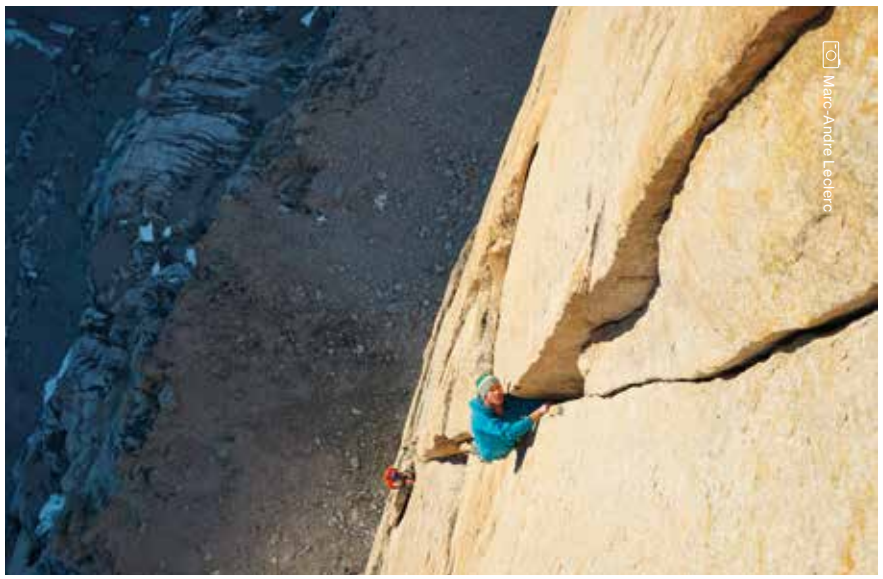
2017 Canadian Alpine Journal


Brette Harrington


Marc-André Leclerc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The Canadian Alpine Journal

Volume 100, 2017

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Editorial

Supercentenarian

CENTENNIALS ARE CAUSE for celebration—a time to pause, take stock and reflect. For people, 100 years represents a very full life. Well, this is the one-hundredth volume of *The Canadian Alpine Journal*. Like a centenarian, the *CAJ* was conceived, born and has thrived for more than 10 decades by evolving with our changing times. I say "more than" because despite this being the hundredth volume, 106 issues have been published over the course of 110 years, thus making this a supercentenarian.

The first *CAJ* was published in 1907, one year after the founding of The Alpine Club of Canada in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Since that time, a handful of issues were doubled up—two years of climbing news summarized in a single volume. Zac Robinson, ACC vice president for mountain culture (and a history professor at the University of Alberta), points out that anomalous issues were innovations demanded by their respective times. "Look at the years that were doubled," he says. "With only one exception, they're all years of economic hardship in Canada, or war. It was likely a necessary cost-saving measure when subscriptions were low. And then, along the way, there were a few other 'special issues,' which were never numerated, that highlighted different specific initiatives or events."

"It's all a sign," Robinson continues, "of just how reflective our climbing history and achievements are embedded in the wider story of Canada and the world."

Indeed, the *CAJ* charts a course much like Canada's own, and it is a particularly splendid coincidence that as we celebrate the centennial volume, Canada celebrates its 150th birthday—its sesquicentennial.

From Arthur O. Wheeler to me and my editorial and design team, the tradition of the *CAJ* lives on. I am honoured and proud to play a role in helping navigate the journal's modern trajectory. Much has changed in the publishing world since the turn of the twentieth century, and even more so since I took the reins of the *CAJ* in 1997. The digital era threatens to make hardcopy books obsolete, so we must continue to adapt.

Last year, we jumped in with both crampons and went for a new journal size in full colour. The result was stunning—a beautiful book printed on quality paper with vivid images that illustrate meaningful stories. This year, the ACC takes the *CAJ* one step further by releasing all the *CAJ*s—up to within one year of the current issue—online as a free, searchable, open-access platform.

It is with mixed feelings that I announce Suzan Chamney's final year as graphic designer for the *CAJ*. While I am happy that Suzan will embrace her hard-earned retirement, free from my pestering emails and drawn-out Skype sessions as deadlines loom, I will miss her artistic eye and meticulous attention to detail. Ten years ago, we were paired up and thrown into the deep end of *CAJ* publication. I owe Suzan endless gratitude for bringing pages of text and photos to life with her creative and clean layout. Suzan, thank you.

Time brings change. And there is a lot of change to be had in a hundred years. So as another era begins, please welcome Zac Bolan as the ACC's new publications manager and my new partner in crime. Onwards and upwards!

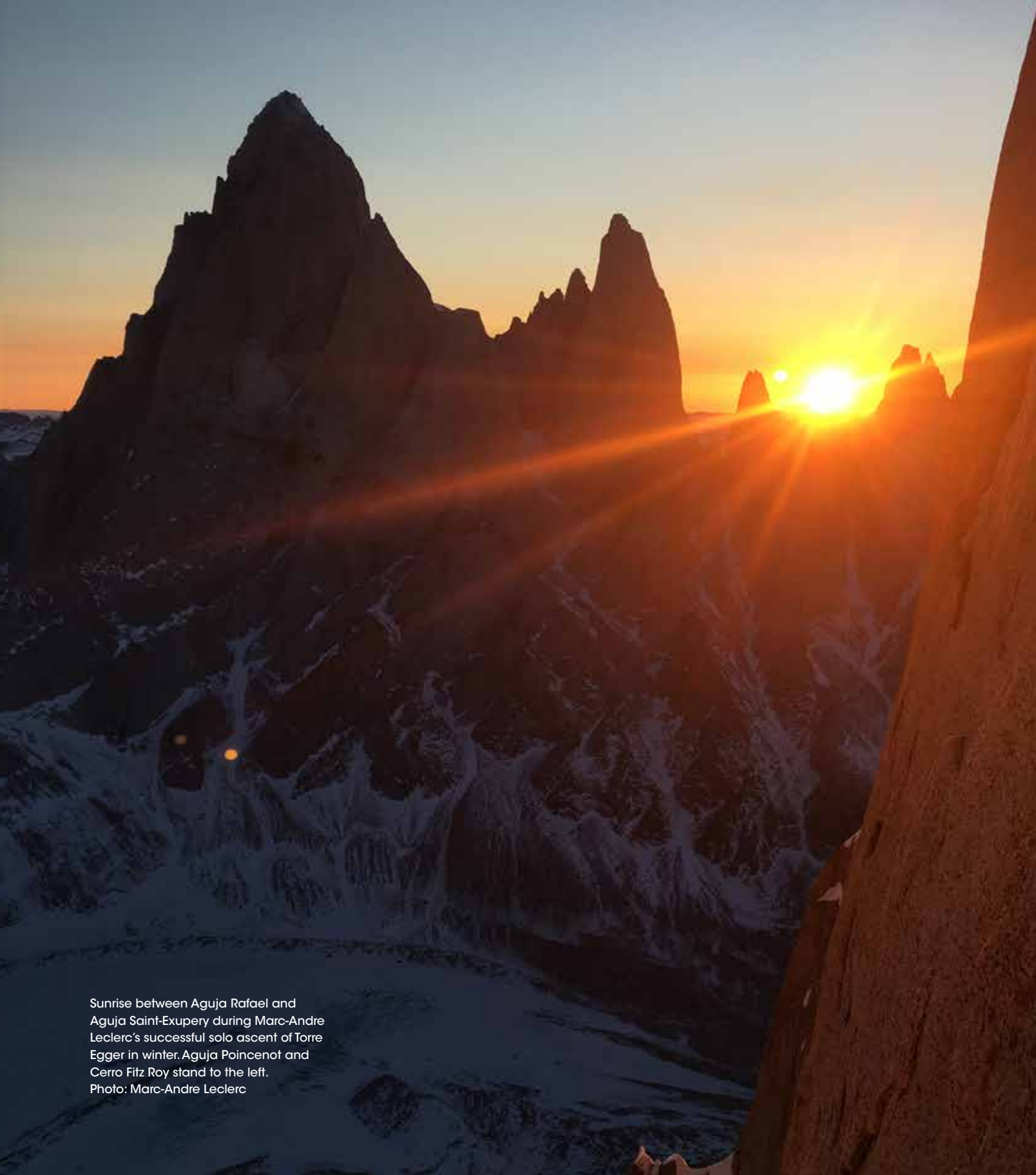
—Sean Isaac

Torre Egger Solo

Marc-Andre Leclerc

It was mid-June and I had already decided that Patagonia would not be in the cards for me in 2016. With a seven-week summer trip planned for Baffin Island, it seemed almost foolish to expect an opportunity to sneak in a winter climb in Patagonia, on the other side of the world, before the arrival of its austral spring on September 21. The days had been filled with the organization of what seemed to be truckloads of food and climbing gear destined for the Arctic, but Brette could see, through some extra-sensory perception, that Patagonia was still on my mind.

> “Marc, you should just book the ticket, you need to go before you lose inspiration.”



Sunrise between Aguja Rafael and Aguja Saint-Exupery during Marc-Andre Leclerc's successful solo ascent of Torre Egger in winter. Aguja Poincenot and Cerro Fitz Roy stand to the left.
Photo: Marc-Andre Leclerc

wiser and more supportive or understanding words could not have been spoken. I booked the ticket.

Returning home to B.C. in mid-August, I was struck by the beauty of the lush green rainforests. There had been no green in the Arctic. I felt homesick, but a week of big-walling with Brette in the lush Nesakwatch Valley provided a wonderful cure. Regardless, I felt I had somewhat worn out the travel bug, and the last thing I wanted was to pack my things and board another airplane. I tried to cancel the ticket. I was unable to get my money back, so I packed my bags and boarded the airplane.

By the time I was on the passenger bus rolling through the endless *estepa*, the Chalten peaks profiled on the horizon, excitement had returned in full. I arrived at the hostel of my good friend Hugo and the adventure began. On day one, I shuttled the first load of climbing gear to the Torre Glacier. On the second day, I rested. On the third day, the first window arrived.

There was much work to be done. I carried my second load of gear to Niponino, and walked back to the glacier's edge and shuttled in the climbing gear from the first day's deposit. The sky was clear, the winds were calm and there was much new snow in the valley. I tried not to let my imagination run wild over the audacity of the objective, and focused on one small task at a time. Realistically, thus far, I was merely out for a stroll in a scenic valley—no need for stress, right?

There was, though, one small detail that would prevent this camping excursion from being pleasurable in the classic sense of the word. This was indeed Patagonia in the winter, and winter nights in Patagonia are not known for being warm. Because my plan to climb the East Pillar of Torre Egger would require me to carry a sizeable rack of climbing gear, I did not think that my skinny legs would be able to efficiently propel me to the top and back with said gear plus a hefty winter sleeping bag. To compensate for my alpine style ambitions, I had decided to carry my rather damaged, decrepit summer sleeping bag rated only for zero Celsius.

So it was with relative ease that I exited my tent at 3 a.m. to get a move on the following day and begin the long trudge up to the base of the wall. Despite the lightweight sleeping bag, my pack felt heavy and the trudge felt rather trudge-like.

This was, in fact, the first solo climb in the area that I had packed bivy equipment for, and also the first for which I had packed two ropes. On my previous climbs, one 80-metre section of rope had proven sufficient, but Egger was intimidating enough that a second 60-metre tag line for rappelling seemed to stack the odds more in the favour of my survival.

When I arrived at the base of the wall, it was bathed in sunshine and fresh powder snow. I had imagined climbing a sneaky serac-threatened couloir to get a head start in the lower part of the wall, but this now seemed awfully foolhardy. I decided instead to start further to the left, up a steep mixed dyke feature and a technical dihedral. The climbing was slow, requiring me to sometimes self-belay while making M7 drytooling manoeuvres interspersed with aid moves. I had not expected to belay many pitches, and my set-up for re-ascending my rope after cleaning pitches was terribly inefficient. Furthermore, I had removed my gloves every so often in an attempt to place gear more quickly, but the numbing effect of the cold had caused me to batter them to a bloody mess with a notable lack of skin on the knuckles where it normally should have been.

After another long pitch of mixed aid and drytooling, I finally reached the top of the hanging glacier between Egger and Punta Herron where I made my first bivouac. I had hoped to reach a point much higher on the wall, but the difficult climbing and conditions had dictated otherwise. As I settled into my sleeping bag and made soup and tea for the night, my hands came back to life with a terrible ache.

It was at this bivouac where I once again faced the classic alpinist conundrum with its two main rules: 1) When safely at home or in some nice comfortable place, the alpinist will wish him/herself to be having an epic on a large frozen mountain somewhere; 2) When having an epic on a large frozen mountain somewhere, the alpinist will wish him/herself to be safely at home or in

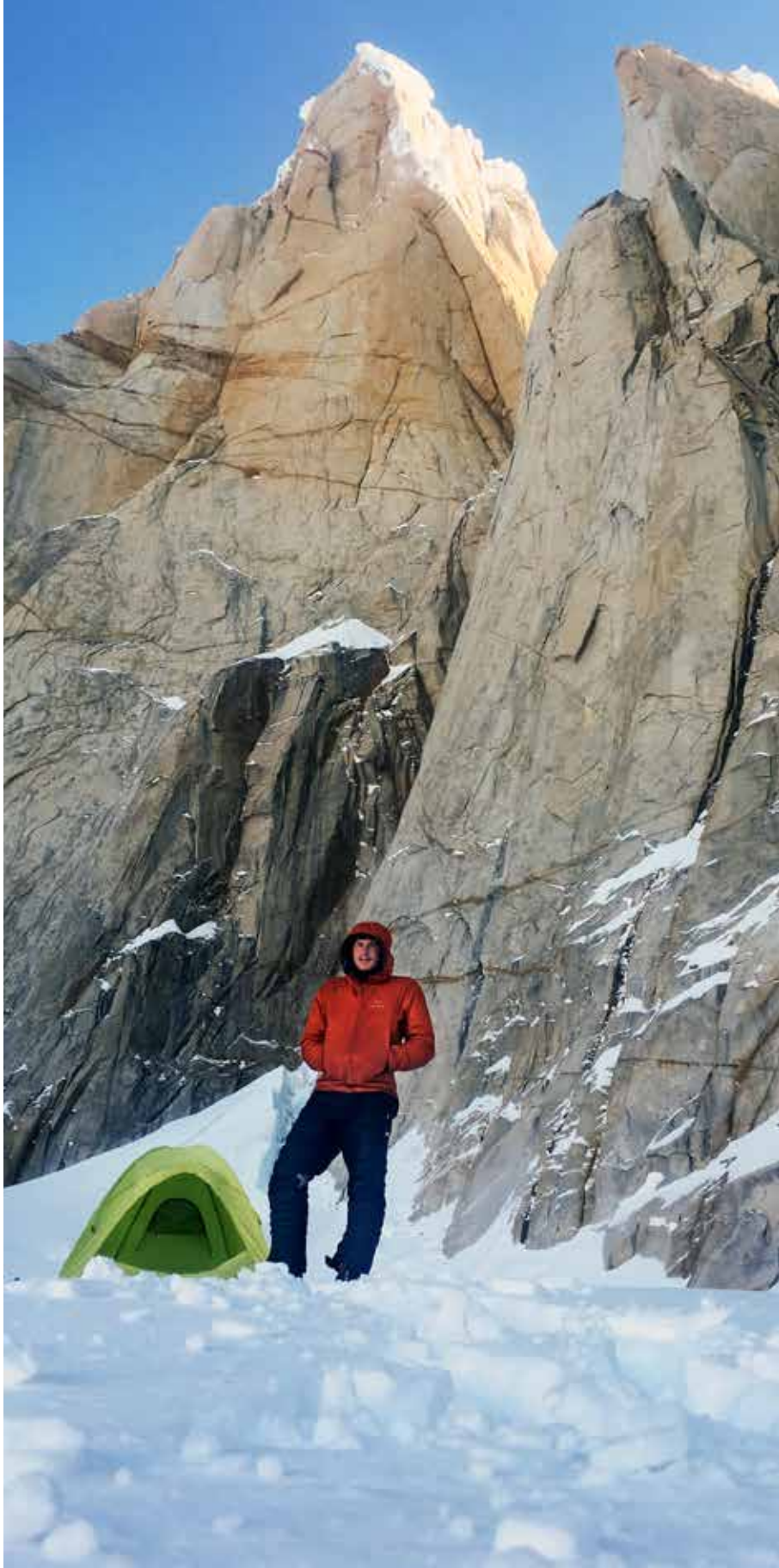
some nice comfortable place (the spa, the bakery, Hawaii, etc.).

The night passed with some discomfort, and once it was light enough to see where to go, I continued up. The climbing conditions improved considerably, with some very enjoyable pitches and some moderate terrain where I could easily climb with my pack. At one point, I hung my pack from two lightly placed wires, stacked my rope over my bag and climbed a wonderful pitch of mixed terrain while trailing my rope. Once at the top, I gave the rope a pull and my two wires lifted straight out of the crack, thus retrieving all my gear without fanfare. If only every pitch could go so smoothly.

I self-belayed a long pitch of excellent free climbing in rock shoes for a noon arrival at the base of the headwall where I had intended to bivouac. I knew that I would not be fast enough to finish the route and descend in half a day, so I continued hauling my bivy gear, hoping that a second bivouac—high on the wall without dinner—would not be too miserable.

The climbing was superb and the rock wonderfully dry for a September ascent. Instead of scratching on slabs hidden by powder snow, I could climb freely in rock shoes, enjoying splitter cracks mostly un-belayed, but employing occasional big-wall tricks when the terrain required. I made some wildly exposed pendulums, slithered up an icy chimney and reached a ramp on the headwall that held some truly adventurous climbing.

Underclinging flakes with bare hands, I kicked my crampon spikes into the white mush that was precariously clinging to the ramp while I cleared away snow with my right ice tool. I was climbing without a belay, hauling my pack behind me on the rope, but reached a move that I was not confident to make without some form of protection. The solution I came up with was to place two cams in the flakey crack and clip them together in a way that equalized them somewhat. I stepped my left crampon front point into the carabiner of the equalized cams and balanced up onto it as a point of aid. This allowed me to reach a large flake



Marc-Andre Leclerc below Cerro Torre (left) and Torre Egger. Photo: Marc-Andre Leclerc

to hook with the pick of my right ice tool. I firmly hung onto my tool, everything suspended by the metal pick for a moment, as I removed my two cams from the crack before continuing on my way.

While on the headwall, I was totally immersed in the continuously interesting climbing, but two rope lengths up the mixed ramp I realized that the sun had already set. Amazingly, a small snowy ledge materialized on the otherwise vertical wall, and I cleared an alarmingly exposed perch on which to spend my second night on the route, now a mere 150 metres below the summit of the tower.

The perch was spectacular and the views all around were incredible. The south face of Standhardt looked particularly beautiful in the evening light, but the aesthetics were somewhat diminished as the cold set in and the long night began. I had no food left, aside from two energy bars that I wished to save for the morning. But the cold was so biting that I ate one of the bars in hopes that it would help me stay warm. It helped and I fell asleep for a short while, but then awoke, shivering. I ate the second bar, which provided some respite, but left me painfully aware that I was now out of provisions.

I burrowed deeper into the sleeping bag to keep warm, and when I finally emerged in the early hours of the morning, it was snowing. Visibility was down to almost zero, huge snowflakes were falling from the sky and loose spindrift was pouring down the walls. It was safe to say that the weather window was over.

I rappelled through incredible waves of spindrift, navigating down the safer prow of the east pillar itself as my line of ascent was surely a funnel for the barrage now falling from the mountain. Surprisingly, my descent, while somewhat stressful, passed largely without incident and I found myself back on the glacier at the base of the route. I had tried and failed, but with delusional optimism I left my climbing gear hanging at the base of the wall before beginning the long march out to El Chalten.

My knuckles only had two days to recover back in town before another window appeared in the forecast. I could not believe my apparent good fortune with the weather, two winter high pressure systems in two weeks. I still knew, though, that this would be my last chance for a winter ascent.

On the hike back into the mountains, my pack was delightfully light without all the weight of my climbing gear. When I arrived at the foot of the mountain, I was pleased to see that the serac had avalanched and swept the starting couloir conveniently clean of snow, leaving firm névé and water ice in its place. I spent the day drying out my equipment in the sun, and then attempted to sleep away the evening in preparation for a 2 a.m. departure to attempt a single-push ascent.

Climbing a familiar route is so much quicker than an onsight ascent can ever be. All of the tricks that make an ascent go faster can be planned for in advance rather than figured out on the fly. Gear can be pared down to the bare essentials. When I started up the threatened couloir, my pack felt light and there was a bounce to my step, an energy behind each swing of my tool. I noted that I was dressed all in black, including my pack and boots. I felt like a thief in the night, moving quickly but delicately so as not to wake the looming serac.

The climbing in the gully was superb. The sheet of névé gave access to a classic groove that slowly steepened into a narrow chimney lined on one side with perfect water ice. Above this, I joined the line of my previous attempt and continued making good progress over the now familiar terrain. It was barely 5 a.m. when I passed my previous first bivy site and at first light I was switching into rock shoes for the long pitch of 5.10+ that led to the mid-height arête. The temperature was frigid, my toes went numb and my hands seized repeatedly as I climbed the pitch, but such things are to be expected in winter. I was glad I could even use rock shoes at all.

A cold wind rained ice chunks down the headwall as I climbed, but never ones large enough to do much damage, so I continued mostly without a belay. By mid-afternoon, I had passed my second bivouac and summit fever was beginning to set in.

The climbing was never hard, but also never straightforward. A tension traverse from a Birdbeak led to an ice chimney that gave way to some amazing 5.9 stemming before the summit ice slopes were reached. After a rope length of ice,

a rock step barred the way and required me to aid off my ice tools to reach easier terrain. Another tension traverse and a series of aid moves brought me to the final rime groove, which luckily never became steeper than 75 degrees. It was with some disbelief that I stumbled onto the summit of Torre Egger in a howling wind and was rewarded with a spectacular view across the Patagonia icecap.

However, the views were not the foremost thing on my mind. I still had to get off the tower in one piece, and the wind was strong and cold. So at 6 p.m., it was with some trepidation that I drilled a V-thread into a small patch of ice and rappelled directly over the prow of the upper east pillar headwall in the fading light. As I rappelled by the light of my headlamp, my ropes got stuck every now and again, and I had to solo around to free them. I was now familiar with the rappels, having set many of them during my retreat, allowing me to reach the glacier at 11 p.m. under the light of an epic full moon.

Unfortunately, I quickly ran out of fuel while making a hot soup, and the remainder of my meals required water to rehydrate, which left me feeling rather parched and famished. After struggling to sleep for a couple of hours, unable to keep warm, I simply packed up my camp and walked through the night and early morning hours to reach the glacier's edge a few kilometres away. Here, I could finally lay in the sun, drink my fill of water and fall asleep. The deed was done. I could relax now, go to the hot tub and enjoy the bakery.

Summary

Winter Link-up (5.10 M6 WI4 A2, 1000m), east face, Torre Egger, Patagonia, Argentina. 2nd solo ascent, 2nd winter ascent: Marc-Andre Leclerc, September 2016.

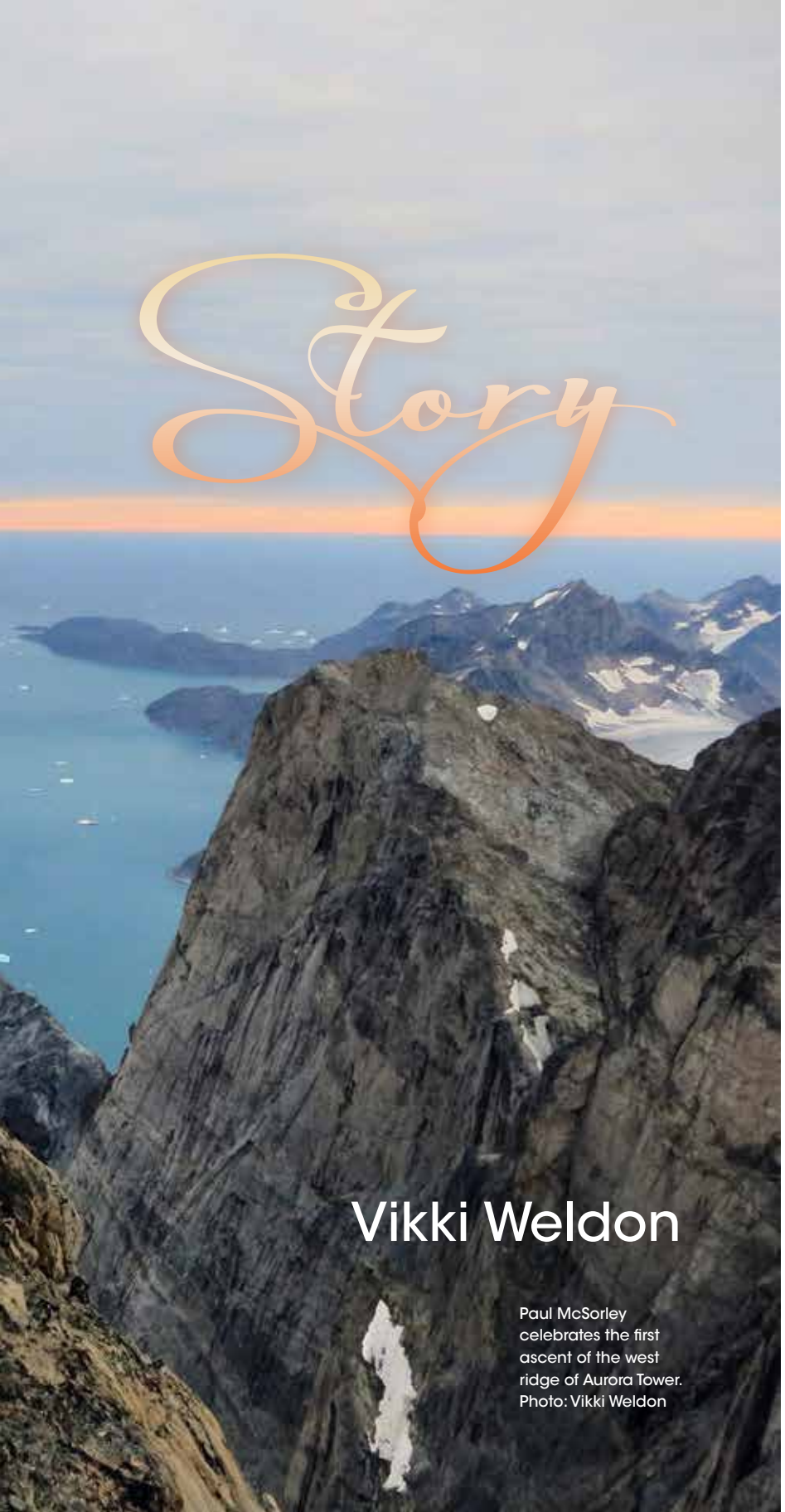
Titanic (VI 5.12 M6 WI4, 1000m), east face, Torre Egger, Patagonia, Argentina. FFA: Marc-Andre Leclerc, Austin Siadak, September 2016.

About the Author

Marc-Andre Leclerc grew up, and currently lives in Agassiz, B.C., at the foot of the North Cascades and Coast Mountains. At 24 years old, he is a full-time professional athlete and might be one of Canada's most stoked all-around climbers.

Marc-Andre Leclerc on the summit of Torre Egger, making the first solo ascent in winter and becoming the first person to solo all three of the Torre towers.
Photo: Marc-Andre Leclerc

Cinderella



Paul McSorley celebrates the first ascent of the west ridge of Aurora Tower. Photo: Vikki Weldon

RUGGED PEAKS SHAPED BY THE CRUSHING FORCE OF POLAR ICE OVER MILLENNIA. ¶

BEHEMOTHS OF ICE SLOWLY ENCIRCLE THEIR OUTER LIMITS, WHILE SMALLER BUT NO LESS IMPRESSIVE BERGS FILL THE INTRICATE FJORDS THAT CARVE THEIR WAY IN AND OUT OF THE OUTER EDGE OF THE SHORES LIKE A MOSAIC. ¶

WHALES SPOUT GEYSERS OF FRIGID WATER, WHILE SEEMINGLY BARREN SHORES HIDE BURSTS OF LIFE IN THE FORM OF VIBRANT WILDFLOWERS AND EMERALD GREEN MOSS. ¶

POPULATION OF LESS THAN 60,000 PEOPLE WHOSE LIVES ARE DICTATED BY LAND AND OCEAN. ¶

PLACE WITH FEW ROADS; JUST ICE, MOUNTAINS AND SEA. ¶

THIS IS GREENLAND.

Paul McSorley leads the last pitch of technical climbing before the final summit scramble on the west ridge of Aurora Tower.
Photo: Vikki Weldon

It was a chance to go to one of the wildest places in the world. This is what I was offered in the summer of 2016. A team was headed to eastern Greenland to experience the wild—Paul McSorley and me from Canada, and Paolo Marazzi of Italy, together with three photographers/videographers, Angela Percival and Julian Kenchenten (Canada), and Matt Irving (United States). The main purpose of the trip was to shoot a campaign for Arc'teryx, themed The Offroad Trip. The major bonus was we would be sailing from Iceland to Greenland in search of first ascents.

On August 16, 2016, we landed in Reykjavik, the capital city of Iceland. The next day we drove up to the Westfjords, arriving in the small port town of Ísafjörður, where we would be trading in our rental car for a 60-foot expedition sailboat. Striking in red and white, the *Aurora* was a former race yacht with four around-the-world trips under her mast. Its racing days over, the *Aurora*, along with its sister ship, the *Arktika*, now serve as a floating base camp around Iceland and Greenland, allowing the adventurous to explore these areas more freely.

Shortly after meeting our captain, Vidar Kristinsson (Iceland), and first mate, Rasmus Jonsson (Sweden), preparations were made to start our adventure. The plan was to depart Ísafjörður and sail across the Strait of Denmark towards the east coast of Greenland. Captain Vidar predicted a 50-hour crossing to Kangertittivatsiaq Fjord. With the compass set to 270 degrees west, we left the harbour with calm seas and zero wind. Within 30 minutes, Paolo was our first victim to sea sickness, but definitely not the last. We were not people of the ocean.

Calm seas and a small breeze followed us across the Strait of Denmark, making for a relatively uneventful crossing. It was surreal to turn in a circle and see nothing but sea. A pod of minke whales accompanied our passage early on the second morning, their sleek bodies cutting through the glassy water as we all gazed in awe. At noon, we spotted the far-off shores of Greenland. Massive icebergs came into sight—the grand sentinels of the Greenlandic shore. We manoeuvred past these slow-moving giants as they made their journey south with the currents. That evening, the *Aurora* cruised into Kangertittivatsiaq Fjord. It was then that we gained the first views of our objective.

The Mythics Cirque, a grand amphitheatre of looming granite towers, had, to our knowledge, only been visited once before by an Australian-American-British team and an American team who climbed in the area independent of each other in 2012. The next day we stepped back onto land with the intent of scouting out potential objectives. As we made our way closer to the centre of the cirque, I began to feel intimidated. These were monsters. The powerful Father Tower (Ataatap Qaqqaq) loomed to our left, neighboured by the aptly named Hidden Tower (Isertugaq Qaqqaq) and Siren Tower to its right, while an unnamed tower occupied a huge part of the right skyline. Drawn to the unclimbed towers in the cirque, including the stunning Siren Tower and a large broad northeast face of the unnamed tower, we were put off by the potential dangers of the large loose couloir and the friable rock that guarded the access of both towers. After a time, we decided that neither option was realistic, and no one seemed to want to attack due to the dangers. Our hearts told us no.

After much deliberation, we decided to try and access the cirque from the south side. Matthew Bunn and Mike Royer from the American-Australian-British team had ascended Hidden Tower's south face in 2012 and spoke of wonderful golden granite climbing. That sounded

Vikki Weldon (belayed by Paolo Marazzi) starts up the crux pitch of Cinderella Ridge on Hidden Tower. Photo: Paul McSorley

much more promising than the treacherous nature of the cirque proper. After a flurry of packing and organizing, we were dropped off on the southeast slopes of the cirque by Vidar. A few hours of hiking through steep terrain gained us access to the glacier that led us up and around to the south side of the cirque.

Finding a camp on a small saddle of rocky terrain between two glaciers, we went to scope out our potential lines. Although Hidden Tower had already been climbed, our eyes were drawn to a long buttress that ran its entire southwest ridge. It was pure, obvious and ripe for the picking.

The next morning, Paul, Matt, Paolo and I woke early. A short walk across the glacier and a small scramble led us to the beginning of the buttress. Three pitches of easy climbing through somewhat friable rock led us to the first technical pitch of 5.10+. Paolo nicknamed it "The Nose" pitch due to its main jutting feature. The rock quality varied throughout the climb, ranging from pure and utter choss to dream-like golden granite. A memorable pitch was the crux pitch, which ended up being my lead. It was obvious that the crux would be just off the belay, with only two pieces of suspect gear to protect the rather exposed moves. Nervously, I dug deep to pull the few powerful moves that led to a small stance and easier terrain above. The rock was stunning, and it felt incredible to make hard moves way up high in the alpine.

After more than 10 hours of continuous climbing, we reached the summit of Hidden Tower (1,400 metres). We had climbed a total of 14 pitches mixed with sections of scrambling for an estimated 800 metres of vertical gain. This was my first alpine first ascent and it was a special moment. After celebrating our successful climb with some elated hooting and hollering, along with some well-deserved summit gummy bears, we turned to begin our long descent.

On the second rappel, my feet aching after an entire day in climbing shoes, I untucked my shoes from the heels. As I kicked my feet against the

rock, I felt my left heel bump a bit too hard and watched in dismay as my shoe bounced down the entire wall to the glacier below. I gave a little yelp of frustration before reminding myself to focus on the task at hand. The main goal was to safely get down.

Once we regrouped and I told the team what had happened, Paul wrapped my foot in tape to protect it while Paolo looked on, laughing. "You are like Cinderella!" he giggled. With a mummified foot and one lonely right shoe, I had to laugh, too. Down we went.

We returned back to camp after 18 hours of climbing and descending, where our teammates Angela and Julian awaited with hot food and warm smiles. It was a beautiful day that I will never forget. A great route with a great name—Cinderella Ridge.

A few days of hiking, stand-up paddle boarding and seaside cragging ensued before the team decided to head back to the south side of the Mythics Cirque. This time our objective was for the entire team to climb the highest tower in the group. Unnamed and, to our knowledge, unclimbed, we had originally thought of attempting this peak from the north side, but Paul had spied the west ridge and thought it a solid choice.

The approach and access to the ridge was a slight crapshoot, but the mountain gods were on our side, and we were able to find our way to the mountain. Our progress was slowed by a gnarly glacier—Mother Nature's version of the corn maze. "Never take shortcuts in the mountains," Paul had trumpeted prior to our group's decision to try to beeline it through the glacier to the mountain. A few hours later, we meekly popped out the other side, only to find a house of cards of choss staring us down above the bergschrund. Tiptoeing along the side of the actively exfoliating face, it seemed like one wrong move could bring

The *Aurora* anchored outside of Tasilaq, the most populated town in eastern Greenland with 2,000-plus people. Photo: Vikki Weldon

the whole mountainside down.

Gaining the ridge, we breathed a collective sigh of relief. Ahead of us lay a beautiful path of granite leading up the 1,451-metre peak. As a team, we scrambled and climbed along the ridge, encountered engaging moderate climbing no harder than 5.9. Nearing the summit, we had to climb a mellow, albeit exposed, slab around the corner. With the fjord shining below and the proud faces of the Siren and Father towers as the backdrop, it was the sweetest section of the entire route, leading us straight to an easy ridge from where we gained the summit.

Words are hard to find to explain the feeling of being the first—again, to our knowledge—to stand on a mountain. It was surreal. To share such an experience with a great team made it even better. We had climbed from sea to summit in one day. We laughed, turning in circles, unable to take in the beauty before our eyes all at once. Yet, in the words of Mr. Newton, what goes up must come down. We rappelled and down-scrambled back to our bivy site beside a small hanging glacier, about 100 metres above the glacier. Warm soup and a brisk-shiver bivy ensued. We awoke to small snowflakes drifting down, which marked the first weather of the trip.

Luckily, the skies cleared and we made our way back to our floating base camp. This time we took the long way, skirting the crevasse matrix and slowly making our way back to the *Aurora*. Warm and dry, and savouring fresh-baked focaccia bread, we shared our story with Vidar and Rasmus.

"What will you name the peak?" Vidar asked.

Paul leaned forward, a smile playing on his face, "We named it Aurora Tower."

Vidar beamed. It was the perfect name, a nod of thanks to the vessel that had provided us access to this mountain playground.

Our time in the Mythics Cirque had come to a close. That evening, Vidar steered the *Aurora* out of Kangertittivatsiaq Fjord and towards a sheltered anchorage, where we would spend the night before heading south towards the town of Tasiilaq.

A few days later, we found ourselves setting course for Iceland. Spouts of water erupted in the

Paolo Marazzi climbs golden granite hand cracks during the first ascent of Aurora Tower.
Photo: Vikki Weldon

distance, signalling whales in all directions. Vidar and Rasmus could only relax once we had passed the final iceberg, a sentry guarding the gates of Greenland, bidding us adieu. That evening, the aurora borealis danced and played above the boat, stronger and brighter now that winter was on its way.

The seas were much less forgiving on our return journey. A storm was on the horizon and Vidar was keen to complete the crossing before it hit. With the choppy swell, I felt completely debilitated by nausea. In an optimistic moment, I stumbled out of bed for some lunch. Back in my bunk, the nausea hit me like a train. Barely making it to the head, I promptly returned my lunch to the sea. Squeezing my eyes shut, I willed Iceland to move closer. I penned a letter to our floating cabin in my head.

Dear Aurora,

I love you and all you have given us, but I can't wait to kiss you goodbye with both feet on solid ground.

Your friend in puke, Vikki

Summary

Cinderella Ridge (V 5.11c, 800m), Hidden Tower, Mythics Cirque, Greenland. FA: Matt Irving, Paolo Marazzi, Paul McSorley, Vikki Weldon, August 21, 2016.

West Ridge (IV 5.9, 600m), Aurora Tower, Mythics Cirque, Greenland. FA: Matt Irving, Julian Kenchenten, Paolo Marazzi, Paul McSorley, Angela Percival, Vikki Weldon, August 26, 2016.

Acknowledgements

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About the Author

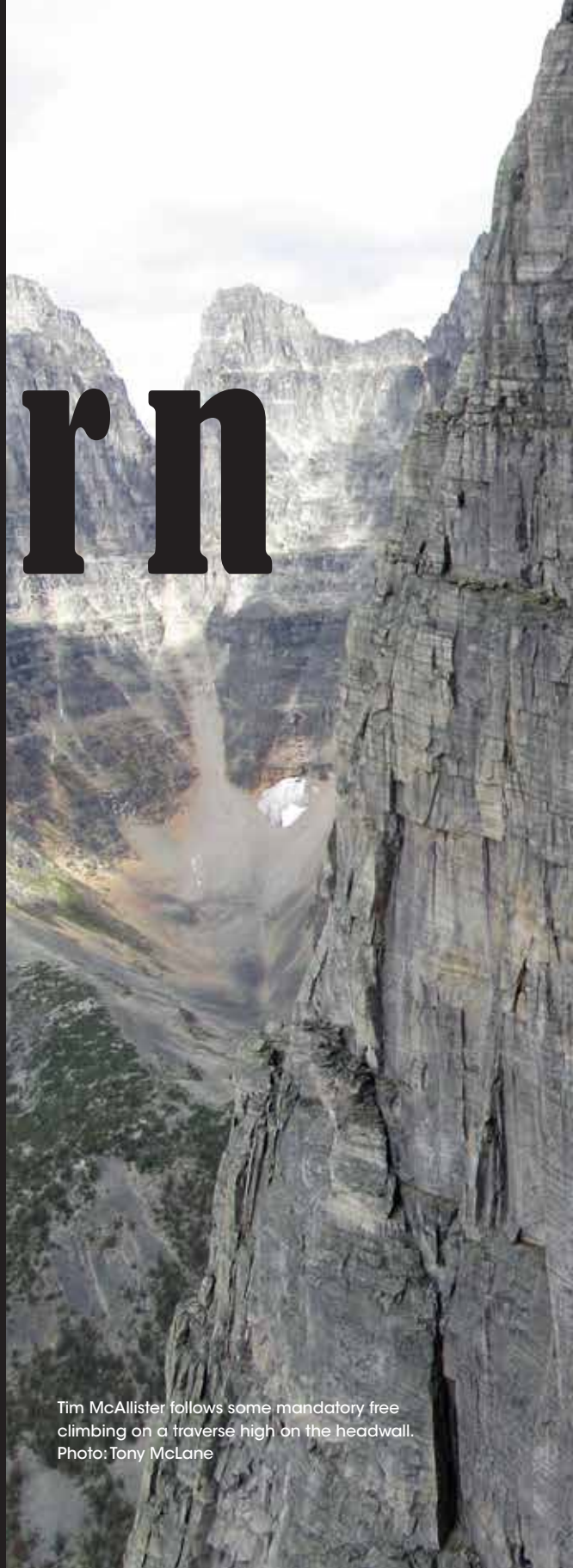
Vikki Weldon is a rock climber based in Squamish, B.C. Her accomplishments range from sending 5.14 sport and 5.13 trad to putting up first ascents in Morocco and, now, Greenland. She is also a registered nurse specializing in pediatrics, and loves long walks along the river with her husky, Tundra, and her partner in crime, Tom.

Cinderella Ridge on Hidden Tower. Photo: Vikki Weldon

postern

Tim McAllister

HALFWAY UP THE 10-PITCH HEADWALL, AT YET ANOTHER HANGING BELAY, TONY LOOKS AT ME WITH A GRIN AND ADMITS, "NORMALLY, I CLIMB WITH SOMEONE FIRST BEFORE VENTURING ON A BIG CLIMB LIKE THIS."



Tim McAllister follows some mandatory free climbing on a traverse high on the headwall. Photo: Tony McLane

TONY IS 20 YEARS MY junior, and I remember him as a wee crusher in Squamish decades ago. I used to climb with his dad, Kevin. Other than a few weeks of humping seismic cables around the jebels of Oman, and a brief chat as Tony and his partner blazed by me on El Capitan during a Nose-in-a-day attempt, we had never roped up. So it was a leap of faith when Tony texted out of the blue to say, "Drop everything and let's go climb a MacDaddy of a wall in the Ramparts."

I sort of knew what I was getting into, as I had taken some photos of the elusive mountain called Postern the winter before while on a wildlife study flight with Parks Canada. Later that summer, I bumped into Tony on the streets of Jasper, Alberta, after his and Jason Ammerlaan's fantastic attempt on Postern's northwest face. His eyes were wild and crazy as he told me the story of an injury and backing off from high on the mountain. I offered to share my photos and hinted that I was psyched to join him if he ever came back. I had never climbed in the Ramparts. First ascents on remote alpine walls has always been my favourite aspect of climbing, and Postern's untouched walls looked phenomenal. I knew that someday I would make the hike in and climb amongst the quartzite towers.

The Ramparts are host to notoriously poor weather, but in August, a decent forecast had Tony scrambling for partners since Jason graciously declined due to his imminent new role as a father. He must have spun through his digital Rolodex a few times before he texted me, but I am grateful he did.

Two days later, we met in a parking lot in Jasper National Park that smelled of horses and bug spray. We danced the jig of racking up for a five-day adventure. Bolt kit? No, we have pins. Jumars? No, we have a Grigri. Crampons? No, let's bring one ultra-lightweight ice axe.

Twenty-five or so kilometres of mostly pleasant hiking had us sleeping under the stars on a pretty little grassy bench perched above Amethyst Lake. In the morning, we stashed our big packs under a quartzite boulder and marched up the Bastion-Drawbridge col that separates Alberta and British Columbia. From there we could see

the profile of Postern and the descent we hoped to take down the steep wall separating Postern and Casemate. It looked like a lot of climbing, rappelling and hiking.

What makes the Fraser Rampart Group unique in the Canadian Rockies is that they are formed of solid, blocky quartzite instead of the typical shattered limestone. It takes a solid day or more to get to the base of these mountains and few climbers make the arduous hike. Indeed, only 16 out of a total of 85 alpine routes on 37 peaks have been recorded in the past 40 years. Most notably, and not surprisingly, is the Lowe-Hannibal Route on Mount Geikie (3,313 metres), climbed in August of 1979—part of George Lowe's Grand Cours hat trick, with Mount Alberta and North Twin being the other two. Honky Tonquin (5.10 A3) is another outstanding line on the north face of Geikie, climbed by Scott Simper and the late Seth Shaw over nine days in 1996 and unrepeated. Our planned route up Postern Mountain was the next valley over in B.C., stepping the remoteness up a notch from the already committing north-face routes of Mount Geikie.

The weather still looked promising so we dropped a thousand metres to the valley floor and picked up a rope, hammer and some pins that Tony and Jason had stashed two years prior.

After a desperate boulder-to-boulder leap across Geikie Creek, we hiked downstream and made dinner, a fine boil-in-the-bag affair. We guessed there would be no water for a couple of days so we guzzled and filled up two litres each, and at about 6 p.m., began up the arduous scree cone we had to ascend before we put on the rock shoes.

The dark, 1,000-metre quartzite wall loomed over us as we slowly made our way to near the toe of the buttress where we geared up. Tony's mellow vibe allowed me to bury my doubts for the time being.

Before I had my shoes on, Tony disappeared around the corner and started up the near-vertical wall, following ramps and crack systems, easily

Tim McAllister jugging high on the headwall.
Photo: Tony McLane

soloing terrain that I thought looked fun to lead. I yelled up expressing my concern, but he assured me that it was no big deal and that we had about 400 metres to solo before we roped up. So I sucked it up and followed Tony, grey matter leaking into my eyes. I did ask for the rope once, as I really did not want to die, and was grateful when it slithered down to me. The shadows grew long as we meandered up the buttress that Mark Hesse and John Catto had climbed in 2001 during their impressive four-day ascent of the Southwest Buttress. I finally caught up to Tony as he flaked the rope and switched on his headlamp in preparation for climbing a couple of steep pitches before the big ledge where we would bivouac. My pack tugged at my back as the beam of my headlamp narrowed my reality to the circle of light in front. It was hard to appreciate the good crack climbing and solid rock after such a long day—but I tried.

Once on the ledge, we unroped and traversed right for 20 metres to a semi-flat spot under an overhang. We silently shuffled a few big rocks, blew up our air mattresses and tucked under the one lightweight sleeping bag we had brought—and then passed out. We were right on schedule.

Tony McLane starting up the sixth pitch of the headwall.
Photo: Tim McAllister

The alarm at 6 a.m. came fast, and we quickly made some coffee and scrambled out onto the huge ledge, put our rock shoes on again and soloed up to the base of the headwall. The sky to the north now had strings of cirrus cloud, silky and foreboding. Winds floated the roar of the rowdy creek up into the amphitheatre, disturbing the stillness. Neither of us mentioned these changes.

A pitch below the imposing orange headwall, we made a belay and Tony climbed around a corner and disappeared. I paid out a bunch of rope, and after what seemed like a long time he yelled, "Secure!"

I soon understood why it took so long. Tony was right below me, about 15 metres or so, with no gear clipped to the rope. He had downclimbed a vertical wall into a traverse that I had no interested in soloing. I ended up down-aiding to protect myself. On the ledge beside Tony, my eyes scanned upward tracing the obvious line of thin cracks, roofs and bulges.

Tony led up the dihedral and right away it looked hard. Clean and compact, the orange quartzite was streaked with white and black horizontal bands. Thin cracks provided good gear and thin jams. Face holds were in short supply but bomber. It was all overhanging, like nothing either of us had ever seen before on an alpine climb.

At the belay on the second pitch of the headwall, still huffing and puffing after pulling on the last few pieces of gear, Tony mentioned that Jason had onsighted this pitch on their first attempt. It sure felt like 5.12 to me.

The climbing then got harder and we slowed. On some of the pitches, I jugged with the Grigri and a prussic while Tony hauled the heavy packs with two Micro Traxions. We climbed six pitches of sustained hard 5.11 with some tricky aid sections. Birdbeaks and knifeblades were pounded to patch together discontinuous cracks. This took us to the small ledge—Tony and Jason's high point. I could not imagine rappelling down from there

and hiking out. I silently hoped the climbing would get easier. It never did.

We shuffled left for five metres to the only obvious weakness that split the upper part of the headwall. Tony looked at me to take over, but I thought it made sense for the monkey, 20 years younger than me, to keep on keeping on. The name of the game was to get to the top of the wall before dark. The thought of hanging in our harnesses all night erased any sense of pride.

Instead of hand cracks to the top of the wall like we had hoped for, the wall steepened and technical trickery to surmount roofs and changing corners was the flavour. Tony battled hard, freeing as much as possible, but the unrelenting nature of the compact rock and need to protect had him sometimes standing in slings. It was full-on big-walling with anything goes.

Winds continued to intensify and the sky darkened, adding drama to the outrageousness, exposure and remoteness.

Nearing the end of the headwall after three more long pitches, the only contact between the two of us was the rope that slithered in fits and starts through the Grigri. Finally, I heard Tony scream, "Secure!" He was 50 metres out on our 70-metre rope, the thrashed six-millimetre tag line dangling three metres behind out in space. I had not seen Tony in an hour.

I started taking him off belay, and then he yelled some more words, but they were stolen by the wind. I hesitated then yelled back for clarity. More chopped half words. I kept him on belay, hoping that was his wish. A pause, and then the rope continued to slowly slither up the corners and around the roof.

Finally, I managed to catch "Secure!" again, to my relief. Jugging this very steep pitch was challenging with huge swings and little gear to lower out on due to abundant back-cleaning by Tony. As

Tony McLane on pitch seven of the headwall. Photo: Tim McAllister

I slid my prussic up the taut rope that soared overhead, I could only hope there were no sharp edges.

Lost in my personal battle to ascend—one huge swing at a time—I could only marvel at the sheer beauty of our position. It was not desperate, or miserable, or cold; we were doing exactly what we came here for. Pulling around another small roof, I could finally see Tony's Cheshire grin poking over the rim with his chalk bag in use as edge pro on a nasty razor slot at his feet. He was standing on the top of the headwall.

After the typical and awkward high-five-to-hug combo, we took a moment to absorb our efforts and position on the wall. My sweat from jugging cooled as the last light to the west faded behind apprehensive clouds. We untied and scrambled on ledges, looking to get out of the wind and find a sheltered bivy. A snow patch provided much-needed water. We settled on a large slab and fashioned the tarp into a makeshift shelter. Strong winds buffeted the tarp all night, and like a long-suffering married couple, we each tugged at the small mummy bag to stay warm.

Dawn broke cool and windy, but still no rain. The views of the upper Fraser River and the steep black buttresses of the south face of Mount Geikie were spectacular. I made a radio call to Jasper dispatch letting them know we were fine. My friend Gord on the other end, warm in his dispatch seat in Jasper, told us he had just seen the final concert of the Tragically Hip in Ontario. It felt like we were in a different realm.

We were now back on the Northwest Ridge and had three long pitches of superb 5.10d on perfect quartzite. We were tired and they were no giveaway. We summited Postern mid-morning, fired off a quick selfie and started down the ridge to the south that Rex Gibson and Ernie Niederer had climbed in 1927 for the first ascent. We had just made the third ascent of the mountain in a timely progression of style and grade. The ridge was longer than expected and loose in places. On one section, following Tony around a gendarme, a block the size of a mini fridge that I was standing on, pulled out like a cash register drawer and crashed 300 metres down a horrendous gully. My feet cut loose but my hands gripped a solid ledge. I almost puked with fear. A couple of raps to avoid more steep downclimbing plunked us on the broad col between Casemate and Postern.

We left the ridge and downclimbed a lower-angled face to the east, towards Geikie Creek, patching together a labyrinth of ledges and grassy patches. An hour later, we started six or seven 60-metre rappels to a small, steep pocket glacier.

We hacked away at the hard grey ice with our one tool, trying not to blow it so close to being near the safety of hiking mode. It was not pretty, but we pulled it off and poked our way down to Geikie Creek.

I chose to wade through this time instead of the huge leap across the boulders and I searched for a suitable location. Tony, of course, made the jump and grabbed my stashed poles to make it easier for my crossing. We choked a couple of bars down and started the grind up a thousand metres to the col then down to our original bivy site on the eastern side of the Ramparts.

The next morning, we woke to fresh snow on the ground. We shouldered our packs for the last time and slogged our way back to Jasper, satisfied with a great adventure.

Summary

Mystical Realm (ED2 5.11d A2, 1000m), northwest face, Postern Mountain, Fraser-Ramparts Group, Canadian Rockies. FA: Tim McAllister, Tony McLane, August 19-21, 2016.

About the Author

Tim McAllister is an ACMG Mountain Guide who lives near Wilmer, B.C. He divides his year ski guiding in the winter and alpine guiding in the summer. Despite climbing for more than 30 years, ascending rocks of all sizes remains his sole hobby, but he strives to be a 5.8 surfer by the time he is 70.

Mystical Realm on the north face of Postern Mountain.
Photo: Tim McAllister

Exiled

Joshua Lavigne

The skidoos parted the waters in a frothy wake on top of the frozen Baffin Bay. At our feet, through the sea of meltwater, we caught glimpses of the crystalline blue ice. The cracking ice shelf separated the spring runoff from the dark ocean depths below. Our team of three climbers travelled across the icy flood towards the eastern fjords of Baffin Island with three Inuit guides. Our objective was to free climb in the Stewart Valley—a geological landscape of rock, ice and water sculpted over the course of two billion years from the Precambrian Canadian Shield.

Marc-Andre Leclerc and Brette Harrington cross the ice on Stewart Lake ferrying gear to the base of Great Sail Peak(directly above Brette). Photo: Joshua Lavigne

SIX MONTHS EARLIER MARC-ANDRE LECLERC, Brette Harrington and I had secured our plans to climb on Great Sail Peak. This followed two previous trips to the Walker Arm, and as such, the Stewart Valley was next on my list. When I asked Marc and Brette, a bold climbing team and a couple whose lives revolve around climbing, I knew they would be psyched for the adventure and have the two months of free time available. They committed to the Arctic adventure with little hesitation.

There were no free-climbing routes yet in the valley. We hoped with some luck and summer weather we would change that. Our plan was to access the walls via the ice, and then raft and boat out once the ice melted—an untested strategy, and to our surprise one that another team had also planned. As we discovered upon arrival, a team of Belgian and Italian climbers had made similar plans and were already in the Stewart Valley.

We departed from the remote hamlet of Clyde River, north of the 70th parallel on the summer solstice with an endless sunset on the horizon. Our guide, Levi Palituq, along with his son and cousin, navigated us towards the fjord of the Walker Arm. The breakup was soon approaching and our sleds plunged through the lakes of ice water for two days. The team bounced along, dodging leads—massive cracks in the ice—and circumventing the open waters.

When we entered the Sam Ford Fiord on our second day of travel, our small armada of snow machines was blanketed in a silvery fog. A heaviness obscured the monoliths that towered above and the ramparts of stone made apparitions on the horizon. The walls were obscured until the last moment when our team made the final push towards the dogleg in the Walker Arm, where 1,400-metre walls dwarfed our sleds. The fjord had swallowed us like a great northern whale.

Our strategy of accessing the walls of the Stewart Valley during the late spring months had

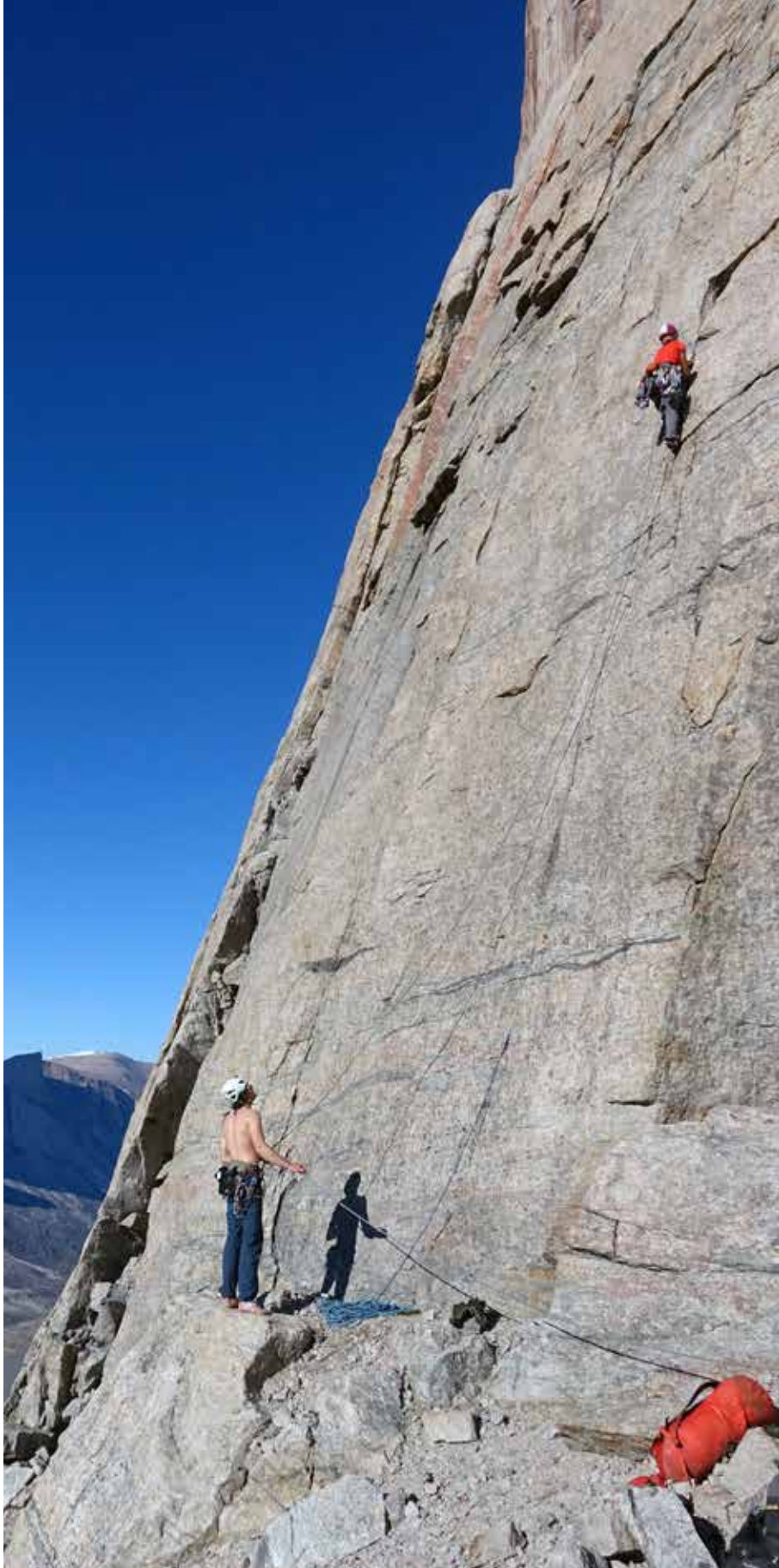
Brette Harrington attempts the 5.13a crack (pitch 10) below the hanging camp on Northwest Turret on Great Sail Peak. Photo: Joshua Lavigne

nearly derailed the entire trip with barely a day to spare. But with our guides' help and their adeptness to Arctic travel, we managed to land on the sandy beaches of the Stewart Valley with our gear and two months of food.

The Stewart Valley—possibly an ancient fjord that rises only 27 metres above sea level—slants on a southwest to northeast angle and is connected by a series of lakes, moraines, sheer granite walls and hanging glaciers. The sound of silence mixes with a continuous hum of rock and water eroding the valley. Our existence changed from the hectic rhythm of travel and the modern life of the south to one of timeless skies and horizons of granite. Climbing in Baffin Island often feels like travelling to the edge of the earth, and then, falling off. It is a place where time is hijacked by light and shadow, frozen rock and ice.

We moved gear towards the open and windswept beach at the southern edge of Stewart Lake, also known as the Russian Beach, which was two kilometres closer to the fjord than our topographical map charts, due to the lake waters rising from glacial retreat. We spent five days moving across the frozen lake and finally arrived at our base camp with a mountain of gear. We placed the tents in a meadow of moss campion and other wildflowers below the wall. Perched on the moraine along the edge of the lake, the southwest ridge of the crown-capped summit of Great Sail Peak rose high above our newly minted backyard.

Great Sail Peak had only seen two ascents until the summer of 2016: an American route (Rum, Sodomy and the Lash, VI 5.10 A4, 1100m) in 1998; and a Russian route (Rubikon, VI 5.11a A4, 1100m) in 2002. Both are difficult aid lines that were established in the cold months of early spring with many fixed lines being used and left on the wall. Although world-renowned climbers had climbed the face, none had attempted to free climb. The logistics of free climbing in the Arctic can be extensive, but after several trips to the



Brette Harrington (leading) and Marc-Andre Leclerc during the team's one-day ascent of the West Buttress of Great Sail Peak. Photo: Joshua Lavigne

eastern fjords, our strategy of marooning ourselves looked like it was going to pay off.

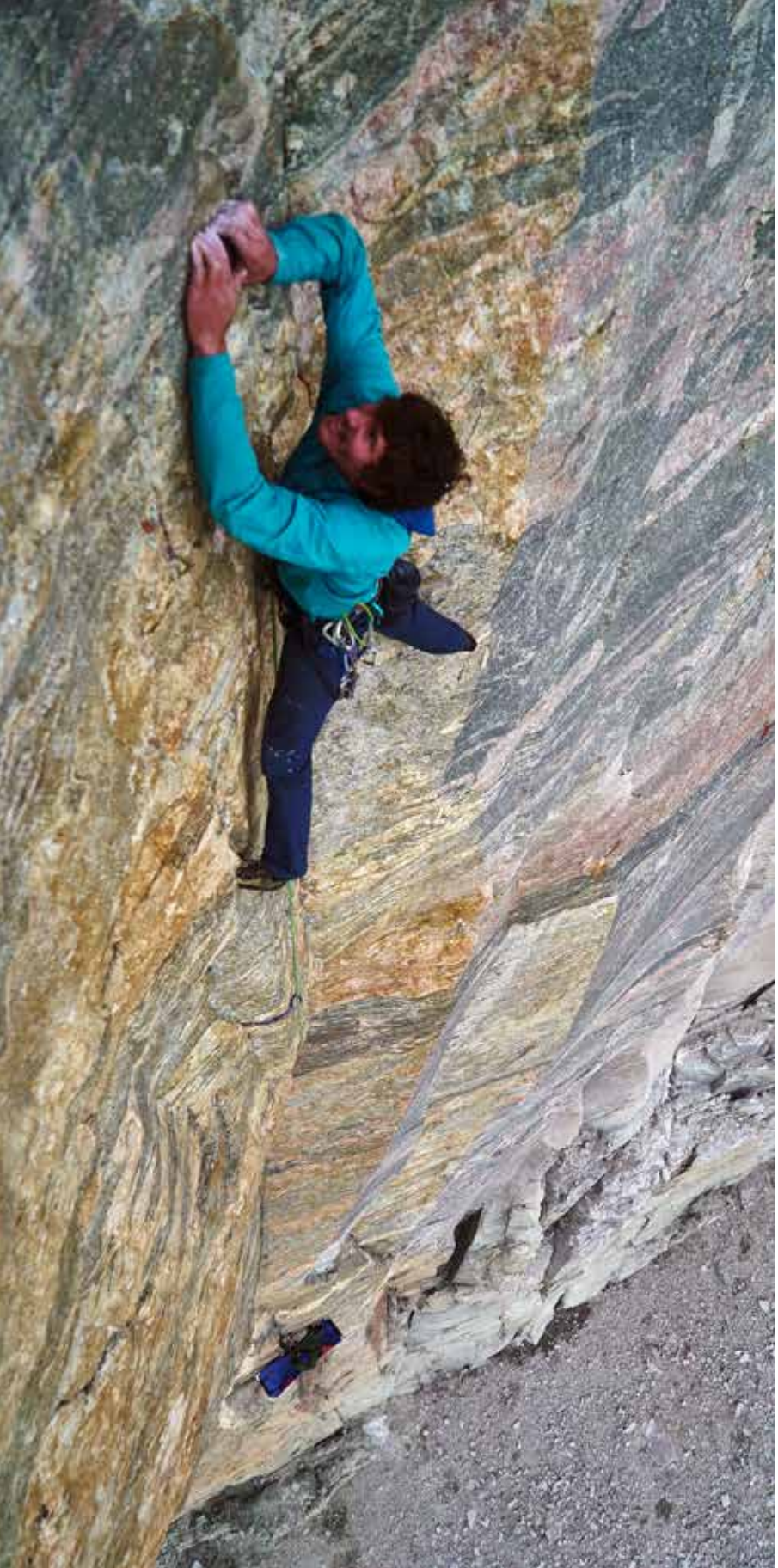
We commenced the task of carrying haul bags and food to the base of the wall. We then established an approach route to the main ledge system 300 metres up as the main face is broken by a lower tier. We free climbed, jugged and hauled our way up the lower section, which included free climbing seven pitches of intricate face moves and steep rock up to 5.12. Our strategy was to team-free the route, so not every member freed every pitch. We were also trying to establish a direct and clean free climb that could be repeated in a single day, so we placed bolts at some of the anchors and thoroughly cleaned the pitches.

After a week's worth of work, we arrived on the large ledge (which we dubbed Robben Island) that breaks the lower face from the upper walls. Before committing to the upper face, we wanted a closer look. This is when we met our compatriots of Stewart Valley—the Belgian and Italian climbers we had heard about from our Inuit guide. To our surprise, they had already made quick work of the Russian route, Rubikon—the same route we were planning on trying to free. They free climbed a steep and bold route up an overhanging portion of the wall. We had been scooped on Great Sail Peak! What were the odds?!

We gathered our thoughts and redirected our energies to a massive overhanging pillar to the left of the main show while the Belgian-Italian climbers ate the last of their rations and made their way down.

The Quest Pillar is like the underside of a giant's belly, protruding and engorged with a single 300-metre splitter rising to a blank headwall. We spent a week freeing and fixing lines up the lower crack system, enthralled by the position and the climbing. Each day we returned to our comfortable ledge camp in the evenings. We climbed from noon until 2 a.m. most days, often in T-shirts, warmed by the golden rays of the setting sun.

Joshua Lavigne attempts to free a 5.12+ finger crack (pitch 13) high on the still-unclimbed Quest Pillar.
Photo: Marc Andre Leclerc



Unfortunately, the splitter dead-ended in a blank and overhanging wall that required extensive aid and hand drilling. Marc and Brette were keen to continue even if we were unable to free climb. I was not. I acquiesced and we pushed higher. We spent another 20-hour day on the wall working a technical aid pitch that required hooking, drilling and copperheads, and then spent an uncomfortable night on our portaledges after hauling our gear and ropes up to our high camp. With doubt running through the team and having few options left for upward progress, I finally protested, making it clear I wanted to focus on a route we could free climb and that we should descend as our provisions were limited. The difficult decision to turn back after 10 days of work on the pillar divided the team. We dismantled our lines, plundering our anchors and descending back to the ledge with our morale dropping with each rappel. We sat as a team on the proverbial Robben Island, expressing our concerns then finally coming to a consensus on our next objective. We had provisions for 10 more days. We committed to climbing a slender turret on the north edge of the ledge, launching with seven days of provisions.

We mixed free climbing and aid climbing as we moved up, hauling our gear, cleaning the rock and rehearsing difficult moves as we recommitted to establishing a free climb. Off the Robben Island ledge, we climbed 150 metres of steep and sometimes overhanging granite. Sustained thin cracks and technical face climbing were painted with intrusions of diorite, feldspar and mica.

The difficult pitches required multiple attempts, which meant more time and effort. We climbed a series of discontinuous cracks that led to a blank 30-metre traverse. This would be a connector pitch to access a continuous corner system. The team free climbed pitches of 5.12 and 5.13 below the traverse with Marc freeing a bold 5.12+ crack and a bouldery 5.13 face protected by Birdbeaks and a single bolt. After establishing the tenth pitch—the third on the turret—we set

Marc-Andre Leclerc sends the 5.13a crux pitch on the Northwest Turret. Photo: Joshua Lavigne

a portaledge camp below the traverse, at which point prospects and morale had rebounded and the team was excited for the incredible free climbing ahead.

Then the storm hit.

A raging south wind blew off of Baffin Bay mixed with a northern high pressure of cold air. This blended together with the rising topography of the fjords to create an orchestra of wind, snow, rain and ice. We closed the hatches, hunkered down and re-orientated our lives to an inner world—a life encapsulated in nylon like three caterpillars strung up by a single thread of silk.

We waited, expecting the storms to pass, but slowly, our elevated morale turned into festering. Any remaining morale blew into the Arctic sea. Wall life was desperate. Our portaledges acted as sails and mine was buffeted so hard that it swivelled 180 degrees. My tantrums were lost into the noise and wind of the storm. We waited for the storm to pass, but it continued unabated—raining, snowing and blowing day and night. The snow accumulated below and above us and the turret became a popsicle. The winds eventually calmed but the rain continued, and our team was out of options. We needed to make a move: up or down.

The storm finally abated, so we decided to make a run for the summit, leaving most of our big-wall gear behind. We dressed in Gore-Tex and puffy jackets and started climbing in cold and wet conditions, leaving our aspirations of an entirely free route behind. In addition, Marc spilt boiling water on his foot during the morning brew-up, giving himself a second-degree burn across his foot. He bandaged his foot and took some pain killers and committed to jugging and carrying the pack. Brette started across a traverse, which had been prepped during the bad-weather days with a series of hand-drilled bolts, thus establishing us in a faint and shallow corner system. We continued upwards by freeing several off-width pitches and leading in blocks, with the leader and second free

Brette Harrington learns to drill while leading pitch 15 of the Quest Pillar. Photo: Joshua Lavigne

climbing while the third jugged with a pack.

The strategy of free climbing was short-lived, as the steepness of the wall gave way to incipient seams and the sky started to transform drifting layers of fog into rain. We were committed to summitting the turret, but we would have to push through decidedly un-summer-like conditions by any means possible. Brette led an ugly wet overhanging off-width and handed the sharp end to me to finish off a series of chimneys drenched in snow and a fresh layer of verglas.

We had been climbing in the rain for hours, and we were wet, cold and cornered. The system of cracks above us were filled with black, slimy wetness and a cold layer of freezer burn. The climbing did not feel like rock climbing; it was mixed climbing with rock shoes.

The summit of the turret jutted up in three sharp nipples, and we extracted ourselves from the chimneys onto a shoulder of horizontal ledges that gave us easy access to the glacier. The true summit loomed above, another couple of pitches of wet but moderate climbing. We looked away from the summit, deciding to leave it for another day as it was dripping with rainwater. We dumped our gear and peered over the edge, swallowing our stomachs in the process. The clouds parted and we could see the remnants of the storm—snowdrifts overflowing off the glacier and a frosting on all the peaks. We celebrated with some hidden food at the bottom of the pack, hugged, and contemplated our meager success as the sun rose over glistening walls and ocean to the north.

We descended and returned to our base camp after a brief rest on the Robben Island ledge. We were happy to be back on flat ground and celebrated with the remnants of our tequila stash. Once again morale improved and we started dreaming about the numerous objectives towering over our camp.

After a week of rest while waiting for another storm to pass and our skin to grow back, we decided to climb the West Buttress of Great Sail Peak in a single push (in contrast to our previous climb). A sweeping buttress rising like a giraffe's neck from the talus greeted us. We had two light bags and no jugging equipment, and planned on free climbing everything as a team. We climbed from the early morning into the heat of the day, taking a midday break for an application of sunscreen and some shirts-off climbing. We were distinctly relaxed in comparison to our previous climb. The evening settled over the glaciers and granite walls in a hue of red alpine glow, burning the landscape and contours of the horizon into our memory.

The trip continued well after our last rappel. We rafted twice across the 10-kilometre span from Great Sail Peak to the Russian beach, stuffing our leaky Feathercraft rafts with a dozen bags and ferrying our gear to the white sands of the Walker Arm. We then settled into our beach camp on the shores of the Walker Arm. While waiting for our Inuit guides to arrive, we passed the days watching Narwhal pods and curious seals swim by, letting the tensions of wall life slip into forgetfulness as the white sand and water lapped at our toes.

Summary

Northwest Turret (ED2 5.13a A2, 21 pitches, 700m), Great Sail Peak, Stewart Valley, Baffin Island. FA: Brette Harrington, Joshua Lavigne, Marc-Andre Leclerc, June 28 - July 17, 2016.

The West Buttress (ED2 12a C1, 1100m), Great Sail Peak, Stewart Valley, Baffin Island. FA: Brette Harrington, Joshua Lavigne, Marc-Andre Leclerc, August 24, 2016.

Acknowledgements

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About the Author

Joshua is an ACMG-certified mountain guide residing in Canmore, Alberta. He has travelled to Baffin Island five times in the past five years to explore its eastern fjords. He has a penchant for playing with expensive cameras and crashing even more expensive drones.

The northwest face of Great Sail Peak: (1) Northwest Turret, (2) West Buttress. Photo: Joshua Lavigne


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Ouvertures en Terre de Baffin

Nicolas Favresse

Luca Schiera sur la proue sud-est du Copier Pinnacle.
Photo : Nicolas Favresse

Nicolas Favresse jouant à la mandoline dans un bivouac sur portaledge haut dans la paroi du Great Sail Peak.
Photo : Sean Villanueva

Avec des températures de plus de 0,5 degré au-dessus de la moyenne, l'été 2016 a été le plus chaud sur Terre depuis le début des relevés en 1880, selon la NASA ! Une augmentation de 0,5 degré, cela semble négligeable, mais lorsqu'on se rapproche des pôles, cette variation est beaucoup plus grande, faisant fuir la glace des fissures presqu'à vue d'œil. C'est pour cette raison entre autres que nous avons décidé de retourner en expé dans le Grand Nord encore une fois ! Mais nous n'avions pas pris en compte l'impact de la fonte des glaces et des courants. En fait, la côte est de l'île de Baffin est une des rares zones au monde où le réchauffement climatique a conduit à des températures plus froides que la moyenne. Effectivement, le 15 juillet à notre camp de base, au niveau de la mer, nous nous sommes étonnés de voir la neige tomber et de nous retrouver dans des conditions hivernales. Les matins, souvent nous retrouvions l'eau des rivières et des lacs gelée. Les glaces fondantes du Groenland et du pôle Nord sont ramenées par les courants le long de la côte est de l'île de Baffin, ce qui explique le pourquoi du comment de ce froid polaire qui nous a fait hérisser le poil de la torse plus d'une fois.

Heureusement, le froid n'était cependant pas tout à fait notre ennemi durant cette expé. Pour ce qui est de nos activités aquatiques contribuant à notre bonne hygiène, un froid tonifiant était primordial pour garder un esprit vif ! Et encore pour nos skis, il fallait du froid pour que la banquise reste gelée au moins juste assez pour nous permettre de glisser avec nos traîneaux le long des 150 kilomètres séparant la vallée Stewart de Clyde River. Peut-être que vous vous rappelez de notre dernière expé en Terre de Baffin, à bord du *Dodo's Delight*, et de son fameux capitaine, le révérend Bob Shepton. Une glace tenace nous avait empêchés d'atteindre l'île de Baffin avant le 8 août. Voilà ce qui nous a fait réfléchir sur une autre manière d'approcher la côte est de l'île afin de mieux profiter des températures estivales pour grimper.

Le 30 mai, nous ne passons pas inaperçus à l'enregistrement de Bruxelles National, avec nos vieux skis Rossignol que j'ai retrouvés dans la cave chez mes parents. Par chance, la règle des bagages avait indiqué qu'on avait droit à un sac de ski gratuit. Il suffisait donc de bien laisser dépasser les skis du sac ; on en a profité pour remplir le reste du sac avec Friends, cordes, packrafts, etc. C'est ainsi que nous décollons de Bruxelles sans suppléments bagages.

Après une semaine de shopping intensif au Canada, ainsi que la rencontre avec nos amis italiens (Matteo, Giga et Luca) et quelques réglages de dernière minute sur nos skis et traîneaux, nous quittons Clyde River et l'aventure commence enfin ! Tout est blanc : le ciel est blanc, le sol est blanc, l'air est blanc et des flocons soufflés par le vent nous piquent le visage. Pour être plus léger, j'ai eu la bonne idée de décider de ne pas prendre de boussole ; on essaye tant bien que mal de tenir un cap en prenant comme référence les quelques rochers découverts de neige par le vent. D'après la carte, la côte devrait se trouver à notre droite ; du coup nous essayons de dériver vers la droite plutôt

Sean Villanueva fait un grand-écart pendant la première ascension de *Coconut Connection* sur le Great Sail Peak. Photo : Matteo De Zaiacomo

que la gauche pour tenter de tomber dessus, tout en espérant ne pas faire un tour de 180 degrés sur nous-mêmes. Finalement, comme par miracle, notre feeling est bon et nous tombons sur la côte, qui nous servira de repère jusqu'à l'entrée du fjord Edlington. L'ambiance est tellement hivernale qu'on a du mal à imaginer que nous sommes là pour grimper ; cette masse blanche qu'est la mer, sur laquelle nous marchons, semble d'un autre monde !

De jour en jour, le relief s'accentue, mais les montagnes qu'on voit au loin ne semblent pas vouloir se rapprocher. Les heures s'enchaînent dans une sorte de transe rythmée par le son de la glace qui crisse sous nos skis, et nos pensées voguent et se perdent dans l'ambiance magique. Chaque pas individuellement est très facile, mais à la longue ça use, et c'est surtout au niveau mental que la difficulté se situe. Dès que mes pensées se raccrochent à des éléments rationnels tels que des horaires, des attentes ou des objectifs, soudainement la difficulté augmente. Par contre, quand je me détache de tout et me laisse aller avec le paysage, je me sens flotter dans l'effort. De temps en temps, nous apercevons des traces d'ours polaires ou un phoque bronzant sur la banquise, ce qui nous offre une excuse pour faire une petite pause. Avec une vitesse de 20 kilomètres par jour en moyenne et des journées de marche de huit à dix heures, il nous faut sept jours pour atteindre l'entrée de la vallée Stewart. Incroyablement, nous nous retrouvons à ski sur la banquise, exactement là où il y a deux ans nous naviguions.

Dès notre arrivée aux big-walls, un beau créneau météo nous invite à grimper. Nous profitons de la banquise encore gelée pour tenter une paroi de l'autre côté du fjord, mais à peine engagés, nous nous étonnons de notre environnement plutôt aquatique ; nos skis s'immergent dans une dizaine de centimètres d'eau qui recouvrent la glace. L'ambiance est vraiment hallucinante, car on a l'impression de marcher sur l'eau comme Jésus, et pourtant deux jours plus tôt tout était encore gelé.

Nicolas Favresse se réchauffe les doigts pendant la première ascension de *Down a Slope without a Ski* sur le Walker Citadel. Photo : Sean Villanueva

Nous gravissons une paroi de 1 000 mètres environ en guise de mise en bouche. Un beau mélange de dalles engagées et de fissures nous mène au sommet. Malgré des températures bien au-dessus de zéro, les conditions d'adhérence sont optimales, avec nos doigts qui collent au rocher encore gelé de l'hiver et les fissures qui sont pleines de givre et de glace. Un couloir raide rempli de neige nous permet de redescendre sans faire de rappels, mais comme nous n'avons pas de crampons, nous faisons les premiers 500 mètres en taillant des marches dans la neige dure, avant de pouvoir nous retourner et terminer les 1 500 mètres de descente sur les fesses. Pour rejoindre notre camp de base, c'est un énorme lac formé sur la banquise que nous devons traverser. Nous marchons pendant près de deux heures dans de l'eau glaciale jusqu'aux mollets. A partir de ce moment, l'accès à notre camp de base depuis toute civilisation est rendu impossible par la glace fondante. Il faudra maintenant ne compter que sur nous-mêmes pour survivre, jusqu'à ce que la mer soit libre de banquise et que quelqu'un puisse venir nous chercher.

Nous entrons ensuite dans la vallée Stewart. A cause des difficultés d'accès liées à la banquise, aucune expédition n'est venue grimper ici durant l'été jusqu'à maintenant. Nous sommes donc les premiers ! Il faut s'imaginer une vallée comme celle du Yosemite, sauf qu'elle est plus grande encore et quasiment vierge d'ascension ! Cette vallée, qui était un fjord il y a très longtemps, est remplie d'un long lac bordé de moraines. Nous profitons du lac encore gelé et de nos traîneaux pour glisser sur la glace et établir un camp de base à 15 kilomètres de l'entrée de la vallée, au pied d'une grande muraille de big-walls. De tous côtés, les parois sont plus alléchantes les unes que les autres. Nous optons pour une première voie en style big-wall afin de mieux nous imprégner de l'endroit et de vivre quelques jours avec l'équipe au complet dans la verticalité. Giga, le plus jeune du groupe, est non seulement une vraie armoire à glace bonne pour tout job de mulage, mais aussi un apprenti violoniste ambitieux, ce qui nous permet de connaître de nouvelles sonorités. Des difficultés d'accordage en paroi liées à l'humidité donneront lieu à des sons uniques, transportant nos esprits

(1) La proue sud-est du Copier Pinnacle, (2) *The Seed of Madness*, Tree of Wisdom Wall. Photo : Nicolas Favresse

La face nord-ouest du Walker Citadel: (1) *Down the Slope without a Ski,* (2) *E Poi Boh*. Photo : Nicolas Favresse

La face nord-ouest du Great Sail Peak: (1) *Mascalzone Latino,* (2) *Le Passage du Nord-Ouest,* (3) *Coconut Connection.* Photo : Nicolas Favresse

Catacomb, dans la face sud-ouest du Citadel. Photo : Nicolas Favresse

vers de nouveaux cieux. C'est ainsi qu'après sept jours d'élévation en paroi, le sommet du Great Sail Peak est vaincu. Alors que Sean et moi sommes friands d'une immersion totale dans les éléments par le moyen du naturisme pour célébrer chaque sommet, les Italiens, quant à eux, étonnamment préfèrent dresser le drapeau du Club alpin italien.

Après deux jours de repos dans nos portaledges à profiter de l'ambiance verticale, nous décidons de reprendre contact avec le sol pour mieux repartir dans deux lignes, cette fois en style alpin (c.-à-d. escalade non-stop sans matériel de bivouac) et en deux équipes. Les Italiens attaquent une ligne de dièdres évidents sur la gauche, tandis que Sean et moi nous attaquons la « king line » du Great Sail Peak — un dièdre qui coupe tout droit la face en deux en son point le plus haut et plus raide. Entre-temps nous nous interrogeons devant deux tentes qui sont apparues proche de notre camp de base. Qui pourraient être ces intrus dans notre vallée ? Si ce sont des grimpeurs, quelles seraient leurs ambitions ? Cela fait plus d'un mois que nous n'avons vu personne.

A peine deux heures lancés dans notre « king line », nous sommes surpris de voir des personnes arriver au pied de celle-ci. Par la suite nous apprendrons qu'ils ont l'intention de grimper la même ligne que nous et que nos traces fraîches dans le névé menant à la base leur ont bien indiqué qu'on est passé avant eux ! Apparemment ils sont dégoûtés, mais vous vous dites sans doute, quelle coïncidence de se retrouver à tenter la même ligne dans un endroit aussi vaste avec tant de belles parois. En effet, c'est une belle coïncidence, surtout car c'est la première fois que des grimpeurs viennent dans cette vallée l'été. Par contre, il est vrai que cette ligne tape tellement à l'œil que ce n'est pas étonnant qu'ils aient choisi aussi cet objectif. C'est un peu comme la ligne du *Nose* au Yosemite ; tout le monde est bien d'accord que c'est la « king line » sur El Capitan.

Les premières longueurs s'enchaînent avec des fissures tellement parfaites qu'on n'a vraiment pas envie de s'arrêter et de passer le relais à l'autre. Après trois longueurs, Sean me crie : « J'ai un cadeau pour ton anniversaire. » Je ne comprends pas trop ce qu'il veut me dire, jusqu'au moment où je découvre la fissure parfaite juste au-dessus de lui. Faute de corde, il a dû s'arrêter quelques mètres avant, me laissant le privilège de la découvrir en premier ! Ensuite chaque longueur continue à offrir d'autres cadeaux d'anniversaire, aussi beaux les uns que les autres ; on ne devra plus s'en soucier pour les 10 ans à venir !

Comme disent les Américains, c'est une classique instantanée ; sa pureté et sa beauté sont dignes d'une des voies les plus classiques de la planète. Elle me rappelle une voie de référence telle *Astroman* au Yosemite, sauf qu'elle est trois fois plus longue ! A 100 mètres du sommet et après 15 heures de grimpe dans les pattes, un nuage vient se frotter à la paroi, y passant un coup de vaporisateur. Comme on vient d'arriver sur une vire confortable, on décide d'en profiter pour casser la croûte et attendre que cette humidité parte. Vu qu'on a tout réussi en libre jusqu'ici et que la voie a été un tel cocktail de cadeaux, il ne faut en aucun cas échouer notre ascension. Malheureusement, au lieu de partir, le nuage persiste, accompagné d'une petite bruine très désagréable. Pour ne pas prendre froid, on construit un abri avec les cailloux entassés sur la vire, puis on improvise quelques pas de danse. Après quelques heures, pourtant, les nuages ne voulant pas s'ouvrir, on décide de faire une petite sieste. Mais à chaque fois que je suis sur le point de m'endormir, un petit frisson agaçant dans le dos me tient éveillé. Pour la plupart du temps on est dans la balle de ping-pong, c'est-à-dire qu'on a exactement la même vue que si on était dedans. Parfois on aperçoit la montagne en face, mais vite l'espoir s'efface avec la balle de ping-pong qui revient de plus belle.

Après huit heures, enfin un sommet voisin sort des nuages tout ensoleillé et le beau temps nous revient. Un off-width coriace et engagé fait office d'expresso bien serré, et c'est reparti ! Puis on enchaîne sur une longueur exceptionnelle de 60 mètres en fissure légèrement déversante. De là il ne reste plus qu'une longueur jusqu'au sommet, mais je me vois buter sur une fissure évasée, je retente

Nicolas Favresse dans une des longueurs clé de *Coconut Connection*. Photo : Sean Villanueva

ma chance par la gauche et je me lance dans un passage déversant pour rejoindre un réta. Mais pas de chance, le réta me mène à un autre obstacle : une face lisse, mouillée et moussue à quelques mètres seulement du sommet. Nous sommes contraints de désescalader deux longueurs (attention, toujours en libre, bien évidemment !) pour trouver le dernier maillon de l'enchaînement en libre : une dalle de 30 mètres non protégeable. Par chance et grâce à des grosses patates dans le pantalon de Sean, nous libérons ce dernier passage et rejoignons le sommet par un beau dièdre mouillé et branlant. Nous sommes euphoriques, contents d'avoir pu grimper cette face en libre, mais aussi surtout car nous savons à quel point c'est exceptionnel pour un grimpeur d'avoir l'opportunité d'ouvrir une ligne aussi majeure ! De retour au sol, nos amis italiens nous racontent leurs exploits dans leur dièdre, qui apparemment est majeur aussi, et nous découvrons que les intrus dans notre vallée sont en fait des amis canadiens ! Après avoir avalé le fait qu'on leur est passé sous le nez, ils jetteront leur dévolu sur d'autres sommets.

Autour du 20 juillet, nous retournons vers notre camp le long du fjord pour y découvrir la banquise transformée en mer et pour saluer nos amis italiens, qui vont s'aventurer à l'aide de kayaks gonflables dans la direction de Clyde River afin de tenter de prendre leur avion retour vers l'Italie. Quant à Sean et moi, nous retournons dans la vallée Stewart pour continuer les hostilités big-walliennes, en attendant que le voilier *Maewan* puisse passer au travers de la banquise et nous emmener pour une croisière à la conquête du Passage du Nord-Ouest. Nous y ouvrons une dernière ligne, mais pas n'importe laquelle, puisque ses 900 mètres n'offriront rien d'autre que des cheminées et off-widths mouillés et difficilement protégeables ! Jamais je n'avais grimpé une voie aussi mouillée et soutenue en fissure large. Le 26 juillet, après trois grosses journées de marche et de kayak afin de ramener toutes nos affaires vers l'entrée de la vallée, nous apercevons un voilier ancré sur la mer. C'est le *Maewan* !

Il nous faudra encore trois semaines de navigation pour vaincre le Passage du Nord-Ouest jusqu'à Cambridge Bay. Au menu, quelques morceaux de banquise tenace, des hauts-fonds à négocier, des records en baignade polaire, des jam-sessions au rythme des vagues et la rencontre avec ours polaires, morses et baleines.

Mais le Passage du Nord-Ouest n'était qu'une partie de pétanque par rapport à nos aventures verticales dans les fjords de la Terre de Baffin.

Remerciements

Je tiens à remercier tous nos partenaires, sans qui ce projet n'aurait pas pu être réalisé : Patagonia, le Club Alpin Belge, Lyo Food, Alpacka Raft, Julbo, Threshold Provisions, Maewan Adventure Base, Black Diamond, Petzl, Sterling Rope Company, Five Ten, Seeonee et Cap Expé, ainsi que Jody et Laura, qui nous ont ouvert leur maison à Ottawa.

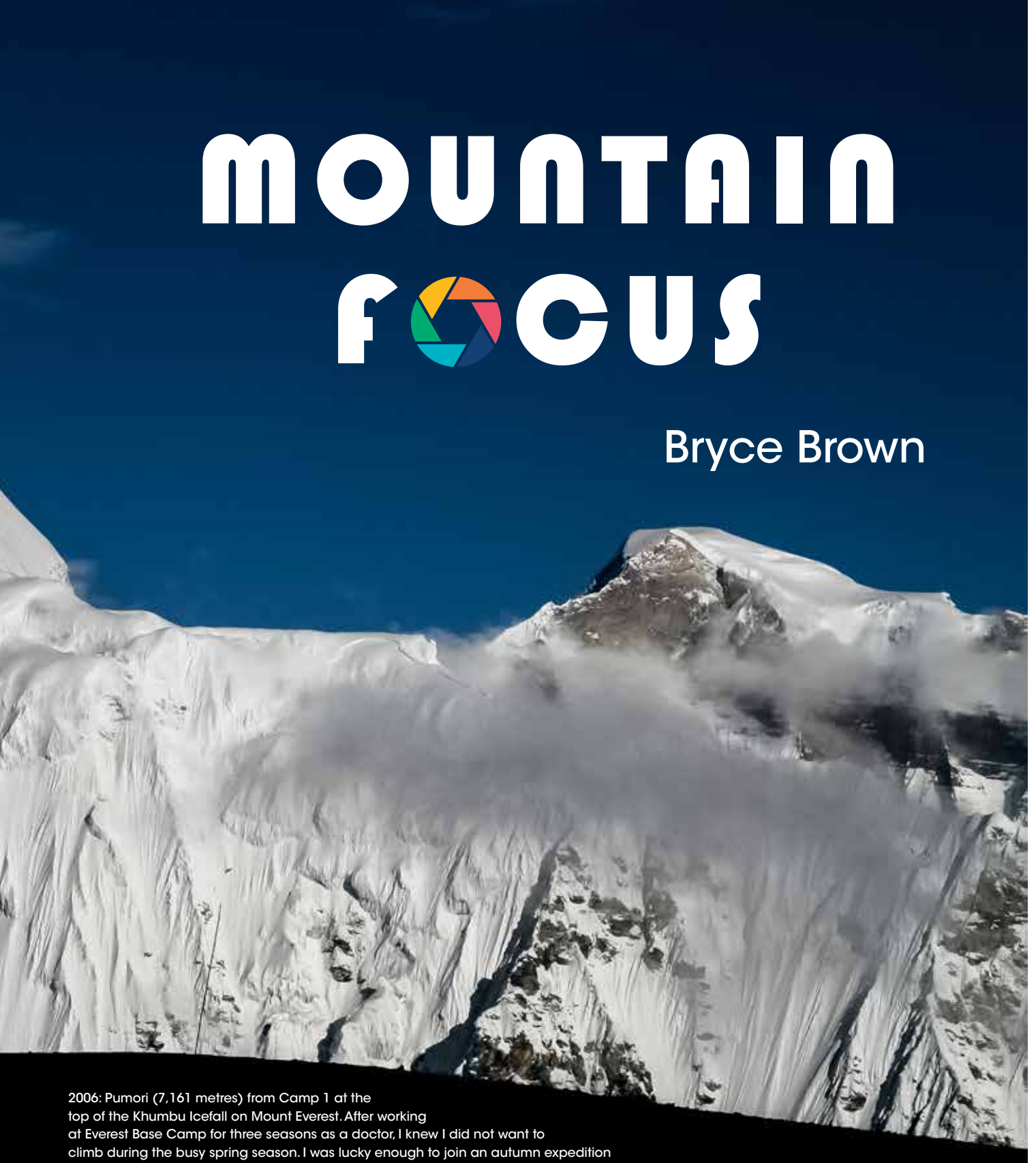
Nos amis italiens rejoindrons Clyde River après sept jours d'aventure à parcourir 150 kilomètres de nature sauvage ! Durant l'expé, nous avons ouvert au total sept grandes voies, sans l'usage de plaquettes. Chaque ascension a été un vrai régal d'aventures pimentées de passages non protégeables, de rochers instables ou même de rocher mouillé et moussu.

L'équipe célèbre sur le sommet du Great Sail Peak après avoir réussi la première ascension de *Coconut Connection*.
Photo : Nicolas Favresse

Sean Villanueva grimpe une fissure "splitter" parfaite dans la voie *Coconut Connection*.
Photo : Matteo De Zaiacomo

MOUNTAIN FOCUS

Bryce Brown



2006: Pumori (7,161 metres) from Camp 1 at the top of the Khumbu Icefall on Mount Everest. After working at Everest Base Camp for three seasons as a doctor, I knew I did not want to climb during the busy spring season. I was lucky enough to join an autumn expedition supporting a North Face-sponsored team that skied from the summit. Photo: Bryce Brown

2015: Gord Bose, Willi Prittie and I attempted a traverse of Mount Logan, Canada's highest peak at 5,959 metres. We planned to ascend the technical East Ridge (pictured) then ski down the easier King Trench. This required carrying four weeks' worth of food and fuel as well as skis. After summitting, we were caught by a storm that forced us to spend three days hunkered down in a crevasse before being evacuated by helicopter. Photo: Bryce Brown

Humans are not meant to exist at high elevations, but as climbers we are privileged to occasionally visit the land of fairy tales and the home of deities. High in those seldom explored places, we experience the rollercoaster of ambition, hubris, loss and triumph.

I bought my first camera for my first big expedition, Denali almost 20 years ago. Since then, I have carried a camera on every mountain adventure, but only recently have I become serious about taking photos with intention and sharing my work. When I decided to dedicate more time and energy to photography, I asked myself "What are my goals?" The answer was simple: to share my love of the mountains with a wider audience; to share those magical places one image at a time with people who may never go there themselves.

The way I originally envisioned sharing my photos was to see them hanging on other peoples' walls or printed in magazines. Over the past year, I have been fortunate enough to accomplish those milestones and I am thrilled when I see my work displayed in public or in print. I think about the people that I reach but will never meet. My only hope is that they connect with those magical places in some way, as I did.

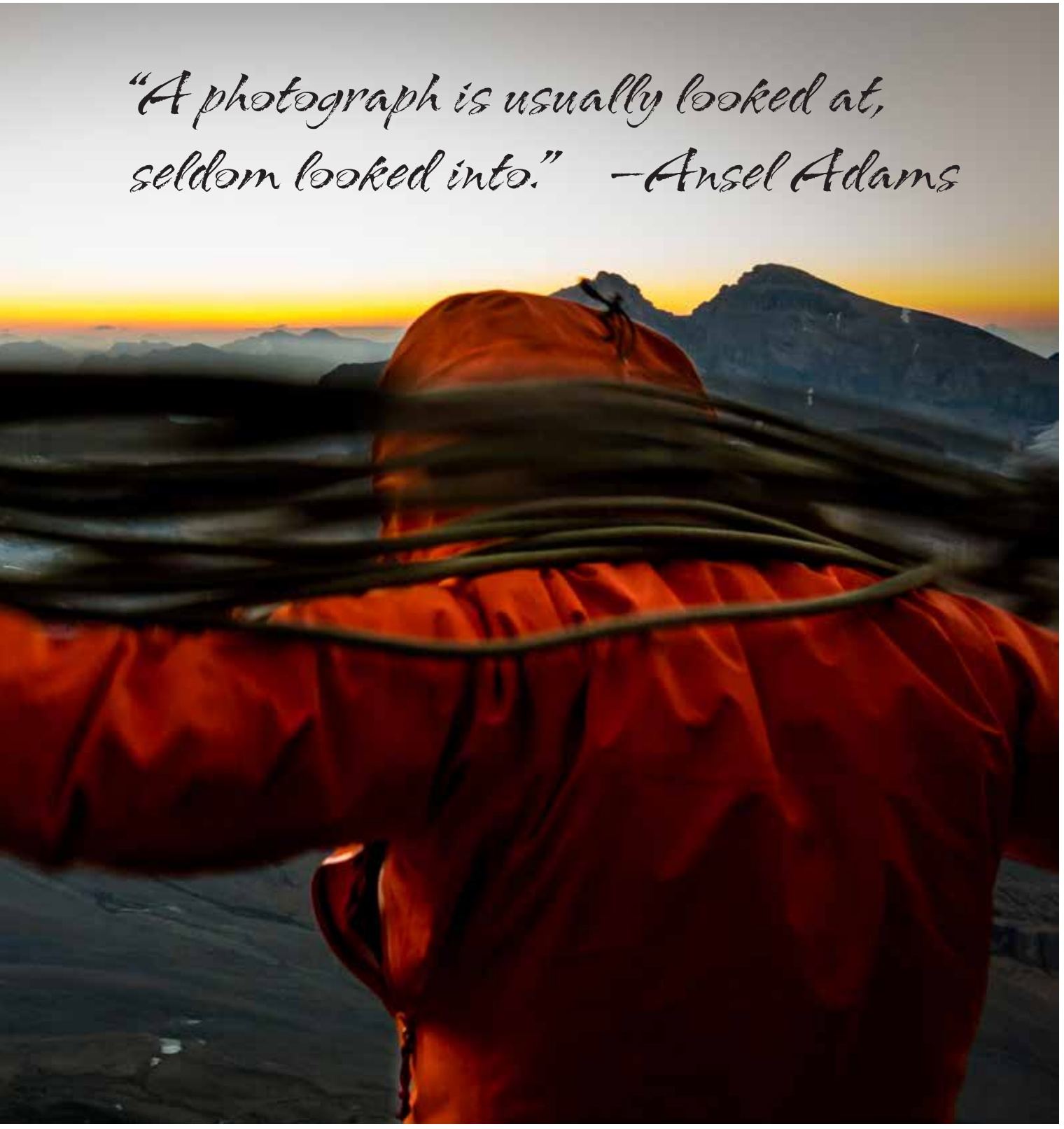
The other obvious (and easier) place to find a wider audience is online. Today, anyone can have an Insta-audience for their very own Insta-channel. Akin to most modern wannabe photographers, I was sucked into the social media machine and felt the rushes of dopamine as I started to acquire more "likes" and followers. It is a great platform for connecting with people of similar passion. It is also easy to get caught up in trying to please thousands of anonymous "likers" who will look at a photo for less than a second and possibly click a thumbs-up. Despite this, I still think offering my photos and stories online is valuable, to me at least. It brings focus to my photographic journey and, I hope, reaches an audience that shares my love for the mountains.

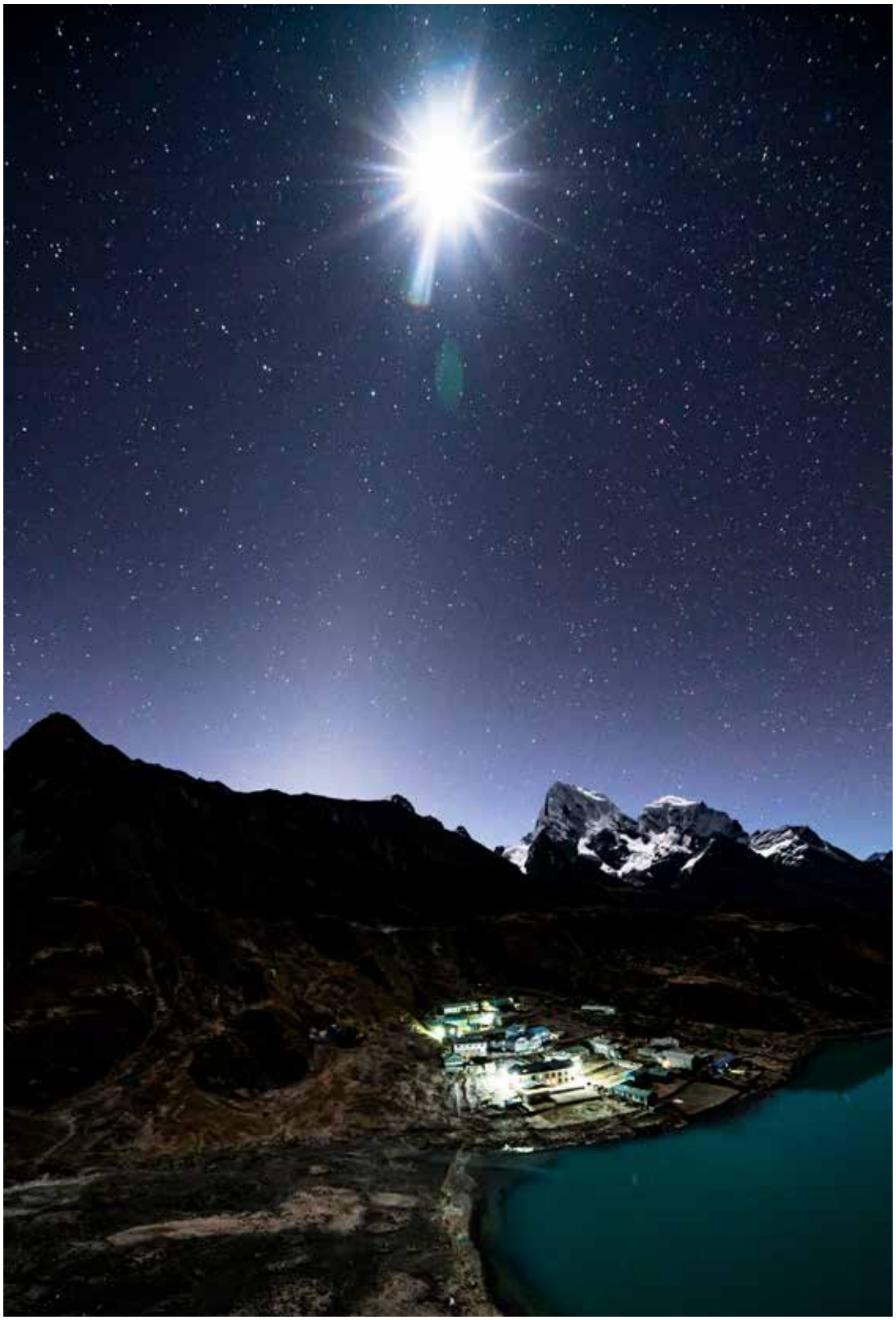
Being able to see the mountain story unfold and to be able to capture that narrative in a single image, well, that is the challenge. I want to produce images that evoke emotion and involve the viewer. As you look through the next few pages, please do so slowly, deliberately. I welcome you to look into each photograph and be engaged.

About the Author/Photographer

Bryce Brown learned to climb ice and rock a quarter century ago in his hometown of Thunder Bay, Ontario. For the past decade, he has been based in Canmore, Alberta, but continues to split his time between there and Thunder Bay. On paper, he is an ICU physician with an interest in high-altitude medicine, while in his head he is still an aspiring climbing bum. He has made nine trips to Nepal for climbing and medical work.

2013: My wife, Sunny Twelker, Lyle Rotter and I climbed Mount Alberta via the Japanese Route, but had to bivy halfway back down the mountain cuddled under a tarp. Watching the sunrise from our exposed perch on the Rockies' sixth highest mountain is something I will never forget. Photo: Bryce Brown

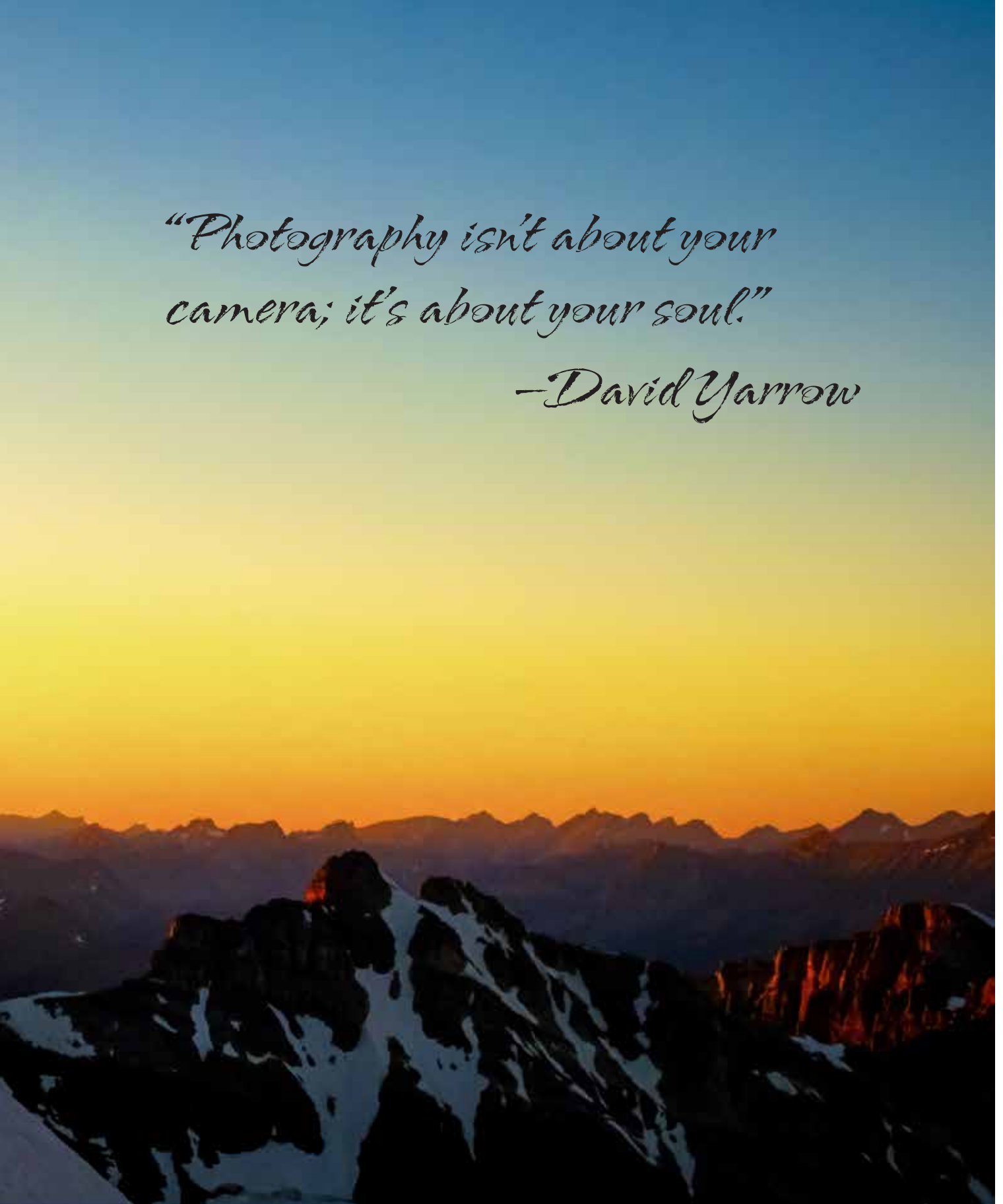

"A photograph is usually looked at,
seldom looked into." —Ansel Adams



2016: The moon sets as the sun creeps up behind Cholatse—the object of our Himalayan aspirations [see page 169]. The small village of Gokyo sits illuminated on the shore of Dudh Pokhari (Milk Lake). I had wanted to catch the sunrise over Everest so I departed Gokyo at midnight, and the higher I hiked in the dark, the more captivating the scene became.
Photo: Bryce Brown

2016: Sunny Twelker styles the steep pillar of Icebreakers near Orient Bay in Northern Ontario. North Shore Lake Superior ice climbing is vastly different compared to more popular areas like the Canadian Rockies. The winters are very cold, which makes for extremely brittle ice, and the hard routes see little traffic, therefore there is lots of swinging and not much hooking. Orange-hued ice above the largest freshwater lake in the world offers exposed positions like nowhere else.
Photo: Bryce Brown

2012: Sunny Twelker races the light down the southeast ridge of Mount Victoria, in the Canadian Rockies. We completed the classic skyline north to south traverse, but were slowed by fresh snow and lots of loose rock. The guests at the Abbot Pass Hut were surely surprised as we stumbled in well after dark. Photo: Bryce Brown


"Photography isn't about your camera; it's about your soul."
–David Yarrow

The North

Nirvana

Eric Gilbertson

THUNDER MOUNTAIN (Mount Nirvana), the highest mountain in the Northwest Territories, has seen five documented ascents, all relying on support from helicopters or floatplanes. I had made an unsuccessful attempt for the summit in 2015 [see *CAJ*, vol. 99, 2016, p. 90], helicoptering in from Watson Lake, Yukon, to try a new route on the southwest face with Dave Custer and Susan Ruff. On that trip we had climbed to within a few rope lengths of the summit ridge, but retreated after encountering un-protectable rock.

On June 13, 2016, Len Vanderstar and I set out on an overland expedition to make the first ascent of Thunder Mountain with no air support. We would attempt to climb the east face. From the mining town of Tungsten, Northwest Territories, we put in our boats and paddled down the Flat River with Ron Vanderstar and Luke Weyman.

After two days of difficult whitewater involving many portages, we took out at an unnamed stream, stashed our boats in the trees and began bushwhacking into the Ragged Range. Three more days of tough bushwhacking, a glacier crossing and walking in alpine meadows brought us to the base of the east face of Thunder Mountain.

We had happened upon a rare sunny and warm weather window and approached the face at 5 a.m. the next morning. Ron and Luke helped me and Len haul gear to the top of the glacier at the base of the climb. Then Len and I continued for the ascent while Ron and Luke returned to camp.

Len Vanderstar midway up the east face of Thunder Mountain. Photo: Eric Gilbertson

I led three moderate pitches up the lower rock band, and built a solid anchor on a well-protected ledge just below the upper snowfield. The sunny, warm weather was not actually the godsend we had hoped for, because by this time the upper snowfield had warmed up enough and multiple avalanches were releasing.

Len and I decided to wait until the snowfield went into the shade, hoping the snow might stabilize before we crossed the slope. After four hours, though, a small avalanche released directly above us. Luckily, our ledge was protected enough that the snow passed over us, just spraying us lightly, but we were rattled enough to decide to descend for the day.

Back at camp, we slept for a few hours then started another attempt at midnight. This time we reached the upper snowfield at 3 a.m. when it was still firm, and we easily made it to the base of the upper face. I led nine pitches of moderate but wet rock up to 5.7 until we reached the left side of a long horizontal ledge. I believe I roughly followed the route of the 1997 expedition led by Jack Bennett, which was the first ascent of the east face [see AAJ, #71, vol. 39, p. 201].

From here, we donned crampons and traversed several snow pitches rightward across the face, and then climbed three moderate rock pitches to the summit ridge. Easy snow and 4th-class rock led us to the summit, where I laid on my stomach to reach up and tap the highest point, the top of a cornice overhanging the north face. It was the morning of June 21, the first day of summer.

We rappelled the route, taking a nap midway to let the upper snowfield firm up again, and

returned to camp 51 hours after leaving. Ron and Luke departed back to the boats that day to paddle out, and Len and I rested a few days while the normal rainy weather of the area returned.

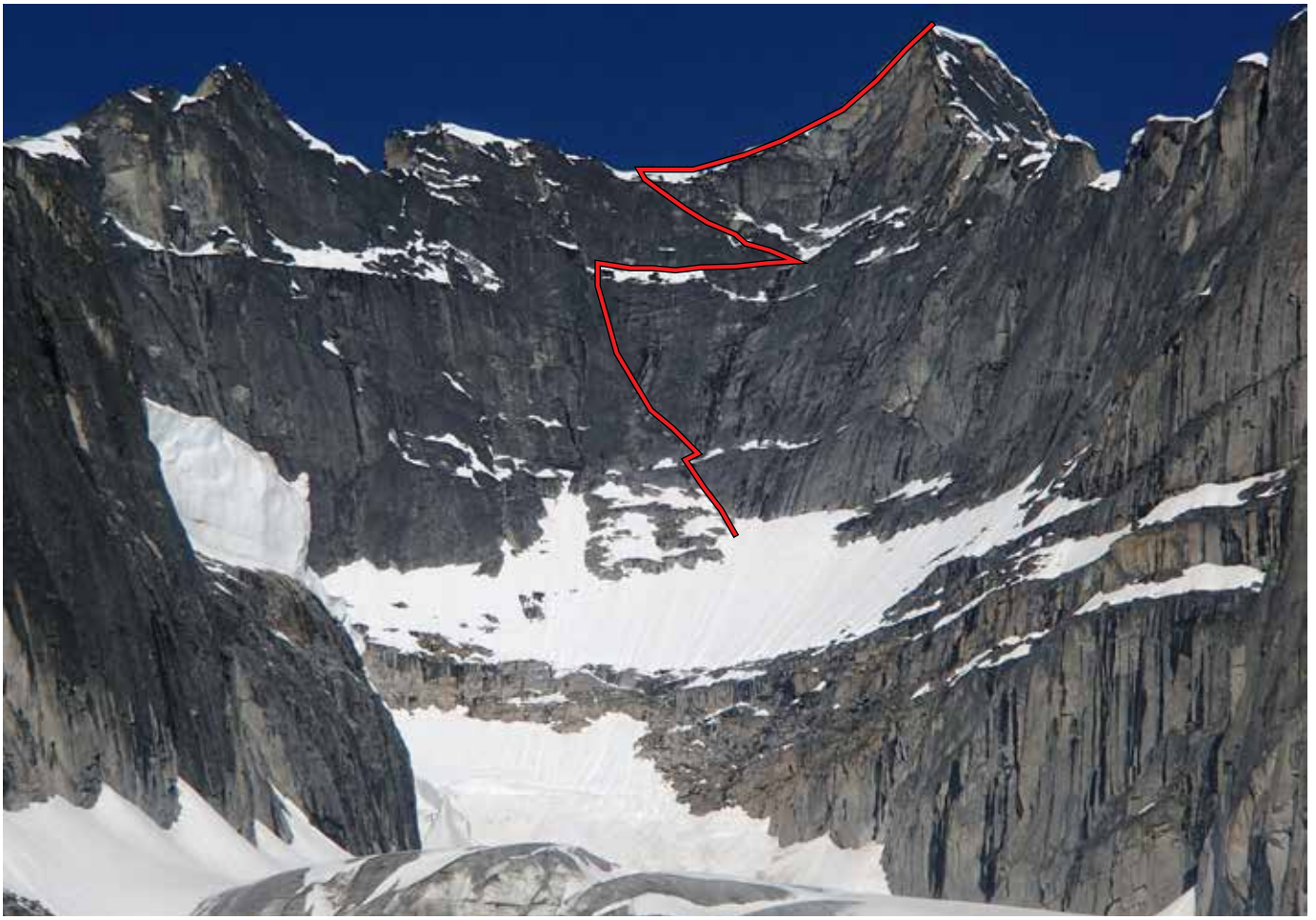
On June 25, we started our journey back to the truck at Tungsten. We scrambled partway up a gully just east of the Minotaur, and climbed four pitches of moderate snow and rock to a high col and rappelled into the north cirque. Three days of hiking brought us to the western edge of the Ragged Range, and we had enough extra time for a brief side trip to an unclimbed peak (2,545 metres, GR656561, unofficially named "Peak 46" by Bill Buckingham in the 1966 AAJ). After crossing the northern glacier, Len led a few steep snow pitches, then I led a moderate rock pitch across a knife-edge ridge to the crumbling summit.

The next day we dropped down into the Flat River Valley, and three more days of difficult bushwhacking brought us back to the truck at Tungsten. To finish the trip, we drove down to Blackstone Landing to pick up Ron and Luke at the end of their paddle.

Summary

East Face (5.7, 50° snow, 22 pitches), Thunder Mountain, Ragged Range. Unsupported Ascent: Eric Gilbertson, Len Vanderstar, June 21, 2016.

Peak 46 (5.5, 50° snow, 2545m, GR656561), Ragged Range. FA: Eric Gilbertson, Len Vanderstar, June 27, 2016.



The east face of Thunder Mountain.
Photo: Eric Gilbertson

Gateway Glacier

Greg Horne

SITUATED BETWEEN PANGNIRTUNG and Kingnait Fiords on Baffin Island's Cumberland Peninsula, 35 kilometres northeast of the village of Pangnirtung, is a rugged glaciated group of alpine peaks that had caught my attention on several previous visits to the area. The igneous bedrock has allowed cirque and small valley glaciers to carve an impressive selection of miniature big walls, narrow arêtes, nunataks and ski-touring circuits.

Our crew of five, Grant Dixon (Australia), Marshall Netherwood (Calgary) and three from Jasper—Terry Winkler, Louise Jarry and I—made our way to Pang in two separate waves. Using local outfitter Joavie Alivaktuk, on April 16, Louise, Grant and I were taken by snowmobile drivers Jamie and Patrick to the mouth of an unnamed valley on the west shore of Kingnait Fiord across from Qaiqsuki Point. We called the drainage Tupeq Valley from the peak at the head of the valley. Louise and I had made a two-day reconnaissance of this valley at the end of our 2015 trip east of Kingnait Fiord [see *CAJ*, vol. 99, 2016, p. 84].

Moving camp through Tupeq Valley.
Photo: Grant Dixon

We knew how to deal with the first and second river canyon bypasses, thus saving several hours of backtracking.

While we waited for Terry and Marshall to catch up to us, our first summit foray took us to a 1,554-metre peak by skiing its steep lower northeast slopes—a jumbled snow-mushroomed giant boulder slope that felt like a big-mountain position, with no room for slips or tumbles, and a 1,350-metre elevation gain. A broad upper plateau led to a glacier dome sharpening to a razor arête at the actual top. We had a superb vantage point to assess the terrain we planned to explore over the next few weeks. Retracing our route, we returned to camp at sunset.

Skiing back down to the first canyon, we met the other guys after being dropped off by Joavie and helped carry their gear back to our camp. Bypassing another canyon below "Zed Lake," we crossed that lake and carried on to the next as the wind picked up and snowfall began. For two nights, we waited out the storm then continued up valley. This valley bottom is protected from strong winds based on evidence of snow mushrooms on boulders and a very un-consolidated snowpack. Trail breaking in 25 centimetres of new snow felt more like the Rockies than the Arctic. With effort, we reached the mouth of our chosen side valley to "East" Gateway Glacier.

A small spiky peak (spot elevation of 1,291 metres) we had seen all day and dubbed the "Little Matterhorn" drew me and Grant to make a five-kilometre daytrip to ascend. Skiing to a high shoulder, we cached our skis and scrambled to its small rocky summit. With ski boots on, one small section of the ridge was traversed *au cheval*. Degrading weather obscured views and gave us a challenging whiteout ski descent of the upper mountain.

A ferry of gear and food was made up towards the east Gateway Glacier. Two more shuttles would be needed to move everything to the glacier. With warming temperatures, avalanches could be heard and seen immediately. At peak activity, we could see five slides at once running from various aspects and mountains, point releases and soft slabs. In three days I witnessed more active slides than I had previously seen in my entire life. Then the weather returned to be cooler, all avalanche activity stopped, all settlement was done and the snowpack turned rock solid.

On the evening of April 25, the dreaded sound of rain on the tent fly put us to sleep. A few days earlier it had been -25 C overnight, now this. Neither our pulk covers were waterproof nor many of the bags inside that organized our food and gear. We improvised to keep the critical things as dry as possible.

At the crest of the "East" Gateway Glacier we camped two nights at "Gateway Pass." Peaks 3 (1,440 metres) and 4 (1,600 metres) on each side of the pass were ascended. A day of foggy weather had us groping our way down the "West" Gateway Glacier nervous about skiing into known crevasse zones seen from Peak 4.

A hoarfrost-covered camp in morning hinted of clear skies above. Grant and I skied, and cramponed, up the twin summits of Peak 5 (west, 1,617 metres; and east, 1,620 metres). The remains of a plastic bag turning to powder and a very weathered cardboard note under a single rock at the west summit of Peak 5 was evidence of an ascent. Only the words "1st August 19--, -- Carey, Jonas[?] --, Dave --" were readable. The east summit was a belayed traverse on a ledge followed by a crack with crampons to a summit small enough that we took turns on our knees. Cloud banks filled the Tupeq Valley and lapped around the granite walls.

Another snowy whiteoutish travel day found us moving over 1,260-metre "Aanisittuq (South) Pass" for a short haul to position a high camp for several daytrips to neighbouring peaks. Initially heading for a mountain east of camp, we switched to the peak two kilometres south when it looked like the weather was improving. Unfortunately, the clouds lowered a few hours later, but rocky terrain provided some reference. Louise and Terry turned back, leaving me and Grant to finish off the ascent in fog. A small cairn was found with another weathered note, and this time some of it was readable. American David MacAdam and his son had made the first ascent in 1974 from a lake I assume is the three-kilometre-long body of water

4.5 kilometres to the southwest. Theirs would have been an unglaciated scramble compared to our three-quarters glacier ski ascent. The second ascent was in 1975 by a school expedition. By the time we returned to camp, "Mount MacAdam" was cloud-free, of course.

The highest summit of our trip, Peak 7 (1,708 metres) just west of "Aanisittuq Pass," was skied to its west col then cramponed and short-roped to the top where a cairn and no record was found. Peak 8 (1,650 metres), one kilometre to the west, permitted skiing to within 100 vertical metres before switching to crampons. Here we had our first view of Pangnirtung Fiord, over Tikeq Peak and its bare blue ice.

A move off the Gateway Glacier system was made by descending south from a high camp down to above MacAdam's lake, then east to the toe of a six-kilometre-long glacier southeast of Gateway. Then we moved up to about the 1,000-metre level and established our best camp of the expedition, a hub for numerous ski and climbing days. Windy, snowy weather kept us away from summits, and time was up for Terry and Marshall who needed to start their return to Pang ahead of the rest of us.

With afternoon clearing, Grant and I sprinted to a tiny sub-peak (Peak 9, 1,281 metres) for our first scouting view of the area. The higher neighbouring granite top to the north had a Patagonia-like character, and Peak 11 (1,528 metres) had an impressive northwest ridge and overhanging rocky knob. Back to fine weather, on May 9 the three of us skied east to a 1,170-metre pass, requiring us to carry our skis for a 100 metres before a gentle

Two to three hours of grass skiing from Pangnirtung Fiord. Photo: Grant Dixon

ski down to the west, and onto the south slopes of Peak 10 (1,530 metres). Seen from the first summit we climbed at the start of the trip, Peak 10 has a dramatic northeast face and general form that stuck in our minds.

Just before the pass, Grant and I broke off north while Louise carried on over and back to camp. An hour of steep skinning had us to a high shoulder at 1,440 metres. Caching our skis, we traversed the east slopes of a sub-peak to a notch with a couple of rock moves, and then zigzagged up south slopes, weaving around rock outcrops to the small airy summit of Peak 11 (1,528 metres), which we knew was overhanging on its northeast aspect. Probably the finest summit of the trip, we soaked in the landscape, reviewing where we had been so far and making plans for our time left. We yodelled to Louise two kilometres away; surprisingly, she heard us. A 10-minute ski descent of our skin track put us to the 1,170-metre pass then back to camp before sunset.

The next objective the following day was a narrow-ridged granite peak a bit more than a kilometre north of Peak 9. Louise skied with us to near its southwest base then left us for the ascent. Steep cramponing, followed by a belayed pitch, brought us to a narrow rock crest. Our very lean rack of a few hexes and Stoppers left us under-equipped to follow the ridge directly. We retreated and tried a diagonal line on the sunny south face. Again, lack of pro and clunky footwear had us turn back about two pitches from the top.

Greg Horne on the summit of Peak 9, looking towards Peak 11. Photo: Grant Dixon

With only one more day left before moving camp, Grant suggested an ambitious ski circuit around and over the mini range south of camp. Leaving camp at 1,000 metres, we descended to nearly 800 metres then up a lateral moraine and across a glacier to a nunatak with spot elevation of 1,356 metres (Peak 12). Then we travelled over a glacial divide to 1,000 metres, where we left the glacier and ascended up to Peak 13 (1,422 metres). From there, we descended back to 1,000 metres to intersect our route to Peak 10, and then home by the 1,170-metre pass. This was a 14.5 kilometre tour of two passes and two summits.

Degrading weather on May 12 helped soften the regret of needing to leave and begin our journey back towards Pangnirtung. Soon off the glacier and across a couple of lakes, we established a camp at 503 metres above the second unnamed lake. The sound and sights of snow buntings, patches of grass and open water signalled we were now into true spring.

After poor weather and a rest day, the "Q Range" peaks were calling us for more ascents. Seen on and off for the last few weeks, Qajaq Peak in particular, but also Qilalugaq Mountain would be our final mountains of the trip. Skiing up Qilalugaq's northeast ridge used up most of the day's good weather. A caribou antler revealed itself just below the summit rocks. Had the animal been this high or was it brought by a person? Descending to 1,000 metres, we gained a glacier and climbed back up to a 1,220-metre col now in the clouds. Traversing the ridge crest west to a 1,280-metre sub-peak, we were required to make a couple of steep belayed traverse pitches on snow to bypass steps of the ridge proper. Clearing briefly, we saw Pangnirtung and Qajaq's top before clouds rolled back in. The summit of Qajaq is a boundary point corner for a land-claim area, therefore it had a surveyor's drilled pin and marker on its bare, tiny rocky peak.

Our descent to Pangnirtung Fiord at Aulatsivikjuak Bay with the full onset of spring made for interesting snow, water and grass skiing. Creeks were flowing and the option to follow frozen drainages and canyons was quickly abandoned. Traces of Terry and Marshall's tracks helped us connect the snow and grassy patches and avoid most rock. Camp on a sandy beach with seaweed and the sound of returning Canada geese was a radical change from a pure rock and snow landscape of the last month. A few more relaxing sunny days of mainly walking on water-covered sea ice brought us back to town.

Summary

Ski tour from Kingnait Fiord to Pangnirtung Fiord via the Gateway Glacier complex, 15 peaks ascended (10 probable first ascents), 225 kilometres travelled, including daytrips en route. Grant Dixon, Greg Horne, Louise Jarry, Marshall Netherwood, Terry Winkler, April 16-May 17, 2016.

Greg Horne and Louise Jarry return to camp on the Gateway Glacier with the southwest face of an unnamed 1,760-metre peak above.
Photo: Grant Dixon

Geographical Names in Auyuittuq

Donald Morton

THE NAMES OF VALLEYS, GLACIERS and mountains often tell interesting stories about early exploration. To this end, here is some of the background to the naming of geographical features in what is now Auyuittuq National Park north of Pangnirtung on the Cumberland Peninsula of Canada's Baffin Island.

Geophysical and Biological Expedition of 1953

IT WAS THE 1953 EXPEDITION led by Pat Baird (Baird *et al.* 1953, 1954) that initiated the references to Norse mythology with the name Asgard, the Home of the Gods, for the spectacular double rock tower topped with ice and snow. The Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research contributed four scientists and mountaineers—Jürg Marmet, F. H. Schwarzenbach, Hans Röthlisberger and J. R. (Hans or Howie) Weber—who made the first ascent of Mount Asgard on July 13, 1953. Various combinations of these men also climbed four unnamed peaks from their camps up the Highway Glacier, as well as a glacier dome they called Tête Blanche (2,100 metres), which they falsely estimated to be the highest in the area at 2,156 metres (the latest topographic map places Mount Odin at 2,143 metres). Most expedition members climbed Mount Battle on the southeast shore of Glacier Lake, named for geomorphologist W. R. B. (Ben) Battle buried nearby, after he accidentally drowned.

At the close of the expedition, the members packed down the west side of the Weasel Valley, some stopping to climb another high peak, first by Baird (1954) and Marmet, and three days later by Weber, William Ward and Vero-Wynne Edwards. They named the peak Queen Elizabeth in recognition of her coronation that year, but later learned the name had already been assigned to a mountain in the Yukon. Baird (1954) contracted it to The Queen or Mount Queen, but apparently this also was not accepted. On a later map (Baird *et al.* 1966), he designated it Mount Odin, the ruler of the gods, from whose name we have Wednesday.

Additionally, on the west side of the Weasel Valley between Crater Lake and Windy Lake, the map shows Schwarzenbach Falls, named after the Swiss botanist. The German-American anthropologist Franz Boas (1858-1942), spent the year 1883-84 in the area living and travelling with the Inuit. The reference to an illustration by the Dutch-American writer Hendrik Willem Van Loon (1882-1944) for the naming of Mount Asgard could be from his popular children's book *The Story of Mankind* (Van Loon, 1921), which has a drawing of a huge, partly flat-topped mountain in the land of Svithjod.

Sometime after the 1953 expedition, Hans Weber moved to Canada for a distinguished career with the department of then-called Energy, Mines and Resources in Ottawa. Jürg Marmet (1927-2013) was a Swiss mountain guide. In 1956, with Ernst Schmied, he made the second ascent of Mount Everest.

The report by Baird *et al* (1953) provided a complete list of all the names approved by the Canadian Board on Geographical Names and the reasons. In parentheses, I have added altitudes from the 1994 government topographic maps.

Summary of Names from Pat Baird's 1953 Report in *Arctic*

- Coronation Fiord: Coronation Glacier flows into this fjord.
- Coronation Glacier: First reconnoitred on the day of Her Majesty's Coronation.
- Fork Beard Glacier: The ice of this glacier divides and falls in two rippled tongues to the valley floor.
- Highway Glacier: The main expedition route from base camp to the Penny Icecap.
- Matak Fiord: Abbreviation of the local name Maktartudjennak (Boas map), meaning the place where one eats white whale meat.

- Mount Asgard (2015m): Spectacular rock tower resembling the home of the Norse gods as illustrated by Van Loon.
- Mount Battle (1329m): After the late W.R.B. Battle, a member of the expedition.
- Mount Fleming (1500m): After the late Bishop Archibald Fleming, an Anglican missionary.
- Naksakjua River: Local name, meaning big valley.
- Owl River: Many snowy owls nesting here in 1953.
- Penny Icecap: The general region here was named Penny Highland by Boas.
- Rundle Glacier: After the late Nurse Rundle at Pangnirtung.
- Tête Blanche (2100m): Ice-domed highest peak. On the 26-I/14 topographic map this broad snow summit lies between the 2,080-metre contour and the absent one at 2,120 metres, indicating that Mount Odin at 2,143 metres is actually higher.
- Turner Glacier: After the late Rev. H.A. Turner, a missionary at Pangnirtung for many years.
- Weasel River: A tiresome number of weasels here in 1953.

The Cambridge Expedition of 1961

THE NEXT EXPLORATION of the Asgard area was in 1961 by a party of students from Cambridge University, comprising of Robert E. Langford (1962a, 1962b), Terence A. J. Goodfellow, Anthony R. Crofts, Graeme Bonham-Carter, C. William Barlow and John W. Dale for climbing and some modest scientific work. En route they enjoyed the hospitality of the Montreal Section of The Alpine Club of Canada and generated some publicity by rappelling off the twelfth story of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation building. They arrived by plane at Broughton Island (now Qikiqtarjuaq), where two local boats took them south to the Owl Valley at the head of the fjord. From there, they made the first ascent of the already named Mount Fleming, as well as climbing and naming Midgard, Turl and Sici east of Summit Lake.

In order to cross to the west side of the valley at the pass, they had to improvise a raft from their gear and two planks left from 1953. From there, they trekked to the base of Mount Asgard and named the peak to the east Friga (also spelled Frigg or Frigga), the wife of Odin. Like Asgard, Friga has some impressive vertical walls, so they called the glacier that flows toward the Turner Glacier the King's Parade Glacier after the main street in Cambridge "because of the fabulous architecture on each side." However, the present maps have shortened the name to Parade Glacier and ignored Friga, thus erasing the direct connection with these early explorers from Cambridge. The climbers did reach one of the two summits of Friga, but atrocious conditions defeated them on Asgard and another peak rising from the Turner Glacier that they called Anawakaluk, which now is the Mount Loki described below. Altogether this was a remarkable visit to Baffin Island. Six men aged 20 to 27 travelled from tidewater on the north through Pangnirtung Pass to the southern fjord over seven weeks, making five first ascents and carrying all their gear.

Summary of New Names from the 1962 Article in *The Alpine Journal* with the official distinctions of Mount, Mountain or Peak

- Mount Friga (1970m): Named after the wife of Odin and stands between Asgard and Summit Lake, but not designated on the map.
- Midgard Mountain (1700m): East of the upper Rundle Glacier, named for the real world, distinct from the realm of Asgard.
- Parade Glacier: Between Asgard and Friga, originally King's Parade Glacier after the main street in Cambridge, England.
- Sici Mountain (1740m): East of Summit Lake, designated Siki on the map, named for the icy route.
- Turl Mountain (1820m): East of Summit Lake.

The Alpine Club of Canada Expedition of 1963

DURING THE EARLY 1960S, Syd Wilkinson from England was a successor to Cannon Turner as the Anglican priest at St. Luke's Church in Pangnirtung. Syd was also an accomplished climber who did some solo explorations, including the first ascent of Overlord Peak on the east side at the entrance to the Weasel Valley and the third ascent of Mount Queen.

In 1963, Pat Baird organized an ACC expedition to the Asgard area, the Club's first major camp outside Canada's Rocky Mountains (Baird *et al*. 1964). Altogether we had 19 climbers and three camp staff. Pat arranged a Canso flying boat based in Frobisher (now Iqualit) for transport to our planned base camp near the pass. After a stop in Pangnirtung to add Syd to the team, we flew up the Weasel Valley planning to land on the seven-kilometre-long Summit Lake. Pat had intentionally chosen the late start date of July 31 to be sure the lake ice would be gone, but we found the lake still frozen. We had to fly back down the valley and establish our base at sea level on the sandy beach on the west shore of Pangnirtung Fiord. To help us reach the mountains across the fjord, we borrowed a leaky rowboat from some Inuit fishermen who saw us land.

Being sited some 33 kilometres from the southern end of Summit Lake was a major disappointment for everyone. However, we had come prepared to carry camps to reach peaks distant from the pass, so now we just had to carry everything farther. Thus Syd Wilkinson, David Atherton, Bruno Egloff, a medical doctor Pat had invited from Switzerland, and I organized gear and food for a seven-day trek up the valley to attempt Mount Asgard. Early on our second day, we saw the imposing sheer face of a mountain rising high above us on the other side of the river. This mountain certainly was something very special that needed an appropriate name. Later, after trying unsuccessfully to climb it, I proposed Mount Thor after the Norse god of thunder and the origin of our Thursday.

Our second camp was near the south end of Summit Lake where a major glacier enters the Weasel Valley from the west. Here Syd found a large caribou antler so we began referring to the Caribou Glacier. The next day we hiked up this and a tributary glacier on our right to the col with the twin towers of Asgard on our left and the steep walls of Friga on our right. The weather was unsettled the following day, so we postponed Asgard and tried an easier peak immediately south of Friga that we called Freya after the goddess of love and beauty and the source of our Friday. The stories of Freya and Friga originally may have evolved from the same goddess, so it is appropriate for the two peaks to be adjacent. The next day, we climbed Asgard unhindered by the verglas of 1961.

On our return to base camp, a second team consisting of Syd Wilkinson, Gordon Weetman, Stan Paterson and Felix Largiadèr, our second Swiss doctor, crossed the upper end of the fjord to explore the country north of Overlord. Over six days, they climbed and named the First and Second Guardians, Turnweather Peak and Tête des Cirques. Jack Cade and I also rowed over with a camp to explore Thor. We traversed around the east side, scrambled high on the north ridge and retreated after finding a possible rock-climbing route to the summit.

As listed below, expedition members climbed and named several more peaks on both sides of the valley. Others carried camps up to Summit Lake, including Ellis Blade and Geoff Webster who continued up the Caribou Glacier to climb a mountain they named Tyr after the Norse god of war and the origin of Tuesday.

Boats from Pangnirtung took us back to the village on August 17, but bad weather either there or in Frobisher prevented the Canso from flying us out for a whole week. This was a serious problem for those who had southern commitments, but for the rest of us it was an unforgettable introduction to Arctic life and a chance to enjoy Arctic char, seal and polar bear for dinner.

Summary of New Names from the 1964 Article in *The Canadian Alpine Journal*

- Adluk Peak (2000m): Snow dome north of the Caribou Glacier named for the snow hole or crevasse Atherton found unexpectedly on the summit.
- Aegir Peak (1740m): West of the lower Weasel Valley after the Norse sea giant.
- Caribou Glacier: Flowing southeast into the lower end of Summit Lake, named for the antler found in the nearby moss.
- Freya Peak (1800m): Southwest of Mount Friga after the goddess of love and beauty.
- Gauntlet Peak (1620m): Overlooking the glacier used to reach Turnweather.
- The Guardians (1500m and 1580m): Two rock pillars east of Turnweather.
- Moon Peak (1500m): Above Moon Lake west of upper Pangnirtung Fiord.
- Niord Peak (1780m): Between Aegir and Crater Lake, named after the father of Freya.
- Overlord Peak (1485m): On the east side of Pangnirtung Fiord at the entrance to the Weasel Valley.
- Sandcastle Peak (1740m): Between Gauntlet and Tête des Cirques.
- Tête des Cirques (1851m): North of the Guardians at the origin of four glaciers—three flowing to the Weasel Valley and one towards Kingnait Fiord.
- Thor Peak (1675m): On the east side of the Weasel Valley, south of the Fork Beard Glacier, named after the god of thunder. Officially, this is not Mount Thor because that name already was used elsewhere in Canada.
- Tirokwa Peak (1820m): On the east side of the Weasel Valley where the river turns from southwest to south.
- Turnweather Peak (1760m): East of Gauntlet Peak, named for the presence of a summit cloud as seen from Pangnirtung, signalling a weather change.
- Tyr Peak (1780m): South of the Caribou Glacier after the god of war.
- Ulu Peak (1260m): North of Overlord named for its resemblance to the knife used for skinning seals.

The Alpine Club of Canada Expedition of 1965

PAT BAIRD AND THE ACC organized a second expedition in 1965 that brought 11 climbers, two artists and two camp staff back to the area (Baird *et al*. 1966). This time he assured we would have a base camp near the pass by sending in supplies and a better sealed rowboat by snowmobile during the spring, and flying in people in July with a Dehaviland Otter piloted by Arctic aviation pioneer Weldy Phipps. His single-engine plane had large soft wheels that permitted landings and takeoffs from unbelievably short sections of sandy beaches. Consequently, we were able to establish base camp midway along Glacier Lake in view of Mount Asgard. The artists were Jim MacDougall from Montreal, who also was our camp doctor, and the renowned landscape painter A. Y. Jackson (1882-1974) of Group of Seven fame. He had painted on Baffin Island before and now was returning in his eighty-second year. Every dry day he would set off with his oil paints, folding chair, easel and a 13-by-10-inch piece of plywood to sketch the surrounding scenery. Following his usual practice, he took these sketches home to be used for larger canvas paintings during the winter.

The climbers included my boss from Princeton University, Lyman Spitzer, Chairman of the Department of Astrophysical Sciences. Rain during the first week in camp encouraged reading and writing in the dining tent, or in Lyman's case, thinking. Thus he suggested we could see the upper limb of the midnight sun when the weather cleared if we climbed the prominent snow peak he had seen east of the Highway Glacier. Without pencil or paper, he had estimated that the distance we were north of the Arctic Circle, the altitude of the mountain and the half-degree refraction at the horizon would compensate for being 20 days after the summer solstice. The required mental

calculation did not surprise me because more than a decade earlier he had conceived the stellarator for controlled hydrogen fusion while riding ski lifts in Aspen, Colorado.

The weather improved the evening of July 13, so five of us hiked up the Highway Glacier and partway up the mountain. When the cloud returned, three of us retreated while Ellis Blade and Bill Franz continued to a broad snow dome with minimum visibility. Although we were unable to check Lyman's prediction, we named the mountain Midnight Sun. Later with the help of an almanac and some spherical trigonometry, I confirmed his calculation. This is the 1,967-metre peak with higher and lower snow domes one sees directly ahead while trekking up Weasel Valley. Midnight Sun must be the unnamed summit Marmet climbed solo in 1963 and described as "a peak of striking appearance about 6824 ft. lying to the east of Camp A3, which dominated the northern termination of the South Pangnirtung Valley" (Baird *et al*. 1954). In the earlier report (Baird *et al*. 1953) for the same August 5 climb, Marmet gives an altitude of 6,440 feet (1,963 metres) that is much closer to the map altitude of 1,967 metres.

Of course, we had to try Asgard again, so six of us packed up the Turner and King's Parade Glacier to a campsite on the col between Asgard and Friga, from which we made the third ascent. More than a decade later when I was watching the James Bond movie *The Spy Who Loved Me*, the view of the vertical rock walls of Friga suddenly appeared on the screen. The bad guys on skis were chasing Bond down a steep hill through a forest somewhere in the European Alps. As Bond escaped by skiing off a precipice, the scene suddenly changed to a background of Friga with the skier falling gently, supported by a Union-Jack parachute. Stunt man Rick Sylvester had skied off the snow cap of Asgard.

Spitzer and I had a scheme for an attempt on Thor. He wanted to leave the expedition early in order to attend an important meeting, so he had arranged for a boat from Pangnirtung to meet him at the head of the fjord on the east side on July 23. Since Thor had seemed possible by the north ridge, we left base camp on July 20 with climbing gear, crossed Glacier Lake in the rowboat, hiked down the Weasel Valley to the Fork Beard Glacier and pitched our tent. The next day we climbed the moraine, crossed the upper glacier and started up the north ridge. Near the top there were a couple of nice laybacks and one place where I needed the aid of a sling. Soon we were on the summit able to look down the overhanging face. After a rest day we parted. With all the gear, I hiked back to our base camp while Lyman began the eight-kilometre trip south to his rendezvous. Unfortunately, the Inuit with the boat and Lyman never found each other. He had no choice but to continue solo along the fjord another 50 kilometres with minimal food, crossing two serious rivers, until he reached Pangnirtung the next morning. It is well we did not lose him to a fast river or a polar bear. Lyman Spitzer (1914-1997) was a leading American astrophysicist. In 2003, NASA honoured him by naming one of its major space missions the Spitzer Space Telescope.

Back at base camp, Mike MacCallum and Bob Paul invited Pat Baird and me to join them to climb the pointed rock peak up the Turner Glacier that the Cambridge climbers had attempted in 1961. After a night in a camp below the south side of the west ridge, we found a route to the crest, passing a 1961 rappel sling. The rock along the ridge was good, but the exposure encouraged us to belay most sections; we reached the summit shortly after midnight. This mountain challenged us continuously for 29 hours, so I proposed to name it Loki after the Norse god of mischief.

After some sleep in camp and a midnight breakfast, we trekked back to base camp for our last day. There on packing boxes in the stores tent A.Y. Jackson gave us an exhibit of his 28 sketches from the trip. The good weather held and Glacier Lake now was free enough of ice for the Canso to land and take off.

Summary of New Names from the 1966 Article in *The Canadian Alpine Journal*

- Mt. Baldr: True summit (1,740 metres) of the outlier called Breidablik Peak (1,650 metres), which has the hanging glacier seen to the south from Summit Lake. Both peaks are on the east side of the Weasel Valley north of the Fork Beard Glacier. Baldr was a god of peace, and Breidablik his home.
- Bastille Peak (1733m): Between Tête Blanche and the Highway Glacier, first climbed on Bastille Day.
- Branstock Glacier: South of Mount Battle, flowing towards Summit Lake, presumably named after a tree usually spelled *Barnstokkr* in Volsung's palace.
- Mount Brynhild, Mount Alvita and Mount Svanhvit (2007m, 1900m and 1855m, respectively): Valkyries along the north side of the lower Turner Glacier.
- Mount Gram (1460m): South of Branstock Glacier, named after Sigmund's sword.
- Midnight Sun Peak (1967m): West of the Highway Glacier, named for the unsuccessful attempt to see the sun at midnight.
- Mount Odin (2143m): Named after the ruler of the gods.
- Mount Sigmund and Signy Peak (1820m and 1700m, respectively): South of the upper Branstock Glacier, brother and sister twins, children of Volsung.

CLIMBERS, TREKKERS AND SKIERS around the world gradually learned about the wonders of Baffin Island, came to explore and climb and added many more names. Some have continued the Norse tradition with names such as Mount Sif for Thor's wife and Mjollnir Peak for his hammer. The huge walls have attracted many of the world's best rock climbers to establish multi-day routes, each with its special name. The guidebook by Mark Synnott (2008) records many of these. In 1976, thanks in part to the efforts of Pat Baird, the Government of Canada established Auyuittuq National Park, extending from South Pangnirtung Fjord north and west to include the Penny Icecap. Pangnirtung Pass now is Akshayuk Pass.

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The West Coast

The Prow Wall

Sonnie Trotter

LAST TRY OF THE DAY, last day of the year, last layer of skin! How many times have we heard the story? It is "almost" cliché but not quite, because if there was no success on those last-of-the-lasts, there would be no story. There would only be another failed attempt, which would disappear into the blackness of thousands of other failed attempts. Still, it is one of my all-time favourite stories to hear, and because it does not happen everyday, it remains enchanting, special and exciting.

Climbing is full of these stories, and I eat them up. And once in a blue moon it even happens to me. This is the story of how I climbed The Prow Wall.

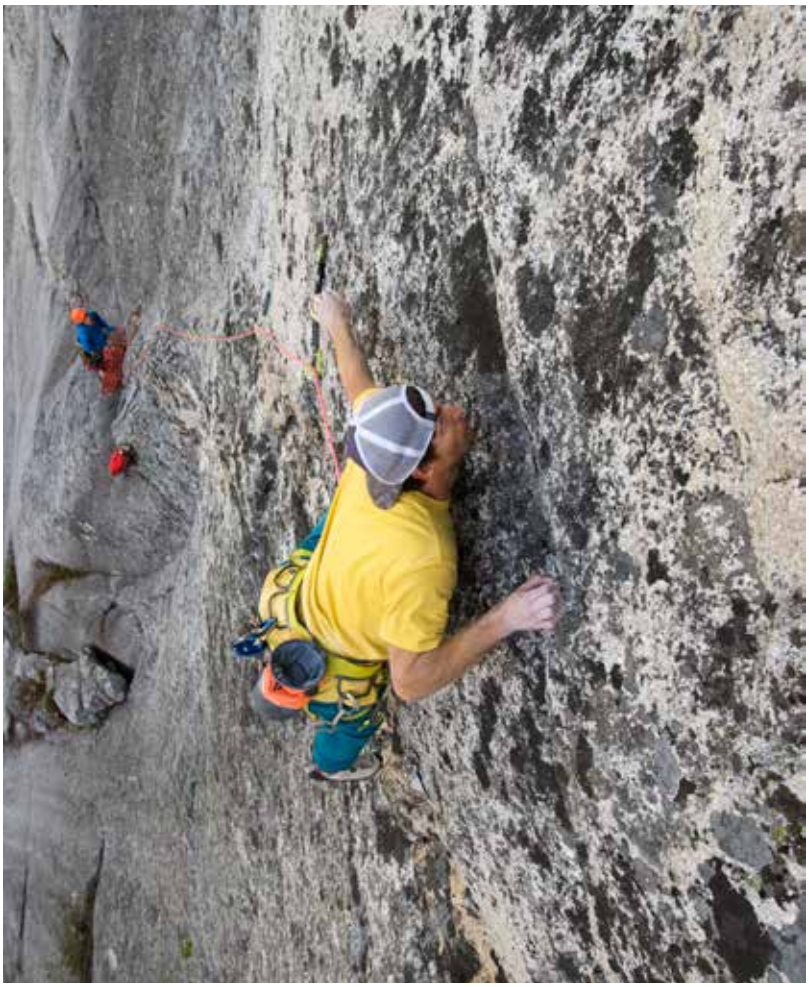
FIVE YEARS EARLIER, my good friend Jesse Brown raised another glass of dark red wine to his lips and looked at me with smiling eyes. I knew he was serious when he said we would go up there together, up to the last unclimbed headwall on the Stawamus Chief. As a young, ambitious and curious climber, I had been staring at that wall for years, wondering what was up there and why it had not yet been climbed. The Prow Wall was one of the cleanest faces in the Squamish valley—over 200 metres without a major ledge or a forest of trees, a clean sweeping face high above the cold waters of Howe Sound. And Jesse knew all about it. After all, he had bolted most of it.

We made plans that night at his house in the Smoke Bluffs to go up there together, from the ground up and see what would happen. He suspected the crux pitch may go free at 5.13b/c, but since a hold broke, it was hard to tell. He and a friend had spent years rappelling, cleaning, scouting and bolting a way through the wall. They would have done it, too, if it had it been just a smidge easier, or had his partner not passed away. Jesse fell in love, had two daughters and never could find the time to rekindle his relationship with the line.

We started early, hiked through the humid forest and on up to the windy ridge of the Squamish Buttress. We made good time, feeling fit, strong and optimistic. I led every pitch, onsighting most of them, but got completely shut down by a dark water streak—a wave-like feature scooping up from a blank-looking slab to barely overhanging and back to slab again. The holds were there, I could see them and touch them, and it really seemed like it should not be so hard. Time and time again I fell off, beat down. I wore my tips to pink and wondered if we would have to rappel since I could not get to the next bolt.

Frustrated, I created a loop of slings and stepped into the bolt, standing up ever so gently. Using every inch of my six-foot frame, I just barely managed to latch the bolt above. I placed my hand on the slab, searching for a micro edge, something to give me hope that the pitch would go free. And I found it. Sadly I had nothing left, and we moved on before I could do each of the moves. We hooped and hollered all the way to the summit, and topped-out in the heat of the afternoon sun. Two friends with eight pitches of perfect rock below us and the sun on our faces. It was a good day. We walked off the backside and—as I do with most unfinished climbs—vowed to return.

Sonnie Trotter sends the 5.14a crux of pitch four of The Prow Wall. Photo: Rich Wheater



Sonnie Trotter on pitch six (5.13a) of The Prow Wall. Photo: Rich Wheater

FIVE YEARS LATER, I GOT my chance. With a heavy travelling schedule, some early spring coastal rain and a two-year-old toddler on our hands, I decided to hike up by myself and inspect the line. This was easier than trying to make plans with a fellow climber. I suppose I wanted to make sure the holds I had imagined were still there. I rappelled in with high hopes.

After five days of cleaning, adjusting bolt placements, moving anchors and working the moves, I felt ready for my second ground-up attempt. Although I was never able to link the crux section alone on my Soloist, I was able to do every move fairly consistently. It seemed like a series of V5, V6, V7 and V8 boulder problems. Nothing too desperate, but desperate enough that it was far from a sure thing.

On the morning of the big day, I received a text from my partner Jeremy. He had had a hard night with his daughter and both he and his wife were exhausted. He just could not make it happen. Being a father myself, I completely understood the situation, so I began texting around looking for a backup. I was desperate. It was 7 a.m. I threw my head back down on the pillow and waited.

Ding. A moment later my phone lit up. It was none other than Tom Wright, one of B.C.'s finest British imports. Tom was back from a trip to Yosemite, a die-hard climber and keen as anyone I have ever met. He has big plans and projects of his own, but is willing to get out with mostly anyone, anytime, and he became my saviour of the day. You see, this was literally my last day in Squamish—family and work commitments would have us back at home in Canmore and tied up for months. The temperatures were warming up, too. Even if I could stay another week, there was no telling what the weather might do. I kissed my wife and boy goodbye, and with coffee in hand, headed for the big cliff.

We met in the parking lot, shook hands and while catching up, strapped harnesses to our hips, tied ropes over our shoulders and clipped water bottles to our gear loops. It was game time.

Suddenly, less than three hours into the day, I found myself hanging from the rope on the crux moves of the crux pitch. It is not hard to get up there, 5.10, 5.10, 5.12, but this pitch was nasty.

"I'm not sure what happened," I said to Tom as he lowered me to the belay. "I think my foot slipped off."

"No worries, mate, you got this," he replied. "Looks vicious!"

"It's not that bad," I said clipping into the anchor and untying my knot. "It's subtle. Delicately powerful, you know?"

But in my head I knew I had to take it more seriously. I had to tap into a level of strength and focus I usually reserve for these exact types of moments in my life. I knew I could do it, and I knew I had only one more chance before the sun would hit the wall. When that happens, the

friction would vanish and the tiny, slippery holds would get sweaty under my tips.

I tightened my shoes and went up again, breathing hard, trying to let out my redpoint jitters. I was going to give this sequence everything I had. Calm and collected, I moved into the boulder problem, chalking, breathing, executing. I reached for the first bad hold and was suddenly airborne again. A broken hold had sent me flying. A second failed attempt.

This was no laughing matter anymore. The sun was creeping across the wall and my skin was already worn from the heat. I had to act fast. Without removing my shoes, I took 10 deep breaths and climbed back up to a no-hands rest. I leaned my head against the wall, and with eyes closed, I went through the sequence one more time, visualizing myself perfectly sticking every move. There would be no time to fail again.

As I cast off across the coal-black slab, I felt the wind pick up—it was warm air, but the dryness helped my thinning skin dig deep into each crystal of coastal granite. I instantly transformed into sending mode, a place of existence that I can rarely tap into unless I am under a decent amount of pressure and when there is a climb that needs to get done—that usually does it for me.

I screamed my way to my high point, over-gripping each hold, promising myself that if I could just get onto the slab everything would be fine. I powered my way over the lip, and literally screamed as loud as I could while dancing across the slab moves above to better holds. I was not about to blow it at the end, but surely could have. My fingers were numb, and I shook with adrenaline as I tiptoed to the security of better holds.

I suspect the problem goes at V10 or V11 and is not really over until you reach the source of the water streak about five metres higher. I kept it together and was not about to take this opportunity lightly. It had been years in the making, days of work and a miracle partner to get me where I was. I was not about to screw it all up with a single distracting thought. My breath and desire carried me to the anchor. It was a good fight.

After that, it was just another four pitches (up to 5.13a) to the top. We climbed well, efficiently, and Tom proved to be one of the most relaxed and encouraging partners I could have ever asked for. For 20 years this line had been coined The Prow Wall Project. So I kept the name the same, and simply called it The Prow Wall (5.14a). Not until it gets repeated will we have a better understanding of the overall grade. Slabs are tricky; they can feel worlds apart from one climber to the next. But it is there now, done, and with a decent start.

One thing about bringing these types of lines into reality, and hopefully onto people's "to do" list, is that I will always remember the struggle. The process is what I love, not necessarily the send. For me, it is about exploring, working, sharing, giving and climbing. It is the complete package, and I am so honoured to have had this opportunity to experience all of these things through this big wall, high in the sky. Routes like this do not come along everyday, regardless of the grade.

I have been climbing for more than 20 years, and when I look up at Stawamus Chief in another 20 years, I will recall the amazing times I had with my friends, and I suspect I will still feel a hint of pride in the work I put in to make it all happen.

Summary

The Prow Wall (5.14a, 8 pitches), Stawamus Chief, Squamish, Coast Mountains. FA: Sonnie Trotter, May 1, 2016.

Sonnie Trotter (belayed by Tom Wright) tops out on the last pitch (5.12a) of The Prow Wall with Squamish below, and Mount Garibaldi behind. Photo: Rich Wheater

The Hidden Mecca of Moderate Ice

Monte Johnston

I ANSWERED THE PHONE, "Hey man, what's up?" Jia Condon, a good friend and fellow guide at Bella Coola Heli Sports was on the other end.

"I'm driving up for staff training, do you want to stick around for some ice climbing after?"

With no work plans for early December, and after skipping out on my usual fall climbing trip to Indian Creek, I was itching to get on something—anything.

"Sure, sounds like fun!" I responded, eager to see what we might find.

Steve Hodgson belays Jia Condon on the first pitch of Deceptive. Photo: Monte Johnston

Due to the number of ski movies that have filmed in the area, the name Bella Coola conjures up visions of extreme Alaska-type skiing for the power hounds out there. However, the place is relatively unknown in the ice-climbing world despite the amazing climbing opportunities that can be found on the steep granite walls that surround the town. One of the obvious reasons for this, of course, is the remote nature of the community. No one drives through Bella Coola on the way to anywhere. There is also the relatively short ice-climbing season, given the fickle weather and temperatures on the coast. There was basically no ice in the valley when I arrived on December 5, but five days later, due to a cold snap, it was game on.

While this was my first ice-climbing trip there, Jia Condon has been picking off beautiful lines in the valley for 18 years. His local knowledge was key to getting the most out of our four-day stay, which allowed us to complete a couple of beautiful first ascents. That and the cold, dry temperatures, which allowed the ice to form-up just in time.

The first climb we got on was dubbed Tour-de-Snooka for a number of reasons. First, the climb is on Mount Snooka. The second reason will become apparent, but it all started with an extremely circuitous route, in the dark, through what seemed like a never-ending forest of devil's club and alder.

After several hours, we reached the base of our intended climb, slightly bloodied and glad the bushwhack was over. However, once we arrived, Alex Boileau, a local climber that was joining us for the day, revealed that he had already climbed it—or, at least he was fairly sure he had. After a short discussion, we decided to abandon this climb and continue to a second flow that we had scouted from the road with binoculars the previous day. After more thrashing through the forest, no longer in the dark, we finally arrived at the base of the climb.

The route followed a beautiful narrow gully over mossy rock through some rambling terrain at the start. After soloing up a few pitches of easy WI2, we decided to get the ropes out when it steepened to WI3-4. The crux pitch ensued, which was a very chandeliered pillar, likely climbable, potentially not protectable and definitely not a sure thing.

We had two choices: continue up and see how it went; or traverse a few hundred metres along the side of the mountain to an adjacent flow that had a much higher chance of success. Unfortunately, we only had time for one. Given that it was our first day of ice that season we opted for a bunch of easier ice instead of the more challenging single pitch above.

So, after a descending traverse through more bush, we arrived at the base of what we would call Tour-de-Snooka (I am sure the name is making sense now). We racked up again and climbed six pitches of WI3 and WI4 with great views of the Bella Coola valley under a pale blue sky. The perfect great reward for our perseverance.

The day after Tour-de-Snooka, Jia and I took a rest day to recover from our epic bushwhacking mission and to plan for the next objective. Another local ice climber, Steve Hodgson, would join us for the day, so we went over to his house to discuss some options. When Jia asked him if he had any ideas, he pointed out his living room window at the north face of Snooka. There, in the gap between two trees, was an elegant ice line just begging for attention. We had decided on our objective.

Early the next morning, we found ourselves bushwhacking though devil's club, alder and blow-down—in our characteristically circuitous fashion—to the base of the climb.

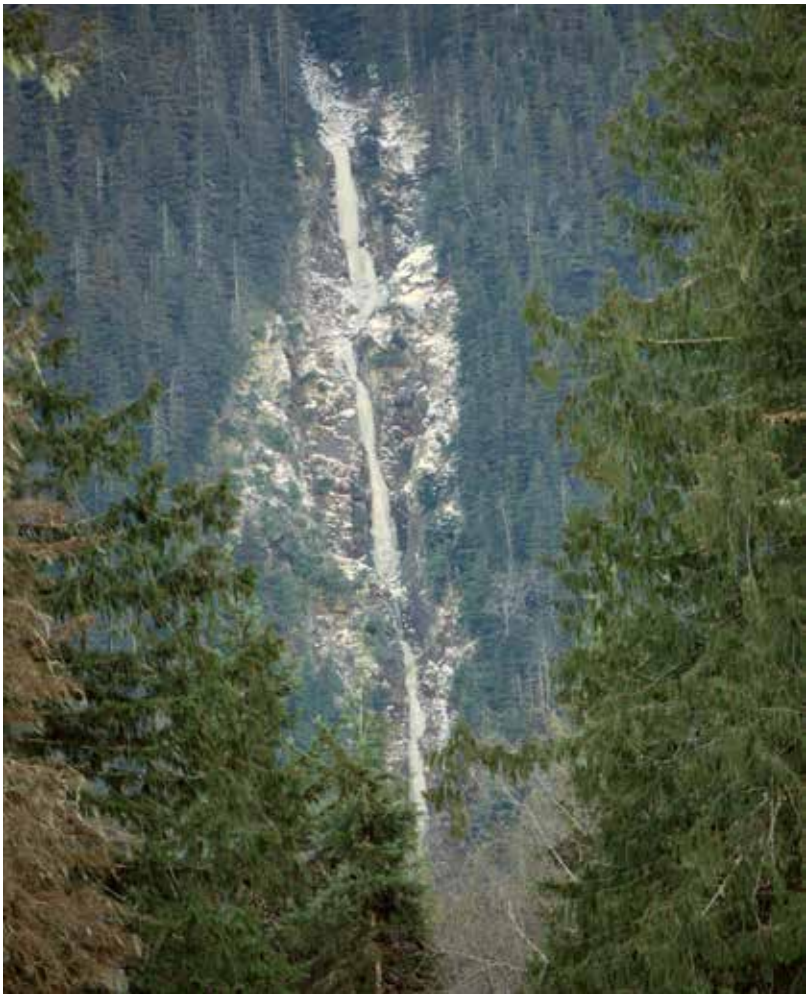
Three fantastic and long pitches of WI3-4 with a little scrambling inbetween quickly lead us to the top of the ice we had seen from Steve's house. The line had been deceptively short, about half as long as anticipated. Still hungry for adventure, we hiked further up the gully to see if we could find some more ice around the corner. Alas, we did not.

We descended through the forest on the east side of the route. The ground under the steep spruce and hemlock forest was covered in frozen moss, which made walking and downclimbing easy. Soft light filtering through the canopy provided a tranquil ambiance—a great end to a great trip!

Summary

Tour-de-Snooka (WI4, 400m), north face, Mt. Snooka, Bella Coola, Coast Mountains. FA: Alex Boileau, Jia Condon, Monte Johnston, December 11, 2016.

Deceptive (WI4, 200m), north face, Mt. Snooka, Bella Coola, Coast Mountains. FA: Jia Condon, Steve Hodgson, Monte Johnston, December 13, 2016.



Deceptive on Mount Snooka.
Photo: Jia Condon

Adventure with The Colonel

Philip Stone

THE GREY CLOUDS HAD BEEN SWIRLING about the peak all morning, looking ominous, so there was a feeling of resigned inevitability as the rain started to pitter patter on the dark rock around our belay. Garner Bergeron and I ruminated about the prospect of rappelling back down the 300 or so metres we had climbed up the west side of Mount Colonel Foster that morning. Not a great prospect given how far we had come. Then we heard Hunter Lee call down, "On belay," so up into the drizzle we continued to climb.

MOUNT COLONEL FOSTER is well known for its imposing 1,000-metre east face. Not only is the east face covered in natural lines with imposing relief, but it is also the most accessible part of the peak, so most of the climbing has been naturally concentrated there. But the mountain has no shortage of eye-catching features, and viewing Vancouver Island's iconic peak from the north, the line that always seems to stand out is the northwest skyline. With each of the major buttresses and couloirs on the east face now sporting ascents, interest in new climbs has turned to the less-imposing but still impressive west side.

Philip Stone belays on pitch nine with the Northwest Arête and Donner Lake below. Photo: Hunter Lee

In December 2015, Hunter Lee, Josh Overdijck and I had climbed the Great West Couloir looking for a more direct line to the main summit. While bivied below the west face that winter, we were treated to an up-close view of the Northwest Arête, a striking feature that runs up to the summit of Colonel Foster's Northwest Peak. That seed germinated in July 2016, and Hunter and I invited Garner to join us for a trip to investigate this promising feature.

The three of us began the hike up the Elk River trail on July 22 with a plan for three nights out. The trek up the valley went smoothly, and in a few hours, we were chatting with some local hikers at Landslide Lake as we soaked in the impressive view of the Colonel. The bushwhack of old, around the shore of the lake, has softened with the years as many boots have pounded in a fairly good tread and only a few stubborn slide alder stems form any kind of obstacle. What used to feel like a real chore is now little more than an extension of the main trail.

There are other changes I also notice. When I first visited Landslide Lake almost 30 years ago, the aftermath of the great landslide and resulting tsunami was very evident. While the story is still illustrated in the surroundings, the trees have greened-up around the shore, the huge logs that used to lie scattered on the scoured rock slabs have been eaten away by carpenter ants, and the open rock is rapidly disappearing beneath the new forest.

We followed the usual approach line along the creek up to Foster Lake, and then turned north along the moraine and up the heavily forested and bushy hillside to the high shelf north of Landslide Lake. Here, a massive debris field of huge boulders—that lacked enough momentum

Hunter Lee belays Garner Bergeron on the Northwest Arête. Photo: Philip Stone

to make it all the way to Landslide Lake—sits silently in a scene that otherwise screams chaos.

It is a bit of a scrappy scramble out of this basin up some loose choss to reach the North Col, and we were all glad to see the back of that and dump our packs beside the pretty alpine pools that nestle in the high saddle.

It rained a little overnight, and as we roused the next morning a dense fog hung over the mountains. No worries yet as we had more or less planned on a rest day following the approach. We took it easy for most of the day, taking a couple of hours to recce the first part of the approach, which makes a descending traverse around the base of the rock faces on the north side of the mountain. My wife, Renée, and I had previously been around this route a couple of summers ago, so I knew that it went. A few other climbers, including Mike Walsh on the first ascent in 1968, have also used this line and its utility is starting to grow in importance as access to and from the west face.

That evening a clearing trend set in and the temperature cooled down—good signs for the climb the next day. We sorted the rack and ropes and made plans for a reasonably early start.

On July 24, we rose around 4 a.m., made breakfast and left our camp by headlamp, hiking up to the north shoulder then making a long descent down a boulder-choked creek/chute that drains the névé at the base of the North Tower. The chute ends at a cliff edge that forces an exposed traverse westward across a slope of fine loose talus. Once across the talus, the exposure is reduced by the typical stocky Island alpine trees and the rest of the approach is straightforward, traversing around the base of the upper rock face on heather and open granite ledges.

From Google Earth imagery, we had a pretty good idea of how far to traverse to reach the third of three stacked ribs that formed the base of our route. We were at the base of the Northwest Arête for 7:30 a.m.

We started up a wide slab of solid grey basalt, scrambling up 4th-class rock to the left of a gully. Our proposed line angled right, so eventually, we were forced into the gully where some damp moss covered the rock. It is every Island alpinist's nightmare that the vegetation will be their undoing, so we prudently decided to rope up.

Hunter led the charge starting with a couple of pitches up the gully. Passing a large chockstone presented some entertainment by way of a 5.7 crux. The third pitch had a tricky traverse across a slab that put us into 5.9 territory, but the rock was sound and everything seemed to be falling into place. After some low 5th class, we were tucked onto a small ledge below a right-leaning chimney/ramp. This is where the fog started to look a lot more like rain. Hunter pulled up his hood and headed up the ramp. Watching from below, it was obviously difficult, but Hunter figured it out and flashed us a big grin once over the steep head of the ramp before disappearing from view to the other side of the rib. Garner and I followed together on the double ropes, and as we grappled with the 5.9 crux of this pitch, we voiced admiration for Hunter's lead.

We were now on the right side of the arête and the rib was starting to narrow and take form. A 5.6 and a 5.7 pitch and more 4th class had us getting higher and higher along the arête. As noon approached and the sun pulled over the crest of the mountain and began to warm the west side, we realized that the rain had not really materialized and we started to shed a few layers.

After eight or nine pitches up, the arête was becoming quite narrow. Good on the one hand, because we had hoped to find a nice aesthetic feature for our climb, but some unease was peppering our conversation as we watched the deep chasms on either side steadily pinch toward our slender thread with no view past the pinnacles above us. Would our arête connect with the main summit ridge?

Garner led over some easy 4th-class blocks and ledges on the left side of the arête. The next pitch took him onto the crest at a series of pinnacles, and Hunter and I exchanged nervous glances as Garner hollered down that the other side of the arête dropped away and he was unable see a way forward. He backtracked to our side and made a rising traverse below the pinnacles and went back up to the crest again. This time a whoop and a cheer! On the other side was a wide ledge. Garner

belayed Hunter and me, and we joined him on the ledge, following its line up along the right side of the arête and smack against the summit block of the Northwest Peak.

Relieved, we broke for a late lunch, finally taking the time to soak in the atmosphere of being perched high above the west coast with the sun shimmering on the Pacific Ocean and the deep green of the early summer forest laid out below.

Packed up again, we scrambled up 4th-class terrain over some massive boulders and met the cairns marking the summit ridge traverse. From the Northwest Peak, the traverse line turns 90 degrees to the right, and a ledge on the north side of the ridge leads eastward to a notch overlooking the drop into the col between the Northwest Peak and the North Tower, and the first rappel station. We rapped a line that kept to the rock well above the notorious Evacuation Gully. As the years have passed, the bergschrunds in the gully snow have appeared progressively earlier in the season, and while it takes more rappels to keep to the rock, it is a lot safer.

The setting sun beamed across the North Vancouver Island mountains, lighting up our descent in a beautiful golden glow. This is one of the hallmark experiences of a late-day descent off the north end of Mount Colonel Foster, and it brought back memories of past climbs on the mountain. I took the lead fixing the descent, making 10 rappels down the rock steps, ribs and gullies toward the waiting névé below. With a stroke of impeccable timing, I landed on the snow as the last of the daylight faded, and once all safely off with ropes coiled and stowed, we made our way by headlamp back down to our camp in the North Col.

It had been a fantastic climb with just enough technical difficulty to make a worthy adventure, and the up-and-over line of climb and descent that led straight back to the camp had a wonderfully aesthetic feel.

After a nice long sleep, we had a casual departure from camp before making the long, familiar trudge down the Elk River trail and back home.

Summary

Northwest Arête (D+ 5.9, 500m), Mt. Colonel Foster, Vancouver Island. FA: Hunter Lee, Garner Bergeron, Philip Stone, July 24, 2016.

The Northwest Arête on Mount Colonel Foster. Photo: Philip Stone

Brandywine Falls

Tim Emmett

In December 2012, an Arctic northerly airflow brought the west coast of B.C. into an unusual cold spell. At the time, I was looking for alternative places similar to Helmcken Falls, that is, large free-falling waterfalls that remain unfrozen in winter.

I heard that Brandywine Falls, only 20 minutes from my house, was an option so I started searching the Internet for images. The most recent shot on Instagram looked like a miniature Helmcken. I had no choice but to go check it out.

Tim Emmett and Jamie Finlayson on the first pitch of Brandywine Falls. Photo: Jia Condon

After a 10-minute walk from the road, I was amazed by the aura of this dramatic waterfall with thin translucent ice daggers covering the back wall. I wondered whether it might be possible to climb. I made a free-hanging rappel from a tree at the top and saw holds on the steep compact wall above an ice-covered ledge 20 metres below. I placed bolts at the obvious belay next to the waterfall. Upon closer inspection, I knew it would be climbable if the ice did not melt. Being south facing, the falls are a natural solar trap, and even at low temperatures the walls warm in the midday sun on a clear day.

Jamie Finlayson is one of my summer rock-climbing buddies and one of the local strong boys. I asked him if he was up for an adventure with some ice axes. Although Jamie had only climbed once with axes, he bouldered V14, and I knew that with a little bit of guidance and an adventurous spirit, he would be solid for the quest.

The next day, Jamie and I rappelled down to the belay I had bolted to see if I could lead the top pitch. It was technical climbing on thin ice to a rightward traverse over frozen bushes. Steep moves on frozen moss and thin ice led up a groove to steeper and more powerful climbing through the roof. The aura created by the waterfall only several metres to my left added excitement as I placed my tool out leftwards on a small edge. As I transferred my weight, my right axe ripped. Holding on with one arm, I placed my feet back on the holds and continued upwards onto the headwall. Amid engaging climbing and lactic acid building in my forearms, I managed to make my way up to the giant tree and the top of the pitch. Jamie followed with some assistance and joined me at the top. Smiles beamed—a unique adventure only minutes from our homes. We called the top pitch 100% Proof, and graded it M10.

The next day, I went back and rapped further down the face, placing more bolts. This would turn out to be the second pitch, but there was

some dubious rock halfway up on the less-steep section before the roof. I wondered whether this pitch would be climbable. The day after bolting, temperatures warmed and Brandywine Falls was over for the season.

Two years passed, and temperatures never went down enough to bring Brandywine into condition, but in 2016, the Arctic inflow began with a week of consistent temperatures between -15 and -20 C in Whistler. Brandywine began to form again.

I went down and inspected the second pitch, removed some of the loose rocks and moved bolts into more suitable positions. Then I waited a few more days to see if the first pitch would also form.

The cold temperatures continued and the spray ice on the first pitch formed, arcing tubular fingers like tentacles from a giant octopus. These transformed the overhanging wall into vertical columns of soft spray ice. There were no bolts placed on this first pitch because there was no exposed rock.

After accessing the bottom of the falls, Jamie and I climbed for cover into a small cave between spray-ice pillars. In a matter of seconds, we were both completely soaked with the hosing spray from the waterfall, but once in the cave we were protected. Our rope was carefully stashed in a rope bag to keep it dry. I climbed out across the column and into the groove. It was like climbing in torrential freezing rain. The quality of the ice on the first pitch was a combination of snow and ball bearings. Placing screws was not worthwhile so I climbed to the top of the first pitch without protection, and then placed a screw before the belay to act as a directional for Jamie. He followed and was also completely saturated by the waterfall, but arrived at the belay with a beaming smile.

I set off up ice-covered rock towards an icicle, carefully moving across broken ground as the rock steepened above. Going through the bulge was truly wild on amazing pocketed rock, sometimes cutting loose with picks only a few millimetres in. I made it to the belay, finishing a very memorable pitch and some of the most fun climbing I have ever done. With a little assistance, Jamie joined me at the belay, and we prepared for pitch three—100% Proof.

Tim Emmett on pitch two (M9) of Brandywine Falls. Photo: Jamie Finlayson

There was less ice than in 2013, making the start very technical on delaminated ice that had been warmed by the sun. Even though I had climbed this pitch before, the steep and strenuous climbing was no joke. I knew the consequences of a fall would mean re-climbing the pitch, and I doubted whether I had the energy if this were to happen. Climbing carefully with occasional very long moves, I reached the headwall to the huge tree, ending our backyard adventure.

Summary

Brandywine Falls (M10 WI6, 90m, 3 pitches), Squamish, Coast Mountains. FA: Tim Emmett, Jamie Finlayson, December 17, 2016.

Chinese Puzzle Wall

Brette Harrington

MARC-ANDRE LECLERC FIRST pointed out the Chinese Puzzle Wall to me three years ago, as we climbed the Northeast Buttress of Slesse Mountain. Across the Nesakwatch Creek valley, on the south side of the west buttress of South Illusion Peak, was a diamond-shaped outcrop of steep white granite. Why had this beautiful 500-metre wall, just an hour's hike from the trailhead, not seen an ascent? Described that way, it sounds like a pleasant walk in the park. But from our vantage, we had no perception of the height or the characteristics of the rock. I would later learn that, within the small community of climbers who actually knew about the wall, it had a formidable reputation. It is almost entirely overhanging, with huge looming blocks the size of grand pianos suspended by unknown forces. The Chinese Puzzle Wall is aptly named.

Marc-Andre Leclerc follows pitch three of Hidden Dragon. Photo: Brette Harrington

The wall has had five known attempts. In 1986 and 1987, Nick Jones, Bill Noble and Kurt Sellers made two unsuccessful ground-up attempts on a line near the middle of the wall they called the Warlock. Then, in 1994, Fred Beckey, Mark Maffe and Steve Must tried to climb the wall but were stymied after the first two pitches. In 2000, Michael Crapo and Ben Demenech got a few pitches up and bailed due to loose blocks. Finally, Tony McLane and Dan Tetzlaff made an attempt in 2008; they took a scary gear-ripping fall on pitch one and bailed.

In August, Marc and I hiked our gear up the steep and forested slope to the base of the wall and spent a total of eight days establishing its first complete route.

Our first pitch led us to a ledge wide enough to walk on without being tied in. To avoid loose blocks in the dark corner of pitch two, we traversed a hollow, razor-thin flake that linked the next corner system to the right back into our line, 15 metres higher. We then cleaned the dangerous blocks on rappel to open the direct corner line.

As we continued up, we had to establish nearly every pitch by aid, just to clean out the moss-filled cracks so typical of the Pacific Northwest. While one of us cleaned on a fixed line, the other aid-soloed new terrain above. In this manner, we divided and conquered, each of us ending up with dirt-plastered faces. After establishing a few pitches, we would rappel down, free climb back to our high point, and then bump our camp higher up the wall.

By day three we made it to the Mirage Corner,

which appeared black from below and white from above due to a lichen that only grew on the underside of the textured granite. I spent all afternoon aiding and preparing this pitch. We were about halfway up the wall, having greatly underestimated the amount of cleaning that would be required to establish an all-free line, so we bailed to resupply and return in a few days.

Upon return we climbed back to our high point. The Mirage was ready for the lead. The crux was fiddling in gear, almost blindly, into the undulating flare while laybacking the slopey edge. Pumped out of my mind and just a few metres from the top, I ran it out in desperation. It was pointless; my hands peeled away from the crack and I took a mega-whipper. During the fall, the rope jammed into the crack and suffered a severe core shot, leaving Marc and I with two options: bail and return with a new rope, or continue for a few more days and be careful with the damaged line. We opted for the latter. Climbing the next pitch, we heard a deep rumble. Across the valley the pocket glacier on Mount Slesse was sliding. Thousands of tons of ice cascaded into the cirque below. The remarkable sight reminded us of the power of the mountains.

Over the next five days, we continued up more beautiful corners in the same relentless style. On day seven, we finished cleaning the route and hiked to the ridge crest. On the eighth day, we free climbed the final pitches. We then rappelled the entire face on our dangerously core-shot rope while carrying our haul bag and portaledge. Using a hand drill, we equipped the route with bolted rappel stations at every other belay (we used a single nut for the first rap from the top of the face). The 11-pitch route, Hidden Dragon, is sustained at 5.12b. We also equipped two variation pitches that go at 5.12c.

Hidden Dragon follows continuous corners that flow gracefully around the giant roofs throughout the face. It is the first route on the wall, and there is potential to establish more lines in a similar ground-up style. The rock quality was excellent, and the climbing was incredible. We are confident this will become a popular wall in the future.

Summary

Hidden Dragon (V 5.12b, 500m, 11 pitches), Chinese Puzzle Wall, South Illusion Peak, Cascade Mountains. FA: Brette Harrington, Marc-Andre Leclerc, August 2016.

Hidden Dragon on Chinese Puzzle Wall. Photo: Drew Brayshaw

East Face Indirect

Paul Cordy

"WOW, THE ROCK IS EVEN pretty solid here!" A mountain's sense of irony and comedic timing should never be teased in this way. Doing so out loud, on the east face of Mount Slesse, was particularly foolish of me.

In my defence, it had been a harrowing downclimb followed by a long traverse over narrow mossy choss ledges just to get to the comfy grassy ledge where Tony was belaying me. The only protection was a #3 Camalot behind a seeping guillotine flake that I had to remove to begin the five-metre downclimb. Admittedly, Tony made it look pretty easy, but loose rock changes everything, and I had not climbed choss in years. The best-case scenario in that pendulum would have been broken bones and a difficult and uncertain descent down the steepest and hardest part of the face. With some possibility, I would be left bleeding in a free-hanging dangle on a core-shot rope. So when the following pitch climbed straight upward on clean white un-fractured granite, I think I can be forgiven for letting myself relax a bit.

Still more reassuring were the few solid pieces of protection I was able to place in good reliable cracks. I was really starting to have fun. I was on belay and ready to move quickly so we could top out before dark. Tony and I had team free soloed more than 2,000 metres of alpine rock together over the course of our friendship, hundreds of which we had climbed just that morning. At no time until that moment had I been lax in my rock-stability assessment or management. Now that I was on belay with good protection, I let my guard down and committed to an imprudent movement.

And I pulled a rock off. From a layback on a high foot, with the other foot and hand floating in air, I was suddenly weightless and unsupported. These are odd, frozen moments where you are madly trying to undo the immutable reality you are surprised to find yourself in. Frantically grasping for holds that were now slightly above and beyond my right hand, I reached down with my left for the ledge I had stood on moments ago. As my body rotated, the left hand caught first, and the other arm slapped the ledge hard and slipped off in a wash of dust and gravel. My legs slammed the wall below just as my left arm went straight and my hand slammed closed on the sharp rim of the ledge. Before I could think, I pulled myself back onto the ledge and stood up as if to begin climbing again. But the pain in my legs and arms suddenly screamed into my consciousness, and I had to sit down to avoid going into shock.

"What the fuck!?" I screamed.

Tony let out an uneasy chuckle, "I don't know, dude, are you OK? I've never seen anything like that!!" What he saw was his partner leaping away from the face then catching the ledge he had been standing on with one hand. I never loaded the protection or even jerked the rope.

"I'm OK," I lied.

Was I? I felt surprisingly alright. My knee and shin hurt as I sat down, but I had not hit my head, and I wasn't bleeding anywhere. Suddenly, my left hand was really painful and swelling fast. I tried to make a fist. I could only half curl my fingers without pushing against the inflammation.

"Are you OK, dude?"

Of course, he knows that now I probably have a better idea of the answer than the first time he asked.

"I just need to sit a minute to find out for sure, but I think I can keep climbing."

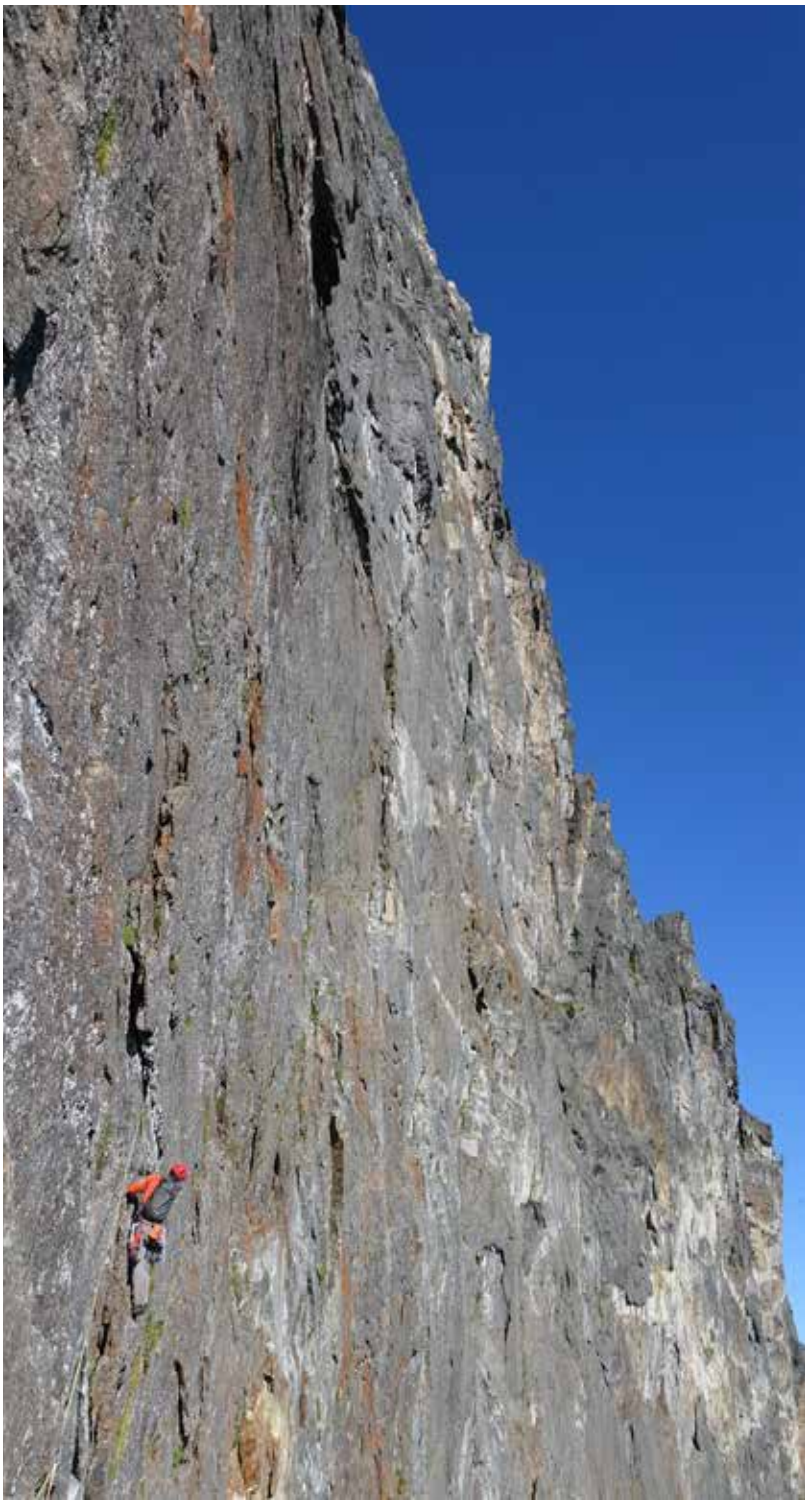
Why do we always prioritize the least important things in these situations? I was so angry at myself for having been complacent, but mainly I was afraid of letting Tony down. He had already been up to a couple of pitches below our present location with another partner, who decided it was too sketchy and bailed (understandably). For me, what an enormous bummer that no matter what happens, this would be my last climb for many months. I knew I had broken my hand.

Meanwhile, the real problem was the wall beneath us—a fearsome dozen pitches up to A3 that had yet to be repeated since the first ascent in 1996, despite many strong climbers having approached it. That would be our best way down at this point. To repeat the choss traverse would be almost as terrifying and dangerous as when I had done it without a busted hand, and there would still be a lot of awkward rappels to follow. Why not just try to enjoy being here and see if I can keep going? In any case, we have a long and annoying descent. I did not want my only memorable mission of that summer to be a scramble up Navigator Buttress plus a few non-descript traverse pitches, and then a big rappel and slog all the way home.

It was still morning, on a cloudless day, and we were surrounded by magnificent granite spires and ancient temperate rainforest. I could half close my hand, so I decided to see how well I could climb with it. My index and third finger were totally out of commission. There was too much pain when I tried to load those fingers. I figured I had torn my tendons in the index, middle and third finger, although the middle finger could bear loading when it was perfectly aligned. I had developed a pretty good solution by hooking my thumb pad over the climbing edges and essentially mono crimping with my middle finger. At least I could use that mostly without pain. But would I make the injury worse by climbing another 300 metres?

I decided instead just to take it one hold at a time and keep climbing. First, I inspected my broken hold. Immediately below the spot where I had fist hammered and pull-tested the rock and found it to be competent, I had mindlessly placed my hand a few centimetres lower than the hold I had tested.

The second time, I pulled past it with much more conservative and static movements, and then past some pleasant moderate face climbing—with occasional protection—up to an obvious belay below some serious climbing. As Tony approached the belay, I let him know that for now my hand



Tony McLane traverses onto the east face proper during the first ascent of the East Face Indirect.
Photo: Paul Cordy

was functional enough. We had lots of light, and we could go down just as easily from a pitch or two higher.

"Let's just try another pitch and see how it goes?" I offered.

So Tony took over the lead and took us to the top of Slesse's east face. Although we had snuck around an A3 pitch, there was still a lot of steep and sketchy pitches to be freed. The second pitch after my injury looked the best from afar and the worst from the belay. We had to climb rightward off the belay to the base of an array of large vertical rectangular flakes standing precariously on end—and then gingerly traverse across these death blocks directly above the belayer. That was uncomfortable for both of us.

Although every pitch had a reasonable belay ledge, each one also had small underclings and roofs that we could weave around. This gave the wall a very steep feeling, and even from quite high on the wall, we could look all the way down onto the pocket glacier at the base.

I struggled on, mono-fingering everything and testing each hold with paranoid care. This was not relaxing top-roping. I never had confidence in any of the belays or the gear protecting the endless small traverses and awkward fall potential. Everything was pretty friable, and although good gear could be found, it was sparse and always looked worse than it was. The quarter-inch bolts from the 1996 first ascent were rusted into a red blob of metal that looked as if it was barely attached, though at one belay it was the only protection available. I felt as if I were soloing every pitch, fully aware of the gravity of a fall. After a few pitches, the climbing got easier and the ledges bigger, and the summit was near.

Paul Cordy starts across the "choss traverse" on the East Face Indirect. Photo: Tony McLane

By the time we stood on top, I was already elated and oddly proud that my stupid gamble had paid off. My hand was only as bad as it had been when I injured it. I was pretty sure I had not ripped anything more or made anything worse. Although I hardly led any of the climb, I also never weighted the rope or the protection. I had somehow caught my own fall, and we had still completed the first free ascent of a proud mountain face. Sure, we had skipped about half the climbing plus the hardest pitch, but our little East Face Indirect still proves the top is free climbable and that the whole thing could probably be done in a day. Now, 20 years after the first ascent by Sean Easton and Dave Edgar over five days of aid climbing, there is a cheeky variation that joins their route halfway and is all free. Neither of us recommend the route as a pleasurable outing.

Having left the car at 3 a.m., we summitted at 6 p.m. with lots of time for the long trek around to Crossover Pass. Tony led everything after my injury, and although it would have been in much better style had we swung leads, I admit this way makes for a better story. The X-rays showed that I had hairline fractures on the proximal phalange of the index and third finger where the tendons anchor to the bone. The first joint on my middle finger was sprained, but the bone was unbroken, which is why I could load it pain-free and without causing damage. Loading the other tendons would have resulted in full avulsion, which would have required painfully invasive surgical reattachment with an uncertain outcome and difficult rehabilitation. Fortunately, the tendons themselves were all intact, and only a tiny bit of bone had cracked under the strain of catching my full body weight with one hand 400 metres off the deck. Chatting with friends about it later, Tony's only comment was, "It's a good thing Paul can down-dyno."

Summary

East Face Indirect (V 5.10, 700m, 22 pitches), east face, Mt. Slesse, Cascade Mountains. FA: Paul Cordy, Tony McLane, August 11, 2016.

East Face Indirect on Mount Slesse. Photo: Kevin McLane

Happy Trio

Takeshi Tani

MOUNT WADDINGTON IS ONE of the best alpine climbing areas in the world, but it is not well known in Japan and other parts of Asia. To be honest, I had never heard about it until recently. Since it is a remote range that requires helicopter access, it was not even close to being on my radar.

Craig McGee was the instructor on my ACMG apprentice alpine exam. He said, "The Waddington Range is amazing! It's like Chamonix but bigger, and there is still a lot of potential for first ascents."

Immediately, I decided to organize a trip.

Happy Trio on the southwest face of Asperity Mountain. Photo: John Scurlock

TOSHIYUKI YAMADA, NOBORU KIKUCHI AND I flew into Rainy Knob and set up base camp on April 30, 2016. It was unseasonably hot and very dry for early May in the Waddington Range. We decided to focus our energy on a southern aspect to hopefully enjoy dry and sunny granite. After scouting along the Tiedmann Glacier, we opted for the southwest face of Asperity.

These peaks are far bigger than any mountains I had ever climbed before, and I got neck pain from looking up, way up, 2,000 metres up. There was still so much potential for new lines on incredible granite spires.

At 4 a.m. on May 5, we left the camp and followed the Asperity couloir to below a big crevasse. After crossing it, we climbed up the left side of the snow slope then a long section of WI3.

The lower section of the wall was a route-finding challenge, but offered enjoyable climbing and quality rock. Eventually, we stood below what appeared to be the crux of the route. A perfect left-facing corner crack shot upwards for 60 metres. It was akin to the famous Incredible Hand Crack at Indian Creek—perfect #2 Camalots. However, unlike the Utah desert, it felt too cold to climb the splitter crack; especially since the sun had moved off the face and the crack had ice glazing the inside of it. The small ledge we were on would have worked for a bivy, but we still had two or three hours until sunset. A bigger ledge for the three of us would have been better, so we decided to keep climbing.

Toshi took the rack and started up the beautiful 5.10a crack leading to an icy ledge. His hands and feet went numb, and the verglas inside made cam placements tricky. As a result, he faced a bit of a runout.

Above the crux, we found a small bivy site at around midnight. The next morning dawned perfect weather and we found amazing crack and knife-edge ridge climbing to the headwall. A few snowpatches had us changing from rock shoes to

Toshiyuki Yamada on the summit ridge of Asperity Mountain.
Photo: Takeshi Tani

boots and crampons.

On the headwall, we discovered solid granite and beautiful cracks. The climbing was awesome, and I especially enjoyed a spicy thin-hands section. I led the ridge above the headwall to the summit, topping out at 4 p.m.

We descended to Asperity Couloir with darkness approaching. I was quite worried about avalanches and rockfall in the narrow gully, but all was silent without the intense daytime solar radiation. Endless downclimbing culminating in a rappel over the big crevasse got us to the glacier. Despite feeling wasted, by the time we arrived at base camp I was content and already thinking of what to climb next.

After the trip, I emailed Don Serl, author of *The Waddington Guide*. He kindly informed us that our line on Asperity Mountain was a new route but not the first ascent of the southwest face, which was completed in 2010 by Nick Elson and Tony McLane [see *CAJ*, vol. 94, 2011, p. 65]. We climbed a different line on the face and established our route in alpine style, without the use of bolts. There is still so much potential for first ascents. I will certainly be back next season.

Summary

Happy Trio (ED- 5.10a WI3, 950m), southwest face, Asperity Mountain, Waddington Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Noboru Kikuchi, Takeshi Tani, Toshiyuki Yamada, May 5-6, 2016.

Toshiyuki Yamada (leading) and Norboru Kikuchi on the crux crack pitch of Happy Trio.
Photo: Takeshi Tani

Rapid Change

David Williams

THE STIKINE ICECAP HOLDS a special place in my heart since having first visited the area on a south-to-north traverse in the spring of 1993 [*CAJ* 1994, p. 79-82]. Additional trips followed in the spring of 2007 [*CAJ* 2008, p. 106-107] and 2013 [*CAJ* 2014, p. 90-91], and the summers of 2000 [*CAJ* 2001, p. 116-118] and 2008 [*CAJ* 2009, p. 98-99]. The summer trips had both been rather wet adventures. However, similar to the spring of 1996 [*CAJ* 1997, p. 77-78] and 1994 [*CAJ* 1995, p. 12-15], where traverses were undertaken a little to the north and south of the Stikine Icecap, the spring of 1993 and 2007 provided for brilliant conditions to travel through the mountains. The spring trip in May 2013, for which we had planned a clockwise traverse on the icefields surrounding Whiting Lake, started out with what I felt at the time was the norm: cold clear skies day after day. But the latter half of the trip dissolved into a misadventure of extreme instability. This was bought on by the onset of what I thought was an unprecedented early spring melt with rain up to 1,800 metres and none of the typical overnight freezing of the snow surface.

Denise Hart and David Williams ascend the Baird Glacier.
Photo: Betsy Waddington

By 2016 it was time to visit the Stikine Icecap once again. The idea, as in 2007, was to initially ski north up the North Baird Glacier, and then instead of continuing north, swing east at about the 1,200-metre level and join the main Baird Glacier on the divide of the ice cap, 13 kilometres south of Mount Ratz. From there, we would follow our 1993 route south for a day or so, along the divide to the west of the Flood Glacier and on past Mount Gilroy, leaving our old tracks at the head of the upper Le Conte Glacier. The plan was then to continue south until the glacier starts to crumble, a little below the 1,000-metre contour level, where all the ice from the various tributaries of the Le Conte descends in a constricted manner to the ocean. We would then swing east and drop down to the upper Shakes Glacier, travel south from there to the upper Summit Glacier, and then on to the snout of the Popof Glacier with the intention to descend to the Stikine River for a pre-arranged boat pick up. My old cohort Betsy Waddington from Vancouver, and good friend Denise Hart from Berkeley, California, were both keen to join.

Images on Google Earth should have alerted us to some of the rapid changes taking place in this part of the world. It was apparent that you can no longer expect to walk or ski directly onto the snout of the Baird Glacier from the beach at the head of Thomas Bay as we had done in spring 2007. A large lake has formed between the beach and the glacier. Instead, on May 24, 2016, we had Wally of Temsco Helicopters out of Petersburg drop us off on the North Baird Glacier at 650 metres. Even at this elevation compared to 2007, there was a distinct lack of snow. With big loads, working our

way through the broken ice and crevasse fields was remarkably slow and tiring, and we only covered about 2.5 kilometres north the first day.

From here on, over the course of the next 10 days, until descending to the Shakes Glacier, travel in itself was straightforward, and we followed the planned route outlined above. However, there was not a part of a day that was not spent following the compass needle or hunkered down in the tent in rain, sleet, or on the odd occasion, snow. Not one peak was climbed. The brief glimpses of the terrain through which we travelled were spectacular. Particularly memorable was the scenery at the head of the western fork of the upper North Baird Glacier where numerous peaks still remain unclimbed, and along the main divide of the ice cap looking south as we travelled adjacent to Mount Gilroy.

With the weather apparently clearing on the evening of day 11, we made camp on an upper tributary of the Le Conte Glacier. We knew that finding a way down from here onto the upper Shakes Glacier would be the route-finding crux of the trip. Unfortunately, by morning, although we still had some visibility, the clouds had come in and the snow surface was only lightly frozen. The snow conditions descending from the col (56.894098° N, 132.203293° E, five kilometres northwest of Castle Mountain) were horrendous, but boot-stepping the route down through the bottomless snow, though exhausting, was at least manageable.

With the clouds clearing, the remainder of the day spent descending the Shakes Glacier was the highlight of the trip. Spring skiing around crevasses and seracs, one scary descent of a moraine wall and a rappel or two over ice bulges bought us to the point where we could swing west onto a lower tributary of the Shakes Glacier. In so doing, we avoided what looked to be ever-increasing chaos on the lower portions of the glacier. Travelling west below impressive cliffs, we made camp near the first glacial pond we came across. Although tired, I think we all finished the day exhilarated. With two days in hand and the terrain ahead—west to the divide with the lower Le Conte Glacier and south towards the upper Summit Glacier—all looking perfectly manageable, I felt we would reach the Stikine on time for our boat ride out.

The issue was again the weather. The cloud cover was gradually thickening into a dimensionless grey blanket. We did, however, have a pleasant evening, reckoning that at any moment one of a number of the impressive seracs on the main Shakes Glacier had to collapse. With birds chirping and a grouse off in the distance, we headed to bed.

The finish of the traverse—that I had been imagining for months, which was to culminate with a descent to the magnificent Stikine—was not to be. By early morning, the pattering on the tent had begun, and by breakfast, monsoon conditions had set in, conditions that continued almost unabated for 36 hours. We spent the next two days sponging out the tent, dealing with my deflating Therm-a-Rest and contemplating the likelihood of Trump being elected. The satellite phone that we carried allowed for weather updates through Temsco Helicopters, and for Wally to

Denise Hart travels south on the upper Baird Glacier.
Photo: Betsy Waddington

swing by to pick us up in the first short weather break late in the afternoon of the second day of being tent-bound. From below, we could easily see the helicopter, but it took sometime for Wally to locate us since the glacier had shrunk so considerably that we were actually many hundreds of feet lower than what we had estimated from the map.

After dealing with the weather on the Stikine Icecap in the spring of 2013 and now in 2016, it is obvious that the conditions and terrain are changing remarkably fast, and that I am now dealing with my own demons of climate change. That is, I can no longer accurately extrapolate the lower elevations from what I see on the map to what you will encounter in reality. Yes, this is perhaps a selfish and privileged gripe as an issue on a world scale, but to me this is quite devastating. Additionally, I am left with another question. If this was back in 1993 when we first visited the area, when we carried no form of electronic communication, would we still have managed to get ourselves down to the Stikine on time? Quite possibly, I think. Yes, we were younger then, perhaps hardier, but likely the advent of the satellite phone has helped remove an essence of wilderness. I am sure I will return to these thoughts, but for the coming months I turn my attention to the rather profound dilemma of knee replacement surgery and the likelihood of no big mountain travel for at least a year.

David Williams descends the Shakes Glacier. Photo: Betsy Williams

Contemplating Emotions

Max Fisher

STRATHCONA PROVINCIAL PARK is home to an amazing selection of numerous jagged peaks, and it is an excellent area for beginners looking to cut their teeth or for seasoned alpinists looking for adventure.

Colonel Foster's east face is one of the most well-known alpine zones on Vancouver Island, and for good reason, but there are many other areas worth a look. I think Big Den is one of those spots.

On May 18, Ashlie Ferguson and I loaded a canoe and paddled from Strathcona Park Lodge across the Upper Campbell Lake to the mouth of the Elk River. We set up camp on the gravel bars and had a leisurely day swimming and enjoying the wonderful old-growth forests up Tlools Creek.

The next day we headed up the east-shoulder approach to climb Big Den. Neither of us had been up there before, and due to a late start, we opted not to bring our rope and small alpine rack.

The approach took us three and a half hours to the base—faster than anticipated. It is pretty steep and a bit bushy, but definitely a nice line for quickly getting into the alpine.

Our first thought was to climb the classic Perimeter Ridge, but as we got closer, the left-most buttress on the east face looked inviting and a good soloing option, so we opted for that. The bottom is fun low-5th-class climbing to a ledge followed by sustained exposed 5.5 climbing for 50 metres to gain another ledge. The remainder of the route is a mix of exposed 4th- and 5th-class climbing to the summit.

After the exposed soloing, we were definitely happy to let our minds relax and boot ski down the south ridge then descend the east shoulder back to our camp on the Elk River. We called the route Contemplating Emotions.

In early September, Ryan Van Horne and I headed up King's Peak with the intention to climb a new route on the west face. Though we did not get to climb the main objective, we still had a great day out soloing on the left side of Queen's Face—a 250- to 300-metre alpine wall.

We quickly cruised up the King's Peak trail and were climbing the Island's alpine basalt within a few hours. The stone was typical Island style, great for climbing but not many features for protection. We topped out around noon, chilled on the top of Queen's Face and headed back down to the truck. There are a number of really fun accessible routes on Queen's Face that range from 5.7 to 5.10+ and are six to eight pitches long. Check out Phil Stone's *Island Alpine Select* for the beta!

Summary

Contemplating Emotions (PD 5.5, 300m), east face, Big Den Mountain, Elk Mountain range, Vancouver Island. FA: Ashlie Ferguson, Max Fisher, May 19, 2016.

Queen's Face Quickie (PD 5.7, 250m), north-east face, King's Peak, Elk Mountain Range, Vancouver Island. FA: Max Fisher, Ryan Van Horne, September, 6, 2016.

Queen's Face Quickie on the northeast face of King's Peak.
Photo: Philip Stone

The Madeline Wall

Gary McQuaid

ONE AFTERNOON IN THE SPRING OF 2006, I was waiting for a helicopter ride home from a diving job at a hydro dam on Brown Lake in B.C. Knowing about my obsession with climbing, some colleagues told me of a huge wall somewhere near the intersection of Madeline Creek and the Ecstall River. On the way home, our helicopter pilot took a detour and flew us in close, giving me a bird's eye view. Through the small window, I saw an ocean of flawless granite. The glaciers had polished this wall like an artist does a carving. The bottom third, being an apron, had a blackness that made the green moss along its flanks glow. As the apron rose, the darkness abated to a lighter grey, spreading into the upper headwall. The massive headwall was lined with roofs and corners, giving an image that resembled the aged facial lines of a venerable elder. Its stature and positioning emitted a certain feeling, something akin to pride and formality.

Laurent Janssen on pitch seven of Kids in the Haul. Photo: Gary McQuaid

Over the next couple of years, there was much talk of an expedition. However, the wall is situated just inland from the small town of Prince Rupert, which is subject to huge coastal storms and receives the most annual precipitation of anywhere in Canada. Over the next few years, our attempts were thwarted before even stepping in a boat.

Finally, in 2013, Tim Russel, Andy Lequire and I booked time off work. I had recently purchased a cheap jet boat and the weather was with us. The wall was approximately 25 kilometres up the Ecstall River. To get to its entry, we would need to cross the mouth of the Skeena. Both of these bodies of water are infamous for their shallow depths, high winds and big tides.

Our boat was at its maximum capacity as we set out early on the morning of our departure. The water was calm for the crossing but things changed as we turned south, up the Ecstall. It was a bumpy ride as we pushed against the outflow headwind. An hour and a half later, we were staring up in awe at the 700-metre wall of granite. We pulled into a slough near the wall's base and anchored the boat to shore.

After about 45 minutes of bushwhacking and traversing along the wall's base, we found the start of our objective. The first 300 metres of slabby apron slowly turned steeper as it rose higher. We climbed three pitches of cruisy slab, each of us getting a pitch before the day ended. The next morning found us exploring a different section of the wall. We climbed a really nice crack, which led to an exciting slab with lots of hooking and drilling excitement. On the hike back, I was well ahead of everybody when, upon exiting the forest, I saw nothing but the front quarter of the boat sticking out of the water. It had slipped off a shelf when the tide lowered in the slough and had been swamped when the tide rose again.

After salvaging the floating items in the slough, we managed to get the boat on the dry. After letting it drain, we pushed it back in the water, loaded our gear and started off. As Andy and Tim paddled, I tried to get the engine started. Soon after exiting Madeline Creek onto the wide Ecstall, we were hit with strong inflow winds. Finally, I got the engine going, and we made a break for home. The ride down 25 kilometres of shallow river, against a strong headwind that was pushing against an ebbing tide, felt like a really cold fist fight. We slammed into every wave head on, straining the rivets on the thin aluminum boat. We had lost most of our gas when the boat was submerged and were terrified of running out with two-metre waves breaking at our stern. Finally, we beached the boat with relief. We checked the gas tank and were horrified and relieved to see that it was empty.

September of the next year found Tim Russel and me learning the fine art of hauling on rough granite slab. It took a ridiculous amount of time and energy to get us and our gear atop the 300-metre apron where we planned to establish our high camp. The climbing, however, was amazing. The apron consisted mostly of slab with a couple of crack pitches. Pitch six was very aesthetic with an angling runout face traverse on perfect rock.

The upper headwall gave us plenty of challenge. Its wide off-width cracks required much cursing and even a little screaming. Day five had us finishing the off-widths and climbing a vegetated corner into a crazy three-metre roof. On day six, we made it approximately 150 metres from the summit. It was our last available day, and the weather came in. We had to go down, but at least the boat was afloat, there was no gale to battle and we still had plenty of gas for the ride home.

The next year, Tim and I decided a four-person team would be ideal. Laurent Janssen and Grant Stewart eagerly accepted the invite. After an intense whirlwind of logistics, we found ourselves again at the base of the beautiful wall. Laurent and I were the first to start climbing. The already runout slab pitches were made more exciting as the quarter-inch nuts were rusted onto the bolt hangers, making it impossible to install hangers. We managed to fix three pitches before we went down for food and rest. That night we slept at the base of the wall head to head with our upper torsos under our single mosquito net hanging from a tree. It did not work. The swivel-faced buggers managed to get in and harass us all night. Not a wink of sleep was had by anyone.

On our second day, Tim and Grant jugged up the three fixed lines to push further up the wall. Thankfully, on the upper pitches the nuts on the old bolts were coming off. Laurent and I got into the rhythm of hauling up slab. This time we came prepared—the haul bags were secured to modified trolleys. We had wheels, and they worked! To this day, I still cannot believe it.

So far, the climbing was incredible with a difficulty up to 5.10. We took another route from our last expedition for pitch seven. Originally, it crossed a dihedral to avoid a roof above, which ended up leading to grass-filled seams. This time I

Gary McQuaid rappels pitch nine of Kids in the Haul.
Photo: Laurent Janssen

followed the whole dihedral into a wild undercling traverse under the roof to gain an airy slab, which brought us to the top of pitch seven.

It was midnight by the time we reached our high camp. Poor Tim was the last to arrive, being the last to finish the hauling. I could only imagine how exhausted he must have felt since he had absolutely no sleep the night before. Soon enough, we all passed out in our portaledges under a clear sky 300 metres off the deck.

The next morning, we got word via satellite phone that the weather was predicted to deteriorate in 24 hours. With such a volatile forecast, we made the decision to climb through the night until the summit was reached. This would be tough since we had 100 metres of the more difficult climbing just to reach our previous year's high point, and we were unsure how much further it would be after that to the summit. The day started warm and I repeated an exciting pitch, originally established by Tim, consisting of a steep arête onto a tricky slab. After this, we were faced with 100 metres of steep flaring chimney climbing. Laurent and Grant repeated these burley pitches, going back and forth from aid to flaring squeeze. The next pitch took us to our last attempt's high point. I repeated the pitch, enjoying its sweet fist jams and wild exit moves through a roof onto a slab.

Laurent Janssen cleans pitch 10 of Kids in the Haul. Photo: Tim Russell

As the sun was setting, we all showed up at the top of pitch 10, our last expedition's high point. We were all still game to keep the push on. Retreat now would mean days of waiting out weather and having to re-climb three difficult pitches as we had no extra rope to fix back to the portaledge camp. Tim was the first to set off on the new ground. The pitch started on steep slab before kicking back into a large roof. Equalizing a few tiny roots for gear, Tim entertained us by attempting the awkward body positioning for the off-width crack system in a roof before eventually resorting to aid. By this time, it was dark and the temperature dropped considerably. I was dumb enough to think a thin vest would suffice and was soon regretting it. After a few hours at the small belay, the rest of us jugged to the high point. I was relieved to get the exercise to warm my body. We had no water, and I was overjoyed to find a small patch of blueberries in one of the cracks to help quench my thirst.

The next pitch consisted of a plugged seam into a huge roof. Grant started up as Laurent jugged the last pitch. The next four hours of semi-lucidity and cold have stayed etched in my mind. I would fall asleep for short periods to strange dreams and awake beneath stars and the glimmer of northern lights. I was grateful for the small patch of grass the three of us were leaning on as we hung at the belay, waiting. It was much warmer than cold rock.

After climbing a steep face, traversing below the huge roof then up a very long off-width crack, Grant found himself on a small ledge with no natural protection and a drill that was not working properly. After many tries, he managed to pull the hand drill up from us on his tag line. He drilled on and on to get a belay out of quarter-inch bolts in the compact granite. When the bolts were finally in, it was still dark and all Grant could see above

him was a blank headwall with no discernible features or cracks. He yelled down that it looked like nothing but a steep blank wall above. It would require approximately 30 metres of bat-hooking with a hand drill, as our power drill was apparently defunct. At this point it was perhaps 4:30 a.m. We all ran out of water six hours prior, and we were dead cold. I volunteered to jug up first and go for the blank pitch on the thought that I would get warm doing so.

Upon arriving at Grant's crumbling, ant-infested ledge, dawn began to approach. As the light improved, we spotted a potential steep slab line to the right, which would possibly go free. There was no natural pro anywhere, whatever way we went. I geared up for a hand-drilling, slab-climbing extravaganza when Tim suggested I give the power drill a try. Even if it only drilled half a quarter-inch hole, that would still be a great help. I took the advice, and the drill managed a complete hole, and then a second, and a third! The drill had decided to work again. It turned out that the shape of the bit we were using was making it bog out.

An hour and a half later, I was in a tree island at the top of the slab. After tying off the line, I immediately went to feasting on the multiple species of berries growing amongst the tree roots. After this, I passed out until Laurent showed up. Not long after, I started up the last short slab pitch to the top. Once again at the top, I tied off the line and fell asleep. Soon we all stood atop the wall, exhausted, dehydrated and starving. It had been nine years since I first laid eyes on the wall and we had finally done it.

Desperate for water, we rappelled the route back to our portaledge camp. Four-hundred metres of rappelling later, I was sitting cozy on the ledge as rain loudly fell against the fly. It felt amazing after such a push to crack a victory beer while hanging 300 metres off the deck. Our boat charter would not arrive until the next day so we all crashed for 15 hours.

The next day brought steady cold rain. Rappelling with the pigs on wheels was interesting. Laurent insisted on riding his down each rappel. It was entertaining to watch it work until it tipped over. Unfazed, he would simply pull it up right and get back on. By the time we got to the top of the second pitch, our boat operator had hiked up to the base of the wall. The angle of these pitches was low, so rappelling with the pigs was both painful and hilarious. I thought it was great that our boat operator got to view the spectacle of four grown men trying to get down the last bit with a bird's nest of haul bags, trolleys and a million other tidbits of gear, all tied together in a mess like the web of a drunken spider. Soon enough we were at the base, and not long after that the jet boat was loaded and we were on our way home.

Summary

Kids in the Haul (VI 5.10 A1, 700m, 15 pitches), south face, Madeline Wall, Ecstall River, Coast Mountains. FA: Laurent Janssen, Gary McQuaid, Tim Russell, Grant Stewart, August 3, 2016.

Kids in the Haul on the south face of Madeline Wall. Photo: Gary McQuaid

The Ultimate Ultimate Everything

Paul McSorely

THE 2016-17 ICE SEASON IN SQUAMISH was one for the books. Our usual one- to two-week window of winter climbing extended like a frigid banshee's shriek for upwards of two months.

First up was the development of a small crag near kilometre seven of the Shannon Creek FSR. It was hoped that this would be a local M-climbing venue and steep ice practice zone to rival Haffner Creek in the Rockies. Impossible you say, well, yes, but with a rotating crew of Jason Ammerlaan, Sebastien De La Rosa, Tony Richardson, Katia Voyeur, Julian Kentenchen, Andrew Rennie, Will Stanhope, Hanna Preston, Jia Condon and Monte Johnson, we established over a dozen pitches from WI2 to WI5 and M5 to M8. The small but sweet area was christened the Spirit Bear in deference to a crag that I had helped develop in Banff many moons ago.

With the deep freeze continuing, we checked out a canyon near the Long House that I had set up for a summer rappel adventure. Blueberry Box Canyon denied Chris Geisler, Tony Richardson and I early in the season due to open pools. So, along with Jia Condon, Tony and I returned and found a gully with 300 metres of steps to WI3. Deep snow made for slow but secure progress and the ropes never came out of the packs.

One of the few routes I repeated this season was the Andrew Boyd and Derek Flett creation from many years ago called Two Minutes for Hooking, located on the Squamassif. Visible from my bedroom in Valleycliffe, I attacked with Tony McLane and Will Stanhope. We enjoyed three of the most value-packed mixed climbing

Tony Richardson belays Paul McSorley on Eagle Eye with Squamish below. Photo: Jia Condon

pitches around. At M5 and WI5, this rig is one of Squamish's finest climbs, winter or summer!

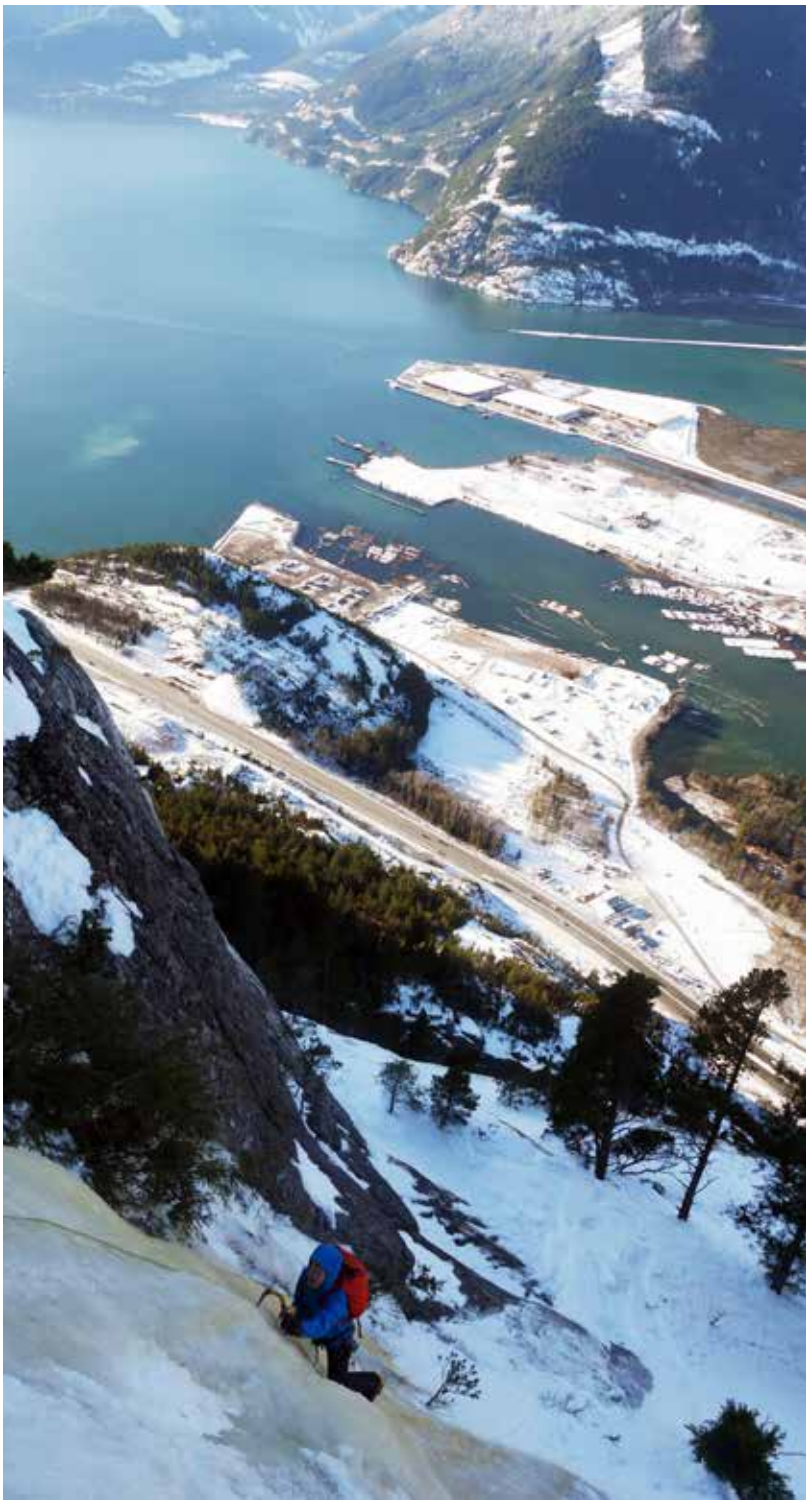
Jia had spotted a pillar behind the Papoose, so with me and Tony Richardson in tow, he stumbled through the pre-dawn darkness of the second growth forest for almost three hours to reach the base of Eagle Eyes (WI5). The first full pitch was a zesty WI4 rope-stretching curtain and pitch two was the money—a 30-metre freestanding pillar with funky candles and wings that were as awkward as they were pleasurable to climb over.

Just a couple of days later, the Eagle Eyes crew joined forces with Jason Kruk and launched up the most memorable climb of the season—The Ultimate Ultimate Everything—an ice-up variation of the classic summer multi-pitch The Ultimate Everything. Not wanting to waste time on Diedre, we scrambled around to Broadway ledge and climbed one long pitch of thin ice to get us into the forest. After the standard forest rambling, we turned towards the Upper Echelon section of the Chief. As we turned the corner under the Ultimate Everything, gobsmacking *goulottes* came into view, snaking just right and eventually joining that line. Several pitches of exquisite névé and waterfall ice brought us to the business section—a pasty thin WI4 pitch that Jason tackled with some tied-off bushes, Spectres and eventually some screws. A few more fat, easy ice pitches led us to within a snowball's throw from the Chief's Second Summit. Though not too hard, this climb was a career highlight for all of us, and we could not believe our luck and the amazing quality that our home mountain delivered this special winter.

Summary

Eagle Eyes (WI5, 100m), Squamish, Coast Mountains. FA: Jia Condon, Paul McSorely, Tony Richardson, January 2017.

The Ultimate Ultimate Everything (M4R, 400m), The Chief, Squamish. FA: Jia Condon, Jason Kruk, Paul McSorely, Tony Richardson, January 2017.



Jason Kruk nears the top of The Ultimate Ultimate Everything with Howe Sound below.
Photo: Jia Condon

Island 6000

Lindsay Elms

MOUNTAINEERS HAVE THEIR OWN unique story as to why and how they became a climber. These can often be read in the various local mountaineering club newsletters and reports, online blogs, Facebook, Instagram, websites, books and other formats I have either missed or are unknown to me. Most of those early trips are about getting out and making new friends, but also exploring and experiencing the beauty of the wilderness that is in their backyard. First climbs are often non-technical. As climbers gain experience, they begin to push the boundaries and test their physical limits (in relatively controlled situations) to see what they are capable of achieving. They soon notice their friends setting loftier goals, and realize they, too, are starting to make a list of peaks to climb. Some are lured by the thrill of travelling and climbing overseas, choosing peaks that are within their ability while still affordable. The few with money and time aim big. They want to accomplish what others seldom can, such as complete the highest peaks on each of the seven continents, or climb the 14 8,000-metre peaks. Realistically, it is a small number who really consider those goals. Most are happy to read the books and dream about such exotic and challenging climbs. So, what do the rest of us do in the meantime? Come up with goals closer to home, right in the backyard.

Golden Hinde, The Comb and Golden Hinde Northwest (left to right), Vancouver Island Ranges.
Photo: Lindsay Elms

Climbing mountains is an obsession to some, but generally recognized by most as a passion. Gradually, as skills and technical abilities improve, climbers begin to collect peaks, bagging them, so to speak. The goal of what has become known as peak bagging began in Scotland in 1891 when Sir Hugh Munro produced a list of mountains higher than 3,000 feet, which became know as Munro's Tables. Munro researched and produced a set of tables that were published in the Scottish Mountaineering Club's journal. The tables listed 538 summits over 3,000 feet, 282 of which were regarded as "separate mountains."

The term "Munro" applies to separate mountains, while the lesser summits are known as "tops." Munro did not set any measure of topographic prominence by which a peak qualified as a separate mountain, so there has been much debate about how distinct two hills must be if they are to be counted as two separate Munros. A popular practice amongst Scottish hillwalkers is "Munro bagging"—the aim being to climb all the listed Munros. As of 2013, more than 5,000 people had reported completing their round, and in 2010, the fastest continuous round was completed in just under 40 days. Of course, there are now other Scottish lists, such as the Corbetts (2,500- to 3,000-foot peaks) and the Grahams (2,000- to 2,500-foot peaks). Both of these require a peak to have a prominence of at least 500 feet for inclusion. The Munros, however, lack a rigid set of criteria

for inclusion, but the process is complicated, with no time to go into detail here.

Although a few Canadians complete some of the Munros while on holiday in Scotland, very few consider themselves Munro-baggers. However, in Canada in the early 1960s, there was talk of a list of 11,000ers in the Canadian Rockies. All the 11,000ers had been climbed, but not by an individual, until Don Forest came along. He became the first to climb all of them when he completed his last peak in 1979. Rick Collier followed in 1994 and Bill Corbett in 2002. As of 2016, there are about a dozen climbers (including one woman, Nancy Hansen) known to have climbed all the 11,000ers while several others are very close to completion. In 2004, Corbett wrote a book about the 11,000ers in which he said there were 54 peaks. In 2016, the book has gone on to its second printing and now the updated version announces 56 (possibly 57, and maybe 58) 11,000-foot peaks.

But such goals are not limited to the Himalayas, Scotland or the Canadian Rockies. Colorado has its 14,000ers, of which there are 53 (or up to 58, depending on the list), and New Zealand has its 34 3,000-metre peaks. Each list has people who have completed or are in the process of completing all of them, and yes, it usually takes years. But most do not count the years; it is the fun of ticking the peak off the list that is important.

On Vancouver Island, we too have such a list. It is called the Island 6000, and currently there are 53 peaks over 6,000 feet. To date, three people have completed the list of 53: Aaron Smeeth in 2008; me in 2014; and Valerie Wootton in 2016. At the time of this writing, Tak Ogasawara has one left, and Darren Wilman is very close, but he has a slightly different list. He wants to climb every bump over 6,000 feet on every peak, which in his reckoning is 64. It is not a competition, but this is his personal goal. It must also be stated that some years ago Charles Turner reported completing all the 6,000ers on the Island, in good faith, when the list stood at 42. Sadly, Charles is no longer with us, but if he was he would have continued to climb the rest of the now 53 summits (many of which he probably has) just for the fun of climbing.

As we see, with any list there is going to be discussions about what should or should not be included. Island 6000 is no exception. Island 6000 has not included the five sub-peaks on Mount Colonel Foster, which are all over 6,000 feet (only a handful of climbers have completed Foster's six summits), and the slightly lower west peak of Crown Mountain. However, most people who have made the effort to climb Crown Mountain usually climb both summits anyway. Nine Peaks, which, as its name suggests, also has nine summits or bumps on its summit ridge, but these are not usually climbed except by those completing the summit traverse. Many ACC Vancouver Island Section members climb Nine Peaks because it is one of the Rick Eppler Island Qualifiers.

Only the highest peaks have been included in Island 6000 because many of the bumps have a prominence of only a few feet. Some will argue about the inclusion of Rambler Junior, which is near Rambler Peak. For many years, climbers have hiked to the head of the Elk River specifically to climb this spire. Why? Because it is a stunning

The east side of Rambler Peak. Photo: Valerie Wootton

natural feature when viewed from many angles, and because it is a challenging climb in itself. Rambler Junior could be compared to The Helmet on Mount Robson. There are two other peaks that have been under discussion, and they are The Comb and Golden Hinde Northwest. The Comb is one kilometre away from Golden Hinde, and Golden Hinde Northwest is one kilometre away from The Comb. Some consider them sub-peaks of Golden Hinde; however, both have significant prominences in between each other, enough to almost be considered individual peaks (another debate for the future).

So, after much discussion, the current list of 53 peaks is generally accepted by the Island's climbing community to be the most practical; however, if you want to climb 64, you are free to do so. No one is going to criticize you and the overwhelming response from the climbing community would be one of congratulatory well-wishing whichever list you use. As Bill Corbett stated after completing his final Canadian Rockies' 11,000er and receiving a steady stream of emails and phone calls from the local mountaineering community: "It's gratifying to be in the company of those who appreciate such a peak-bagging quest."

Vancouver Island Report

Lindsay Elms

THIS WINTER THERE WAS not as much climbing action on Vancouver Island as the previous couple of years due to unstable weather and poor conditions; however, there were a few interesting ascents. On January 2, Mike Paquin and Daniel Booy skied Hkusam Mountain near Sayward. Although not the first winter/ski ascent, it is rarely climbed because of unstable snow conditions from being right on the coast overlooking Johnstone Strait.

Then came the big news. Located in the middle of Strathcona Provincial Park is the Island's highest mountain, Golden Hinde. On January 4, Michael Loch, Ryan Van Horne and Marie-Lou Piché started up the Phillips Ridge trail with the intention of a winter ascent of Golden Hinde. The first and only previous winter ascent of the mountain was in 1993 when Philip Stone, Chris Barner and Robin Slieker reached the summit during a rare high-pressure spell of good weather. Although two of them had skis, they were not taken to the summit. This time Piché, Van Horne and Loch carried their skis to the summit (January 7) and skied down the southeast gully. They arrived back at the trailhead three days later, having timed their trip to perfection.

Continuing with winter ascents, Van Horne, Piché, Chris Montagner and Nicky Bachmeier climbed Waring Peak on February 23. Four days later, Van Horne, Nic Manders and Booy skied the east face of Mount Adam, another rarely climbed Island peak, which they accessed from the Moakwa Creek Main.

Between May 6 to 8, Danny O'Farrell and Chris Jensen climbed Mariner Mountain via the east ridge. They called their route the Owinmitisaht Ha'houlthee ridge in respect of the Ahousaht First Nation Traditional Territory who lived within this area since the dawn of time. They found lots of 3rd- and 4th-class terrain with some 5th class up to 5.6. After covering 600 metres on rock, they then traversed along the top of the ridge towards the summit. Once the continuous ridge ran out, they headed onto the snow over to the main summit and climbed the south face to the top.

May was a very active month with a number of interesting ascents. Van Horne and Piché visited the southeast face of King's Peak over two consecutive weekends. They climbed a new line

on one of the many southeast buttresses. It was about 500 metres long to where it met the east couloir then shortly after joined the east ridge. It goes about 5.9 with most of the climbing in the mid-5th- to 4th-class range. The rock quality is great but can be a little hard to protect. The second route (May 21) took a line east of the route they climbed the week before. It was low 5th-class with a few steps of 5.7/5.8.

Triple Peak saw about 15-plus people on its summit in less than a week, and several parties climbed Nine Peaks while continuing to collect their Rick Eppler Island Qualifiers. Over the May 21-22 weekend, Max Fisher and Ashlie Ferguson climbed a new route on the west-most buttress on the east face of Big Den Mountain. They named the 300-metre, 5.5 exposed climb Contemplating Emotions [see page 97]. May 25 saw Valerie Wootton and Lindsay Elms make the first ascent of Watchtower Peak Northwest, and on June 1 they climbed (again probably first ascents) Moakwa Peak West and East off the Moakwa Creek Main.

Over the June 4-5 weekend, Brette Harrington and Marc-Andre Leclerc day-tripped and soloed Into the Mystic on the east face of Mount Colonel Foster. With plans to initially sport climb at Horne Lake, they arrived at the bottom of the mountain without any alpine gear—no rope, harnesses, crampons or ice axes—and only approach shoes on their feet, climbing the whole route, in Leclerc's words, "redneck style."

Wootton and Elms continued exploring some of the remote mountains on the Island and made first recorded ascents of Swah Peak (June 25) and Centennial Peak (July 3), although Laurence Philippsen had climbed the lower northeast summit on June 21, 2005.

Horne continued his exploring of Mount Colonel Foster, and on June 28 he set up camp of the mountain's south col. The next day, he traversed under the west face and completed a new route to the summit ridge about 75 metres north of the main summit. The 400-metre line was mostly in the low 5th class to 5.6 range with a few short steps of 5.8. He then traversed south back to the south col.

Another notable ascent of Mount Colonel Foster was made on July 24. After climbing to the north col, Philip Stone, Hunter Lee and Garner Bergeron traversed around to the mountain's west side and made the first ascent of the northwest arête. After 100 metres of 4th-class scrambling, 16 pitches followed up to 5.9 on mostly excellent rock. The rarely climbed Cataract Ridge on Colonel Foster also saw two ascents. The first party comprised of Andreas Hinkkala and Lee, and the second by Adrian Surdu and Steve Janes. Having reached the summit ridge but not the main summit with Stone and Lee, Garner Bergeron was "Foster hungry" to reach the summit. At the end of July, he returned with James Rhodes and completed the south-to-north summit traverse of Mount Colonel Foster.

On July 24, Ahren Rankin and Rhodes climbed a new route on the south face of Mount Tom Taylor. The eight pitches were between 5.6 and 5.9. James returned with Bergeron to Mount Tom Taylor on the weekend of August 30-31 and completed another line on the south face. It shared the same start pitch as the previous route but trended right out onto the main buttress up steep cracks and grooves. The difficulties were up to 5.10 with a few points of aid.

On August 20, further up island, Randy Smith and Chris Jensen climbed a new route on the north face of Mount Alava on generally excellent rock. It was mostly 4th- to mid-5th-class terrain, but there were a few moves up to 5.8 over its 600-metre length.

There were numerous ascents of Golden Hinde via the standard route in August and two via the west ridge/south face variation; one of which was by Steffan Gessinger and Shanda Lembcke who completed their Rick Eppler Island Qualifiers. Sarah Seeds and Jen Segger also made a fast round-trip ascent of Golden Hinde in 19 hours and 32 minutes.

In July and August, the ACC Vancouver Island Section had two successful one-week helicopter fly-in camps (15 people in each) to the Mount Alava/Bate Sanctuary between Gold River and Tahsis, where ascents were made of Mount Bate, Mount Alava, Tlupana Ridge, Thumb Peak and the Thumb.

The Interior

Gneiss Summer

David Lussier

CLIMBERS VISITING THE VALHALLAS often assume that the varied and interesting spire-like summits in the area are granite. This misconception has also tricked local climbers, including myself, for many years. It is, however, a classic gneiss (pronounced "nice") rock formation. Gneiss is a type of metamorphic rock formed at a high pressure and temperature deep in the ground. It can be both sedimentary or igneous in origin. In the case of the Valhallas, it appears to be an interesting mixed bag of origins. The Mulvey Basin area has a combination of vertical and horizontal cracks with varied mineral types, colours and a coarse grain that suggests a sedimentary origin. The Nemo Creek area, however, displays mostly vertical crack features and a fine consistent tone and grain that suggests an igneous origin.

Whichever way you slice it, the alpine rock climbing here is varied, interesting and mostly solid. It has drawn folks from the far corners of our continent and beyond for more than six decades. Today, the aesthetic rock walls of Mount Gimli and other Valhalla peaks continue to attract climbers who are looking for adventures off the beaten track. Living in Nelson, B.C., the area has become a stomping ground for exploration and adventure climbing. There are countless opportunities to climb established moderate alpine routes on solid rock, with endless potential for more. My summer 2016 pilgrimage through the area resulted in the creation of six new routes peppered through Mulvey Basin, the Devils Range and Drinnan Pass areas. These involved various climbing partners and friends whom I feel very grateful towards. Most of these routes are relatively short with the exception of Wedge Peak.

Jonas Furger halfway up the south face of Wedge Peak. Photo: David Lussier

We started exploring in early June 2016. Douglas Noblet and I were gunning for the south face of Devils Spire on skis. The snow had already melted below treeline, so we decided to climb further up the valley. From a camp at the Gwillim Lakes, we made the first ascent of the south face of Mount Mephistopheles in the Devils Range between May 31 and June 2.

Later in June, Jason Luthy and I planned again for Devils Spire, but on foot this time. Over five days, we made the first ascent of two new routes on this appealing shear mountain. Prior to these routes, there was only one route up the mountain—the original first ascent route of the northeast face (II 5.3) pioneered by Ian Hamilton and Howie Ridge in 1974. From a camp in beautiful Coven Lake Basin, we climbed both the southwest face (Angel Heir) and the complete west ridge (Witch's Ridge). Witch's Ridge ascends the complete west ridge of Devils Spire, including four prominent towers from the Satan Peak/Devils Spire col. It is 12 to 14 pitches long and involves four rappels, one from each tower. All four towers were surmounted by climbing crack systems on their south side or near the ridge crest. Alternate options exist for the first two towers.

The next adventure in mid-July brought us to the southwest face of Batwing, a minor summit between Mount Dag and the Wolf's Ears. The southwest face had attracted me on multiple occasions with its untapped quality-looking vertical

crack systems, so Vince Hempsall and I established Blind as a Bat.

In early August, Dave Tracz and I established a fun multi-pitch slab route in the vicinity of Drinnan Pass. The goal was to establish an easy route up the long low-angle slab directly above the Drinnan Pass trail just before Drinnan Lake. This would allow for a multi-pitch rock route doable in a day from Nelson. We decided to bolt all the belays on the otherwise very compact rock and potentially circuitous adventure. Protection on the pitches is a mix of bolts and traditional gear. The result exceeded expectations and the climb is a potential classic with good access.

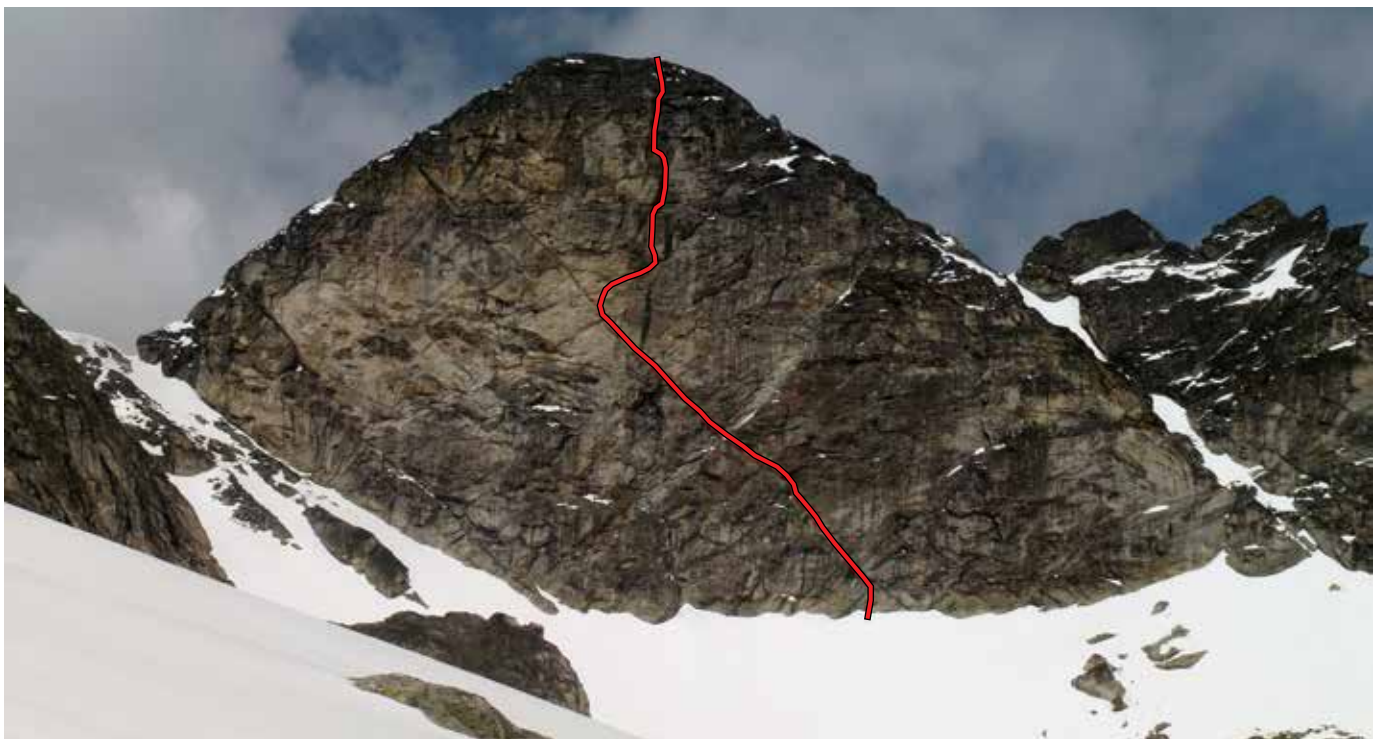
The final adventure climb of the summer was in the lower Mulvey Basin area with Jonas Furger, also from Nelson. Together, we made the first ascent of the 1,100-metre south face of Wedge Peak. This face had been attempted by Valhalla pioneers Peter Koedt and Peter Rowat in August 1974. Both the southwest ridge and southeast ridges of this aesthetic wedge-shaped peak had been climb at the time. Due to the difficult access and relative remoteness, it was luckily left unclimbed for us. Jonas and I completed this route over three days in late August. We approached the route from the modern Gimli parking lot via Mulvey Basin. We managed to do the approach and climb to the halfway ledge on day one. We summitted late on day two, and descended down the north face via six rappels to a bivouac on flat ground at 2,180 metres. Day three was spent descending via the complex Southwest Gully and back to civilization.

Summary

South Face (AD+ 5.10, 180m), Mt. Mephistopheles, Devils Range, Selkirk Mountains FA: David Lussier, Douglas Noblet, June 1, 2016.

P1: 5.8, 60m. Climb the left-trending crack/dyke system passing one steep step near the beginning. Belay on gear in a low-angled recess at the intersection of a broader perpendicular dyke.

P2: 5.7, 30m. Continue along the left-trending crack/dyke system and belay on a small ledge just before the wall steepens considerably.



The South Face on Mount Mephistopheles.
Photo: David Lussier

P3: 5.10, 35m. Continue up and left along the same feature with increasing difficulty on steep, clean stone with reasonable gear to a small roof. Surmount this on good holds and look for a crack system heading up and right. From here, leave the previous left-trending crack/dyke system and climb up and right on left-facing features and eventually a broad-sloping ledge. Belay on gear below an obvious right-facing corner system.

P4-5: 5.10, 70m. A few variations exist on these last two pitches. Climb straight up, following the easiest line up the right-facing corner system, passing a few overhanging sections. Generally good rock with a few loose blocks to watch for.

Angel Heir (D+ 5.11a, 220m), southwest face, Devils Spire, Devils Range. FA: David Lussier, Jason Luthy, June 28, 2016.

Gear: Double set of Camalots to #4, single set of Stoppers, double 60m ropes.

P1: 5.9, 40m. Start in the moat and climb a clean right-trending ramp with a thin-to-no crack (runout in places). Cross a perpendicular ramp system (dirty) and continue along the right-trending ramp with better gear to a belay at the next perpendicular system.

P2: 5.9, 25m. Climb up and left along the second perpendicular ramp via a protectable but dirty, wide crack to a belay on a sloping grassy ledge below a steep wall.

P3: 5.10, 25m. Climb up and left towards the steep wall for a short distance. Locate and climb an unlikely right-trending line of layback flakes and a short flaring slot (#4 Camalot useful) leading to a spacious ledge and belay.

P4: 5.10a, 35m. From the ledge, climb up and left via a beautiful fist crack leading to a roof. Continue up on good rock with fine positions to the base of a long vertical right-facing corner that defines the right-hand side of a dagger-like pillar.

P5: 5.10-, 30m. Climb the beautiful corner above to a belay on a small stance below an overhanging wedged block.

P6: 5.11a, 40m. From the small stance, stem up the broken corner above to the overhanging wedged block. Jam, stem and layback wildly past

Angel Heir on the southwest face of Devils Spire. Witch's Ridge ascends the lefthand skyline.
Photo: David Lussier

the block using the left-hand crack (crux). Above this, climb up an interesting blocky chimney to the top of the pillar feature. Continue up five metres to a belay on a slopping grassy ledge at the base of a thin-looking left-facing corner.

P7: 5.10-, 45m. Climb the clean corner above, passing a small, dubious block and a fixed piton towards the base of a steep wall above. Continue up and right, following a ramp feature with some avoidable loose blocks to easier ground. Belay on blocky and slopping ledges below a short squeeze chimney near the top of the wall.

P8: 5.9, 25m. Climb up the final squeeze chimney and continue directly to the summit.

Witch's Ridge (AD- 5.11, 400m, 12-14 pitches), west ridge, Devils Spire, Devils Range. FA: David Lussier, Jason Luthy, June 29, 2016.

Blind as a Bat (D, 110m, 5.10d), southwest face, Batwing, Valhalla Range. FA: David Lussier, Vince Hempsall, July 16, 2016.

Gear: Double sets of Camalots to #3 plus one #4, single set of Stoppers.

P1: 5.9, 40m. Climb up right-trending flakes and a left-facing corner system to a good ledge.

P2. 5.10d, 45m. Climb up and left, following a beautiful left-facing and left-trending dihedral with a good hand crack for 25 metres to a small pedestal at the base of a steep open book capped with a small roof. Stem up the open-book with marginal gear (crux) towards the roof above where better gear is available. Stem up and left past the roof and climb left across a featured slab above to a hanging belay at the base of a left-facing flake system.

P3. 5.10c, 35m. Layback the steep flake above with good gear to easier ground. Follow ledges and corners up and right initially then back to the left near the top. Belay at the two-bolt rappel anchor for the Northwest Ridge descent.

Slabadabadoo, (AD 5.7, 350m), Drinnan Slab, Drinnan Pass. FA: David Lussier, Dave Tracz, August 2016.

P1: 5.5, 55m. Start from the right-hand side

Slabadabadoo on Drinnan Slab. Photo: David Lussier

of the wide, sloping ledge near the bottom of the slab. Climb up trending right, following diagonal flakes towards a small sloping left-facing corner about 45 metres up. From the top of the small corner, clip a bolt and climb up and left across a smooth slab. Belay at a two-bolt anchor in a gentle dish above the smooth slab.

P2: 5.6, 50m. Climb left across a slab and gain a shallow right-facing corner and flake system. Climb this and continue up via a beautiful orange double dyke past three bolts to some overlaps. Climb over the first overlap and belay at a two-bolt anchor below a second overlap.

P3: 5.6, 50m. Climb past the overlap above the belay to a bolt. Continue up trending right, passing another bolt to the right side of another overlap. Once above this, climb up trending left, passing a third bolt to a two-bolt belay below a larger overlap.

P4: 5.7, 50m. Traverse right around the overlap then climb a vertical line on a steeper featured slab, passing four bolts. The last 15 metres of this pitch trends a little bit more to the right towards a decent stance and a two-bolt anchor.

P5. 5.6, 50m. Climb past a small overlap above the belay and continue up trending right along featured slabs, passing three bolts towards a left-facing corner above a small tree. Climb the corner to a nice ledge and two-bolt anchor above.

P6: 5.7, 55m. Climb the slab directly above the belay, passing a bolt trending left towards a slabby arête. Climb the beautiful arête, passing two more bolts to easier ground. Climb up and right via left-facing cracks and flakes towards a dark overlap above. Traverse left under the dark overlap to the base of a dark right-facing corner. From the base of this corner, step left on a nice clean wall and climb vertical crack features up and left to a good ledge and a two-bolt belay.

P7: 5.6, 50m. Climb up trending right on lower-angled slabs, passing one bolt to the right-hand side of a large overlap below a treed area. From the right-hand side of the overlap, climb up and left, passing another bolt to the base of a vertical right-facing corner system. Weave your way up the corner system, passing a nice hand crack to a two-bolt belay below a steep wall on a sloping ledge just right of the corner system.

P8: 5.6, 50m. Step left from the belay and continue up along the corner system just left of an arête to easier ground above. Climb easy slabs and cracks straight up and just right of a loose gully and treed area. Belay at a two-bolt anchor on a slopping ledge below an overhanging wall just right of the upper loose gully system.

Descent: From the last anchor, traverse left across the upper gully and scramble up, trending left for 70 metres to a large flat grassy meadow area. From here descend down to Drinnan Lake.

South Face (ED1 1100m, 5.10), Wedge Peak, Valhalla Range. FA: David Lussier, Jonas Furger, August 23-25, 2016.

The South Face on Wedge Peak. Photo: David Lussier

Dark and Stormy

Cam Shute

In the past few years, there have been a few great routes put up on what has been dubbed the Little South Face of Mount Gimli. From the first time I rapped Valhalla Gold (III 5.12a, 200m), I wanted to try the prominent dark corner system I had spotted just left of that route, as it looked like technical climbing on great rock in a truly awesome position. In June 2013, JT Croston and I went in to take a crack at it, but the dark corner was soaking wet, and we were pushed up the corner to its left and wound up putting up a fun route called Sailor Jerry [see *CAJ*, 2014, p. 104]. I had always been dissatisfied with the first pitch of Sailor Jerry, which is rather indirect and can be run out as subsequent parties passed on to me.

I was able to connect with Jasmin Caton this past September to go back and try to get these two monkeys off my back. Since we were both pressed for time, our choice of climbing days was limited, so we committed to a somewhat marginal weather day since we knew that it might be one of the last alpine days in the Valhallas for the season. Steve Ogle decided to join us for the day and planned to snap some pics of our effort.

Cam Shute belays Jasmin Caton on the crux corner (pitch four) of Dark and Stormy. Photo: Steve Ogle

We left Nelson at a rather uncivilized 3:30 a.m., but it positioned us at the base of the route at a very respectable 7 a.m. Having been on the wall several times before, we decided to bring a power drill and a set of pitons in case things were slammed shut in the corner. Thankfully, Jasmin also brought a full set of C3s, which would later prove critical.

After climbing up the dirty approach gully and managing to avoid dropping rocks on one another, we took stock of the first pitch, which had been attempted previously by Jesse James, who had lowered off two nuts on the initial few metres. The pitch starts at the left-hand edge of a very prominent orange rock scar in a shallow right-facing corner. Mostly because I was super cold, I offered to take the first lead. I quickly found myself in a gently overhung corner struggling to keep my fingers from turning into icicles while pulling down on solid 5.10 moves. Luckily, there were a few good rests and stellar jamming with great gear up high. I think this pitch makes a much better direct alternative with better climbing than the original first pitch of Sailor Jerry.

Jasmin took the second pitch, which JT had explored a little in 2013, and sailed through his high point winding up at the second anchor of Valhalla Gold. It was a super fun pitch that involved a rising traverse to a section of very featured and fun climbing on steep chickenheads and discontinuous cracks (5.10-).

We were starting to get closer to the business part of the wall where the clean rock rears up and becomes rather featureless, except for the main corner systems. I managed to get through a delicate traverse and pounded in a pin to protect a committing and awkward section (5.10-) that led to the base of the dark corner that we were hoping would take some gear. Being a climber of limited mental and physical strength, I called

down to Jasmin to tell her I thought she would be better suited to take the crux corner, but she called back saying she could not promise an onsight it. I quickly reminded her that she was the pro climber in our duo, and that, technically, it was her job to onsight it since we were both freezing and needed to get up and off the wall without having to try the pitch more than once. Not looking totally convinced by my logic, she set off into the intimidating and technical corner with a large rack of tiny gear. Just as she was getting started, our spirits were buoyed as Steve called out asking where we were so he could get some shots from above.

With the paparazzi in place, Jasmin slowly worked her way up the corner as she placed very tiny, awkward gear while sustaining a full-body pump from smearing and stemming the pitch. Only days earlier, she had completed a trail run of the Valhalla traverse that worked her legs, which she was fully feeling in the corner. As she pulled through the crux of the corner (5.11), she was rewarded with juggy cracks through an overhanging bulge where the whole wall dropped away below her. Although frozen, we were overjoyed with her awesome effort as she clipped the fourth anchor of Sailor Jerry. I followed the pitch with much effort and pumpage, and then ran up the final scrambly pitch to the summit. Jasmin coined the apropos route name Dark and Stormy, which was a nod to the freezing day, the dark corner and the vice theme of the wall.

While descending, we drilled two anchors, one at the base of the crux pitch, and the other at the top of the first pitch, so every anchor is bolted. The route climbs well and is a great option on Gimli for shorter days. We managed to get home before dinner, which is one of the amazing things about new routing in this part of the world.

Summary

Dark and Stormy (D 5.11, 120m, 5 pitches), Little South Face, Mount Gimli, Valhallas, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Jasmin Caton, Cam Shute, September 1, 2016.

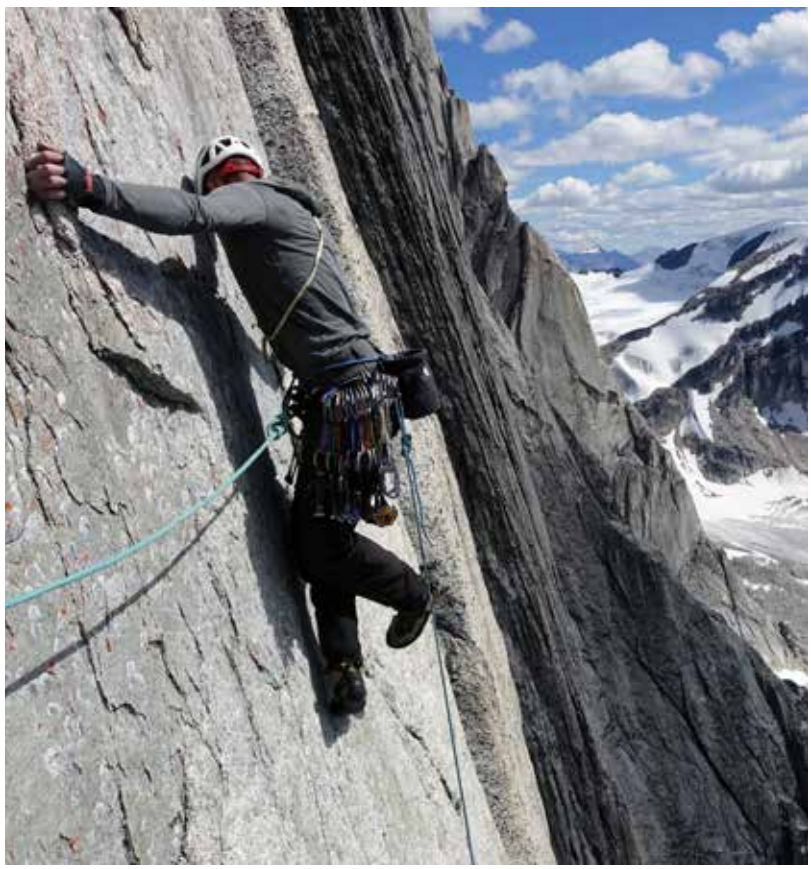
Double rack to #3 Camalot, one #4 Camalot and a full set of C3s is highly recommended for the crux pitch (pitch four). There are no protection bolts, just one piton fixed on pitch three. Descend by rappelling Valhalla Gold with two 60-metre ropes, or downclimb the standard descent down the east face.

Dark and Stormy on Little South Face of Mount Gimli. Photo: Cam Shute

Freeing Armageddon

Maury Birdwell

"THIS IS THE BIG LEAGUES, Birdwell! The playoffs, no participation trophies!" Jesse Huey shouted excitedly as he pulled the rope and revved up for another go at what we hoped was the crux pitch. It was our second of two planned days on the North Howser Tower's monstrous west face, during which we hoped to blitz a new free ascent up Jonny Copp and Mike Pennings' 1999 route, Armageddon (5.11+ A2). We had brought a light backpack with a single sleeping bag, one sleeping pad, and seven litres of water, which was the most limiting factor as there was not a drop available until some snow on the final summit ridge.



Maury Birdwell works out a traverse pitch high on Armageddon.
Photo: Jesse Huey

While climbing on the west face of the North Howser is nothing new, information on Armageddon was sparse. We had a loose description in the guidebook and a page ripped from *Alpinist* that featured the drawn lines of the Howsers' major routes. Jonny had written of their ascent: "Arghh! A Pecker and a blade; damn, we have to aid climb ten feet of the thousands that we've freed" [AAJ, #74, vol. 42, 2000, p. 227]. Mike Pennings is a good friend of ours and a great mentor to Jesse, but the most we got out of him was, "Yeah, I don't remember much. I had to aid a short section with some Birdbeaks, but I'm certain it goes free." He is a ferocious force in the mountains and a legend of understatment, so we knew we were in for it. The fact that both men are longtime heroes of ours only added to the intimidation and excitement. Could we stand on their shoulders and be part of an incremental improvement in style? Many parties had aspired to this goal over the years, but a true effort had yet to emerge. Freeing Armageddon remained a conspicuous yet untested goal, just the kind of low-hanging fruit for a few Boulder-ites from Colorado with limited time and ample motivation.

On August 8, we boarded a helicopter with our friends Will Stanhope and Leo Houlding for the arduous 15-minute ride into East Creek Basin. Landing amidst blue skies and impeccable granite, we could not help ourselves and immediately set off on a group romp up the Becky-Chouinard Route on the South Howser Tower. Too giddy and impatient to check the forecast, we soon found ourselves simul-climbing the classic ridge in freezing rain and snow. Luckily, the constant movement kept us warm, and we got away with a cheap lesson on the rapid variability of Bugaboo weather.

While waiting for a weather window, we cragged on the Minaret—an aesthetic siren looming just above our camp. Jesse and I focused our efforts on repeating a route freed by the legendary Belgian climbers, Nico Favresse and Sean Villanueva—Doubting the Millennium

(5.12c, 600m). Day one brought horror as we discovered they had gained the route via a 20-metre unprotected 5.11 slab. Diverting to the original aid line, we managed to fix a few Birdbeaks and add a slightly harder but safer start, which we dubbed Rise of the Millennials (5.12a). Nearly every pitch that followed rang in around 5.12R, proof that the Belgians are truly deserving of all their legends and hearsay. Ultimately, the crux pitch (just below the summit) was wet, and we gratefully took our excuse to tuck tails and rappel back to camp. Meanwhile, Will and Leo were sessioning a free attempt on the nearby Retinal Circus, a goal they completed at 5.12+ after our departure [see page 124].

A few days of poor weather gave us all the perfect respite to recover, which meant drain the whiskey stores as we huddled around Leo's iPhone, watching movies in our small cook shelter. Finally, the call came from Will's inside man at the weather service—a multi-day high-pressure system with warm temperatures and no precipitation. Hours of packing, repacking and thinning the gear got us down to a single 45-litre backpack that was light enough to wear following moderate pitches and to easily haul when things got extreme.

Rappelling into the North Howser's west basin is nothing short of awe-inspiring. The already towering summit retreats further into the sky as you commit down the irreversible cliff band. A quick scamper across the dry glacier and it was game time. We dispatched the lower 13 pitches of All Along the Watchtower in five 70-metre pitches (5.8 to 5.10). I was fortunate enough to lead while Jesse followed in his approach shoes, carrying the pack. By 2 p.m., a little excavation had yielded a comfy bivy site for two MOGs (Men of Girth), with the obvious crux pitches looming above us. We rested up until they were in the sun, and then set off on a recon mission. A pitch of junky 5.10 then a thin and exciting pitch of 5.11 delivered us to the base of a gorgeous 40-metre corner capped by a small roof. This would clearly be hard climbing; whether it was *the* crux was uncertain. Jesse set off with some tenuous, runout climbing right off the belay—5.11+ according to Pennings, but 5.12 by any other account. Twenty-five metres up, Jesse yelled in joy and surprise, "No-hands stance!"

By now it seemed clear the 15 metres above contained the A2 section. Jesse French-freed through to the roof and a belay stance, and then we fixed our 9.2-millimetre lead line and six-millimetre tag line with just enough rope to reach from our high point to the bivy below.

After a pleasant bivy of sharing our one sleeping bag, we climbed to our respective high points. I had finished the day without following Jesse's final lead, and warming up on the so-called 5.11+ pitch the next morning was less than ideal, but I managed it, barely, without any falls. I gave a feeble effort at the thin corner above, but a bit of hanging and cleaning revealed the weaknesses. As Jesse set off on his second lead attempt, I could see the familiar fire and knew the outcome even before he executed the delicate foot switches and all-out stemming. Following free, I was forced to leave only a single #9 Stopper behind, an imposition I doubt the next party will lament. We encourage following parties to improve upon our style by linking the entire corner into a single, monstrous 5.13 pitch. Be sure to bring extra small gear though.

Re-racking at the next anchor, I needlessly fretted about what lay ahead. Had that been the A2 section? It was certainly more than "10 feet" of hard climbing. What if Mike had sandbagged that pitch as 5.11+ and the true crux still lay ahead? Jesse, ever the dogged optimist, put his head down and began climbing, knowing the only way to find out was to climb on. Another handful of 5.10 to 5.11 pitches, including an off-width yielding small gear every five metres, brought us to the ridgeline. Now we were certain. We had done it! Armageddon went free! We hooted and hollered along the ridge, weaving over and around gendarmes for a few hours before standing on the summit together. We had gotten away with it—no suffering, a pleasant bivy and a new free ascent on the North Howser Tower in one go.

Summary

Armageddon (5.12+, 1100m), west face, North Howser Tower, Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains. FFA: Maury Birdwell, Jesse Huey, August 14-15, 2016.

Minotaur Direct

Jon Walsh

A LOT CAN BE DONE with some motivation and a good partner. Colin Moorhead and I rolled out of Golden, B.C. at 6 p.m. on Friday, August 19, bound for the Bugaboos. Fifty-one hours later, we were back in town having completed two new routes.

Minotaur Direct was a multi-year project whose first ascent story goes something like this. In 2011, Moorhead and I started on Labyrinth but ventured into new terrain on what's now Minotaur's sixth pitch. We rejoined Labyrinth for its last three pitches, and did seven new ones, of which a couple included free variations of the aid route Les Bruixes Es Pentinen. Although it was a great day out and a memorable adventure, the king line with a direct start and finish awaited to be done.

In 2014, Michelle Kadatz and I started the direct route, cleaning many loose hanging blocks left precariously in place from the great flake that fell off the mountain in the late 90s. We soon had a five-pitch direct start established to the ledge system that Colin and I had traversed in from Labyrinth. Over several sessions from July 2015 to July 2016, we continued to work on Minotaur ground up, cleaning the cracks, bolting the stations and pushing the direct finish to just 60 metres below the summit ridge. In 2015, when Michelle's schedule was too busy, Alik Berg joined me up the first five pitches until we could branch out left and establish Welcome to the Machine over two days. It turned out to be a really sweet bonus route to my goal of finishing Minotaur. When Michelle's schedule was busy in 2016, she told me to find another partner to finish the Minotaur. On a whim, I reached out to Colin, fully expecting his busy guiding schedule to get in the way. Luckily, he was psyched, clearing his schedule and making the nine-hour drive from Squamish.

Chris Brazeau on the first pitch of Sick and Twisted. Photo: Jon Walsh

We stumbled into Applebee camp by moonlight on the night of August 19. By 7 a.m. the next morning, we were crossing the moat on the edge of Crescent Glacier and climbing into the sunshine. It took us about 14 hours up and down, which included us bolting the last two belays and brushing the final 60 metres on rappel.

Our day went well as we settled into a nice rhythm, swapping leads up the 500-metre face. It was fun watching a solid granite technician like Colin react to the route's challenges and quality as he climbed it onsight. He loved being on a new route with so much of the work having already been completed. High-quality climbing on every pitch with lots of variety is perhaps the best way to describe the route, with an emphasis on hand jams in upper pitches. We expect this route will become a classic, as Welcome to the Machine— another side project from the summer of 2015 with Alik Berg—seems to be well on its way already.

The next day, despite feeling quite sore and full with satisfaction, we decided we might as well attempt climbing a shorter route before hiking out. It so happened that Chris Brazeau and I had an un-sent project on Eastpost Spire, just a 10-minute walk from camp. Chris, who was at Applebee at the time, even suggested we go for it

without him, as it made sense to get it done before the short Bugaboo season ended. Chris and I had done two and a half laps on it in September 2015 and June 2016, putting the route up on lead on marginal gear at times, but then adding a few bolts to it after. Despite having followed the crux pitch clean, we both fell off it on lead.

So after multiple coffees and meals at camp, we headed up to give it a go. This time, just as I felt my fingers wanting to slip off the crux holds, I found the power to move through it, finally redpointing the pitch as well as the rest of the route. After Colin arrived at the belay at the end of the fourth pitch, he said to me, "This is sick and twisted." I agreed and so the route name was born.

Summary

Minotaur Direct (5.11+, 500m, 16 pitches), east face, Snowpatch Spire, Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains. FA: Colin Moorhead, Jon Walsh, August 20, 2016.

Gear: Two 60-metre ropes, one set of Stoppers, a double rack of cams to #3 Camalot plus one #4 Camalot and triples of #0.3, #0.4 and #0.75, and 12 to 14 quickdraws, half of which should be extendable. All the belays are bolted except the top of the first pitch.

P1: 5.10-, 30m. Step across the moat, which becomes trickier as the season progresses. Climb double cracks (opposing flakes) for about 10 metres until able to trend right and easily up the big scoop. Make a gear anchor at some good foot ledges before it steepens.

P2: 5.10+, 30m. Continue up the scoop via a thin corner crack to a belay station at a good stance. Earlier in the season, it is possible to link pitches one and two with a 60-metre rope, but later in the season when the glacier snow has melted, a 70-metre rope is required.

P3: 5.10+, 30m. Climb the corner above and pull through a small overhang to a stance. Step left and climb a shallow left-facing corner until an easy ramp leads back right. Follow this, hand traversing flakes until a belay station below a long left-facing corner.

P4: 5.11+, 45m. This pitch has three cruxes separated by good rests. A fingertip corner gains a section of cool stemming. Face climb left at a bolt to a stance on the arête. From the stance on the arête, move up and right back into the left-facing corner and follow it up past one more crux to the bolted station on a good ledge.

P5: 5.10, 50m. After a couple of body lengths of fist crack, pull a small overhang to a stance. Rather than continue up the obvious corner, look up and see a bolt that can be reached via face holds. Climb up to it and move left into the next corner system, which is much better with a hand crack. It leads to a 4th-class ledge, which needs to be traversed up and left. The belay station with ring hangers below a groove is for Minotaur, or continue past it for five metres to a belay station below a nice-looking flake, which is Welcome to the Machine. If you miss the first protection bolt on the pitch, a mountaineer's version of this pitch exists and will get you to the same place, but less directly and with sandy sections, loose rock and rope drag.

P6: 5.10+, 30m. Follow the groove up and right past two knifeblades to a belay on a good ledge.

P7: 5.11+, 35m. Follow the obvious finger crack in the left-leaning corner past the roof to a belay station. This pitch could probably be called 5.10+ with one point of aid for those that find free climbing the roof too difficult.

P8: 5.11a, 30m. Clip a bolt and traverse right on the slab to a shallow left-facing, right-leaning corner with a thin crack that takes excellent micro cams. At its top, step left past two knifeblades into the main corner, which is followed until a belay station is reached.

P9: 5.10, 55m. This pitch is mostly 5.7ish with one little 5.10 bit. Follow the corner up and slightly left. After a short 5.10 sequence, it will soon be possible to start trending back right to a big ledge with a belay station and an excellent bivy spot, should one be needed.

P10: 5.9, 25m. Climb the best-looking crack above the belay station towards a steeper wall above with several cracks. There is a belay station on the left. The original Minotaur route goes hard right from here.

P11: 5.11a, 30m. Hand jams up the right-hand crack give way to a thin finish in an alcove and a

belay station (P10 and P11 can be linked).

P12: 5.10+, 35m. Climb the left crack from the belay. After about five metres, transfer back into the right crack, which parallels the arête, and follow it to a belay at a nice perch.

P13: 5.9, 25m. An easy chimney leads up and right to another nice belay perch on top of a pinnacle.

The east face of Snowpatch Spire: (1) Welcome to the Machine, (2) Minotaur Direct. Photo: Jon Walsh

P14: 5.11c, 30m. A left-leaning crack with bouldery moves past three bolts soon gives way to easier crack climbing that leads to a big ledge and a station.

P15: 5.11c, 28m. A short corner with a fist crack leads to a ledge. A beautiful thin hand splitter continues up the headwall above to a belay station on a ledge. This pitch is why you need the third #0.75 Camalot on the rack.

P16: 5.10+, 35m. Keep going up the same crack, which kicks back slightly in angle and becomes more positive. The north summit is about 150 metres of 4th-class scrambling away. Stay on the east side of the ridge if you go for it.

Descent: Rappel the route. A 60-metre rappel gets you back down to the last two pitches.

Welcome to the Machine (5.11+, 13 pitches), east face, Snowpatch Spire. FA: Alik Berg, Jon Walsh, August 2, 2015.

Gear: Two 60-metre ropes, one set of Stoppers, a double set of cams from tips to #3 Camalot, a triple set from tight fingers to loose fingers (#0.3, #0.4, #0.5 Camalots), one each of #4 and #5 Camalots, and 12 to 15 quickdraws (half of which should be extendable).

P1-5: Same as for Minotaur (see above).

P6: 5.10, 35m. Climb the flake then hand traverse it left as it turns into a walkable ledge. At its end, move up and left though small overlaps then face climb left then back right to a bolted station.

P7: 5.11+, 45m. This is the roof pitch of Deus Ex Machina. Move left off the belay, and then climb up a small right-facing corner on face holds. Move left into the main left corner and follow it though a series of small roofs to a bolted anchor.

P8: 5.10, 60m. Climb the right-hand crack for five metres to a ledge. Move left into a corner, which is wide but easy. Follow this to a good ledge. Continue up another short right-facing corner with a couple of tricky moves, and make a gear belay on another good ledge with some very nice-looking corners up to the left. This pitch might be better to split into two as rope drag is a factor. Either way, a gear station needs to be made.

P9: 5.11, 55m. An amazing pitch! Start by climbing double cracks with a mix of gear and

bolts for protection (three protection bolts total). At a small stance, there is a fixed wire and a bolt for an optional belay; however, the first-ascent team linked the next 30 metres of sustained 5.10 to a great ledge and bolted belay.

P10: 5.11-, 40m. Climb the nice finger crack up and right. After a section of fist crack, two bolts on your left protect a traverse to a ledge system and a two-bolt anchor at the far end.

P11: 5.10-, 50m. A clean corner above goes from hands to fists to off-width. After it gets too wide for a # 5 Camalot, two body lengths of easy laybacking passes and gets you to easier terrain with small gear options. Continue up the groove to a two-bolt station below some black overhangs.

P12: 5.11+, 25m. Start by climbing through some overhangs with some great and unlikely moves. Belay at a good ledge.

P13: 5.11, 45m. Follow the crack up and left until a big ledge is reached. This pitch is a bit dirty. Scramble for a couple of rope lengths up and left to the north summit. You will pass the top station of Sendero Norte on the way, which is a good descent option.

Sick and Twisted (5.12a, 5 pitches), south face, Eastpost Spire, Bugaboos. FA: Colin Moorhead, Jon Walsh, August 21, 2016.

Rack: Double rack of Camelots from #0.3 to #2, plus one #3 and one set of Stoppers. If rappelling, a 70-metre rope is needed, although two ropes is nicer especially if you want to haul a pack. All belays are bolted.

P1: 5.11d, 25m. Climb up and trend right to a corner. Follow it out below a roof until it is possible to pull the roof, and then up the groove to a belay. This pitch has four protection bolts. The first half of this pitch is unfortunately a bit crumbly, but the rest of the route is a lot better.

P2: 5.12a, 30m. Climb up a few metres, and then traverse below the big roof to the left for about 15 metres until it is possible to climb a left-facing corner to a belay on a good ledge (35-metre rappel to the ground from here).

P3: 5.11a, 30m. Start up a left-facing corner to a ledge, move left to the next left-facing corner and climb it past some funky features. Move right to another big ledge, but make steep moves upwards at its left edge and belay at a good stance at the right end of the big hanging slab. There may be a bit of suspect rock on this pitch so pay attention, but it is much better than the first pitch.

P4: 5.10d, 25m. Cross the hanging slab past four bolts then up and across to belay below some short, steep crack lines.

P5: 5.10d, 20m. Start up the corner then head up the middle of three cracks. The left one is The Flaming Hack Arête.

Descent: You can either scramble off or rappel. From the top, a 55-metre rappel makes it to a bolted station on a slab and about 10 metres away from Shelton Route. Another 50-metre rappel hits the ground.

Sick and Twisted on the south face of Eastpost Spire. Photo: Jon Walsh

Position of Comfort

Jason Ammerlaan

IN ROGERS PASS, MOUNT MACDONALD sits above the Trans-Canada Highway in plain view of the passers-by. It sticks out as something different from the perfectly shaped ski peaks of the Selkirk Mountains. Comprised mostly of quartzite rock, and just like its neighbours, it boasts long clean ridgelines of solid (enough) rock for kilometres. Unlike its neighbours, though, it stands out with a particularly steep and sustained face of golden rock. This steep section makes up the "Little Face" of Mount Macdonald—a 500- to 600-metre face that sits below the true summit of the peak. In August 2016, Tony McLane and I established a new line on this feature that we dubbed the Position of Comfort (5.11+ A2, 510m).

The face is home to the visionary 1973 Waterman Route (5.8 A3, 600m). The Waterman cousins had a different way of looking at the mountains than most anyone else in their era. John Waterman is remembered for going missing while attempting a solo ascent of Denali's East Buttress, but perhaps is infamous for his solo ascent of the Southeast Spur of Mount Hunter in 1978, which took him 145 days. His earlier exploits on rock faces were nothing to jest at either. The Little Face is flanked by two buttresses that end in ridges: on the left is Colin Moorhead and Jon Walsh's 2003 ascent of Prime Rib (5.11b, 500m); and to the right is Colin Haley and Mike Schaffer's 2014 Short Rib (5.10 A1, 500m). For such a relatively short and easy approach, this face has not received the attention it deserves—not for lack of information or photos though, as it sits proudly above the busiest highway in the country.

Tony McLane on pitch six of Position of Comfort. Photo: Jason Ammerlaan

Position of Comfort ascends an obvious line of weakness through the lower tier of the face to reach a large ledge with a perfect bivy cave. From the ledge, it tackles a very steep section of rock all the way to the connecting ridgeline that leads to the summit of Macdonald.

The week before my ascent with Tony, I had explored the initial five pitches of the face with Ryan Thorpe. After travelling back home to Squamish, and with another decent weather window in view, I teamed up with Tony and returned to climb the new line. We slept at the base of the route and started climbing early the next morning with the intent to climb the route in a day and return to the base that night. The climbing was technical and sustained and took much longer than expected. After leaving the large ledge above the bottom tier of the face, we left our boots and extra gear since we had decided that we would rappel back down the face once we crested the ridge. Tony had the bright idea of bringing our socks along in case of an unplanned bivy. His foresight made for a wise decision. Socks can really make or break the experience.

Overall, we freed the majority of the route with three pitches requiring short sections of aid (Knifeblades, Lost Arrows, Peckers and some thin cams). The real crux of the route was finding the line of weakness, and connecting features. The steep quartzite was difficult to read and the corner systems were inconsistent. Our line weaved back

and forth between systems throughout the steep headwall. We placed two bolts for an anchor on top of pitch 10, but did not place any other protection bolts. We did not summit Mount Macdonald after cresting the ridge. Climbing the wall was our goal, and our appetite was satiated after spending a cold night shivering together in the position of comfort.

The Little Face holds many gems that are just waiting to be polished. From steep clean arêtes to the (possibly) unrepeated Waterman route, there are many opportunities for the modern steep-quartzite aficionado.

Summary

Position of Comfort (5.11+ A2, 500m, 13 pitches), Little Face, east face, Mount Macdonald, Rogers Pass, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Jason Ammerlaan, Tony McLane, August 4-5, 2016.

P1: 5.10-, 50m. From the climber's left height of land follow ledges to a compact corner. Belay on the treed ledge above.

P2: 5.10-, 50m. Move left along the ledge to the first obvious right-facing corner. Compact rock to start. Belay in an alcove.

P3: 5.10, 20m. Continue up the corner to the top.

P4: 5.8, 55m. From the top of the corner, move left and climb broken terrain until it is possible to move left across the gully to belay.

Move down and left across ledges to the sweet bivy cave. Belay on the left side of the cave. Fourth class.

P5: 5.10, 55m. Climb a left-facing corner up and out of the bivy cave. Belay on top of a big ledge out right.

P6: 5.10, 55m. Climb up the open book corner (fingers), and then up to a ledge below a chimney. Climb the chimney to a good belay.

P7: 5.8, 35m. Climb the chimney to the next ledge.

P8: 5.10 A2, 35m. Climb straight up from the ledge, aiming for nice finger/hand cracks on the face. Knifeblades and Lost Arrows to get to the finger crack.

P9: 5.11-, 25m. Follow the corner crack above through the overlap. Head up and left to splitters on the face and an exciting mantle out left.

P10: 5.10 A2, 30m. From the top of the huge block, head up right using Peckers in small pods. Climb the blank slab up and left into the next corner (no pro), and then up and right to a bolted belay on a large ledge.

P11: 5.11+, 35m. Head directly right on small finger edges to a thin crack in a corner. Follow the corner up through two overlaps then head out right and mantle up on a good ledge below a left-facing corner.

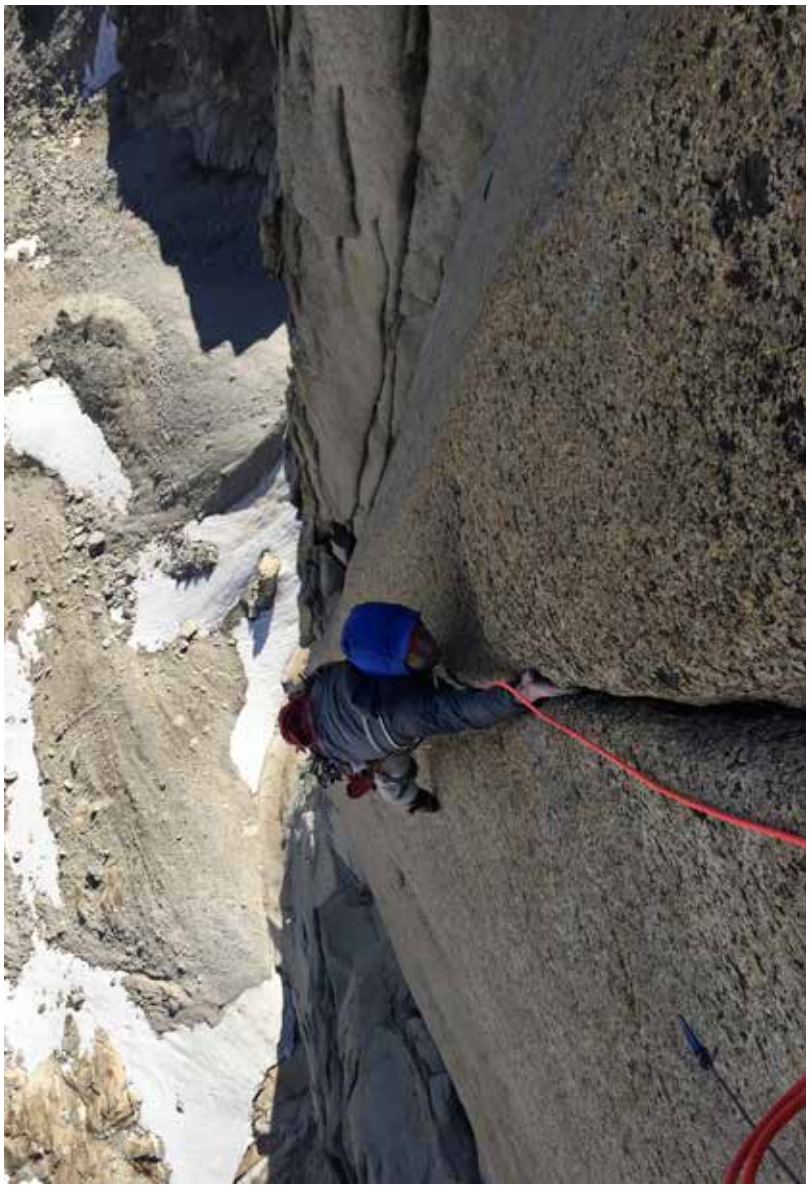
P12: 5.10 A2, 40m. climb the corner to a thin face crack that leads to a right-trending ledge (the face crack was aided with small cams and Knifeblades). Belay on the right side of the ledge.

P13: 5.10 A2, 58m. Climb the overhanging corner above into the tiger-orange rock. Pull onto a loose ledge above and either belay here or continue up broken loose terrain to the top of the wall.

Position of Comfort on the east face of Mount Macdonald.
Photo: Jason Ammerlaan

Retinal Circus Free

Will Stanhope



Leo Houlding jams the headwall splitters during the first free ascent of Retinal Circus.
Photo: Will Stanhope

THE MINARET IS A GORGEOUS PROW, like a rocket ship, that leans against the South Howser Tower in the Bugaboos. Despite having made many trips to the range, I had never climbed on it. This year, friends Jesse Huey, Maury Birdwell, Leo Houlding and I ponied up some loonies for a helicopter and set up a deluxe base camp a five-minute walk away from the base of the Minaret.

Early in the trip, we spied some headwall splitters that guidebook sleuthing revealed the line to be Zack Smith and Aaron Martin's 2002 route, Retinal Circus, that they climbed at 5.11 A2. We made two ground-up attempts on the route with incremental progress each time. Down low, some slammed-shut corners necessitated crafty face climbing.

"Wish we had brought double ropes, mate," remarked Leo, of the U.K.'s Lakes District As a note to future ascentionists: two ropes definitely would not hurt.

On our third attempt, we cracked the code of wandering features and arrived at the centerpiece of the route—the much-ogled headwall splitters. One false start dead-ended me in the middle of nowhere. I rapped, tried a crack to the left and this time, the dots connected. I imagine those cracks had only been climbed once before, but they were absolutely immaculate. By dusk, we were on top of the Minaret and began a slightly tense descent down Doubting the Millennium with our four-millimetre tag line as a pull rope. Around midnight, we scampered back to camp, cracked a Kokanee each and toasted a stellar day.

Last summer in East Creek Basin, there was a solid contingent of competent parties climbing in the Howser towers, and not just on the celebrated moderates like the Beckey-Chouinard. It makes me really happy to see these seldom-climbed (but excellent) harder lines getting the attention they deserve.

Summary

Retinal Circus (5.12+, 600m, 13 pitches), Minaret, South Howser Tower, Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains. FFA: Leo Houlding, Will Stanhope, August 19, 2016.

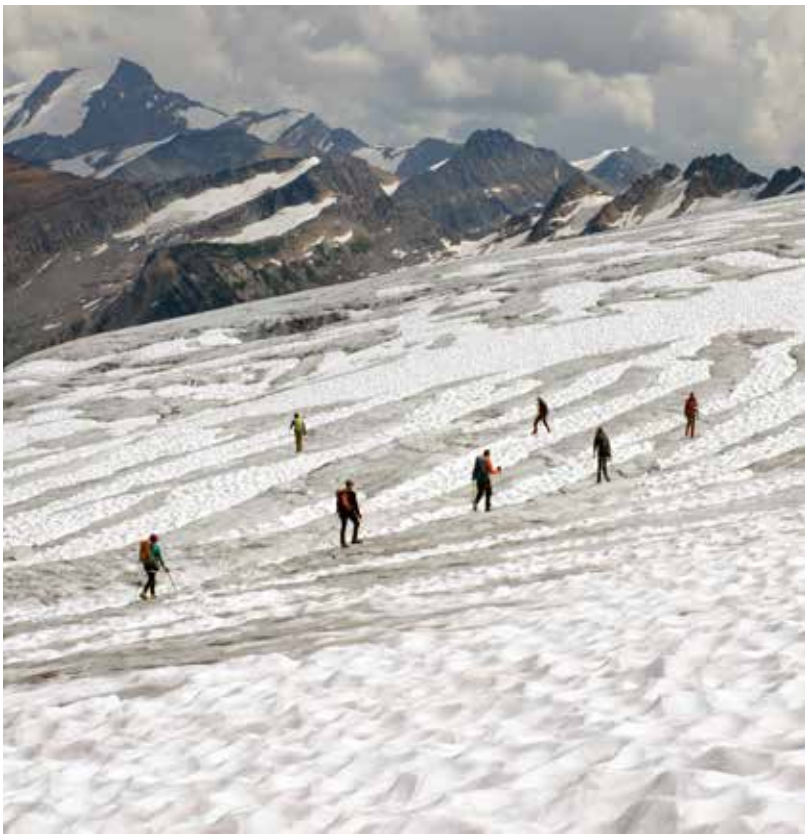
The Sorcerer GMC

David Dornian

THE SORCERER GENERAL Mountaineering Camp (GMC) was actually situated near the toe of Easy Glacier, close to the gentle crest of Bachelor Pass, a not-inconsequential distance north of Rogers Pass, B.C. The true geographic point bearing the name Sorcerer Peak was a day's walk, a fly camp overnight, and then a long, decaying ridge climb away from where most people were sleeping most nights. When you were standing near the dining tent at camp, you could not even point the mountain out to fresh arrivals as they stepped from the helicopter to begin their week. Sorcerer was "over thattaway," and the best you could do was gesture vaguely to the south. However, it is hard to promote six weeks of gorgeous *terra incognita* mountaineering and entice climbers from across the country and around the world via Internet registration with a description that features Easy Glacier, Folly Peak and sundry unnamed summits. Centurion. Argentine. Wink, wink. Nod, nod.

One of the reasons we were there was because we had never held the GMC in that area before. Part of the camp's continuing 110-year legacy and mandate is to deliver new and under-explored alpine terrain to its participants every year. With the GMC, the ACC tries to provide the real deal rather than pretend adventure and retreaded exploration, and although the camp is held every summer, rather than taking the same metaphorical bus to the same metaphorical office again and again, you are able to step out from the camp on any morning of your stay with the reasonable expectation that, at some point during the day, you will put your foot in a place that has never been stepped on before. Ever. By anyone. Canada still has wild mountains. And how cool is that?

Sometimes you have to suffer for your authentic experience. The first week of the 2016 GMC faced appalling weather in the camp's exposed location just east of the uplift from the Columbia-Shuswap. From a Saturday start, going out every day, it was Thursday of that week before most stood on top of anything of significance. But by the end of the second week of camp, the sun was out and many of the nearby peaks had been visited a number of times. Interesting and varied experiences could be had climbing Folly Peak, Able, Baker, Charlie, The Sorceress, The Apprentice, connecting any number of those, walking the ridge toward Centurion, or undertaking the long haul to Argentine. Cliffs loomed over the pleasant meadows where we set up the tents, and rock school could be visited in a five-minute scramble, once a few boulders had been cleared. The glacial ice began just a few hundred metres of level walking to the south of camp, and many took the habit of wearing their harnesses straight from breakfast.



A GMC group navigates crevasses on Sorceress Glacier with Mount Iconoclast behind. Photo: Sam McKoy

After a confused mini-expedition opened the way to Sorcerer during the third week of the camp, where the peak was climbed in fine style but the long walk home was deemed too onerous by the overburdened leadership, a strategy was worked out where attempts from a fly-in camp at Sorcerer Pass—a day's walk away from base—would be made on Fridays. This permitted the long glacier walk—and an intermediate climb along the way—to be undertaken on the Thursday, the big rig climbed and the party returned to Sorcerer Pass on the Friday, and then a helicopter pickup and transfer to the staging area on a logging road below during the Saturday morning exchange. By camp's end, at least three groups had stood atop our summer's namesake, one of them twice in the same day (another story).

The GMC is as popular with the ACMG guides that work the program and the Amateur Leaders that support them, as it is with the folks they lead on their ropes. Every year is different. Every year presents fresh possibilities. Other more directed programs often share the site and take advantage of its potential in any given summer as well. The North Face Leadership program introduced its developing section leaders to the GMC style during week four, and the University of Alberta returned to the camp with one of its summer courses for week five. The added-by-popular-demand week six was motivated by a reunion of expeditionary members from the much-travelled Toronto Section. Led by the legendary Roger Wallis, many of this bunch had not laced up crampons since the 1980s, but took to the ice and snow—and our cocktail hill—like it had been only yesterday. Stories were told all over again. But things got climbed, too. The ACC's Artists' Week followed the end of the regular program. And a U of A grad student named Cole was in residence for most of the season, sampling soils in the wake of glacial recession.

The ACC national office keeps track of the statistics, numbers and routes from every summer's GMC, spins off the new information collected to the guidebooks and websites, and keeps a semi-secret list of potential locations for future editions of the camp. Approximately half of the participants every year have been to the camp before. But the experience is always ready for new friends. It is a bit of an aficionados' thing.

Complete Selkirk Ski Traverse

Stephen Senecal

DREAM BIG, HAVE ADVENTUROUS FRIENDS and an open schedule, and you will make it happen. That was the recipe for success in our ambitious plans to ski the entire length of the Selkirk Mountains.

En route to Mount Logan, the dream started to take shape. Madeleine and I and two friends were on our way to ski the Kings Trench. Endless hours on long flat roads had us dreaming of future adventures, trips and goals. Wallet-sized laminated tick-lists were made and the one big goal we shared was a full ski of the Selkirk Mountains. Years went by and the idea popped up now and then, but always as something that would happen in the next few years. While we were not getting any younger and the thought of long marches with heavy packs became less desirable each year, the time was now.

Plans went into action. We needed a good crew, a good route, food drops and funding. I enlisted Douglas Noblet, a local Kootenay skier we dubbed "The Wolverine" for his grizzly beard and ceaseless energy. Madeleine called up Sam McKoy, as solid as they come and our human compass. She also dusted the cobwebs off of Mark Grist, our hearty veteran, always telling the perfect joke at the right time and a constant voice of reason when our young crew wanted to do something foolish.

The route was pretty simple—follow the

height of land. All of the sections had been skied before, and we just needed a way to link them all together. Food drops were pretty simple, too, since the route crossed a road or highway about every five to seven days. The exception was further north between Trout Lake and Rogers Pass, and then Rogers Pass to Mica Creek (the end of the trip). Lucky for us, there are a few backcountry ski lodges along the way that fly regularly and they were more than happy to stash our food caches for our arrival.

Our grant-writing queen, Madeleine, secured an MEC expedition grant in the form of gear and cash. This was huge as everyone on this trip makes their winter income playing in the mountains and buying new trip-specific gear would save us wear and tear on our personal equipment.

I would like to say the high of the trip was all the north-facing powder and perfect corn we skied, but, alas, it was just not that type of spring. We had amazing weather. Maybe two or three stormy days, and one of those was spent eating delicious meals and trying to drain the keg at Battle Abbey. The highs of the trip for me were covering so much ground, plus not getting dead-ended or weathered down, or faffing about with broken gear. Our crew was strong, and we motored every day and were rewarded with a beautiful camp almost every night. Those are the days you remember forever.

And the lows of the trip—actually, there were not many that I can remember. It helps having an uncanny ability to erase the pain and suffering from every trip and think back with fondness. But digging deep, I do remember some long sections of thick, dense bushwhacking in the Northern Selkirks that may have etched some vivid scars. The numbers go something like this.

- Broken gear: three ski poles, two skis, two bindings, two stove pumps and one boot buckle.
- Pine marten: two kilograms of lunch food, one Leatherman, one water bottle lid and a food scraper.
- White gas: 16 litres.
- Vertical gain: 36,000 metres.
- Distance: 425 kilometres.
- Metres of river log crossings: too many.
- Earliest wake up time: 12 a.m. (that is, midnight).
- Earliest bed time: 3:30 p.m.
- Latest bed time: 2 a.m.
- Kootenay Pass to Nelson: four days.
- Nelson to Retallack: five days.
- Retallack to Trout Lake: five days.
- Trout Lake to Battle Abbey: six days.
- Battle Abbey to Rogers Pass: three days.
- Rogers Pass to Sorcerer Lodge: three days.
- Sorcerer Lodge to Fairy Meadow: four days.
- Fairy Meadow to Mica: five days.

Summary

First complete ski traverse of the Selkirk Mountains. Mark Grist, Madeleine Martin-Preney, Sam McKoy, Douglas Noblet, Stephen Senecal, April 4 - May 8, 2016.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to MEC, G3, MSR, Battle Abbey, Sorcerer Lodge, and all the friends and family that shuttled us and our food along the way.

Mark Grist during the first complete Selkirk ski traverse, with Mount Cooper behind. Photo: Douglas Noblet

The Rockies

Bad Romance

Raphael Slawinski

WHEN I RETURNED FROM SCOTLAND AT the beginning of February, it had been a while since I had swung my tools. The climbing in Scotland was all about rimed-up rock (and atrocious weather, but that is another story). And, even before I left Canada, in order to prepare myself for the fabled Scottish mixed climbing, I had eschewed fat ice in favour of rock, the more snowed-up and traditional in flavour the better. By the time I got back from the land of tenuous hooking and three-hour leads, I craved fast, smooth movement.

With iffy avalanche conditions deeper in the mountains, Juan Henriquez and I headed into the Ghost. His expert driving and a newly bulldozed track got us to within a half-hour walk of the blue pillars of Fang and Fist. We squeezed every bit of ice out of the climb, even the rolling steps higher up. After rappelling off, we backtracked to the main drainage and boulder-hopped up it for another half hour, hoping to spot some ice on the impressive rock walls looming on all sides.

"A waste of rock," was how Juan summed up our fruitless search.

Back at the truck, we had a bite of lunch then drove a couple of kilometres back to the mouth of another drainage. We figured the free-standing pillar at the start of Going to the Sun Highway would nicely round out a day of swinging tools. It did, but the hike up the frozen streambed, so much more pleasant than the cobbles of Malamute Valley, was memorable for another reason. As we rounded a corner, the wall at the head of the creek we were crunching up in our crampons came into view.

"Whoa! What's that?" I stopped to get a better look. A black rock wall adorned by crazy ice blobs looked like a mixed climber's dream. Higher in the alpine cirque, discontinuous ice lines beckoned. Over the next few weeks, a few friends and I explored the valley's potential: soaking our feet after breaking through creek ice, tiptoeing gingerly across drum-tight snow slopes, having our eyes welded shut by blistering spindrift, and falling out of control when a tool placement ripped. But all the while, we could not think of too many other places we would rather be.

Raphael Slawinski on the third pitch of Blind Date. Photo: Julien Ferrandez

Summary

Bad Romance (M7 WI4, 130m) FA: Juan Henriquez, Raphael Slawinski (with guest appearances by Seb Taborszky and Paul Taylor), February 21, 2016.

Approach: Start hiking as for Going to the Sun Highway, but instead of turning into the side drainage on the right that holds that route, continue up the main drainage. Hike up the frozen creek, bypassing open pools through trees on the right. At the head of the creek, head up and right on windblown scree slopes to a rock band directly below the route (the right one of two major ice lines). Either scramble directly through the rock band (recommended) or make a long end run on snow ledges going right then back left. The snow ledges are steep and unsupported and, unusually for the Ghost, avalanche hazard is a real concern. Two hours.

P1: WI3R, 30m. Climb a thin flow of low-angled ice to a snow ledge. Belay at a short curtain. Other than a wire placement at the start and a screw and/or V-thread 20 metres up, there is not much gear to be had, but the climbing is not hard.

P2: WI3, 40m. Climb the curtain to a fun narrow runnel. Where the runnel widens into a broad shield, climb up and right to where the ice disappears below a roof. A couple of dry moves gains a two-bolt anchor. This pitch protects well with screws, but there are also some wire and cam placements on the left wall.

P3: M7 WI4, 60m. Climb bolt-protected rock with the occasional small ice blob to a hanging curtain. The first few moves from the belay are the crux, with small and slippery hooks, but the climbing quickly eases. Once on the ice, climb moderate ice to where it ends in a rock overlap.

Descent: Rappel the route. Rather than swinging into the two-bolt station, it may be easier to make a V-thread above the hanging curtain.

Gear: Ice screws (including some stubbies), a few small-to-medium Stoppers, Camalots #0.4 and #0.5.

Blind Date (M7+ WI5, 90m) FA: Jeff Mercier, Raphael Slawinski, February 16, 2016.

Approach: Start hiking as for Bad Romance, but at the head of the creek head up windblown scree slopes directly to the route (1.5 hours).

P1: M7+ WI3, 20m. Climb steep, nicely

Bad Romance in the North Ghost.
Photo: Raphael Slawinski

featured rock past six bolts to where a step right gains the ice flow above the roof. Climb five metres of thin, low-angled ice to a ledge and a two-bolt anchor on the left.

P2: WI3, 40m. An aesthetic pitch gains a large, comfortable ledge below the upper mixed wall. Belay at a bolt-and-pin anchor. The station at the top of pitch one is a bit exposed to falling ice, so take care while leading.

P3: M6+ WI5, 30m. A classic pitch of mixed climbing that moves from rock to ice to rock and back to ice. The climbing is mostly bolt protected, but a few screws are needed for the upper ice. Belay at a two-bolt anchor. With another couple of bolts, this pitch could be extended another 10 metres up the last hanging dagger.

Descent: Rappel the route. With 60-metre ropes, you can bypass the station at the top of pitch one.

Gear: Screws (including some stubbies).

Orgasmotron (M7+ WI5, 100m) FA: Juan Henriquez, Raphael Slawinski, February 28, 2016.

This is a one-pitch variation to Blind Date. The last pitch is a must-do—a fantastic piece of mixed climbing.

P1 and 2: M7+ WI3, 60m. Climb the first two pitches of Blind Date to the large, comfortable ledge. Move 10 metres right and belay at a blob of solid ice at knee height.

P3: M7 WI5, 40m. Drytool past a bolt to a short ice flow. From its top, move up and left past more bolts into a corner and follow it to a rotten alcove. From the right side of the alcove, drytool over a roof and up smooth rock on small, well-spaced hooks. From an ice blob, continue more easily to a hanging curtain. Another 10 metres of ice leads to a two-bolt belay on the right. With another bolt or so, this pitch could be extended another five metres to a more comfortable ledge.

Descent: Rappel the route.

Gear: Screws (including some stubbies), up to 14 quickdraws (including some double-length slings), a few small-to-medium Stoppers (optional).

Blind Date (left) and Orgasmotron in the North Ghost. Photo: Raphael Slawinski

Facing the King Alone

Marc-Andre Leclerc

THE CANADIAN ROCKIES ARE AN INTIMIDATING place to climb alone; the mountains are big and remote, often with loose rock, and, of course, zero infrastructure or cell reception if something were to go awry. Another characteristic of the Rockies is that, in my mind, the best time to climb is the spring, winter or fall—mainly because the gullies tend to be less melted out, the rock more frozen together and the scenery most spectacular. Many of the faces are likely easier and faster to climb with less snow, but there is always the danger of falling rock, and the mountain faces often appear less healthy in their state of dryness and summer-ice recession.

My first attempt to climb alone in the Rockies was during a -35 C cold snap on the Columbia Icefield in November 2014. As it was my first experience in the Canadian Rockies, I had little idea of what to expect when I started up Mount Andromeda's Shooting Gallery, and I was treated to a frightful concoction of downward-sloping frozen cubes of choss masked beneath 15 centimetres of powder snow and a complete lack of ice in the couloir. Unable to climb down or construct an anchor in the compact rock to retreat, I was forced to continue climbing un-roped for 30 metres through what felt like a terrible nightmare. I used my tools to loosen and chop away some of the frozen rock, and used any remaining small edges to hook with my tools and stand on with front points, the entire time wondering if I would skate off of the insecure holds. Trembling with fear, I eventually reached a thin flaring seam into which I hammered two brass nuts that held long enough for me to bail back down the couloir before hitching a ride to Jasper.

Soloing the upper couloir of the Andromeda Strain on Mount Andromeda. Photo: Marc-Andre Leclerc

Since then, while building experience with partners on alpine routes in the Rockies, I wondered if I had acquired the technical skills to venture out solo again. Each route I climbed in the Rockies, even with a strong partner, felt like it pushed me to my metal limits, and every time I was relieved to have a trustworthy and talented partner to share the difficult leads and strenuous trail-breaking.

Between March 25 and April 11 in 2016, I climbed four alpine routes with my Slovenian friend and climbing partner, Luka Lindic. Three of those were first ascents in the Valley of the Ten Peaks. Each time we climbed another route, I could feel my familiarity and confidence with the unique style of mixed Rockies climbing become stronger. Our final route, a spectacular mixed climb on the north face of Neptuak Mountain [see *CAJ*, vol. 99, 2016, p. 4] left me charged with energy and mentally prepared to tackle some of my solo goals.

Luka's girlfriend was arriving on April 13, and their plan was to travel and rock climb together, leaving me a window to attempt my solos. I was fit and the weather forecast was good—sometimes the stars just align.

As usual I had no car to get to the mountains, but public transit was a viable substitute, as was the good old tactic of sticking out my thumb on the side of the highway.

First on the list was to revisit Andromeda to see if I was indeed better prepared to tackle the mountain solo. I took a shuttle bus from Banff to Jasper, and the driver happened to be a skier and climber. I was invited to sit in the passenger seat, and we chatted about mountains and conditions before I was dropped off at the Columbia Icefield. There, I set up a cozy camp in the thin trees just off the road, nicely hidden from view and in almost the exact same place I had stayed a year and a half previous.

I had no phone or clock, or any form of technology with me aside from an MP3 player and headphones. I decided that I would rely on my intuition to wake up at the right time and climb. After exploring the fantastic moraines and glacial streams running from the toe of the Athabasca Glacier, I went to bed early. I needed the sleep as I had only taken one full rest day since leaving the Valley of the Ten Peaks with Luka.

In the night, I woke up a few times and glanced toward the eastern horizon for signs of predawn. By the third time I felt rested and could see a faint hint of light about to rise, so I had some hot tea and cereal and began the walk toward the base of the famous Andromeda Strain. I carried skis to make the short glacier crossing somewhat safer, and as I reached the toe of the glacier, it became light enough to see the route. I could see a safe path across the small glacier to the start.

I reached the bergschrund and switched into crampons, and clipped a few pitons, a set of wires and two screws to my harness before climbing several hundred feet of easy snow, ice and mixed to the base of the first real pitch, which was a short corner that looked to be good fun. The pitch was not steep and I soloed it without difficulty with my pack on. Soon I was cleaning snow from the typical down-sloping ledges that so often are characteristic of alpine-route traverses in the Rockies. This traverse deposited me at the base of a steep chimney line choked with obnoxious snow mushrooms.

The last pitch of Infinite Patience before reaching the Emperor Ridge. Photo: Marc-Andre Leclerc

Here, I traversed slightly off the easiest line to hang my backpack from a fifi hook on some fixed webbing. It would be well sheltered from the above falling snow as I cleaned the chimney.

As I soloed up the chimney, I carefully trundled snow mushrooms between my legs, taking care to cut away the mushrooms in small pieces that would not knock me off or throw me out of balance. I reached a crux move where first I had to spin around and face outwards while stemming to

get secure enough feet to remove my lower tool, which I then had to use to tap my upper tool more securely into place before spinning back around and pulling into a crack on the chimney's right-hand wall. Above this, the climbing was easier but still sustained and exposed and always interesting and fun. I stopped once to pull up my pack on the five-millimetre static cord I trailed, and then I rehung it from a fixed piton in a sheltered nook before I continued to the end of the mixed difficulties. I never relied on any aid (aside from drytooling) or used any kind of self-belay.

Upon arrival to the upper couloir, it began to lightly snow and large amounts of spindrift poured down the route from above. The first wave of spindrift had me quite frightened, and I braced myself waiting for the impact. To my surprise, the snow was light and simply washed down over my gloves and ice tools and off to either side without threatening to knock me off. So I began to climb upwards through the river of powder while enjoying the wild conditions.

A cold north wind blew the powder back up the couloir, creating an incredible stormy ambience as I climbed the old grey ice with joy. I arrived at the famous exit pitch and made my way easily up a loose ramp to gain the steeper ice bulge. There, the position becomes truly spectacular for the five final metres of ice before reaching the easy slopes above. I broke trail through poor-quality snow and dug through a small cornice to find myself on the summit of Andromeda in near whiteout conditions. I was disappointed as I had been looking forward to the view, but nonetheless started picking my way down towards the top of the Practice Gullies.

Easy but exposed downclimbing around the huge cornice, several rappels from V-threads, and 200 more metres of downclimbing on snow brought me to the 'schrund. At that point, there was some conveniently exposed ice to rappel from for one last time. Soon I was skiing down into the valley bottom, arriving at my tent at what I would guess to be around lunchtime.

I marvelled at how well the climb had gone and at how calm and comfortable I felt soloing the route. The past three weeks of high-frequency alpine climbing with Luka had really made a huge effect on my familiarity with the style of mixed climbing in the Rockies and the Andromeda Strain had been the perfect warm-up solo. I was so content that I thought about just staying at the Icefield for a couple more days and calling things good, but the allure of my next objective—Mount Robson's Emperor Face—was far too strong. After some wandering about in the gravel flats, I packed up camp and stood on the side of the highway with my thumb out until a friendly Jasper local picked me up and dropped me off at a hostel in town.

The next day I made arrangements for a bus to Mount Robson, and completely reorganized and packed my equipment. I planned for four days: one to approach, one to climb and descend, one to relax around Berg Lake and a final day to hike back to the highway and hitch back to Jasper.

When the bus dropped me off on the roadside, I saw Mount Robson for the first time. The way it towered above the road was like no other mountain I had ever seen. The summit felt incredibly distant, as if it were located on another planet entirely. As I walked towards the trailhead, I reminded myself that you only get to visit a place for the first time once in your life. I began to immerse myself into the environment, taking in all the sounds, smells and colours that gave the forest its atmosphere. As I walked up towards Kinney Lake, I frequently peered upwards to the summit ridge, looking for clues on how I would descend, if I indeed made it that far. I was in awe.

I took a short break on the shores of Kinney Lake to appreciate the scenery and not push myself too hard on the approach, saving energy for the huge climb ahead. As I hiked deeper into the valley, the scenery slowly changed. I passed through gravel flats and up beyond the Valley of a Thousand Falls to the snow line where I put on my skis and began skinning. As I rounded the corner above Emperor Falls, I began to see the Emperor Face. I continued through the flats and up to the edge of the small lake at the toe of the Mist Glacier where I planned to spend my first night. I cooked some food and quietly observed the route above.

The face was partially obscured in cloud and a huge lenticular extended to the north from the summit ridge. From the moraine far below, I could

hear the wind violently rage over the summit ridge more than 2,000 metres above, and for the first time in a long time, I felt deeply intimidated by the aura of the mountain. Was I ready for such an undertaking? Did I have the mental and physical stamina to commit to such a large and daunting face with such minimal equipment?

I lay on my sleeping pad with these thoughts running through my mind, feeling very small and alone. As evening approached, a certain calmness overtook me. I realized that I was approaching the route with a healthy amount of respect and that the king also respected me and my ambitions in return. I was being drawn toward the mountain in a search for adventure, by a desire to explore my own limitations and to be immersed in a world so deeply beautiful that it would forever etch itself in my memory.

Despite a strong south wind, I fell into a long sleep, and by the time I awoke, it was calm and clear. There was still a hint of light in the sky, and I could not tell if I had slept for five minutes or if it was nearly sunrise. I detected that the light was coming from the east, so I made breakfast and coffee and shouldered my pack to start my journey up the Emperor Face.

By the time I reached the snowy moraine it was light enough to see without a headlamp, and the snow was of the perfect consistency and angle that I could skin directly up without sliding backwards. As the angle steepened, I began switchbacking my way upwards until it was no longer sensible to continue using skis. I put on my harness and crampons and took out my ice tools.

A few minutes later, I was at the initial ice pillar of Infinite Patience. The pillar was in thin conditions, so I decided that I would tag up my backpack to make the vertical climbing easier. The steepness took me by surprise, and I had to stop to shake out several times through the crux section before the angle slowly eased off. I pulled up my bag and continued up easier, but still not trivial, terrain and gained the easy-angled slopes leading up towards Bubba's Couloir. There was quite a lot of snow on the face and the trail-breaking was somewhat arduous as I made my way to the couloir's entrance. Even in the couloir the snow was frustrating at times, but eventually became firmer and almost névé-like as I reached the start of the left-trending traverse into the upper couloir.

Here, the rock was covered with about 60 centimetres of powder snow obscuring everything, but as I dug through and uncovered the rock beneath, multitudes of thin cracks presented themselves that made for good and secure climbing. I brushed away large amounts of snow until finding an ideal thin crack then used my other tool to gently tap the pick into place. This created a sort of self-belay to hold onto while I continued to clear more snow, slowly making my way sideways across the wall.

I reached an exposed prow heavily covered in snow where I had to dig an exposed trench further left before making my way onto the crest. Then I carefully manoeuvred around cornices and snow mushrooms. This brought me to the upper snow slopes where I found better conditions and less tiresome trail-breaking, and could make my way relatively quickly towards the upper mixed runnels that Infinite Patience is famous for. As I neared the runnels, I could see two possible options, and both were blocked by large snow mushrooms. This made it impossible to know if

The long traverse towards the summit.
Photo: Marc-Andre Leclerc

there was any ice beneath or which would be the best route. The right-hand option looked to be less vertical so I decided to explore it first. I soon found myself scraping up a sketchy groove while digging a tunnel though the snow mushroom, taking care not to dislodge the entire thing on top of myself. I could not help but knock snow into my jacket and was soon soaked through to my base layer. I became concerned that if I topped-out the face into the wind soaking wet that I would become hypothermic. I slowly forced my tunnel through the mushroom, grovelling upwards through this unexpected crux, and soon exited the groove into easier-angled climbing above. I found better névé and exceptionally fun mixed climbing in grooves high on the face. The position was fantastic.

Shortly before reaching the Emperor Ridge, I traversed left onto a ledge into the sun where I allowed my clothes to dry. I also brewed up four litres of water, afraid that once I reached the Emperor Ridge the wind would make it impossible for me to use my stove. Once I was sufficiently dry and had plenty of water, I drank half and saved the other two litres for the remainder of the climb. After traversing back onto the route, more easy ice and two excellent mixed chimney pitches brought me to the Emperor Ridge.

The views were phenomenal as I scrambled upwards to eventually reach the long traverse across the west face, which is used to avoid the gargoyles of the upper Emperor Ridge. This 800-metre traverse can be the physical and mental crux of the route, and although not technical, traversing steep and exposed snow for such a distance is a tedious affair.

I kicked steps and planted my tools for what felt like an eternity, my gloves becoming wet and frozen solid in the cold wind. I watched the sun slowly make its way towards the horizon while traversing towards the Wishbone Arête, which never appeared to get any closer.

Eventually I broke upwards through moderate mixed terrain, now having to stop quite often to catch my breath and shake out my feet, which were starting to become incredibly sore from hours of front-pointing. I entered a blue ice groove in between the spectacular and enormous upper gargoyles, which were very reminiscent of the famous rime mushrooms of the Torres in Patagonia. I reminded myself to enjoy the spectacular climbing, but at this point, my feet were in agony. I was beginning to suffer my way upwards towards the summit, merely metres away.

I stumbled onto the summit of Robson at sunset and was rewarded with a breathtaking view. Snow and ice extended as far as the eye could see in all directions. Robson seemed to be so much taller than any of the surrounding peaks, like a platform in the sky looking down on the rest of the world. I was elated to have made it to the summit, but my feet were in such pain that I knew I could not immediately begin to downclimb the west bowl. I peered over the edge of the south face, but I did not want to take any chances walking alone on the glacier or traversing the infamous ledges beneath the south glacier seracs.

I decided that my best option was to dig a trench in the rime of the summit plateau and open bivouac until I felt rested enough to begin the descent. This would also allow the snow of the west bowl to freeze, making for safer conditions the following morning. I had a light emergency bivy sack—essentially a garbage bag with a reflective liner—and I used my light cord and backpack as insulation to lie on. I took off my outer boots to give my feet a break, and I began snacking on my remaining food, hoping that the calories would help me stay warmer through the cold, windy night. I shivered inside my flimsy bivy sack and pondered my position, alone at night in an ice coffin on the highest summit in the Rockies. Despite the discomfort, it was undeniable that the situation was quite stupendous.

At one point, the wind died down slightly, and I used the stove to make a hot-water bottle that I placed under my hip, where I was losing most of my heat to the cold ground below. This allowed some comfort for a short time, but I soon began to shiver uncontrollably again. The wind was too strong to light my stove, so I attempted to use the stove inside of the small bivy sack. I managed to get it lit and was reheating the water when, in the darkness, the water boiled over into my bivy, drenching my clothes.

I yelled an obscenity and realized that my situation was becoming too desperate to stay on the summit any longer. I climbed out of the bivy sack and began to organize my equipment for the descent. My headlamp batteries were dead, and it took several minutes with frozen fingers to replace the batteries with fresh ones. Rime was growing all over my gear, my outer boots and my bivy sack. I forced on my frozen outer boots, and with numb hands and feet, I climbed over the edge of the summit plateau and onto the upper west face.

Once I reached ice, I became pleasantly distracted in the familiar rhythm of drilling V-threads and making my 25-metre rappels. I sometimes had to downclimb moderate mixed ground and névé to find suitable anchors, and I left two nuts and a piton in place to rappel short rock bands. I reached the long traverse ledge exactly as morning began to dawn. I was now slightly out of the worst of the wind and I dug a ledge into a sheltered zone between two sharp rock pinnacles to try to brew more water. Sitting on my ledge, spindrift poured down either side of me as I filled the Jetboil with snow and relit the stove each time the wind blew it out.

I was having to grab my lighter so often from a pocket that I kept the pocket unzipped for quick access. As I sat melting snow, I noticed a small pebble tumbling down the face and over the edge of the cliff bands below. Suddenly, with a heart-sinking feeling, I realized that the falling pebble was not a pebble after all—it was my lighter. Just then the stove blew out again.

I opened the lid and saw 500 millilitres of water inside, so I added all of my remaining electrolyte tablets and accepted that this was to be my last water for a while. The main problem was that all of my food at the base of the route needed to be cooked on the stove, and I was now worried that I would be unable to replenish after the climb.

I continued to downclimb steep frozen snow for several hundred vertical metres as chips of falling ice fell on and around me, released from above by the morning sun. I looked over my shoulder and could suddenly see the shadow of the mountain extending forever into the horizon against a red sky. I tried to take a photo but my camera battery had died from the cold, and I was well beyond being motivated to replace it with a new one. I accepted that the image of this moment would have to remain my own. It was powerful.

As I lost elevation, I began traversing to the west, eventually rounding the mountain and making my way down moderate terrain near the edge of the Emperor Ridge. As the angle decreased, I knew that I was home free and that there was little chance of having an accident or mishap. I had made it!

I stumbled along the shale bands and across snow ledges, making a couple more rappels over rock steps before eventually reaching my skis by mid-morning. With tired legs, I skied back down the moraines and picked up the food and equipment I had left at my first bivy site. I skied to the edge of the Robson River where I lay in the sun drinking water and eating the food that did not need to be cooked.

Pondering my options, I decided to ski to the Hargreaves shelter at Berg Lake to see if there was a lighter inside. Two long kilometres later, I found the shelter, and much to my relief, a lighter. I spent a long while rehydrating meals and eating my fill

On the summit at sunset before the long, cold bivouac.
Photo: Marc-Andre Leclerc

before eventually falling asleep on the floor of the shelter. When I awoke, I found in my pocket, much to my dismay, a backup lighter that had been there the whole time. The enduring stress had been all for nothing.

Regardless of the lighter situation, I was deeply happy and in an incredible state of mind. It was now my fourth day alone in the mountains, and my thoughts had reached a depth and clarity that I had never before experienced. The magic was real.

I thought to myself that the essence of alpinism lies in true adventure. I was deeply content that I had not carried a watch with me to keep time, as the obsession with time and speed is one of the greatest detractors from the alpine experience. I was happy that I experienced it all on my first visit to the mountain, and that the route had been in virgin condition. One of the greatest challenges of mountaineering is dealing with the natural obstacles the mountain provides. So often, routes will be fearsomely difficult for the first party of the season, and then once the obstacles have been cleared, a track established, becoming easier for those who follow.

Always following the prepared routes in order to attain the summit or set records strips the mountain of its deepest beauty, like burning the cathedral to build a stadium. As a young climber, it is undeniable that I have been manipulated by the media and popular culture, and that some of my climbs have been subconsciously shaped by what the world perceives to be important in terms of sport. Through time spent in the mountains, away from the crowds, away from the stopwatch and the grades and all the lists of records, I have slowly become able to pick apart what is important to me and discard things that are not.

Of course, the journey of learning never ends, and I have come to believe that the natural world is the greatest teacher of all. In fact, listening in silence to the universe around you is perhaps the most productive way of learning. Perhaps not much of a surprise, people are often afraid of their own thoughts, resorting to drowning them out with constant noise and distraction. Is it a fear of learning who we are that causes this? Maybe we are afraid to confront our own personalities. We go on living in a world of falseness, filling the void of true contentment as actors striving at who we are supposed to be rather than the individuals we are.

Already I have been asked how fast I was on the route, but I honestly cannot tell you how many hours the Emperor Face took me to climb. I began when I felt ready and I reached the top at sundown.

I am also unaware of how long the hike back to the road took. But I do know that the descent through the changing ecosystems back into the world of green lushness and deep blue lakes instilled more peace in me than if I had been calculating my pace.

My visit with the Emperor was a truly special experience. At first, I was intimidated by his strong aura, but we began a friendship and the king generously shared his wealth, leaving me a much richer person.

The Emperor Face of Mount Robson from the comfort of the Berg Lake Shelter.
Photo: Marc-Andre Leclerc

Summary

Infinite Patience (VI M5 WI5), Emperor Face, Mt. Robson. First solo ascent: Marc-Andre Leclerc, April 17, 2016.

Big Game Hunters

Steven Kovalenko

EVERYONE NEEDS A FRIEND THEY CAN call and say "Get dressed! We're going on an adventure!" Maurice Perreault is that friend in my life. A reliable ringleader for many of our trips together, I would never turn down an outing with him, no matter how long the slog. Instead of climbing, he devoted winter 2017 to ice fishing and hunting real game in the Rockies, with typical Maury flair and the requisite misery marches. I have heard stories of hunting with crampons, ropes and 14-plus-hour days. Some things never change. We shared several great outings together in 2016 resulting in what we believe are first ascents, and I hope this inspires you to get out in the hills with a good friend.

Spring of 2016 started extremely early. I recall more than 20 days of sport climbing, Yam adventures and muddy mountain bike rides before Maury called. His latest alpine schemes were appealing. My sport climbing was progressing at a rapid clip, but I longed to cool off on a remote alpine outing accompanied with good friendship.

Inspired by a photo of the north face of this "sexy mountain" on Facebook, research indicated it is called Elpoca Mountain and has no routes to the summit via the main couloir. We faced warm mid-June temperatures and thought lugging bivy gear in a backpack on a mountain bike for a short route was distasteful. Instead, we started at midnight on June 4 without sleep. Copious coffee consumption was required. Maury and I cruised Highway 40 to Elbow Lakes trailhead and pushed and slogged our bikes to where the trail runs below the south ridge ascent gully, which would be our descent route. The steep couloir glowed in the moonlight from meadows around Piper Creek and begged to be climbed. A brief interlude of low-intensity log-hopping through a surprise slot canyon in the creek landed us in talus and meadows below the couloir's runout zone.

The couloir went quickly to the base of the ridge with a 10-metre easy mixed step at the top. A solid belay was found on knifeblades at the top of this step. Above the belay was steep, crumbly rock with small edges and limited options for protection. I climbed a rising traverse at M5R above and left of the belay for 10 metres, aiming for an alcove above a snow patch where I found options to build

North Face Couloir of Elpoca Mountain. Photo: Rafal Kazmierczak

an anchor. I brought Maury up this short pitch and he led on, traversing left around the corner on snow until it was possible to trend rightwards on snow. The next pitch zigzagged, linking snow patches and weaknesses through the rock on the face at 5.4 with limited gear to the ridge proper. We climbed together roped on a running belay along an aesthetic and narrow ridge (up to 5.4 with steep snow) leading to the summit (single self-drive bolt rappel placed in 2007). We descended the south ridge route, continuing down the Golden Gully through the now isothermal snow.

Zipping back to the car on pavement, our climbing helmets, heavy packs and ice axes stood out against the weekend-warrior Lycra crowd on road bikes enjoying the June sunshine before the highway officially opened for the season. In total, we were 14 hours and 45 minutes return from the seasonal car closure. Power-naps were required somewhere in a Kananaskis parking lot before the most difficult, sleep-deprived drive of my life back from the mountains. I collapsed in Maury's spare bedroom (a.k.a. his closet) on a Therm-a-Rest at 6 p.m., and had the deepest sleep ever after being awake for nearly 48 hours straight.

Two weeks later, we caught the first Lake O'Hara bus of the season with other hardy hikers and campers. An early alpine start made the best of the forecast's short weather window. A beautiful classic couloir line snaked up from Cathedral Basin and topped out to an unknown narrowing finish. Knee-deep, dry powder in the bottom half of the couloir had me wishing for skis. The tools came out halfway up the line, and we enjoyed icy névé and firm snow conditions throughout the upper half to a choke. As I belayed from solid rock, Maury took the penultimate and only belayed pitch of the day. Thin alpine ice and névé covered a deep groove, which topped out just east of the summit. It was a classic aesthetic mixed pitch that had us grinning ear to ear and wishing for more. After tagging the summit, we descended the normal route and waved down the return bus with our green poker-chip ride tokens just before the weather broke.

Summer passed and fall arrived. Maury was out hunting sheep in the North Ghost when he spied an ice line on Costigan through a spotting

The South Face Couloir on Cathedral Mountain. Photo: Maurice Perreault

scope. I could not believe it was a new line, and our research showed no existing routes in this drainage in the Ghost. A real oddity to us, considering the proliferation of routes in every drainage in the Ghost. Our good friend Chris Meginbir ferried us through the North Ghost to Marker 39 in his monster jeep. A wet, crunchy snowpack and humid conditions had us wonder if we had been transported to the West Coast. Just over two hours later, we stood at the base of the ice pillar, our doubts of route integrity erased. The pillar appeared to be solidly attached to the rock at the top. Most of the first pitch appeared technical, but not overly steep, so one could always bail before committing to the pillar.

I was feeling strong and confident due to my pre-season enthusiasm for training and drytooling, so I drew the first pitch, which ended up being the crux. Mushroomed and featured ice led to a steep and hollow-sounding pillar. Good gear at the base of the steep portion gave me the confidence to take it to the top. Maury snagged the second pitch with interesting and technical WI3+ thin sections. We named it Big Game Hunter—a highly recommended early season route if it forms regularly—as a tribute to Maury's new hobby and to all the other "big game hunters" out there looking for new adventures in the Rockies. Chris and two of his friends returned to the drainage two days later to snag the first ascent of Devil's Pinch (WI4+, 30m), located 40 minutes before Big Game Hunter.

Summary

North Face Couloir (IV M5R 5.4), Elpoca Mountain, Opal Range. FA: Steven Kovalenko, Maurice Perreault, June 4, 2016.

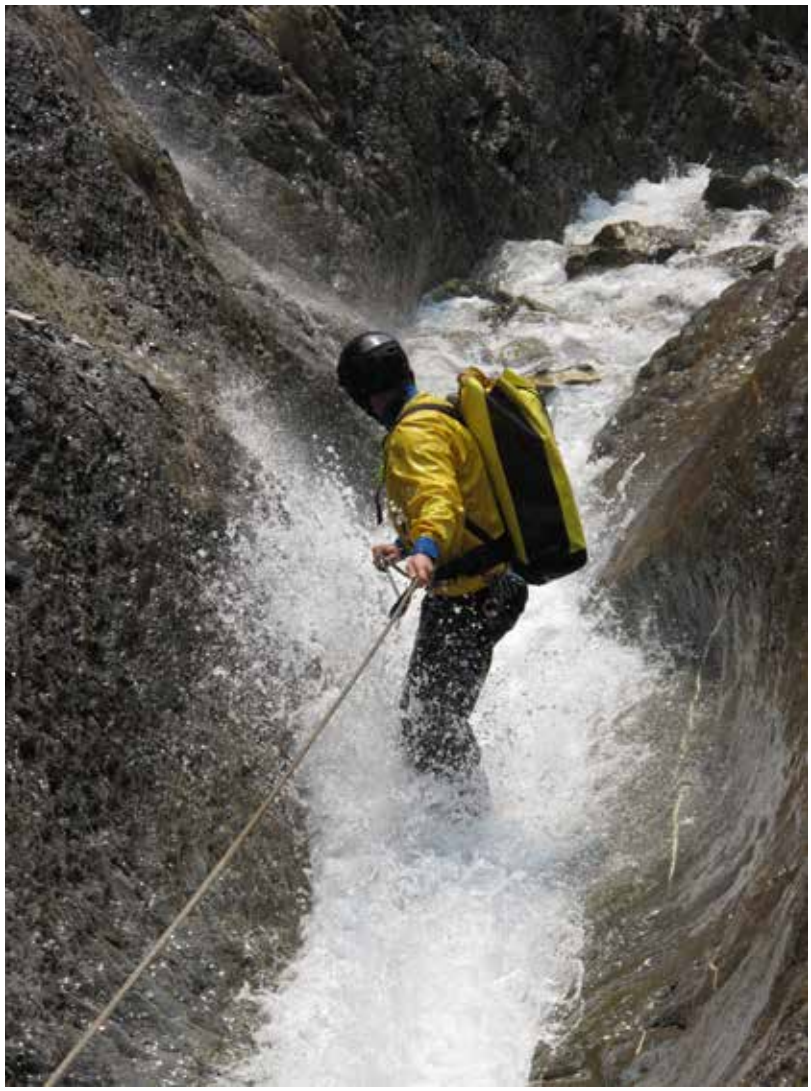
South Face Couloir (III AI3 M5), Cathedral Mountain, Lake O'Hara. FA: Steven Kovalenko, Maurice Perreault, June 18, 2016.

Big Game Hunter (III WI5+, 120m), northeast face, Mt. Costigan. FA: Steven Kovalenko, Chris Meginbir, Maurice Perreault, October 27, 2016.

Big Game Hunter on the northeast face of Mount Costigan. Photo: Steven Kovalenko

Cleavage Canyoneering

Greg Horne



Joe Storms starts the first rappel in the lower canyon.
Photo: Greg Horne

THE IDEA OF DESCENDING the major canyon drainage of Mount Wilson came to me in 2002. Most canyons in the Canadian Rockies are valley-bottom features. To find a canyon from the alpine to the valley is rare. The west side of Wilson fits the bill.

The day before completing the first descent of Hydro Circus [*CAJ*, vol. 86, 2003], Scott Campbell and I began the reconnaissance of Wilson from the bottom up in 2002. We built double glue-in anchors for the bottom five drops. Two days later, as we finished Hydro Circus, a stalled thunderstorm cell over Wilson released a rock debris flow that swept the bottom of the canyon and closed Highway 93 with boulders and gravel. Our new anchors were tested; amazingly, only one Petzl glue-in was bent over but still usable. Time and again since then the highway has been closed due to the road culvert being blocked with rock released from this canyon.

Over the next few years, I made at least two more recon and station-building trips with James Clark of what began to be known as The Apron—a low-angled and low-commitment section of the overall canyon. We would hike along the edge of the canyon, fix a rope to the trees, rap in to the waterfall, build a station, ascend out and repeat for 15 stations.

With Ben Alderman, the first ice-climbing trip through lower canyon (a.k.a Lady Wilson's Cleavage) permitted a few more stations to be established. Understanding what was involved in the upper canyon and steep headwall became the next priority. J.P. Kors and I made The Apron and Lower Canyon ice climb, followed by mainly a snow climb of the upper canyon and finally the headwall via WI2-3 hidden (from the road) gully. Above, terrain led to moraines, the cirque glacier and ultimately the 3,261-metre summit of Wilson. Being an avalanche-control slide path for highway protection and the funnel nature of the terrain meant that the upper canyon was buried under many metres of snow. Our scouting trip of the route did not reveal any of its secrets.

To access the Lower Canyon in summer conditions without coming over the top of the mountain involved climbing a rock band forming this canyon. On August 17, 2010, J.P. Kors made an impressive rock lead on a prow south of the canyon while Joe Storms and I followed with insanely

heavy packs that contained drysuits and related canyoning gear. This bypass would also provide a known bailout option (two 25-metre rappels from trees) should conditions go sideways. Six rappels from five to 25 metres in moderately aggressive flow conditions saw us through the breach. We began the descent of The Apron, but lack of time and increase flow from afternoon glacial melt forced us to escape out. September 5, 2012, had us back to the top of The Apron for a full descent in 23 pitches filling in rappel stations missed by James Clark and me.

The window of access for a descent is limited. Too early in the summer, avalanche debris buries the canyon and/or snowmelt makes for too high water levels. After snowmelt, any sustained hot weather has the cirque glacier melting and discharging too much water. If one waits until late September or early October, low temperatures at altitude cause verglas and harsh bivy conditions. The correct balance comes late August to mid-September. To reach the top of the canyon headwall requires a full-day approach via a gully system on the south side, a glacial crossing of the Wilson Icefield, and then a snow/ice descent to a bivy site. Two more days would be needed to do the actual canyon. With group gear like a bivy tarp and stove and ropes and anchors, critical mass was a minimum party size of four.

Similar to the big alpine routes of the Rockies, blindly picking a future trip date was like winning the lottery. Still it had to be done to align work schedules and days off for four or more of us. Labour Day long weekend was a natural, but it seems recently to be a poor-weather phase between summer and more autumn-like conditions. In 2015, I rallied the troops but weather and a stomach flu conspired against us; we gave the mountain a pass and headed to the front-range canyons of Jasper.

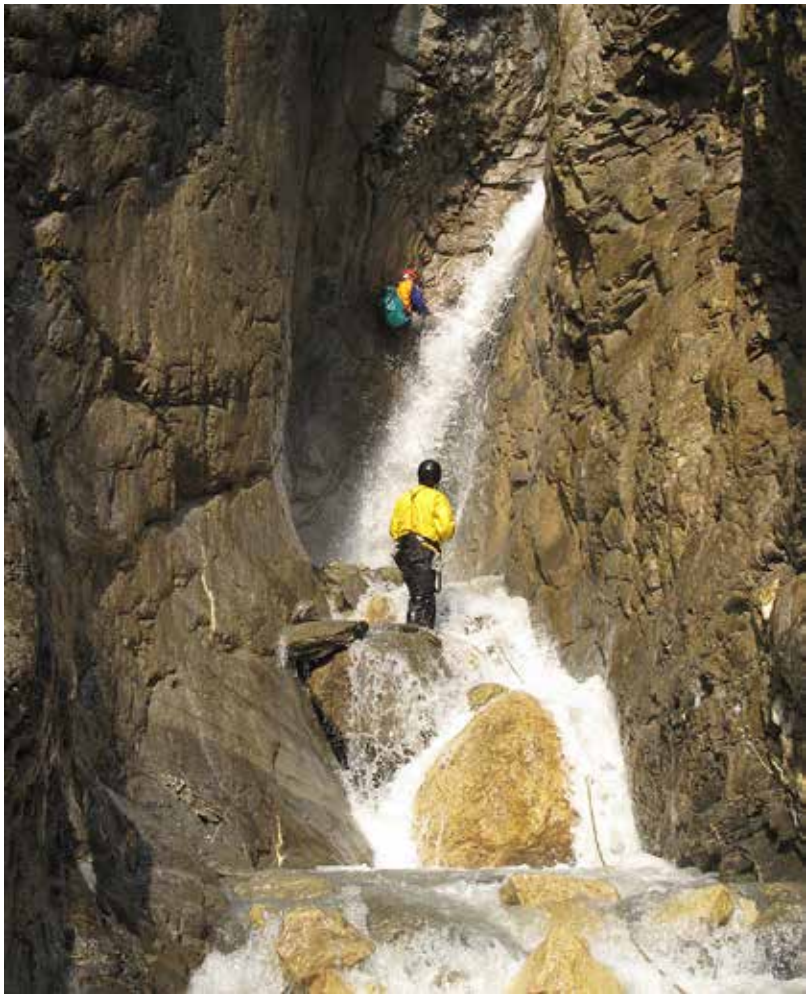
Gavin Elsley on the Spin Wash rappel in the lower canyon of The Cleavage. Photo: Greg Horne

STARTING LATE JULY TO EARLY August 2016, canyoneers started receiving e-mails from me flogging the Wilson trip again. After our 2015 miss, I hooked some Calgary cavers: Jeremy Bruns, Gavin Elsley and Katie Graham. They were game, luckily maybe not fully comprehending what they were getting into. Canyoning is more or less like caving with the roof off and the lights on. That is what the Aussies say anyway.

Leaving Highway 11 (1,450 metres) on September 3, our team of four shouldered large, uncomfortable PVC packs and headed off towards the obvious gully on the south side. The last time I had been there was 1982, and I did not recall as much forest and thick willows back then. The massive resurgence spring (probably from the Wilson Icefield through the mountain) flowed strong

enough that there was little opportunity to ascend along its banks. Once into the dry left fork, travel improved and we reached the col (2,377 metres) by 1 p.m. The way onward was slightly depressing with an ugly talus descent to a lake (2,286 metres) not shown on the topo map, socked-in summit conditions and threatening precipitation.

Once reaching the glacier tongue, we could finally start using (and not just carrying) our ice axe, crampons and rope. Soon I was happy to have brought a trekking pole since fresh drifting snow obscured mainly small crevasses, which the pole greatly helped finding before my legs did. One drop into a keeper hole up to my armpits and a couple more to the waist kept things real enough.



Lower canyon rappels of The Cleavage. Photo: Greg Horne

Nearing the high col (3,150 metres) northeast of the summit, a sunshine break boosted moral—weather-wise, luck was on our side. We could actually see where we wanted to head down the mountain into the northwest bowl. Earlier planning talk of bagging the summit en route were tossed aside in favour of visibility and a chance of warming very cold toes (a month after the trip my left toes were still a bit numb).

Plunge-stepping down fresh snow brought us to a cliff band that blocked the continued easy descent. First we thought a northward end run around the band might be possible, but finally we were back to near where we first reached the cliff, and Katie navigated a downclimb that left us a 15-metre rappel. By the time Gavin and I finished the rappel, the headlamps of Jeremy and Katie were seen far below us skirting the glacier, a good sign it was clear sailing for the rest of day one.

Just off the glacier, the first two had found a soft spot at the toe of a moraine slope and had started levelling a sleeping platform tight enough for us to be sheltered under a tarp. Looking up at the stacked boulders directly above our bivy site (2,573 metres), I told myself that the Rockies is not a recently active earthquake zone, and then blanked out rolling-rock thoughts from my head.

Morning dawned overcast with a skiff of snow overnight, but conditions were good. The last thing we wanted was full sun to melt fresh snow. There were two options of descending the headwall: 1) establish a route down or beside the waterfall that drains the glacier cirque and is visible from the highway, or 2) use the north drainage (not visible from the highway) that JP and I followed in winter. The latter turned out to be a canyon feature that broke up the headwall height into three rappels, versus the possibility of a free-hanging pitch greater than 60 metres that would leave us dangling out of rope. We chose the north or hidden drainage and called it the Headwall Bypass.

The Upper Canyon had 15 more rappels, most of which were a half rope length or less. Although the sun came out on and off, water levels remained unchanged and the descent unfolded without incident, except that Gavin's rope was shortened by

five metres after a core shot. With about an hour of light left as we exited the Upper Canyon, we debated whether to continue late into the night through the Lower Canyon (known terrain) or bivy and start fresh in the morning. The weather seemed stable with cool overcast skies, so we went for a bivy with avalanche debris trees as our firewood supply. Despite drysuits, we had mostly damp to wet clothes, but our campfire allowed us to pretty much get dried out.

Day three began overcast with light rain starting as we were packing up. Like the previous bivy, our second site was exposed to overhead hazards. A rock about the size of an apple, out of nowhere, landed across the creek from camp. I looked up the fall line and saw nothing else. Then movement caught my attention from the upper canyon. Rocks were flying through the air from the north side then ricocheting back and forth on the canyon walls towards us. Although probably travelling at 100 kilometres per hour, there was a slow-motion character to their movement. When a breadloaf-sized block hit the slope and exploded just above where we had slept, our trance was broken. Scattering for our lives, I aimed to get behind a massive boulder below camp. Stumbling as I ran, I fell hard on the rocks but jumped up and found cover. As quickly as it had started, the rockfall was over, as least for the moment.

I finished packing in several minutes and announced that I was starting down to the first drop of the Lower Canyon to rig anchors. The rain increased and I dreaded the expected new rockfall it would bring. Now we headed into a narrow slot of the Lower Canyon with little protection from above. While I waited for the others to catch up, I rested under an umbrella-sized overhang, as if this would really save me. The rain abated and nerves calmed. Familiar terrain eased tension, and when we spotted Joe Storms near the top of The Apron, morale rose tremendously. He had come up join us for The Apron.

Once we joined Joe and were using pre-built anchors, we leap-frogged in teams to set then pull down ropes. Still, the 23 drops of The Apron series took the rest of the day and we arrived at the highway at about 6 p.m.

Jeremy Bruns on the fifth rappel in the upper canyon of The Cleavage. Photo: Greg Horne

Summary

West Canyon (a.k.a. The Cleavage (4C-VI-R, 47 rappels, A.C.A. canyon rating)), Mount Wilson, Banff National Park, Canadian Rockies. First Complete Descent: Jeremy Bruns, Gavin Elsley, Kathleen Graham, Greg Horne, September 3-5, 2016.

The East

New Found Dreamlines

Will Mayo

LAST WINTER, ANNA PFAFF AND I returned to the traditional mixed paradise that is Gros Morne National Park. After considering various options at Ten Mile Pond, we once again set to work on the Cholesterol Wall, this time on a direct start to our 2015 route, Apocalypse Now [see *CAJ*, vol. 98, 2015, p. 111]. On February 19, after two days of effort, we freed Apocalypse Now Direct, linking into the crux corner of the original line. The direct line ascends the "carry-out couloir," named by Joe Terravecchia, Casey Shaw and Andy Tuthill, after two previous accidents involving collapsing ice from above. This year, we found the icicles of the upper portion of the route to be in relatively lean condition, and thus deemed a direct line to be a relatively safe and an aesthetically appealing option. The variation involves a 90-metre pitch of WI4 and continues up the plumb left-facing corner above for a 30-metre pitch of M8 protected with an assortment of pitons, nuts and cams to fist size.

Upon returning to our cabin along the shore of the partly frozen ocean in Rocky Harbour, I took two Excedrin and went to sleep with a splitting migraine while Anna went next door to return our neighbours' packs, those of Bayard Russell and Nick Bullock, who had been climbing on the

Left: Will Mayo on pitch six of Dreamline.
Photo: Joe Terravecchia

Right: Cholesterol Wall at Ten Mile Pond:
(1) The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe,
(2) Apocalypse Now,
(3) Apocalypse Now Direct.
Photo: Will Mayo

Cholesterol Wall beside us that day [see page 156]. We had hauled out their sacks for them that afternoon in the sleigh behind our snowmobile, so they would not have to "ride dirty" (that is, ride their sled while wearing their packs) on their way back to town. Coincidentally, our friend and mentor, Joe Terravecchia, showed up at the boys' cabin while Anna was there and explained that he needed partners for the king line of the province, the same line for which Joe and his partner, Casey Shaw, had been somewhat secretly vying for 20 years. Casey had to leave the following day. Joe explained to Anna that the line had formed up well, but he and Casey had been tent-bound in their camp atop the Pissing Mare Waterfall for the preceding eight days in horrible weather. Bayard and Nick were leaving on the following day, as were our other friends Jon Walsh and Michelle Kadatz, who were also on a sending spree in the park at the time. As luck would have it, Anna and I were in by default. Anna informed me of all this when I woke from my headache-induced nap a few hours later and staggered out of my bedroom.

"What do you think?" she asked.

"That's a question?" I replied. We promptly abandoned our plan to push our direct line to the top by repeating the top pitches of Apocalypse Now, and made plans to rendezvous with Joe the following day to get briefed and sort the rack.

Dreamline on Pissing Mare Waterfall, Western Brook Pond.
Photo: Will Mayo

And so, after a rest, Joe Terravecchia, Anna Pfaff and I climbed the long-coveted spray-ice line to the right of the Pissing Mare Waterfall, which cascades over the imposing granite cliffs above the southeastern end of Western Brook Pond. Dreamline began with a 140-metre simul-climb up a ramp below and to the right of the base of the falls. The ramp is well-sheltered from overhead hazards and was coated with thin water-ice smears that allowed access to the golden spray-ice, which plastered the towering vertical corner system and headwall immediately to the right of the falls. We climbed the spray ice directly in five additional pitches, utilizing ice caves along the way for sheltered belays. The crux (WI6+) was the fifth pitch, led by Joe, involving an overhanging bulge. The sixth and final pitch, which was also challenging, worked out right onto the exposed vertical headwall and continued straight up progressively thinning ice to the top.

Our snowmobile guides arrived at 5 p.m. at the meeting place atop the falls, as planned, with a spread of smoked salmon and barbecued chicken wings, warmed on the muffler pots of their snowmobiles on the ride in—as well as a bottle of Scotch. As we revelled in our success and the overwhelming hospitality of our Newfoundlander guides, I was struck by the poignance of Anna and my good fortune to have been able to share Joe's dream line with him by happenstance. After all, Joe is the one that encouraged us to try Apocalypse Now two years before, which thus inspired the following year's climb of The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (M12, WI7+, 220 metres) on the

same wall [see *CAJ*, vol. 99, 2016, p. 150]. Our only regret was that Casey, who had put so much time and devotion into the idea of the climb, had missed the send. But we knew then as well as we know now, the line is as much his as it is ours.

Joe left for home the following day. Anna and I had one more day to climb before our own scheduled departure. And so, as a Hail Mary epilogue, we climbed a new mixed route on the Big Wave Wall, which hangs above the centre of the southern shore of Bakers Brook Pond. Psycho Killer ascended moderate ice for 100 metres to the base of the right side of the upper overhanging rock wall. A 30-metre pitch continued up and right on more moderate ice, but finished with a few hard moves up onto a disconnected ice structure for a perched semi-hanging belay beneath a striking left-leaning overhanging rock corner. The classy 20-metre corner crack involved pick torquing and good gear (pitons, nuts and small to medium cams), and finished on a comfortable ledge beneath the giant ice awning above. The final 20-metre pitch was one of the most difficult and dangerous pitches I have led with sparse and perhaps questionable rock gear and extremely difficult ice climbing to surmount the roof.

Gros Morne National Park is still relatively untapped for traditional mixed new routes. Already I am counting the months till the ponds freeze once again.

Summary

Apocalypse Now Direct (M8 WI4, 120m), Cholesterol Wall, Ten Mile Pond, Gros Morne National Park, Newfoundland: FA: Will Mayo, Anna Pfaff, February 19, 2017.

Dreamline (WI6+, 385m), Pissing Mare Waterfall, Western Brook Pond, Gros Morne National Park, Newfoundland: FA: Will Mayo, Anna Pfaff, Joe Terravecchia, February 21, 2017.

Psycho Killer (M9 WI7+, 170m), Big Wave Wall, Bakers Brook Pond, Gros Morne National Park, Newfoundland: FA: Will Mayo, Anna Pfaff, February 23, 2017.

Psycho Killer on Big Wave Wall, Bakers Brook Pond.
Photo: Will Mayo

Fundy Mixed

Nathan Kutcher and Rebecca Lewis

NATHAN'S STORY: Since the winter my wife, Rebecca, and I started ice climbing, I have been intrigued about the possibilities of ice climbing in Nova Scotia where Rebecca grew up. Stories of tucked-away, ice-choked hollows and massive cliffs with the occasional ice route fueled my imagination. Limited time on short visits, warm winter temperatures and stories of unspeakable choss has always kept me from looking into the potential of the area when we have been back there to visit Rebecca's family. This past winter's extended Christmas plans with the family provided adequate time to explore, even if the temperatures were not ideal.

Roger Fage's 2011 book, *Ice Pirate's Guide to Nova Scotia*, documents a number of areas along the Bay of Fundy from Baxters Harbour to the community of Morden and beyond. It proved to be an invaluable source of information, allowing me to hone in on and make a plan to explore the areas that held the best potential for cliffs with untapped potential. With a favourable tide forecast, I took off early one morning armed with a topographic map book, Roger's guidebook and Google Maps to search for cliffs and the possibility for new routes. After an hour and a half of driving with rabid anticipation, which seemed like forever on a patchwork of back roads, I arrived at Baxters Harbour.

The brief letdown of the Baxters Falls area was

Nathan Kutcher on Ursula at Pirates Harbour. Photo: Rebecca Lewis

quickly filled with elation a short distance down Old Baxter Mill Road and the coast. Along with the four documented routes at Old Baxter Mill Road, Roger's book mentioned "some great potential for hard mixed lines." He was not kidding! The 20- to 30-metre gently overhanging fractured basalt/volcanic cliffs had a staggering amount of potential on some of the best "total choss" I have seen. I took a quick hike down the coast to survey the potential and take photos of possible lines before I headed to Halls Harbour.

From the parking area at Halls Harbour it was easy to see the potential of the area, even without much ice. With its easy access, when the weather is cold, Halls Harbour is Nova Scotia's most popular ice climbing destination. A number of full ice lines form with the potential for twice as many mixed routes.

Next on the stop was Black Rock, near Canada Creek. At high tide, the ocean reaches the cliff face, but a couple of hours of receding tide reveals a cobblestone beach. I had the most hope for this area. Descriptions of steep cliffs and unclimbed lines toyed with my imagination, and now the cliffs taunted me along the committing beach. Despite the warm conditions, dribbles of ice were trying to form on the overhanging cliffs. The further I walked, the better the cliffs seemed to be. How was this possible? After about two kilometres of continuous cliff line, I could hardly believe my eyes. A massive cave was sunken into the cliffside. Icicles hung from the lip, as well as from fissures inside. Beyond the cave was a steep wall undercut by the high tide, which was also capped with icicles. The cliff line went on for another three kilometres or so to Harbourville, but the potential further down the cliff line seemed inconsequential compared to the section of rock before me.

REBECCA'S STORY: After his first visit, I asked Nathan what he thought—he had walked almost 20 kilometres that day.

"The cliffs are endless!" he told me.

"And what about the tides?" I asked.

"They're high. They're really high."

The Bay of Fundy has the highest tides in the world. On the days we went out, the tides were 11.3 metres high, but they can reach heights of up to 16 metres. The two main tidal considerations in Roger's guidebook are "High: mess up and you'll be swimming" and "High: you'll either have to climb out or swim." The moral is do not take the tides lightly and check the tidal charts.

After a couple of solo trips by Nathan, we went out together hoping to climb ice and traditional mixed routes. Other than the tidal nature of the cliffs, the second big issue with ice climbing in Nova Scotia is temperature. Being on the Atlantic, the temperatures are never very cold for very long. Conditions did not cooperate and in an effort to salvage the day, we switched objectives to sport routes at Halls Harbour. Because of its easy access and its popularity, we thought that mixed lines there would have the most potential for others to repeat them. We eyed up a nice vertical-looking wall that we hoped would yield some good moderates. The top also had surprisingly easy access, which allowed us to rap in and start bolting before heading back to base camp at my parents' house. After a second warm day of cleaning loose rock and bolting, we had three routes ready to be climbed once conditions allowed.

On our third day out together, conditions were perfect. It was business time. After a couple of days of colder temperatures, the rock was consolidated and ice had built up for the top-outs. We also had a good window with the tides. Nathan quickly dispatched his two routes, which he named Trogdor (with a dragon-like mass of brush at the top) and Strong Mad. I put in a few tries on my new route, but realized I had imagined there would be much more ice at the top than there actually was. The route needed another bolt, so at the end of the day, I hiked to the top of the cliff and remedied the issue.

The next day, I quickly sent Teen Girl Squad and spent some time on Trogdor. The three routes Nathan and I had bolted at Halls were quite a bit harder than either of us had expected, resulting in grades from M8 to M10.

On our last day in Nova Scotia, we went to Black Rock where Nathan had spent some time bolting on an earlier trip. This was by far the most impressive section of shoreline. The 30-minute

hike along the water brought us by a number of steep walls punctuated with brilliant-looking ice lines whose bottoms had been wiped out by the tides. Nathan had started bolting two lines out of the cave that he had to abandon after reaching rock that was too chossy to bolt on lead. Instead, he settled on a line on the steep rock just past the cave. Nathan quickly sent his new route, Ursula at M10+. Unfortunately, I only had enough time to work on the steep and burly opening moves.

As we hiked out, we looked at other possible lines. Our trip to Nova Scotia was over and we had to get back to Ontario, but Black Rock could be a strongman's playground. We hope that the locals will get out and enjoy our new mixed routes and be inspired to add more on the finicky shore of the Bay of Fundy. With cliffs up to 50 metres tall, it was hard to believe these areas have been for the most part flying under the radar. Rock that seems like a house of cards when it is warm can be super solid when the worst is scaled off and frost bonds the rest together. While there are a few crack lines that could be climbed in traditional style, the rock is suited to bolted routes.

Summary

Teen Girl Squad (M8, 18m), Homestar Wall, Halls Harbour, N.S. FA: Rebecca Lewis, January 7, 2017.

Strong Mad (M10, 18m), Homestar Wall, Halls Harbour, N.S. FA: Nathan Kutcher, January 6, 2017.

Trogdor the Burninator (M9, 18m), Homestar Wall, Halls Harbour, N.S. FA: Nathan Kutcher, Rebecca Lewis, January 6, 2017.

Ursula (M10+, 15m), Black Rock, Pirates Harbour, N.S. FA: Nathan Kutcher, January 8, 2017.

Rebecca Lewis approaches Black Rock at Pirates Harbour. Photo: Nathan Kutcher

Maritime Ice

Greg Hughes

ALL IT TOOK TO SET THE hook was one photograph. Max passed his phone to show me the picture of the gorgeous ice line he had spotted while scouting for new routes. And so began my romance between rival ice climbs in two wilderness areas of neighbouring provinces on the east coast of Canada. With a tightly knit group of fellow climbers, I would divide my winter weekends between Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, searching for and climbing ice. The core of the group devoted to the N.S. side included Luc Gallant, Don Ricker, Michel Martin, Max Fisher and Marty Dube, while the New Brunswick missions were anchored by Sam Jones, Marc D'Astous, Mike Delaney and Chris MacLellan. Gallant and Martin were, like me, sharing the love of both areas.

Several years ago, I made my first foray into the Little Salmon River Wilderness Area in southeastern N.B. and climbed the classic Walton Glen Falls in Walton Glen Canyon, which is part of the LSR Wilderness Area. I was immediately captivated by the remoteness, the beauty, the untapped potential and, most of all, the quality of ice. This can be a very difficult destination to get to and move around in. It is roughly 12 kilometres from the nearest plowed road, with dense vegetation and bogs on the plateau that never seem to freeze, plus, the rivers at the bottom of the two valleys are always presenting adjunct hazards. It has epic adventure written all over it. But the potential reward was bright—dozens of long aesthetic climbs oozing with character. I was committed to spending as much time as possible discovering the hidden gems and climbing everything I could get my axes into, including old and new lines.

We began by concentrating our efforts in Walton Glen Gorge, ticking off moderates up to 100 metres long. The routes ranged from broad featured waterfalls to slot canyons and chimneys to long narrow winding runnels along the steep

The Geezer Wall in Walton Glen Gorge. Elegant Violence is the discontinuous ice line in the middle.
Photo: Joe Kennedy

walls of the gorge. A few of the tougher lines took a few tries and some remain unclimbed. One of the best lines suffers from being on the wrong aspect. Facing southwest, a three-pitch mixed climb named Elegant Violence still awaits a free ascent. The ice pitches have been done, but the middle pitch involving 20 metres of overhanging rock with no ice has proven to be very good at kicking my ass. I came close this season getting to the fourth bolt with lots of fuel left in the tank, which the crux moves quickly burned through and had me resort to pulling on nylon jugs to the anchor.

We are mostly pure ice climbers here on the east coast and the likely M9 effort required to get through the difficulties was not in me that day. The projects were not going anywhere and the allure of the other side of the plateau was growing too strong. It was time to venture into the Little Salmon River valley, but that was when Max showed me the photo and, suddenly, attentions were turned to Nova Scotia.

The Raven Head Wilderness area is found on the northern Nova Scotia coastline next to Chignecto Bay. Up to 60-metre-tall cliffs are found in this unique area between Apple Head and Sand River. This part of the coast faces mostly northeast, keeping the solar degradation to a minimum and permitting good ice to form on the steep cliffs. The photos I looked at were stunning, and I was easily persuaded to check out this area.

The high tides of the Bay of Fundy control the access to the vast majority of the climbing on the coast. Most of the climbs are inaccessible for several hours on either side of high tide. We had a good tide window in early February and headed down to explore the potential of the area. We parked the car and headed north to the cliff edge, and then made a 50-metre rap down the to the rocky beach. We knew we needed to walk west along the base of the cliff to find the bigger ice lines and the gem that was in Max's photo. After walking for an hour, we saw it. Three narrow columns of ice stacked on top of each other bound together by two horizontal ice ledges in between. At the top of the third column was a huge umbrella-shaped roof reaching out over the climb by at least four metres. There appeared to be an exit on the left, but what kind of infrastructure demolition would be required to get there? The ugly prospect of

Luc Gallant and Greg Hughes on Alaska Flashback, Little Salmon River. Photo: Craig Norris

bashing away at an exit with an ice roof the size of a pickup truck looming above was petrifying. It was a truly awesome line, but was it climbable? Or more importantly, was it climbable by us?

After nervously drooling over it for several minutes, we continued the recon. Another hour of walking and we had the area sized up with a plan in place. Michel and Don would tackle a line about a kilometre east of Birch Cove Falls, while Luc and I would climb a line not far from the gem. Luc carefully ascended a complex 35-metre line of WI5+ and I followed, wishing I had endured the neck pain required to watch him more closely. It was steep, sustained and techy for all but the last five metres. The beauty of this climb and the others around it had me wishing for a long winter. There were so many more to do, but the LSR was both closer in distance and closer in my mind. Luc, Michel and Marty went back two more times, ticking several more stellar lines, but the big one remains undone.

By the time March rolled around, all coastal climbing was out, making the choice obvious of where to spend my weekends. Two more trips to the LSR resulted in another four first ascents. I took advantage of a narrow chain of frozen ice on the river to explore the entire valley on a solo mission in early March. I climbed up a short waterfall that flowed into the river. This led to a long, winding band of ice. I continued up the low-angle flow until I was deposited at the base of a steep 40-metre wall holding six lines. In these conditions, I felt good about soloing two easy lines but saved three more for a return trip with Sam. On the same solo excursion, I spotted an exceptionally unique line poised on the west bank. It was catching some early morning sun but remained in good shape. A week later, I was back with Michel and Marc Hebert for the send. I began up the steep pillar, enjoying plastic ice before gaining the long right-trending ramp that led to the final curtain—not difficult climbing but varied and interesting with great movement throughout. The entire ramp was on top of a long diagonal roof, so the name seemed obvious: Fiddler on the Roof.

The winter clock was ticking and the end of our ice season was rapidly approaching by mid-March. Luc and I made it down the LSR for one more adventure before the river became impassable. We travelled down past the confluence of Walton Glen Brook and the LSR into an area where the classic Alaska Flashback is found. This 100-metre-long WI4 has much to offer as an ice climb, beginning with a pleasant romp up a pitch of WI2, followed by a narrow runnel that leads to a steep pitch of WI4 to WI4+. Luc choose the more difficult third-pitch variation on the left, which offered great pro but precarious tool placements. While rapping off, we could not help but notice an unclimbed route off to the right—a 60-metre line of verglas slabs connected to steep curtains. We answered the call, climbed it and gave it the name Grace Too. More attractive lines caught our eye, but we were out of time. Add these to the list of probably 20 more unclimbed prospects in the LSR valley.

Unclimbed pillars at Raven Head Wilderness. Photo: Don Ricker

Parsons Pond

Guy Robertson

PARSONS POND HAS A POPULATION of about 300 or so. An ice-scoured township on Newfoundland's mid-west coast, it is not exactly a tourist hotspot, especially in February. In fact, I doubt it is known or visited for anything in particular. When we first turned up there, I have to admit to being, well, just a wee bit underwhelmed.

I think Bayard had gone off to find one of the locals who had helped him out on a previous visit, when Nick and I decided to explore the local bakery. We stumbled in from the blizzard to find a full house of Newfoundland thoroughbred dogs, as well as more fur-lined boots, snowsuits and facial hair than made either of us feel comfortable. Our brightly coloured technical mountain wear seemed to glow and dazzle the locals through the dim tungsten light. The thermometer on the cafe's little convector heater must have been set at about 30 C. The lively banter that prevailed on our arrival was abruptly reined in to near silence—you could have cut the atmosphere with a knife. We stood there for a moment, gently simmering under our four layers of performance clothing, feeling a bit like the proverbial lambs just arrived at the slaughterhouse, before Nick blurted out confidently in his best Northern English drawl, "Allaow, 'ows it gowin then?"

Bayard Russel (leading) and Guy Robertson on the first ascent of Gat Me Moose B'y Direct. Photo: Nick Bullock

Within minutes, this burly gang of steel-framed, hard-eyed North Atlantic souls had softened to smiles and laughter.

"You're fram Scotland ur ye?! Jaysus, me woif's mather's from Glaysgow don't ye know!"

"Ye'r mountin' climbers are ye now?! Jaysus what ye dowin' that fur?!"

"And them outfits ye've gat an theyur—they's more Disney Land than Newfinland!"

Never before had I seen cool caution so sharply transform into warm, welcoming banter. One of the gang was particularly animated—a short but incredibly broad fellow by the name of Pierre. He had brightly dancing eyes and a wild and wandering moustache. When the rest of his team went off to see to whatever daily duties they had lined up, Pierre sprinted off to his house to fetch us some bottled moose meat as a welcoming gift. This concept puzzled me somewhat at first. How on earth does one get a moose inside of a bottle?

"We are aalso puttin' the rabbit in a bottle, b'y," compounded my confusion.

When Pierre returned from his kindly excursion, however, complete with beer in hand and joint in mouth, it all became clear. Newfoundlanders do not readily distinguish between bottles and jars. I dutifully accepted the small jar of homogenised lard and meat, and transferred it safely to the footwell in the back of Bayard's truck.

We would meet and chat and go out "across

the pond" with Pierre on many more occasions over the following 10 days, always lifted by his sardonic humour, and always trying, and failing, to fend off his never-ending supply of beers (to be fair, he was always drinking "lights"). He was one of a dazzling array of remarkably funny, generous and larger-than-life characters that inhabit Parsons Pond. There was Brad and Lamont, who quickly made sure we had fully serviced lodgings by way of a cabin at the foot of the mountains (a good 13-kilometre Skidoo ride from the roadside). They seemed to be the senior members of the team, slightly less wild and chaotic than the others, though I strongly suspect they had had their day.

Then there was Derek and BJ, the two token members of the "young team," whom we met in the bar at Cow Head and shared drams with long into the night. They also would not let us pass by unassisted, helping us back over the pond and into the cabin after Brad and Lamont had departed the island for work. Our night in the pub together left me broken for two full days, on account of both a vicious hangover and a severe case of laughter-related facial cramps. I remember lots of dancing and wrestling and stories and drinking, but not much detail, unsurprisingly. Well done to Bayard and Ryan for making it out of bed before lunchtime to take our new friends out climbing!

Last, but a million miles from least, was Bevin, one of the most kaleidoscopic characters a man could ever hope to meet. Bevin works at the sharp end of a diamond mine, deep under the ice in Canada's remote Northwest Territories. Like so many people I know at home in Aberdeen, he works two weeks on and two off, on rotation. He likes a beer just about as much as he likes his snowmobile, his boat and his various other toys. It is good to hear that being away from his family and stuck down a hole under the Canadian ice offers at least some kind of dividend.

Bevin was the first to take me out across the pond, and it was a day that will live with me forever. I had never been anywhere near a Skidoo and was more than a little wary of jumping on the back seat for the first time. I knew fine well from childhood escapades on motorbikes the raw power that lurked under the bonnet of his 800cc two-stroke beast. I had my eye closely fixed on him as he quietly drew another beer from his pocket—his third since we had hooked up, and it was barely even lunchtime! After a high-speed launch out toward the ice, just at the point when my frozen hands were losing the ability to hang on much longer, he stopped on the edge of the pond proper, dismounted and handed me the keys. "Draave" was all he said. Moments later I was pressing the throttle, feeling the exhilaration of the front skis lifting as we nudged gently up towards 80 kilometres per hour. This was less than halfway through the full dial of the speedometer.

We stopped numerous times on the way, sometimes to wait for the others, but also so Bevin could share his knowledge of the pond and the adventures to be had out there. Brook trout, salmon and char all the way up to the inner ponds in the summer; ice fishing during the winter; grouse in summer; moose and caribou all year round. And then

Unclimbed mixed lines in Western Brook Gulch. Photo: Guy Robertson

there was the great shifting, creaking, booming mass of the pond ice itself. A trip out there could quickly end in disaster, especially under thaw conditions, and especially where the fast-flowing brooks tumbled down the hillsides and entered the calmer waters of the pond. Through my own research, I knew the weather and temperature in Newfoundland to be constantly changing, often from -15 C or less to 5 C or more in any 24-hour period. The result for the frozen ponds is something akin to a frozen mine field. Bevin's tour was an education, and my initial somewhat flat impressions on arrival in Parsons Pond were transformed into an almost overwhelming sense of excitement and anticipation.

The high-pitched scream of his snowmobile stepped up a notch as I pressed the throttle a little bit harder. Parsons Pond disappeared over the long white horizon behind us, as the deep fjords and their great icy crags edged closer up ahead. I closed my eyes just for a snatch of a moment and let the frozen air course through my lungs. As I opened them again, a pale sun winked softly through a swirling hole in the clouds overhead. I had a feeling it was going to be a memorable trip.

Nick Bullock on the second ascent of The 'Arding Slot. Photo: Guy Robertson

IN THE SAME WAY THAT single malt whisky is never going to be the drink of choice for alcoholics, winter climbing in Newfoundland is never likely to be popular amongst regular winter climbers. The exception to this I suppose might be the many untapped crags and smaller routes along the coastal fringes. For the true connoisseur, however, the higher mountain routes on the island are the *crème de la crème* of ice-climbing adventure. It is a long way from home, it is wild and uncharted, it is logistically challenging, and the lines are super strong. If I died tomorrow and went to winter-climbing heaven, I reckon it might look a lot like Newfoundland.

The weather is interesting, to say the least. Precipitation is more than 75 per cent likely on a daily basis from November through to April. In fact, the statistics tell us that a cloudy sky is more than 90 per cent likely all year round. The wind is constantly shifting through 360 degrees, and it is cold and snowy enough most of the time in winter that even the slightest bit of wind raises a ground blizzard that makes any form of off-road travel very challenging, to say the least.

The approaches are not straightforward. For most of the established climbing venues, a snowmobile is essential, as the first part of the approach involves crossing a large body of frozen water—the great "ponds" that give access to the steep fjords and inner gulches. Once across the outer pond, prepare for some steeper and more involved snowmobile terrain through thick forest scrub to gain the inner ponds. When we were there, access to the inner ponds by snowmobile was impossible as the snow was not that deep, so a two- to four-hour cross-country ski was the only practicable option. Either way, it is quickly apparent that just getting to your route, let alone assessing its condition and climbing it, can be a major challenge in itself. There are alternative approaches—like getting an experienced local snowmobile driver to take you up onto the plateau to set up a base camp—but

this would be a bit like camping at the North Pole, definitely not for the faint-hearted.

The one exception to all of this seems to be the relatively well-trodden area of Ten Mile Pond, where snowmobile access to the base of the routes appears relatively straightforward. But surely, if you are going all the way to Newfoundland and you are prepared to strap it on, it is got to be worth making that bit of extra effort and looking beyond the well-trodden path.

The climbing itself requires an adventurous soul. There are no guidebooks and no route descriptions or topos, so every ascent may as well be a first. You will have to rely entirely and confidently on your eye for a line and all that you have learned from your previous winter experience. Fortunately, however, finding a line is rarely difficult. The steep retaining side and headwalls of the great fjords are sliced periodically by dramatic chasms, gullies, icefalls and curtains, occasionally broken by steeper and more complicated mixed terrain liberally festooned with ice smears, columns and daggers.

WHEN WE FINALLY MANAGED to stop our bellies from aching from too much laughter and moose meat, we enjoyed some truly world-class climbing. Looking back, I think by Newfoundland standards, we actually climbed quite a lot, completing two big routes in a 10-day trip (a Newfoundland regular, Ryan Stefiuk, had advised me that more than three routes in any trip is highly unusual).

For our first climb, Nick Bullock and I teamed up to make the second ascent of a route called The 'Arding Slot put up by veteran pioneer Joe Terravecchia and partner. This is really the first major line that appears on the left on approaching the inner reaches of Western Brook Gulch. A gob-smacking splitter gully line providing seven perfect pitches up to M6 and WI5+. The grade was somewhat misleading though, with the crux involving 10 metres of horizontal back-and-footing out under a giant roof, followed by what would best be described as a 5.9 off-width

The 'Arding Slot in Western Brook Gulch.
Photo: Bayard Russell

slot. Watching Nick squirm helplessly in the jaws of this great beast, for easily an hour or more, was at once hilarious and terrifying—would I be able to make it through? Fortunately, of course, I had the benefit of his hindsight, so I swiftly arranged what gear I had on my harness to the sides rather than the front or back. It worked like a treat, and I slipped on through like a wisp of smoke. The rest of the route was just about as good as this type of route gets—a bit of steep icy mixed, free-standing ice pillars and curtains, and even another squeeze chimney up high to keep Nick happy (fortunately, this one was wider and had ice on one wall). A few long rappels saw us back on the deck in time to walk out under perhaps the rarest of Newfoundland delights—a stunning winter sunset.

Also that day, Bayard and Ryan teamed up to climb a very fine-looking pure ice line to the right of Newfinized (WI5+), one of Bayard's offerings from the previous season.

Guy Robertson on pitch five of The 'Arding Slot. Photo: Nick Bullock

The second route was perhaps the highlight of the trip—not as long and hard as the Slot, perhaps, but with an atmosphere and intimidation factor all its own. Gat Me Moose B'y (WI5+) takes the stunning ice cascade that spills down the centre of the great amphitheatre at the very back of Western Brook Gulch. On the first and only ascent (Terravecchia again), the lower roof was impregnable—nothing more than a giant curtain of Damoclean fangs threatening the long gully below. The route was apparently named after the stubborn advances of a solitary moose guarding the start of the ice (every Newfoundlander has the legal right to shoot one moose every year). On our ascent the lower fall touched down, forming a gargantuan pillar composed entirely of huge tufas and tendrils, presenting a most Gothic and other-worldly impression on close acquaintance. Our apprehension was not exactly eased when one of the great ice chandeliers high up broke loose and crashed behind us as we geared up. As it turned out, the Moose had a bark much worse than its bite, and the climbing, although quite sustained and scary, was never desperate. How looks can be deceiving; nonetheless, strapping it on and suckering up the front of that great ice monster will live on in the memory forever, no doubt. The walk out was most memorable too as a rabid easterly wind forced us to ditch our skis and don crampons just to walk across the inner pond.

We climbed other lines during our stay on the island—Ryan and I squeezing in an excellent afternoon's cragging on the point a few kilometres north of Parsons Pond, and Bayard and Nick nailing it into Ten Mile Pond for a repeat of the stunning Fat of the Land (WI5+). But my abiding memories of this amazing island will always be of its wonderful people, their hospitality and generosity, and their indefatigable and infectious spirit. If you want world-class climbing in a remote and challenging environment, but you also want to have lots of fun, then look no further than Newfoundland.

Acknowledgements

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The Mealy Mountains

Ross Cloutier

IN JULY 2015, CANADA'S FORTY-SIXTH national park was established as Akami-uapishku-KakKasuak-Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve in Labrador. The traditional names of the park are Akami-uapishku, an Innu word meaning white mountains, and KakKasuak, a Labrador Inuit word for mountain. The park is 10,700 square kilometres and protects a stunning array of landscapes important to the Innu, Inuit and Métis of the region. Bordered on the north by Lake Melville and the east by the Labrador Sea, the park protects extensive watersheds, rivers, the Mealy and English Mountains, boreal forest, the Mealy Mountain caribou herd and an extensive 50-kilometre length of unbroken sandy beaches along the Labrador Sea called the Wunderstrand. It also has what is surely the largest collection of unknown and unclimbed granite on the continent.

The bare rock summits of the Mealy Mountains rise to over 1,180 metres and overlook Lake Melville, which drains the Churchill River into the Labrador Sea. Petrographic and geochemical analysis of the rock reveals a diverse compositional range from quartz monozodiorite to granite. The English Mountains, an area within the Mealy Mountains of approximately 30 by 30 kilometres, are comprised of solid, clean, sweeping granite domes and rock cliffs, often rising from steep and rocky lake shores. While there are large and expansive areas of alpine hiking in these

An unclimbed 300-metre cliff located on the eastern shore of Cave Creature Lake.
Photo: Ross Cloutier

mountains, as soon as you leave the higher elevations you encounter krummolz, a type of stunted, deformed vegetation encountered in subarctic and subalpine landscapes that makes walking virtually impossible. It is also sometimes called tuckamore. On a late September 2016 attempt to traverse the Mealy Mountains from Cave Creature Lake to Lake Melville, our trip ended as soon as we left higher elevations and began to drop down into Lake Melville, as the krummolz was absolutely horrendous. Hiking routes are limited to higher elevations and rocky ridgelines. As if this was not bad enough, the bugs from late June to mid-September are reputed to be unimaginable, leaving the best climbing and hiking period to be late September. In 2016, the first snowfall arrived on September 26, but it did clear after and the bugs were absent.

There are numerous kilometres of granite cliffs in the Mealy Mountains—and no recorded rock-climbing routes. Route potential ranges from 100 to 300 metres in length, but this is an estimate and some may be longer. The best location for rock climbing would be to base from the north end of Cave Creature Lake, found at approximately 53°37'28.9"N and 058°36'15.1"W. This will give access to most of the good climbing and to good alpine hiking in the English Mountains to the north. An inflatable raft would provide access to hard-to-reach cliffs along the shoreline of Cave Creature Lake.

There may be others, but the only reference I could find with regard to climbing in the Mealy Mountains was an early spring ridge climb in 2009 by Mike Barker and Michael Lederer (*American Alpine Journal*, 2010). This area also has plenty of ski-touring potential.

Summer access into Cave Creature Lake is exclusively by helicopter from Goose Bay, and Universal Helicopters has experience in the region. Flight time is 40 minutes one-way from Goose Bay to Cave Creature Lake. This means a group needs to budget close to three hours of flight time to and from Goose Bay to get in and out. The closest communities are Rigolet to the north and Cartwright to the south, but access to the areas suitable for climbing from either place is not yet possible. It may be possible for float planes to access Cave Creature Lake, but the landing and winds are complex and this method is unproven so far. While there are caribou and black bears in the Mealy Mountains, there would be no polar bears, except possibly along the Wunderstrand beaches.

Visitors to the park should contact the Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve office in Goose Bay as part of their planning. Parks Canada staff will be helpful, but there are numerous cultural sites in the park that they are sensitive about.

I have been in the Mealy Mountains by aircraft twice and hiking once working for the Nunatsiavut Government (Labrador Inuit) and am happy to share photos and latitude-longitude references of the cliffs.

An unclimbed 200-metre cliff located on the west short of Cave Creature Lake. Photo: Ross Cloutier

An unclimbed 200-metre cliff located at the north end of Cave Creature Lake. Photo: Ross Cloutier

An unclimbed 300-metre cliff located five kilometres east of Cave Creature Lake. Photo: Ross Cloutier

Le Lac du Cap

Louis-Philippe Ménard

« SALUT, *man*, J'AI UNE MAUVAISE NOUVELLE… », me lance sans détour mon *partner* Serge à peine a-t-il mis le pied dans ma porte. En fait, Serge Alexandre-Giroux n'est pas du genre à prendre des détours pour exprimer ce qu'il pense. Mais j'aime son franc-parler et son authentique personnalité, que j'ai su apprécier dès qu'on me l'a présenté. « Pat ne vient pas et Bruno vient de se *pogner* solide avec sa blonde, alors ça *chie*… » Je suis à terre. C'est en quelque sorte mon retour à la glace depuis quelques années. Paternité oblige ; j'ai mis ma passion un peu de côté ces dernières années, et je n'ai pas vraiment fait de *trip* de glace depuis presque trois ans. Je mise beaucoup sur ce voyage pour m'y remettre, franchement. Une aventure dans le fin fond du bois de la réserve Mastigouche : approche à ski, camping d'hiver et, surtout, le potentiel de faire quelques premières. Cette aventure, qui prend une tournure d'expédition, on la prépare depuis un bout. Et voilà que la moitié de l'équipe vient de déserter. À deux, c'est toujours possible, mais comme l'approche à ski jusqu'au Lac du Cap s'étend sur une trentaine de kilomètres, traîner tout le matos à nous deux relève d'un tout autre registre de dépense physique. C'est de glace que je suis en manque, pas de ski hors-piste avec traîneau ! Mais sans que j'aie le temps de lui poser la question, Serge m'annonce : « Mais on a un *Ski-Doo, man* !! On peut prendre celui de mon père, et il a tous les droits d'accès pour les sentiers ! » Mon cœur fait des palpitations. Je lâche un « *Yeahhh* ! » et cours à la cave chercher la Hilti, la jette dans le *duffle* de *gear*, puis lance mes skis de côté. « On prend le scotch ! »

Louis-Philippe Ménard entre ciel et terre dans la première longueur de *YMB directe*. Photo : Serge Alexandre-Giroux

Barbu, grand et costaud, Serge a une franche poignée de main qui inspire confiance. Bien qu'on n'ait jamais partagé la corde ensemble, c'est mon bon ami Yan qui me l'a présenté l'année précédente au festival Grimpe en Ville de Rivière-du-Loup. Je n'ai pas hésité à le contacter pour ce retour à la glace. S'il n'a que quelques années d'expérience d'escalade sous sa chemise, il compense largement par sa passion et en sa qualité d'explorateur-dénicheur de parois encore jamais grimpées. Résidant dans Lanaudière depuis toujours, Serge profite de la moindre occasion et journée de pluie pour explorer des sites ayant le potentiel d'offrir de la roche à grimper. Lanaudière, grande région touristique de la province du Québec, regorge de reliefs et parois

de granite, et on a souvent dit de la région que le futur de l'escalade au Québec s'y trouvait. Pour qui veut bien sortir des routes et sentiers principaux, bien sûr…

Ayant « découvert » le Lac du Cap l'année précédente avec son frère Bruno, Serge n'avait pourtant eu la chance d'y grimper qu'une seule fois en début de saison. L'hiver avait débuté plus tardivement qu'à la normale, et ils avaient pu accéder au site directement en voiture avant que les routes ne soient ensevelies sous la neige et qu'elles se transforment en sentiers de motoneige pour la saison froide. J'avais vu des photos de l'immense mur de granite. Les quelques premières ascensions s'étaient faites dans des conditions de glace mince par Serge et Bruno, ainsi que par Yan Mongrain et Olivier Ouellette. Il ne m'en fallait pas plus. Si les parois de bon granite ne manquent pas, l'envergure du mur du Lac du Cap et sa raideur sont atypiques pour la région. S'étalant sur près de 800 mètres et haut de 120 mètres en son centre, ce mur impressionne par sa raideur et sa situation. Orientée vers le sud-ouest, la portion nord-ouest de la falaise tombe directement dans l'abysse du lac, offrant ainsi une transition marquante de l'horizontale à la verticale.

À proximité du parc régional du Lac Taureau, le Lac du Cap se trouve dans la Sépaq de la réserve faunique Mastigouche, à environ 50 kilomètres de Saint-Michel-des-Saints. Après avoir fait escale à la résidence familiale de Serge à Saint-Norbert pour récupérer la motoneige, on file directement à l'Auberge Le Cabanon, non loin de Saint-Zénon. C'est là qu'on laisse le camion et qu'on chevauche notre Formule 1 des neiges, attelée d'un traîneau bien rempli.

Notre expédition prend une toute autre tournure — et surtout allure ! – que si on avait apathiquement tracé la distance à ski. En moins de deux heures nous arrivons au lac, avec assez de clarté restante pour faire une reconnaissance complète du mur. Même pour Serge, c'est la découverte — la découverte d'une paroi autrement vêtue que lors de sa précédente visite. De mon côté, je n'ai d'yeux que pour les lignes mixtes et délicates. C'est par dizaines que je dénombre les tracés potentiels.

Contrairement à d'autres aventures hivernales de plusieurs jours, c'est une situation plutôt confortable qui nous attend pour la nuit. Un gîte de la Sépaq se trouve en rive du lac. Le refuge est fermé l'hiver, mais on se permet d'installer la tente sous un abri construit juste à côté. Des chaises de parterre et tout un cordon de bois sont à notre disposition ; nous pourrons profiter d'un bon feu de camp tous les soirs !

Pas facile de s'échauffer avec une motoneige aussi fiable à notre portée. Le lendemain matin, nous déjeunons rapidement et démarrons notre engin, qui fait aussitôt entendre son vrombissement. En moins de cinq minutes, on est de nouveau devant la paroi. Serge me lance tout simplement un « Où est-ce qu'on grimpe !? Choisis ta ligne ! » Il y a des bons *partners*, et il y a Serge. Je me sens comme un gamin entrant dans un magasin de jouets avec son père qui lui dit : « Vas-y, prends tout ce que tu veux ! » Mon hésitation

Louis-Philippe Ménard à la recherche de lignes éphémères dans les sections clairsemées de glace de la falaise. Photo : Serge Alexandre-Giroux

n'est pas longue et on se lance dans une succession de placages de glace entrecoupés de sections rocheuses. Mon type d'escalade de prédilection. Cette variété de formes d'escalade, d'angles et de faiblesses, mais aussi de contrastes — la roche chaude, sèche, de couleur foncée ; la glace froide, mouillée, blanche — anime tous mes sens et me fait recourir à tout mon répertoire de techniques pour progresser. Souple, je fais un grand-écart pour traverser à la deuxième longueur. Serge grafigne le rocher pour passer, mais s'inspire de ce passage clé pour nommer la voie *La Split du Cap*. Il prend le relais pour une troisième petite longueur, et le sommet est atteint avant midi. On se tape dans la main, et on ne perd pas une minute pour redescendre. On en veut encore ! Aussitôt au lac, on court presque vers un autre secteur, tout aussi vertical et offrant la même diversité. Bien que cette voie soit principalement en glace, le départ est tout en rocher et s'avère le *crux* avant de rejoindre une langue givrée. On atteint de nouveau la cime, en deux bonnes longueurs cette fois, et on est repu de cette première journée productive.

Le deuxième jour est aussi fabuleux que le premier. Avec le ciel au grand beau, une petite ritournelle s'installe dans notre cordée : déjeuner rapide, petit jog matinal dans la neige pour s'échauffer, on saute sur la motoneige, et dès qu'on arrive au mur, Serge m'offre une fois de plus de cueillir la ligne de mon choix. J'accepte avec le plus grand des sourires. Je vise cette fois dans un long dièdre revêtu d'un mince placage, repéré la veille. Cet accès vers un éperon rocheux à mi-hauteur et situé sur la portion la plus haute du Cap, se veut une directe de

Louis-Philippe Ménard dans les premiers mètres de la *Ménard–Giroux* (alias *Le Cap au Vif*), voie offrant un grand répertoire de glace et de style de grimpe. Photo : Serge Alexandre-Giroux.

YMB (Mongrain-Ouellette, 2014), voie gravie la saison précédente. Toute paroi respectable a droit à sa directissime, et c'est l'intention que nous avons à l'approche du mur ! La délicatesse est de mise à chaque placement de piolet si je veux laisser un peu de glace à mon second, mais après une pleine longueur de corde, clairsemée de protection, je soupire de soulagement et rejoins l'éperon. J'offre la deuxième longueur à Serge, qui attaque avec efficacité les 70 mètres de bonne glace qui nous amènent au sommet.

À la descente, mon complice est le premier à toucher le sol. Fou comme un balai, il démarre la motoneige en me donnant l'impression qu'il s'enfuit avec. Mais non. Je comprends vite son humour déplacé à la vue de l'immense trace dessinée sur le couvert de neige. Un phallus géant s'étale sur toute la largeur du lac ! Faut connaître le gars…

Encore toute une demi-journée à notre horaire ; pas question d'en rester là. On s'attaque donc à une autre voie, déjà la quatrième depuis hier, dans la plus haute portion du mur. Celle-ci se révèle la plus intéressante de toutes en nous offrant un buffet copieux de formations en tout genre : placage délicat, dalle givrée, colonnette, méduse, chou-fleur, rideau, langue de glace… Même une cheminée *squeeze* fait partie du parcours exigeant mais combien ludique.

Le troisième jour est empreint des premiers ; mon acolyte a pourtant eu une dure nuit à cause d'un gros orteil gelé la veille, et la fatigue se fait sentir. On s'accorde pour aller visiter la portion moins haute, à l'extrémité droite de la falaise, question de s'amuser encore avant de terminer notre aventure de grimpe, mais de rentrer au bercail le jour même. Plus courtes mais tout aussi variées, ces deux ascensions nous laissent satisfaits, et nous fourrons enfin les cordes dans les sacs.

On défait nos quartiers et on fiche le camp, complètement repus de grimpe et de premières. Presqu'à vide de carburant, nous brisons l'attelage du traîneau lors du trajet de retour mais rallions l'emplacement du camion de Serge sans autre embrouille. On s'imagine mal ce qu'aurait été ce long parcours, à ski…

Bien plus que d'avoir fait un retour à la glace, j'ai dégoté un grand compagnon et une joie immense de ricaner et de raconter des conneries avec lui. J'ai aussi trouvé un site et une paroi comme je ne croyais plus possible de dénicher dans un Québec pas trop sauvage. Et cette trouvaille — qui n'en est qu'une parmi tant d'autres dans son répertoire de coins secrets dénichés — on la doit à Serge (et à ses frères Bruno et Pio). Le site du Lac du Cap est d'autant plus accessible directement par voiture lors de la saison estivale pour des voies de rocher, toujours vierges… Leçon d'humilité que me servent ces jeunes : quand y pleut et qu'y ne fait pas beau, ou qu'y fait beau mais que tu n'as pas de *partner* (et que tu ne t'appelles pas Honnold…) — sors dehors, pis va explorer ! De la roche (et de la glace), y en a !

Il fallait rester dans le thème choisi du site. Je vous laisse réfuter les noms de voies, mais deux gars dans le bois, ça parle de cul !

Serge Alexandre-Giroux, explorateur des coins perdus du Québec, sortant de la première longueur de *YMB directe*. Photo : Louis-Philippe Ménard

Résumé

La Split du Cap (M6, 100m), 18 février 2016.
Le Castor (M6/WI5, 100m), 18 février 2016.
YMB directe (M5/WI4+, 110m), 19 février 2016.
Ménard–Giroux (alias Le Cap au Vif !) (M6+, 100m), 19 février 2016.
Cloaque Givré (M7, 60m), 20 février 2016.
Cap Elfique (M6, 50m), 20 février 2016.
P.A. Louis-Philippe Ménard, Serge Alexandre-Giroux.

Foreign

Cholatse

Bryce Brown

CHOLATSE LITERALLY TRANSLATES to "Lake-Pass-Peak." At 6,440 metres, it is small, dwarfed by its nearby 8,000-metre cousins. It more than makes up for its size with its beauty though—a stunning summit of knife-edge ridges, steep faces and fluted lines. It is what a kid would draw if you asked them for a picture of a mountain. Sunny and I had dreamed of attempting this peak for many years.

The first ascent was via the southwest ridge in 1982 by Vern Clevenger, Galen Rowell, John Roskelley and Bill O'Connor. Calgarian Andrew Brash wrote an entertaining account of the second ascent of this ridge in the 1994 *Canadian Alpine Journal*, with a hilarious description of a late-night hydration mishap:

> I unscrew the familiar cap and sit upright to take a deep swill. As the gulp of liquid hits my stomach, I realize that something is not quite right. This water seemed a bit warm and the aftertaste didn't exactly smack of water. "Fuck, dude! Did I just drink your piss!!??" For a brief second, I hoped that it was just Gatorade, but it was no use; I couldn't even kid myself into believing that. The sickening truth and the sour taste in my mouth left me with a sneer of disbelief and wondering why my stomach was still intact.

Until recently Cholatse was rarely climbed, but over the last few years it has seen increasing attention from commercial expeditions. It offers a nice alternative to the overcrowding on its equally beautiful neighbour, Ama Dablam. It is a step up in technical difficulty, minus the crowds. The commercial groups typically climb Cholatse in expedition style with Sherpa guides carrying loads and fixing lines from bottom to top. Our goal was to climb in the purest way possible—no support, no fixed lines, no carried loads, no stocked camps—just two climbers and the mountain. In alpine style, climber fitness, experience and health need to perfectly line up with mountain conditions and weather. Obviously success is much lower, but given the bigger challenge, it also feels more meaningful when you summit. We decided late autumn would give the commercial teams time to climb and clean the route, and then hopefully we would have the mountain to ourselves. The downside of waiting was the colder weather and shorter days as winter approached.

First, we trekked around the popular Three Passes to build a good base of acclimatization that we hoped would allow us to move quickly on the mountain. However, living in close quarters with thousands of trekkers from all over the world proved to be a good recipe for getting sick. We both ended up with respiratory illnesses at various points, basically a nasty bronchitis. This was more than the usual Khumbu cough caused by the cold dry air at altitude. We descended and rested for over a week to try and recover our health and strength. Just as we were feeling well enough, our weather window opened up. The commercial teams had reportedly pulled their lines and were packing up their base camp. This also coincided

Sunny Twelker on the southwest ridge of Cholatse.
Photo: Bryce Brown

with the November super moon. Everything was lining up, so it was time to head back up to the mountain.

Our plan was to make only one camp on the mountain at the traditional Camp 1 at 5,600 metres. From there, we would attempt the summit and back in one 800-metre push in a long but normally doable day. We left Base Camp at 4,500 metres and worked our way through a heinous, loose terminal moraine and up a small icefall. We were happy to find the icefall was much tamer than it had looked. We reached Camp 1 at the top of a 50-degree headwall, nestled in a protected col. I was not feeling 100 per cent, so we decided to take a rest day there. One rest day turned into two then three. Thankfully, this col was one of the most beautiful places we have ever been, so we spent our time absorbing the amazing views perched high above the Khumbu Valley. It was quite a privilege to have it all to ourselves. Finally, we decided we needed to either go for it or bail, as it was forecasted to get colder and windier, and we were running out of food.

Right out of Camp 1, there were several mixed and rock pitches. It is hard to grade it with big boots and a pack, but it felt maybe M4 or 5.7ish. The rock was surprisingly crappy and gear not super, but nothing compared to the Rockies. Above this, perfect snow and névé climbing on the steep southwest ridge seemed to go on forever. Finally, the ridge's angle eased, and it was possible to walk again to gain the final summit ridge. We enjoyed a beautiful bluebird day, the climbing conditions were perfect and the views were absolutely unbeatable.

The only problem was the higher we climbed, the worse I felt. Not altitude illness, just the nagging cough of bronchitis and shortness of breath. With my health not co-operating, we moved much slower than we had hoped and reached the summit ridge well after dark. We were both blasted. I could barely breathe. We looked over the edge down the steep north face, which dropped below us into a bottomless void. In the nearly full moon, we could see the summit 100 vertical metres above, and less than an hour away. If we continued, we would likely make it to the top, but our reserves were depleted. Our ability to deal with an accident, equipment failure or an unforeseen event was gone. It was a difficult, yet easy decision. We clicked a photo, turned around and started rappelling into the night.

On the descent, we quickly discovered we did not have enough energy to get all the way back down to camp. We stopped at around 6,100 metres to rest. It was -25 C. It was dark. Our tent and sleeping bags were still 500 metres below. We put on all our down layers, pulled out our emergency stove and tarp, and dug into a crevasse out of the wind. At this elevation, the oxygen content is less than half that at sea level, and although we were well acclimatized, it was difficult to stay warm. We shared our one package of soup then shivered under the tarp, waiting for the warmth of dawn. We may or may not have slept, it was hard to tell. I was now coughing up copious sputum (lovingly known as Khumbu Lung Butter) and found breathing increasingly difficult. I had vivid dreams of a Sherpa man watching over us, tucking us under the tarp and watching for frostbite. I had heard of the fabled third-man scenario, but had never been there before. Quite a surreal experience.

In the morning, we slowly shook off the cold and started moving again. Between our exhaustion and my breathing, it took us all day to get back to Camp 1, and then the entire next day to reach Base Camp, and another two days to drag ourselves back to Namche.

Most of our adventures are simply about the climbing; this one was more of a human journey of internal exploration and decision making. It would have been so easy to keep climbing that night and risk it all. We pushed it absolutely as far as we dared, looked over the edge and decided to turn back. Maybe we would have made it; we will never know. But the fact that we both came home is a much bigger success, and it means we absolutely made the right call.

Facing page: Sunny Twelker approaches the summit ridge of Cholatse late in the day.
Photo: Bryce Brown

Summary

Alpine-style attempt via Southwest Ridge (60° ice, 5.6) of Cholatse (a.k.a Jobo Lhapeshan, 6440m), Mahalangur Himal, Nepal. Bryce Brown, Sunny Twelker, November 9-14, 2016.

Jenga Buttress

Ben Stephenson

NOBODY STAYS IN PARKACHIK. There is nothing there. You might stop for a cup of Indian chai in one of the seasonal tea stalls on the way to the Zanskar valley, but why would you stay any longer. I have probably driven through Parkachik 30 or 40 times to and from Zanskar with my work at the Zanskar Ski School (ZSS), but only recently have I started to look through a new lens. As a climbing destination, Parkachik definitely deserves to be on every adventurer's map.

A few years ago, the Indian government announced a policy encouraging adventure tourism. My friend, Mahmoud Shah, who is the director of tourism for the state of Jammu and Kashmir, answered this call, actively promoting local initiatives. This aligned perfectly with ZSS aims: one such aim being to increase proficiency in skiing and climbing, enabling the locals to eventually act as guides.

I put the word out among the Canadian guiding community with a hook better suited in a personals ad section: "Seeking climber passionate about route setting. Will pay all in-country expenses." I wondered who would be brave or crazy enough to go to a remote corner of the Indian Himalaya with a total stranger. Instantly, Stephen Senecal from Nelson, B.C. emailed me. "Things don't always go according to plan," I cautioned. From his laid-back enthusiasm for a new climbing experience in an exotic place, I knew he was the right man for the job.

Bragzang Wall above the village of Parkachik. Photo: Ben Stephenson

We met in Delhi, flew to the beautiful town of Leh at 3,500 metres, acclimatized for a day and headed west along the breathtaking Indus Valley, which follows the ancient fault line that separates the Indian subcontinent from geological Asia. A short day's jeep or bus ride got us to Kargil from where one heads south into the lush Suru Valley. The lower valley is rich with barley fields and apricot trees fed by the ferocious Suru River, just begging to be rafted. And the higher valley has Swiss-like alpine meadows, swathed in flowers and guarded by jagged rock walls. Our destination was the village of Parkachik, and our goal was to create the first rock-climbing guidebook for the Zanskar Himalaya.

Although I had seen the Parkachik granite from the jeep road, I had never actually touched the rock. So it was with a hint of trepidation that I trekked up the shepherd's path to the rock band, a short 20-minute hike from the road. It looked really smooth.

"Maybe we'll have to rap in from the top," I offered to Steve, keen to meet any potential problem with a back-up plan, so crucial when in India. Our excitement grew as we approached and the features started to tease us with the prospect of routes—all new! I had heard that the Indian army had once run some rock-climbing lessons here with top-ropes, but as far as I knew, nobody had actually put up any lines. Steve's experienced route-setting eye started to glint with the possibilities suddenly open to us.

"How long have we got here?" he inquired rhetorically with a big grin, "It's not going to be long enough."

Bragzang Wall: (1) Nono (5.3, 20m), (2) Nomo (5.4, 20m), (3) Perak Arête (5.6, 6 bolts, 25m), (4) Perak Direct (5.9+, 7 bolts, 20m), (5) Kyanite Crack (5.8, 115m, 4 pitches), (6) Sickle Flake (5.7, 9 bolts, 25m), (7) Quartz Bones (5.10-, 9 bolts, 25m), (8) Dig-le, Dig-le (P1: 5.7, 8 bolts, 25m; P2: 5.8, 10 bolts, 30m), (9) Ripples of Granite Pleasure (5.8, 10 bolts, 30m), (10) Desert Solitaire (5.11, 7 bolts, 20m). Photo: Ben Stephenson

We geared up and Steve led off up an obvious crack line that splits the eastern end of the crag. After three pitches of curving cracks, a small roof and minimal gardening, we stood atop Bragzang Wall ("Strong Wall" in Balti language). The 50-metre-tall rock band I had estimated from the road turned out to be over 100 metres of super-solid granite. We galloped down the trail in fading light, encouraged by the quality of the first Bragzang route.

We stayed at the Alpine Tourist Hut, a comfortable facility with beds and solar-powered hot showers. You can even buy a meal from Ibrahim, the affable caretaker (*chowkidar*) for under a buck. However, the camping right below Bragzang would also be great. Every day Steve and I walked up to the crag. We would extol the qualities of the putting-green meadow strewn with picnic-table boulders and served by spring water, like some scene from Groundhog Day.

We discovered that Bragzang Wall has crack systems, chimneys and face climbing characterized by a unique rippled texture offering fantastic friction routes, but also cross-cut by the odd quartz vein here and there. We bolted some routes and set chain anchors on trad routes, hopefully creating enough lines at different grades to tempt climbers of every ilk.

One morning I asked Steve which line would upset him the most if somebody else claimed the first ascent. In response, we set off up Wild Rose in the tallest part of the crag. Hand and fist cracks led to the first station next to some sharp wild rose bushes. On pitch two, a corner system turned into an off-width requiring #4 Camalots and a great belay spot on a small ledge. A short traverse led into a quartz dyke, now protected with a few bolts. And the fourth pitch continued up a curved crack system, pulling though a small roof. Overall, a wonderfully diverse route.

"If you think Parkachik is good, wait till you see Shafat," I teased Steve one evening.

"Where the hell is Shafat?" he flashed back.

This same question had been asked by the late great climbing partnership of Jonny Copp and Micah Dash, before they made the first ascent of the intimidating north face of Shafat Fortress—a 5,900-metre granite beauty with a glacial summit like a crystal temple atop the fortress. Not that Steve and I are anywhere near their level, but we do know the area intimately. And when I first read Copp's article about their ascent, and how they were unsure where the mountain was, the penny dropped that there is actually no climbing guide to the area, not even a decent map to point out where the opportunities lay.

In truth, there is nothing at Shafat, other than a police station next to a stream, which one day may get taken out by an avalanche. Like Parkachik, most tourists pass through Shafat, snapping away at the peaks and glaciers en route to another destination. Climbers, however, will be awe-struck by the variety of opportunities available. There is world-class bouldering, single-pitch cragging, multi-pitch adventures and big walls. Steve and I made the short 1.5-hour jeep ride from Parkachik to Shafat and took it all in. I gave Steve his next mission: find the multi-pitch line that people would travel across continents to bag.

We scouted the lower shoulder of Shafat Fortress, where an Italian team had put up an 800-metre route called the Chessboard. There is huge potential for more routes on this shoulder, but it was the adjacent shoulder that caught Steve's

Jenga Buttress on the Nun-Kun massif on the west side of the Shafat valley.
Photo: Ben Stephenson

eye, with the possibility of a direct line straight up a steep buttress. Although it looks huge from the valley floor, the shoulder is a mere elephant's foot on the ridge, which snakes up to the summit of Kun, standing proud at over 7,000 metres with its sister peak, Nun.

We arose early from our camp at Shafat and sped up the lower pitches of the buttress with beautiful hand and finger cracks and plenty of ledges for rests and belays. Our route stuck to the ridgeline as closely as possible, which led to some moments of cool exposure, much like one of the Bugaboo classics. Higher up we arrived at some small headwalls, but each time we were able to bypass difficult and time-consuming terrain, allowing the route to stay mainly in the 5.7 to 5.9+ range. A long section of 5.6 simul-climbing took us to within a short scramble of the shoulder's summit from where Shafat Fortress appeared in full glory along with the other spires on its ridges: Golden Sentinel (ca. 5,200 metres) and Peak Giorgio (ca. 5,135 metres).

An easy walk-off down a long grassy ramp meant that this 16-pitch, 800-metre route is doable in a day and without complications of rappelling. We called it Jenga Buttress, not because it is about to topple over, but due to its regular vertical and horizontal crack systems and to mimic the Italian's Chessboard on the opposite side of the Shafat valley. The granite at Shafat is more rough than at Parkachik, but solid enough with a plethora of routes just waiting to be bagged.

No matter your style of climbing, there is something for everyone on the granite in the Suru Valley. Acclimatize on the bolted and trad routes at Parkachik, head to Shafat for some multi-pitch first ascents, boulder in the meadows on rest days. Is this India's Squamish? Time will tell, but one thing is for certain, there is a lot less traffic.

Summary

Jenga Buttress (5.9, 800m, 16 pitches), Nun-Kun massif, Shafat valley, Indian Himalaya. FA: Stephen Senecal, Ben Stephenson, September 29, 2016.

Stephen Senecal on pitch four of Jenga Buttress.
Photo: Ben Stephenson

Positive Affect

Vikki Weldon

STANDING KNEE-DEEP IN THE RIVER, I stare bewildered at the blood dripping from my face onto the rock below me. It takes a few drawn-out seconds to realize that the blood is coming from the bridge of my nose. As I clasp my hands around my face, it takes me a minute to come back to reality.

I turn around to see my partner, Jo Bulmer, staring wide-eyed and open-mouthed at me. As I take my hands away from my face, everything widens just a little bit more. "Great," I think to myself, "I just smashed my face." Wading back towards Jo, she guides me to the river's edge. It was our first day in Cochamo, a granite paradise nestled within the Patagonian Andes of southern Chile. Jo and I were on our way to do a short multi-pitch on La Junta, the nearest granite dome to camp, and the namesake of the campground we would be staying at for the next two weeks. We came to a river crossing, and I began to hop sure footedly along the row of rocks that led to the other side. I did not account for the invisible slime that covered the wet rocks, and in an instant, I had slipped and fallen face first into the next rock.

Soaking wet and feeling dazed, I heard a sound just above me. My eyes found a group standing next to the Tyrolean line strung above the river that Jo and I had completely missed. I watched as a woman in the group bent down and scooped up a little white poodle, placed him in her lap and casually crossed to the other side. Jo let out a burst of laughter, and I could not help but join in.

HAVING PLANNED TO SPEND THE entire month of January 2017 in Cochamo, we were dismayed to find a weather forecast of unrelenting rain just prior to leaving for South America. A flurry of reorganization found us headed to the Argentinian climbing paradise of Frey outside of Bariloche for

Vikki Weldon starts the crux pitch (5.12b) of Alendalaca on Trinidad Sur. Photo: Jo Bulmer

the first two weeks. There we topped-out mini Patagonian towers of golden granite every day, experienced a small taste of tent destroying *viento* and enjoyed the camaraderie of a host of international climbers. It was heaven.

A promising forecast sent us scurrying back to Chile and prepping for two weeks of granite wonders. Cochamo is a climber's paradise. Nestled within the Los Lagos region of the Llanquihue province of Patagonian Chile, the Vallé Cochamo consists of sheer granite that rises above a thriving, lush rainforest. There are no roads leading into the valley, rather a century-old cattle trail cut deep into the rainforest alongside the Rio Cochamo that allows access into the granite playground.

Arriving in the sprawling green meadow of La Junta campground was akin to stepping foot into a fairy tale. Campers lounged in the sun-soaked fields, while horses and cows grazed next to the small refugio that acts as a kitchen and gathering point. The dark granite of La Junta towered over us on the north side of the valley, while across the river lay the stunning granite triplets of Trinidad Norte, Central and Sur of the Valle Trinidad, neighbouring the impressive curving Anfiteatro. Further to the west lay the soaring slabs of Arco Iris, the granite behemoth that acts as sentry to the valley. It was as if Squamish and Yosemite had made sweet Chilean babies together.

The next day, we set off early to the Valle Trinidad. With heavy packs once again, we soon learned why climbers nickname the area "Approachamo." A minimum two- to three-hour approach only gains you access into the valley, with many climbs demanding an even longer approach from the bivy sites. Most climbers plan to spend a number of days up in the valley, only coming back to the La Junta campground to rest and restock food for the next mission.

Over the next week, Jo and I focused on climbing the classics in Valle Trinidad. The 15-pitch EZ Does It (5.10d, 455 metres) started us off with fun, sustained climbing and the occasional soaking-wet off-width to the summit of Trinidad Norte. We put in a solid attempt on Cochamo's first free climb, Alendalaca (5.12b, 440 metres) on Trinidad Sur, and enjoyed the engaging and unique pitches on No Hay Hoyes (5.11a, 210 metres) on the Gorilla. The highlight of the Trinidad climbing was indeed Los Manos del Dia

Jo Bulmer on the Wild Flake Pitch (pitch six) on Las Manos del Dia (5.11+) on Trinidad Central.
Photo: Vikki Weldon

(5.11+, 500 metres) on Trinidad Central. From technical slab to a wild curving flake to a most perfect hand crack to a burley off-width crux, this route absolutely had it all.

After a successful mission to the Trinidad valley, Jo and I found ourselves back at La Junta, lazing about in the lush meadow and scheming up our next step. Our eyes were drawn to the topo of Positive Affect (5.12b, 975 metres), the king line on Arco Iris. From everyone we had spoken to, it was a plumb line, weaving its way up incredible rock. Consisting of 19 pitches, it would be the longest route either of us had ever attempted. A slow and easy morning the next day, we climbed only the first five pitches in order to bivy on the massive King Ledge.

Waking up with the sun, Jo and I cleared out the morning cobwebs with a handful of easy pitches before the difficulty and the angle of the rock kicked it up a notch. Every pitch was a 50- to 60-metre rope-stretcher, ranging from technical stemming dihedrals to grovelling off-widths (Glad Jo led that one!). As the day wore on with perfect, crisp weather, each pitch left us a little bit more exhausted. Not until around 7 p.m. that evening did we reach the crux of the route, pitch 18. I began handing the gear to Jo. Staring up at the never-ending dihedral, I could see Jo's body sag. She was tired. So was I.

"You got this, Jojo," I murmured to my partner.

An onsight of the route was no longer possible after foot slips from the both of us. The pressure was gone, but the drive to try hard remained. Starting up, the first few moves transferring from the petering-out crack to the smooth granite of the dihedral were shaky. Within a couple of metres though, Jo found her groove. I watched in awe as she fought her heart out, pulling out all the stops to push past my line of sight. I crowed with excitement when I heard a faint shout signalling to me that she had reached the anchor. A proud onsight of a hard pitch. I could not have been more psyched.

We topped out just after 9 p.m. as the sun ducked behind the mountains. Gazing out into the valley, I glanced at the encroaching clouds with worry. The forecast had called for rain overnight. Setting up the anchors for rappel, I crossed

Jo Bulmer follows a technical dihedral on Positive Affect (5.12b), a 19-pitch route on Arco Iris. Photo: Vikki Weldon

my fingers that we would be off the wall before the weather hit us.

The first 10 rappels went quickly, but soon darkness fell upon us, along with the first of the raindrops. Soon the heavens opened, leaving us soaked to the bone and our ropes a hundred times more cumbersome. Our pace slowed dramatically as we worked out the knots in our water-logged ropes, tossing them into the rivulets of water that ran down the wall.

Rapping off the King Ledge, I found myself near the end of our 70-metre lines with no anchor in sight. The darkness confused me, and the rain did little to help. I had missed the anchors. Ascending a wet line with prussic cords is no easy task. What felt like more than an hour later, I spied the anchors with a shout of triumph. Poor Jo joined me minutes later, shaking from exposure. We reached the base of the wall only to find that our mellow slab approach had turned into a nightmare maze of waterfalls. More than two hours later, we stumbled onto the main trail back to La Junta. Heads down, hoods up, we trudged wordlessly back to camp.

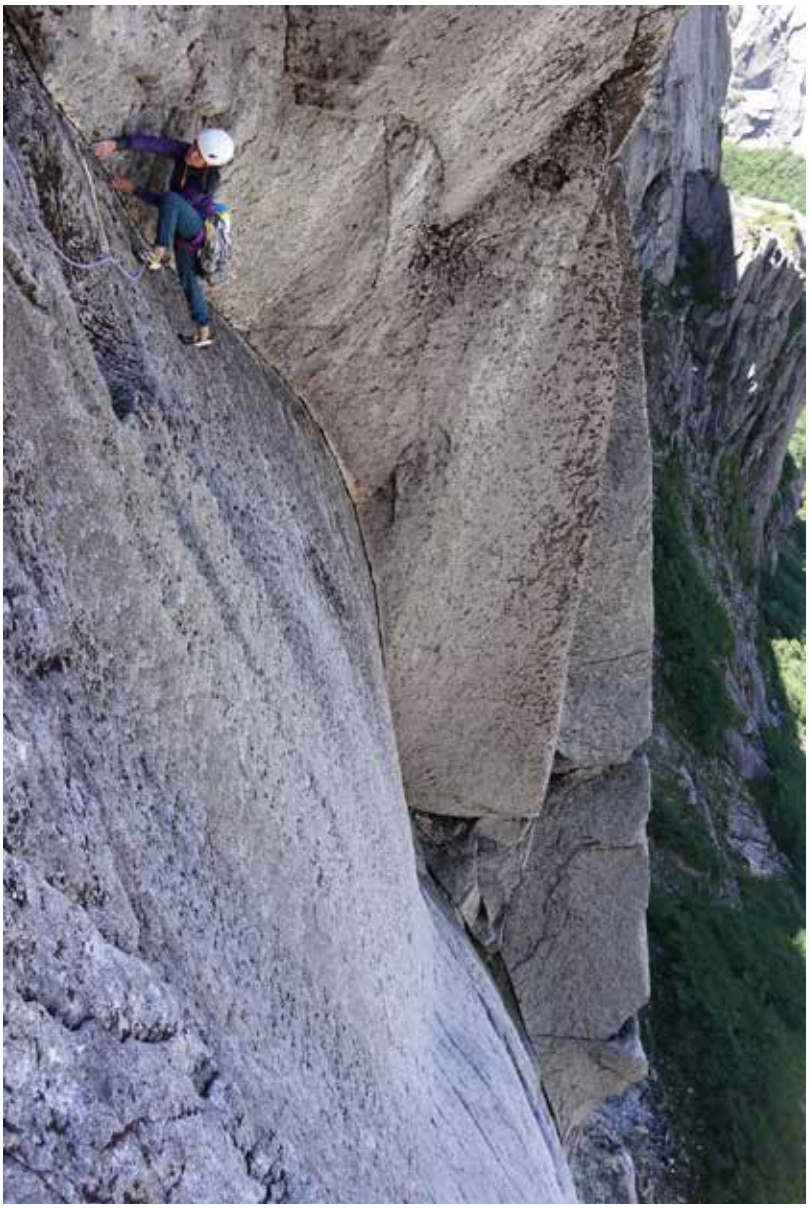
After stumbling into our tent, Jo mumbled sleepily, "I think my phone is broken. It says its six."

I numbly checked my phone.

"Nope," I replied, laughing, "It's 6 a.m." Almost 24 continuous hours on the move.

The next few days passed like a dream. Cramping muscles, soaking gear and drizzly weather kept us from any more climbing for the remainder of the trip. Only too happy to laze about at camp, we met a number of climbers who were happy to discover our safe arrival after having watched our headlamps inch their way down Arco Iris at night. Wherever I go, the climbing community never ceases to amaze and inspire me at their overall inclusiveness, caring and warm nature. The climbers of Cochamo were no exception.

My pack full around the brim and my boots tied up tight, I spun slowly, soaking in the stellar 360-degree view one final time. Cochamo had been generous to us, sharing its adventurous nature and high-quality granite, taking only a small amount of blood in return. I rubbed the small abrasion on the bridge of my nose. "Seems a fair trade to me," I thought, smiling. Perhaps next time, we could give back in a larger way. The endless possibilities up the bright granite domes were outstanding. There are many new routes to be created here. It is only a matter of time before I will be back.



Jo Bulmer on pitch two of No Hay Hoyes (5.11a) on the Gorilla.
Photo: Vikki Weldon

Remembrances

Ernest Frederick Roots
1923 – 2016

Fred roots was born in Salmon Arm, British Columbia, on July 5, 1923. He grew up in Banff, Alberta, finished high school in Vancouver, eventually made his professional base in Ottawa, Ontario, retired in 1989, and died in his sleep in Sooke, B.C., on October 18, 2016. An eminent geologist, mountaineer and distinguished public servant, he is survived by his British-born wife, June, and four daughters. Their eldest child Charlie, also a noted geologist and mountaineer, tragically died from ALS only months earlier.

After receiving a doctorate from Princeton, Roots joined the Scott Polar Research Institute at Cambridge University, and at the age of just 26 years, was appointed chief geologist for the Norwegian-British-Swedish Antarctic Expedition (1949-1952). The expedition's goals included looking for evidence of Polar climate change. He stayed with the expedition throughout its three Antarctic summers and two winters, travelling in summer (mostly by dog sled), covering 500 kilometres on just one of the journeys and making pioneering geological studies over an area of 60,000 square kilometres. His mountaineering knowledge was relied upon for guiding the expedition's three motorized "Weasels" around heavily crevassed areas. He completed his fellowship at the Institute's headquarters, where he met June.

From 1953 to 1958, he served as a field geologist with the Geological Survey of Canada, where he led various projects on the Arctic Islands and mainland of northern Canada. In 1958, he helped to create the Polar Continental Shelf Program and served as its director until 1971. In addition to research in the High Arctic, the program included setting up (in cooperation with The Arctic Institute of North America) the Icefield Ranges Research Project (IRRP), which conducted high-altitude alpine research on Canada's highest mountains, in what later became Kluane National Park in the Yukon.

Although usually too busy to take part in ACC activities, he led Ottawa Section rock and ice climbs and ski trips, helped to renovate the section's cabin and served as section chairman from 1962-1963. The Roots' family home in Burnett, Quebec, was the venue for many Ottawa Section parties and events.

In 1964, after more than four years of planning, the first Canadian Himalayan Expedition set out for a little-known region of the Karakoram with Roots as leader. After massive amounts of correspondence, the expedition had obtained approval from the government of Pakistan with the usual onerous conditions, but also some freedom. As expedition member Don Lyon wrote: "We would have to decide which peak would be Hachindar Chish when we got there" [*CAJ*, vol. 49. 1966, pp 1-27]. They travelled in battered jeeps supplied by the Mir of Hunza along a road consisting of loose rocks with a covering of dirt on the steep mountainside, 300 metres above the river. Although failing to climb their objective, they battled snowstorms and avalanche conditions while trying. Fred even dangled in a crevasse until he realized that "failing to climb out due to lack of strength was not an option."

In 1963, Roots had proposed to ACC management an expedition to the St. Elias Range in the Yukon to celebrate Canada's centennial. Although too busy to take part himself in the 1967 Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition (YACE), with his intimate knowledge of the area, he made vital contributions to the trip's planning and logistics.

In 1971, he left the Polar Shelf project to join the

fledgling department that became Environment Canada, where he served until retirement in 1989, and then as special adviser emeritus until 2003.

In the mid-1990s. Roots became a founding sponsor and mentor for Students on Ice, involving hundreds of students from around the world. He remained active with them until the end, with his last trip to western Greenland in 2016.

During his long career, he received many awards and appointments: the Ness Award of the Royal Geographical Society (1955); Fellow of the Arctic Institute of North America (1955); Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society (1965); Massey Medal of the Royal Canadian Geographical Society (1979); notably, Officer of the Order of Canada (1987); Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada (1990); and the prestigious Medal of The Explorers Club (2016). The ACC was fortunate to have Dr. E.F. Roots as a life member, and on the wider scene, he truly was a Canadian hero.

—Stan Rosenbaum

David Peter Vallance
1950 – 2017

David vallance's backyard was the mountain playgrounds of Alberta and B.C., and he followed in the footsteps of his father and grandfather through participation in the activities of The Alpine Club of Canada. Like his grandfather, Sydney Vallance (ACC president from 1947 to 1950), David served at both the section and nationals levels and was secretary to the board of directors from 1986 to 1990.

As board secretary, he was a key driver of fundamental reforms to the structure and management of the ACC in the 1980s, and in 1986, he became part of a small group of dedicated individuals who worked over a period of five years in partnership with the Southern Alberta Hostel Association to build the Canadian Alpine Centre in Lake Louise (opened in 1991).

He was passionate about the mountains—hiking, camping, skiing and climbing with friends and family. David had a few special places he revered calling "magical." Lake O'Hara and Mount Assiniboine were among favourites. I had the pleasure of standing on more than 20 summits with David, and one of my fondest recollections was a climb of Mount Lougheed with David and his father in the mid-1980s. At that time, he reminisced about his adventures in 1967 as a young "camp boy" at the ACC Yukon Centennial Camp, and in particular, a flight out of the camp laying face down in the ski basket on the outside of the helicopter.

His adventures in the mountains were often impetuous and last minute, beginning with unexpected phone calls inviting departure to exotic locations at relatively short notice. In this vein, he would set off for ascents of Mount Rainier and Mount Baker in Washington state, or a trip to Yosemite Valley to climb Lost Arrow Spire, or a logistically complicated trip to Nootka Sound on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

He was often accused of being compulsive about his hobbies and would delve into new pursuits with intensity and passion—sailing, cross-country ski racing and fly fishing to name just a few. He was a creative soul who expressed himself through photography, needlework and an exploration of Haida art. David was known to have a unique intellectual curiosity, from studying Buddhism to dissertations on Nietzsche. He could often be found with a novel in his hand or reading the latest news in physics, neuroscience and psychology. His passion for the mountains stayed with him through his entire life, and he eagerly shared that with family and friends. Along with the ACC in general, we will continue to benefit from David's life and work well into the future.

—Ken Hewitt

Anna Clare Smith
1985 – 2016

Anna clare smith was born in Manchester, England, spent four of her youngest years in Hong Kong, and then moved with her family to Canmore, Alberta, where she was raised through high school among the mountains. After obtaining a university degree from the University of Toronto—which included time studying music and playing the French horn—she returned to the Bow Valley, becoming increasingly captivated by mountains as both a landscape and a culture. Ultimately calling both Canmore and Golden, British Columbia, her home, Anna became a dedicated full-time Parks Canada employee in Lake Louise. She was deeply interested in the difficulties that land managers face in ensuring human use of a landscape in a way that is both environmentally and socially responsible.

Anna was a keen all-rounder in the world of mountains, continually ambitious and driven to explore new zones and her own personal limits. Anna pursued adventure with passion and humour, making for the best kind of alpine partner. Her deep love of Wu Tang, Roger Federer and bags of red wine—in combination with her incredible laugh—only added to her magnetism. From braving hard mixed and ice routes throughout the Canadian Rockies, Yosemite big-wall speed ascents, new routing on the east face of Snowpatch Spire in the Bugaboos, expeditions and free ascents up the remote peaks of Baffin Island, to extensive and harrowing north-face missions in her local alpine zone, she did it all mostly with a smile and always with a desire to return for another bigger, badder and bolder round two.

Some of Anna's proudest climbs include All Along the Watchtower (5.12, 32 pitches) on North Howser Tower in the Bugaboos, Mounts Asgard and Loki in Auyuittuq National Park on Baffin Island, and the first ascent of The Proposal (M8) with Jim Elzinga on Cirrus Mountain in the Canadian Rockies. In California's Yosemite Valley, she had many test pieces under her belt, including The Nose (in 25 hours), Salathe Wall (in 27 hours) and Shortest Straw (A4) on El Capitan, as well as Astroman (5.11c) on Washington Column and The North Face (5.11c) of The Rostrum.

Anna was inspired by compelling, aesthetic lines in beautifully untamed zones. She was a recent recipient of the Jen Higgins Memorial Fund with her expedition mate Michelle Kadatz, which resulted in a successful trip to Auyuittuq National Park on Baffin Island, and included two likely female first ascents and a second free ascent [*CAJ*, vol. 99, 2016, p. 80]. Most recently, she and I were the 2016 recipients of the John Lauchlan Memorial Award and the Mugs Stump Award for our intended first ascent attempt in the Indian Himalaya.

From big walls in Baffin and Yosemite to stark alpine faces throughout the Canadian Rockies, Anna had a strength and determination that is hard to come by. Anna was a star in every sense of the word. She was a firm believer in advancing female participation in the world of alpinism; you could feel her pride as she witnessed friends and colleagues pushing boundaries and setting new standards in the alpine. She was an integral part of this revolution and of the mountain community.

Anna passed away in her sleep on September 30, 2016, at the age of 31, while we were on an expedition in the Miyar Valley of the Indian Himalaya. The day prior, we had made our advanced base camp at 5,000 metres, at the base of the north face of Rachu Tangmu where we intended to set out in the morning for a new route. Our travels through India up until that moment were a gift. We laughed, ran, climbed and revelled in absolute wonder at the ice-studded world around us. Upon return to Canada on October 16, 2016, a large gathering for the celebration of her life took place in Canmore. Anna will be forever missed, but we will all hear her laughing, which will bring peace and strength as we push our own limits.

—Alison Criscitiello

Severin Andreas Heiberg
1922 – 2016

Born in norway, sev arrived with his family to Kingman, Alberta, in 1926. Growing up on a farm during the Great Depression shaped his frugality, spartan lifestyle and love for the outdoors. From his mother, Sev gained his love for gymnastics. His schooling began in the one-room Pretty Hill School and culminated with a PhD from UBC in Vancouver. In between, he did a stint as a navigator in the RCAF, which brought him to Denmark just as WWII was ending. While at UBC, Sev became a seasoned mountaineer and rock climber in the Coast Mountains. After graduating, he did government defence work in Suffield, Alberta, and from 1960 to 1968, in Ottawa, Ontario.

In 1961, Sev led the first ascent of Pioneer Ridge on the north peak of Denali (Mount McKinley) [see *CAJ*, vol. XLV, 1962, p. 75-88]. The team consisted of three from Ottawa and two from Vancouver. In 1962, Sev was the planning director and nominated leader of Canada's first Himalayan expedition. It finally took place in 1964, but by then he had dropped out, due mostly to his commitments in gymnastics [see *CAJ*, vol. 49,1966, p. 1-27). Sev was also on the team that made the first ascent of Mount Ontario in 1967 on the Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition. Around Ottawa, Sev was always at the sharp and steep end of the rope. His other pursuits included backcountry skiing, canoeing and Scottish country dancing. A paddling trip on a lake was likely to include reaching for that first handhold while still in the canoe. After a few spills in whitewater, including a spectacular threesome nosedive into the Ottawa River, he decided that rock climbing was safer.

But, ahead of all these adventures came his gymnastics, from founding the Ottawa Gymnastics Club in 1960 to casual displays on a camping trip. One morning, waking up under the sky, he realized he had been sliding downhill. No problem, still inside his sleeping bag, his feet swung high in the air, he calmly walked on his hands back to his climbing pants. When coaching, he found it more rewarding to teach girls (with some becoming top gymnasts) because, as he simply put it, they listened to his advice while the men and boys often did not.

In 1968, he returned to Vancouver and concentrated on his two big passions. In 1969, he founded his own school, the Phoenix Gymnastics Club, while for the next two decades he was a frequent leader on ACC and BCMC climbing trips. Well beyond his eightieth birthday, Sev could be found working on one of his trails. He was a founding member of Gymnastics BC and a life member of Gymnastics Canada. The Sev Heiberg National Stream Coaches of the Year Award is named in his honour. And for his contributions to mountaineering, he deserves to be long remembered.

—Stan Rosenbaum

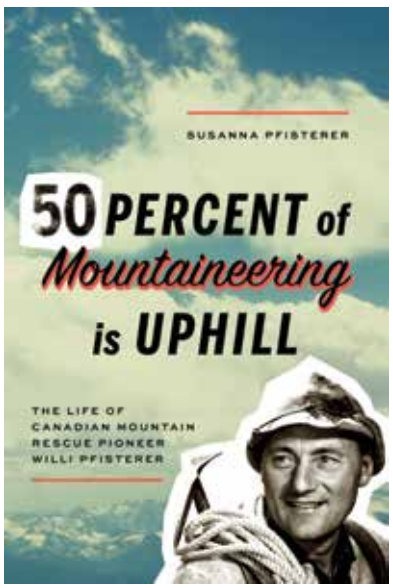
Reviews

Fifty Percent of Mountaineering is Uphill

by Susanna Pfisterer, NeWest Press (2016).

Daughter susanna pfisterer has compiled Willi Pfisterer's many stories and photographs into the book he never had time to write. His friends described him as a man with an infectious grin and a twinkle in his eye. A legend in Canadian mountaineering, his Tyrolean hat, red knicker socks and Austrian accent left no doubt you were in good hands. In Willi's own words, enlivened with his humour, we relive some of the 1,600 peaks and 700 mountain rescues of Pfisterer's incredible life. Through the pages of this book and with the help of his friendly mascot Sidehillgouger, Pfisterer shares valuable lessons learned during his lifetime in the alpine. "The best piece of equipment you can take with you into the mountains is your brain."

Pfisterer was born (1926) in the Austrian mountain village of Muhlbach. As a boy, he watched his grandfather, a mountain guide, head out with his clients. By the age of 10, Willi knew that there was a life for him beyond the meadows. In his early 20s, he was a member of his country's Nordic combined ski jumping and cross-country ski teams and was ranked fourth in Austria.



By the time Pfisterer came to Canada in 1955, he had climbed many of the Alps' classic routes and was taking part in mountain rescues. As luck would have it, he was hired by Bill Harrison as a horse wrangler and mountain guide. Bill, a renowned outfitter from Edgewater, B.C., and his American clients were impressed when one day after morning chores, Pfisterer soloed the northeast ridge of Mount Sir Donald in Rogers Pass.

Jasper, Alberta, became home, where for several years owning Willi's Ski Shop provided the opportunity for climbing, guiding and ski coaching. In 1963, the ski shop was sold, and Pfisterer spent the following two winters managing ski schools in B.C.'s Okanagan. By the winter of 1966, Pfisterer had landed his dream job with Parks Canada and was learning avalanche control in Rogers Pass. Working with Fred and Walter Schleiss, Pfisterer helped to implement the avalanche science needed to keep the Trans-Canada Highway open.

After three years in Rogers Pass, Pfisterer was assigned to Jasper National Park as an alpine specialist. Working closely with Peter Fuhrmann, stationed in Banff, the two men shared responsibility for mountain rescue and public safety in a park system larger than the size of Switzerland. By the early 1970s, helicopter rescue and the use of avalanche rescue dogs were being introduced to the mountain parks. Pfisterer developed the techniques and training methods needed to ensure those in the warden service could implement the skills to safely travel and execute mountain rescues in any remote park wilderness. During those years, he helped to establish the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (honorary member) and the Canadian Avalanche Association.

Perhaps the highest profile rescue Pfisterer and his team worked on was in August 1984 on Mount Robson's Wishbone Arête. The search for Nicholas Vanderbilt of American society and his climbing partner Francis Gledhill put Pfisterer in the U.S. news media spotlight. It was a tense 48 hours before the reality of their deaths was accepted by families and friends. At that time, Pfisterer knew the mountain better than anyone, having reached the summit seven times in 16 attempts.

In 1959, Pfisterer joined Hans Gmoser and four teammates to make the second ascent of the East Ridge of Mount Logan. To add to the challenge, they skied in and out from the Alaska Highway. When Kluane National Park and Reserve was established in 1970, Pfisterer returned to the St. Elias Range to establish a public safety/rescue

program for the new park. Larger than all the other mountain parks combined, this presented the kind of challenge Pfisterer excelled at. For the next 17 summers, Pfisterer led park wardens on training expeditions within the park, developing systems specific to the higher elevations and colder temperatures in these mountains.

It was not always just work. In 1977, an Alpine Club of Canada member convinced then Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau that he would enjoy climbing some mountains in Canada's national parks, and that Pfisterer was the guide he needed. A special relationship developed between Trudeau and Pfisterer spanning many years and included ascents of Mount Edith Cavell and Mount Athabasca.

To celebrate the centennial of the national parks in 1985, Pfisterer organized a two-day ascent of Mount Edith Cavell for a New Year's bivy on the summit. Six wardens representing the national parks, plus Pfisterer with his daughter Susanna (author of the book) and son Fred climbed to the summit. Pulling a few strings, Pfisterer had pre-arranged a supply of firewood to be helicoptered onto the summit.

Sunset Over the Mountains, Susanna's final chapter, recounts the tragic loss of her brother, Fred, at the age of 24 in a 1987 heli-skiing accident. This was a crushing blow for the family. Throughout Willi's long career, there had been no fatalities on his watch. After decades with the park service, Pfisterer knew that it was time to pass the torch onto the younger wardens he had so carefully mentored. "In mountain rescue there are no heroes, just teammates."

—Paul Geddes

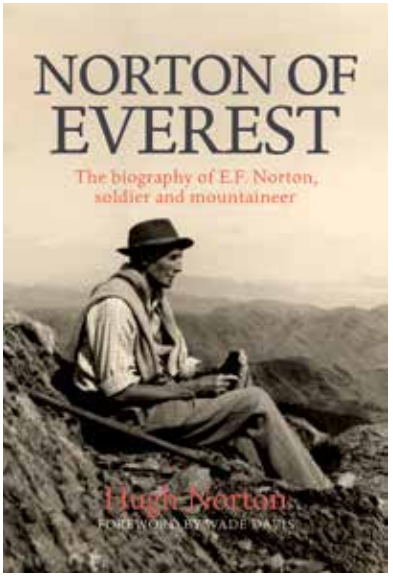
Norton of Everest: The biography of E.F. Norton, soldier and mountaineer

by Hugh Norton, Vertebrate Publishing (2017).

This long-awaited biography of E. F. "Teddy" Norton is pivotal, despite only having one chapter dedicated to mountaineering. A highly respected professional soldier, Norton achieved the rank of Lieutenant General when he retired in 1942. His first posting was in Ireland in 1903, and four years later he was off to India where he spent much of his later career. In Europe during WWI, he served with distinction as an artillery officer, and was awarded the Military Cross and Distinguished Service Order. For 18 months during the war, he was attached to the Canadian army and later received a letter of commendation from the Canadian prime minister.

In the early 1920s, he was stationed in Turkey and played a key role in the developing situation there. Back in England, he was fast-tracked through officer training and considered to be a rising star. In 1929, he returned to India, and in 1940, he was appointed acting governor of Hong Kong where, with a Japanese invasion looming, he was credited with saving many lives by excavating air raid shelters into the granite rock around the city.

Notwithstanding his star military career, and despite taking part in only two climbing expeditions, Teddy Norton is best remembered today for his mountaineering. He had only moderate climbing experience when he applied to join the 1922 Everest expedition; his background and connections in India might have been factors in his being accepted. The 1922 expedition was the first serious attempt to climb the mountain and Norton performed well at altitude, reaching 8,230 metres; plus he impressed other team members with his climbing judgement. In 1924, Norton was accepted for a second Everest attempt, and was appointed second-in-command and climbing leader. During the approach march, General Bruce became ill and had to withdraw as leader, asking Norton to take over. Norton in turn chose George Mallory to be both his second-in-command and climbing leader, and the two worked closely



together until the latter's disappearance and presumed death on the summit ridge towards the end of the expedition.

Despite the demands on his time as expedition leader, and also having to take over duties as a correspondent for *The Times*, Norton led from the front with two very significant personal achievements on the mountain. In the first, he organized and led what he and his companions firmly believed was a suicide mission to rescue four Sherpas trapped by heavy snowfall and dwindling food supplies on the North Col. Determined not to have a repeat of the 1922 disaster when seven Sherpas died in an avalanche while attempting to descend from the North Col, they succeeded against all odds with no loss of life. Later, Norton was partnered with Howard Somervell for a second summit bid after Mallory's first attempt had failed. As they climbed towards a gully known as the Great Couloir, Somervell's cough forced him to stop. Norton went on alone, without oxygen to reach 8,573 metres, just 275 metres below the summit.

Drawing on his scrambling experience in the Alps, he had chosen a more exposed but less technical line below the ridgeline that Mallory and Irvine used on their fateful climb. The hugely exposed gully leading to the summit pyramid that Norton crossed alone is today known as the Norton Couloir, and his high-altitude record without oxygen held for 54 years until 1978 when Reinhold Messner and Peter Habeler summited Everest without oxygen. Messner later made a solo ascent without oxygen via the Norton Couloir, again inspired by Norton. Despite the 1924 expedition's tragic ending with the loss of Mallory and Irvine, Norton was credited with exceptional leadership in the face of adversity, and was felt by some to be the best of all Everest leaders.

In 1927, Norton and Somervell, who became lifelong friends, were recognized in Canada by the naming of two peaks over 10,000 feet (3,048 metres) in British Columbia's Rocky Mountains. And there is yet a third Canadian connection in the book in that its foreword was written by anthropologist Wade Davis.

Apart from his mountaineering and professional achievements, Teddy Norton was universally recognized as an outstanding leader and mentor by those of all ranks and walks of life who served or worked with him. He was also a renowned naturalist (with particular interests in bird watching and wildflowers), a talented artist, a horseman and sportsman, and an accomplished linguist, which helped him relate to local people during his overseas postings and expeditions. He was a devoted family man who took the time to imbue his learning and interests in his three sons; and now the youngest, Hugh Norton, has produced this warm and inspirational biography of his father, one of the 20th century's great mountaineers.

—Mike Nash

Surviving Logan

by Erik Bjarnason and Cathy Shaw, Rocky Mountain Books (2016).

The most important part of a story about three rescue workers trapped in a three-day storm at 5,500 metres, engulfed by relentless hurricane-like gale-force winds, with minimal protection or supplies on Canada's highest peak, is that they survived to tell the tale.

To consider fairing -56 C weather after losing their tent and packs to 108 kilometre-per-hour winds, severe frostbite and hypothermia, or the teeter between intense bouts of hope and despair is incomparable to the fate that protected Erik Bjarnason and his friends Alex Snigurowicz and Don Jardine from being killed by any one of these elements.

In his debut book *Surviving Logan*, Bjarnason delves into his conscious and wandering mind during the month-long expedition of May 2005. Co-written with his younger cousin Cathi Shaw, *Surving Logan* is wholly indicative of Bjarnason's inner-most desire—to survive on Mount Logan—as the book sincerely tells.

A pupil of high-risk rescue stories, Bjarnason

followed the footsteps of his Vancouver-based Icelandic uncles and became a firefighter shortly after joining Vancouver's North Shore Rescue (NSR) in 1988. Comprised of a group of highly trained unpaid volunteers, NSR's initial objective was to protect the coast against Soviet attack, Bjarnason explains, but as the number of calls to aid stranded hikers and skiers surmounted, search and rescue (SAR) efforts became a priority for them.

Bjarnason's passion for mountaineering is shared by the team, including Snigurowicz and Jardine. Over the 17 years Bjarnason was a part of NSR before Logan, he and a few fellow members summited peaks on five of the world's seven continents, including ascents in the Andes, the Himalayas and Alaska, and of Kilimanjaro in Africa.

While the writing is at times repetitive, the simplicity in Bjarnason's descriptions allows readers to envelope themselves in the play-by-play of the expedition. *Surviving Logan* is excellent beta for those with Logan on their to-do list and, perhaps more importantly, it offers a glimpse into a territory that very few will experience in full force, or at all. Logan sees 70 to 140 summit attempts each year. Compare this to the 1,200 annual attempts on Denali, Logan's neighbour and the only peak in North America that is higher. The difference in SAR resources for the two are incomparable. Logan's SAR is virtually non-existent.

Logan is infamous for its severe storms: "…vicious subtropical cyclones that build out in the Pacific Ocean and can strike Logan with little warning," Bjarnason writes. With temperatures reaching less than -50 C during climbing season (late April to early July), Bjarnason equates a bare cheek in wind to a pelletgun shot in the face. "It was so cold," he writes, "that when I spit I watched it freeze before it hit the ground and bounce[d]."

But it was not the ferocity of Logan that drew Bjarnason to the mountain. It was its remoteness; the sense that one might be so removed from society that you feel like the only living human in the wilderness seemed enthralling. It is here, too, that a sense of loneliness, deep despair and homesickness can find its way into your tent. Bjarnason's version includes making a call to his kids and having his ex-wife answer, leaving him reaching out for a connection that felt as though it was a world away.

"In many ways [mountaineering] is a selfish passion," he explains. "Almost an addiction." But what is it about the natural world that calls to us so passionately that we might equate its fulfilling effect with an addiction?

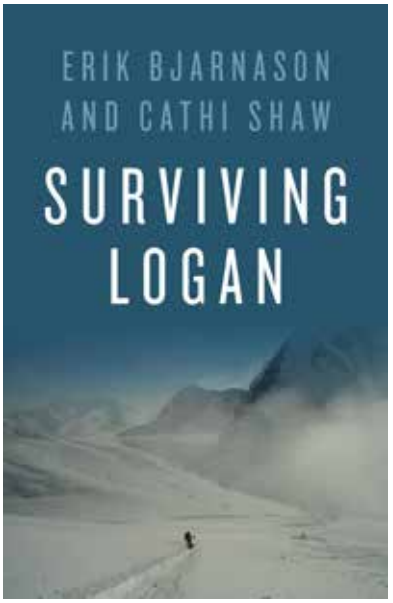
It is a story like *Surviving Logan* that provides access to parts of the natural world where access is difficult to attain. Sharing stories about the power of this planet and its hills are humbling and crucial to our survival as a species. Readers vicariously experience the sixth most prominent peak in the world from the safety of their own couch while wearing wool socks made for skiing. It is not the way the story is told, but the truths within it that astound us (and compel few of us to want to go there, too).

Surviving Logan echoes Sir Edmund Hillary's notion that "It's not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves," a quote that launches the book's preface in which Bjarnason likens his post-Logan life to a fork in the road: one direction offers a half-drunk bottle of Jack Daniels; the other leads to, quite simply, the wilderness around him.

"I am humbled by all I have lost," Bjarnason writes as he struggles, post-hospice, up the clearly paved path to North Vancouver's Mount Seymour, "something a kid could race up."

It is here that Bjarnason finds himself again, as memories of Logan rear their proud and fateful head. It is not our choice to go up or down the mountain, rather it is the mountain that allows us to feel "acutely alive," as Bjarnason writes, while we pass upon it. To survive on a mountain at the mercy of it and its storms is Bjarnason's remarkable gift—to himself, future explorers and the reader's own expedition of *Surviving Logan.*

—Andrea Wrobel

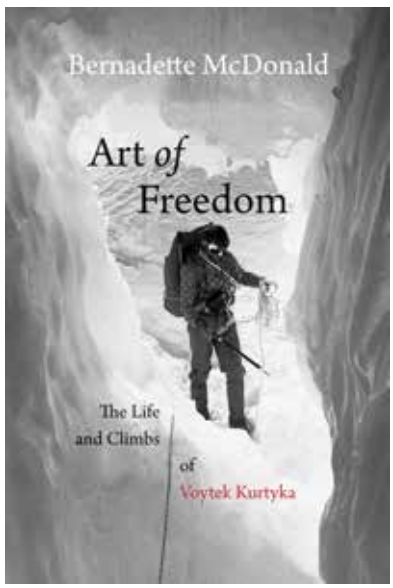


Art of Freedom: The Life and Climbs of Voytek Kurtyka

by Bernadette McDonald, Rocky Mountain Books (2017).

Climbers have been eagerly awaiting the biography of Voytek Kurtyka for some time. In truth, many of us have been waiting for decades for the story of one of the pioneers of lightweight alpine style to be told. Luckily for mountain literature enthusiasts, Bernadette McDonald is on a roll these days. It seems with each passing year there is a new, impeccably researched book bearing her name as the author. Her award-winning titles *Freedom Climbers* and *Alpine Warriors* were the first forays into introducing North American climbers to the hard alpinists born in Poland and Slovenia, respectively. Most of us had never heard of many of these climbers, and most certainly the newer generation could not have known about the extent of contributions to modern alpinism without her works. So it seems like a natural extension that she should pick one of the greatest alpinists of all time for the subject of her next book and that Kurtyka himself should agree to have her take the reins in telling his personal story.

Art of Freedom: The Life and Climbs of Voytek Kurtyka cannot have been an easy book to write. Kurtyka can be notoriously reclusive in his modesty, keeping many of his achievements on the down low through much of his career—and while Poland, and indeed the rest of the mountaineering world celebrated his climbs such as the Shining Wall of Gasherbrum IV with fervour—Kurtyka would rather have remained out of the public limelight. He famously turned down the committee members of the coveted Piolet d'Or awards several times before finally acquiescing when he agreed to accept the Piolet d'Or for lifetime achievement in 2016. Kurtyka never climbed for anyone else but himself, and *Art of Freedom* does a terrific job of revealing the inner workings and intellectualism of his unique character.



Kurtyka climbed with some of the most accomplished alpinists of all time; Alex MacIntyre, Jerzy Kukuczka, René Ghilini, Erhard Loretan and John Porter all tied in with Kurtyka along the way. A remarkable list of climbing partners, which speaks to the exceptional calibre of alpine routes in his quiver. Kurtyka had mastered the art of lightweight alpine style in the high Himalaya, what he called "night naked" ascents, and his dance card was never far from being full for good reason. His infectious enthusiasm for climbing and adherence to the purest, most ethical style possible attracted the best of the best and still acts as inspiration for modern alpinists like Colin Haley, Nick Bullock and Marc-Andre Leclerc today. *Art of Freedom* tackles many of the big issues of ethics in the mountains by providing insight into Kurtyka's relentless obsession with never engaging in siege-style tactics in the hills. He not only thinks of siege style as impure and a form of cheating, but moralistically, he views it as caving in to commercialism and competition, something which he tried to avoid at all costs.

McDonald has a magical knack for honing in on what makes climbers tick, and she definitely unravels threads from the enigma that is Kurtyka in her book. McDonald makes clear that Kurtyka has tried, and succeeded, in turning climbing into an art form. His obsessive-compulsive love with climbing sent many of his relationships into a tailspin, and these parts of his life are painfully revealed throughout. But while his friends and family suffered, the mountaineering world at large benefited with routes that sing of beauty and idealism. His climbs are aspirational accomplishments, like symphonies from a great composer. Some of these grand visions of an artist have yet to be repeated decades later. As Kurtyka puts it himself, "climbing is an example of human creativity; I believe it is one of the richest."

—Joanna Croston

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Larry Shiu, Cascade Mountain, Banff National Park © John Price

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I AM THIS **MOMENT,** THIS **PLACE**

Located in the Canadian Coast Mountain wilderness, Arc'teryx is built on the principle of obsessive, precise design and production. Our in-house manufacturing and design centres allow us to evolve and build products the right way.

ARC'TERYX

Sean Villanueva O'Driscoll turns the corner on a first ascent of Catacomb, which he describes as "one of the wildest wide climbs I have ever done." Sean and Nicolas Favresse made eight first ascents over the course of their two-month expedition to Baffin Island with Matteo Della Bordella, Matteo De Zaiacomo and Luca Schiera. The lengthy approach (on skis and by sailboat) and remote series of climbs were only half of the team's epic season. **Nicolas Favresse** © 2017 Patagonia, Inc.

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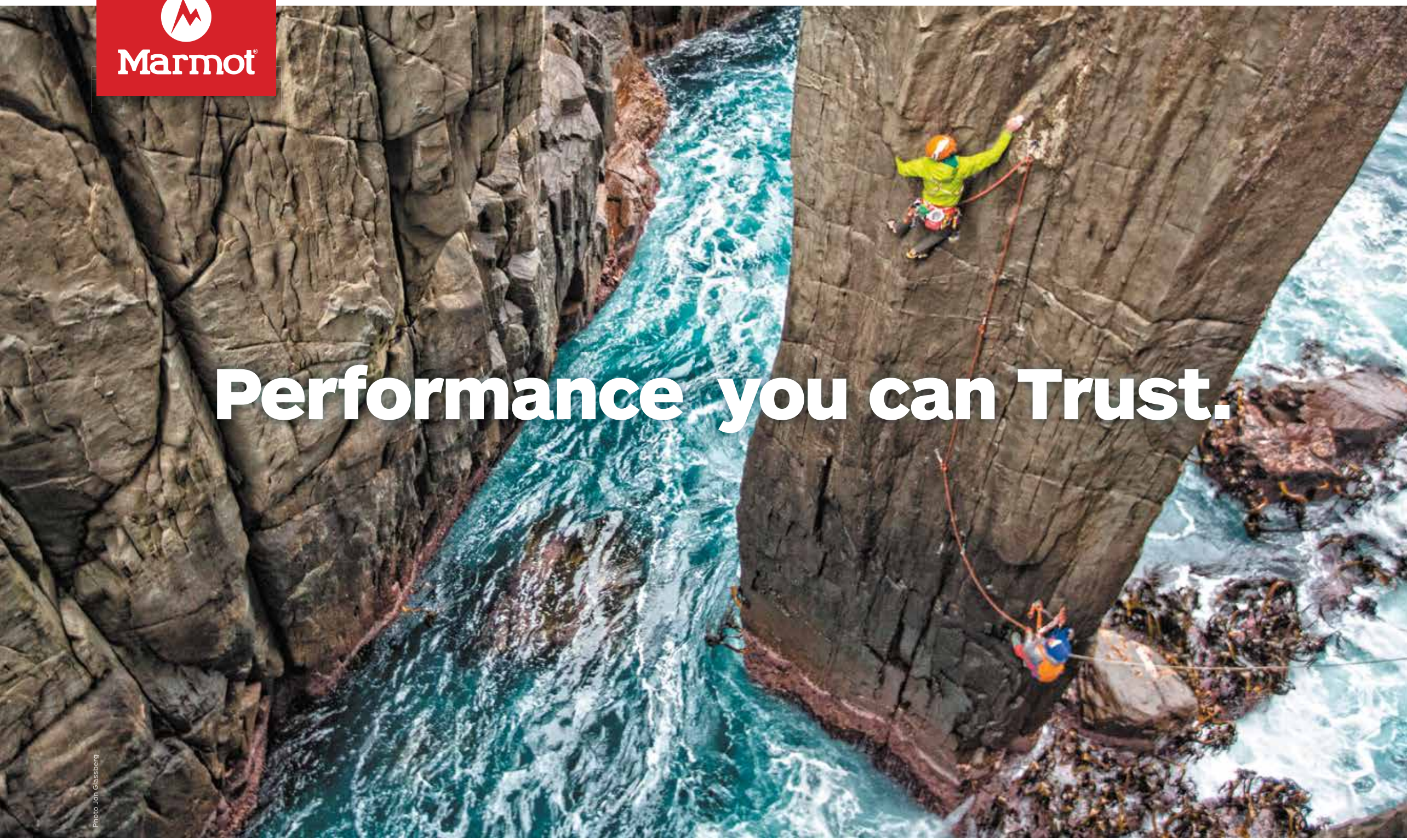

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