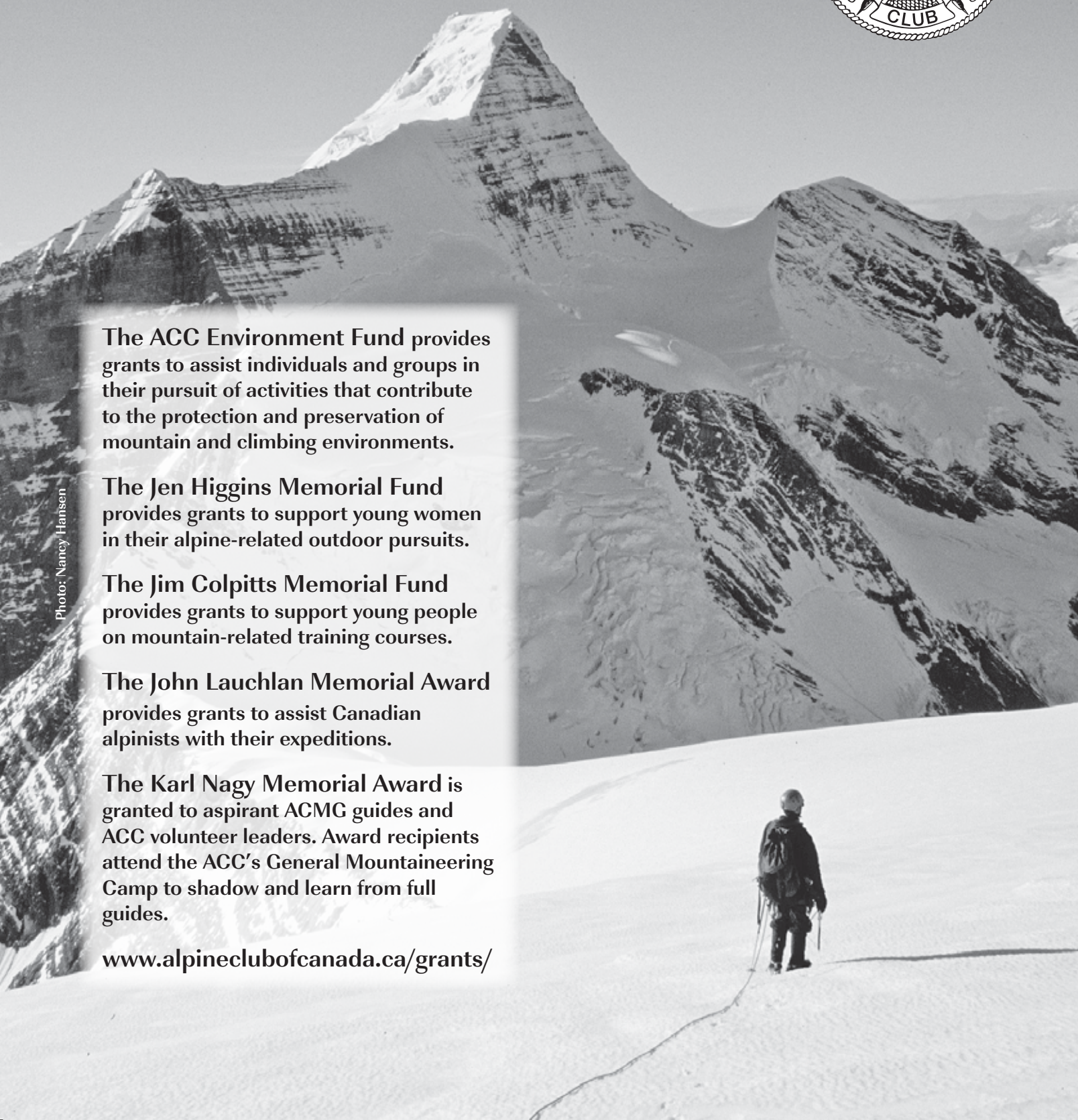
helping you reach your summit



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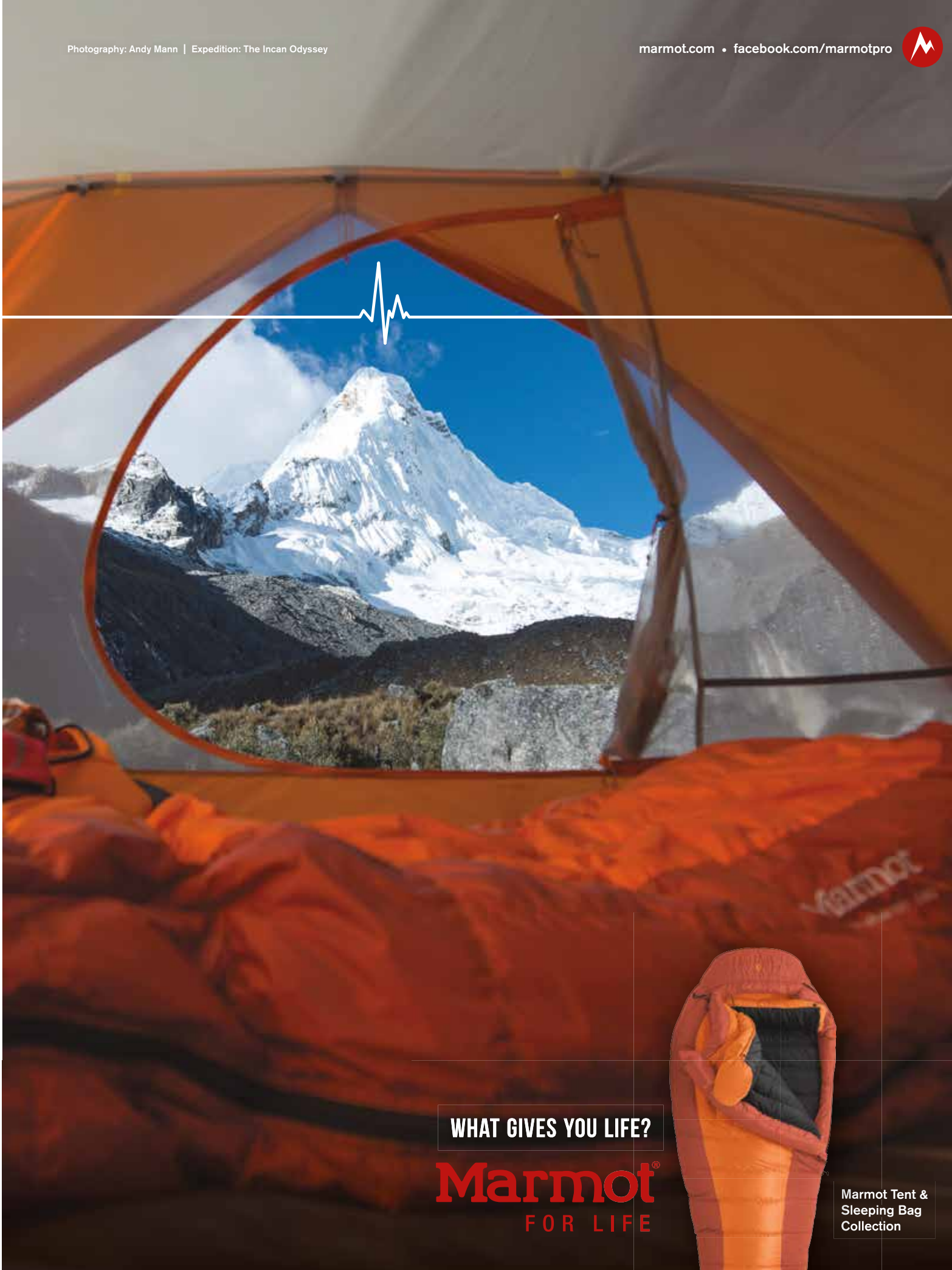
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