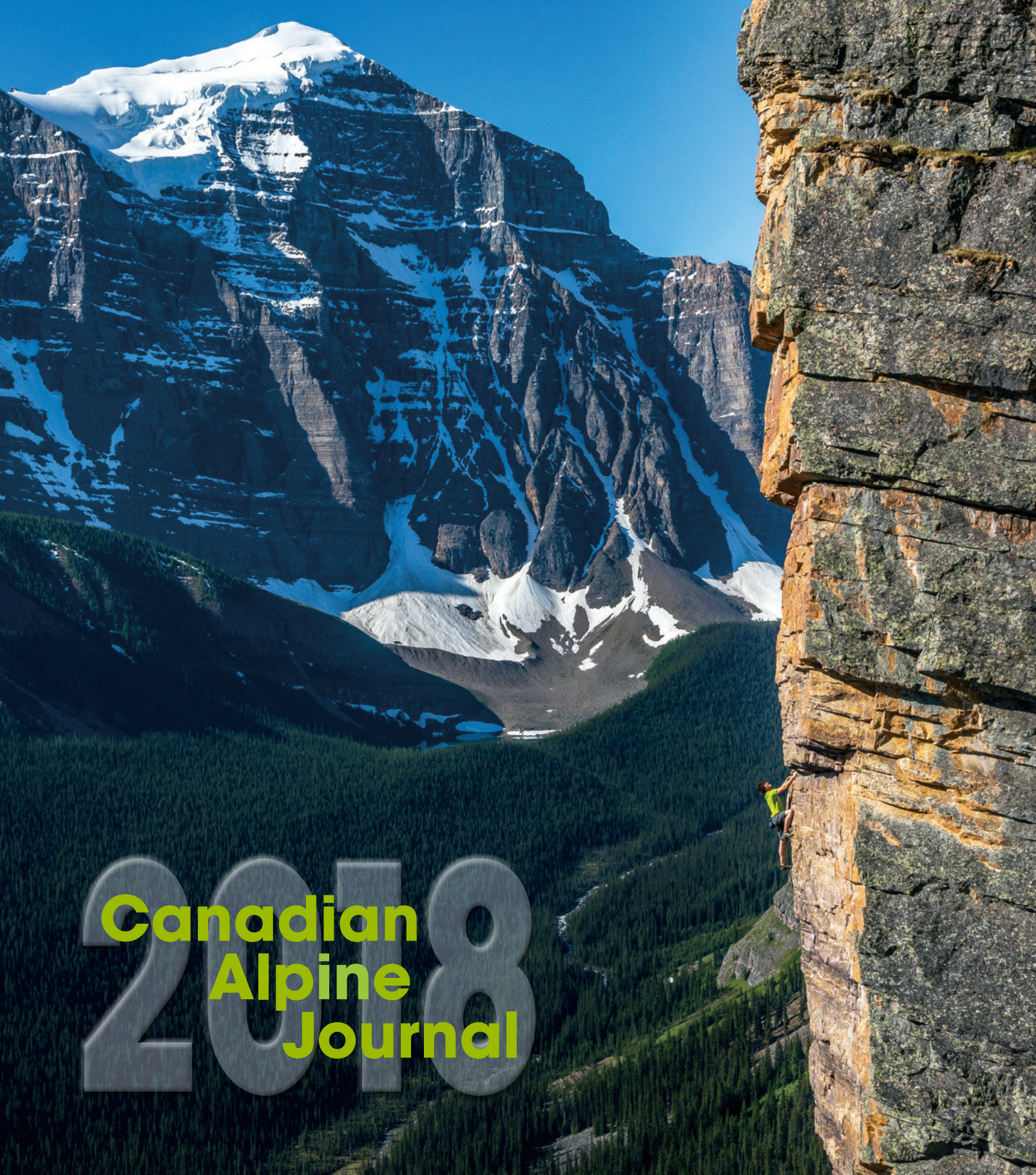

2018 Canadian Alpine Journal

Pictured: Alannah Yip, MEC climbing ambassador and all-around badass.

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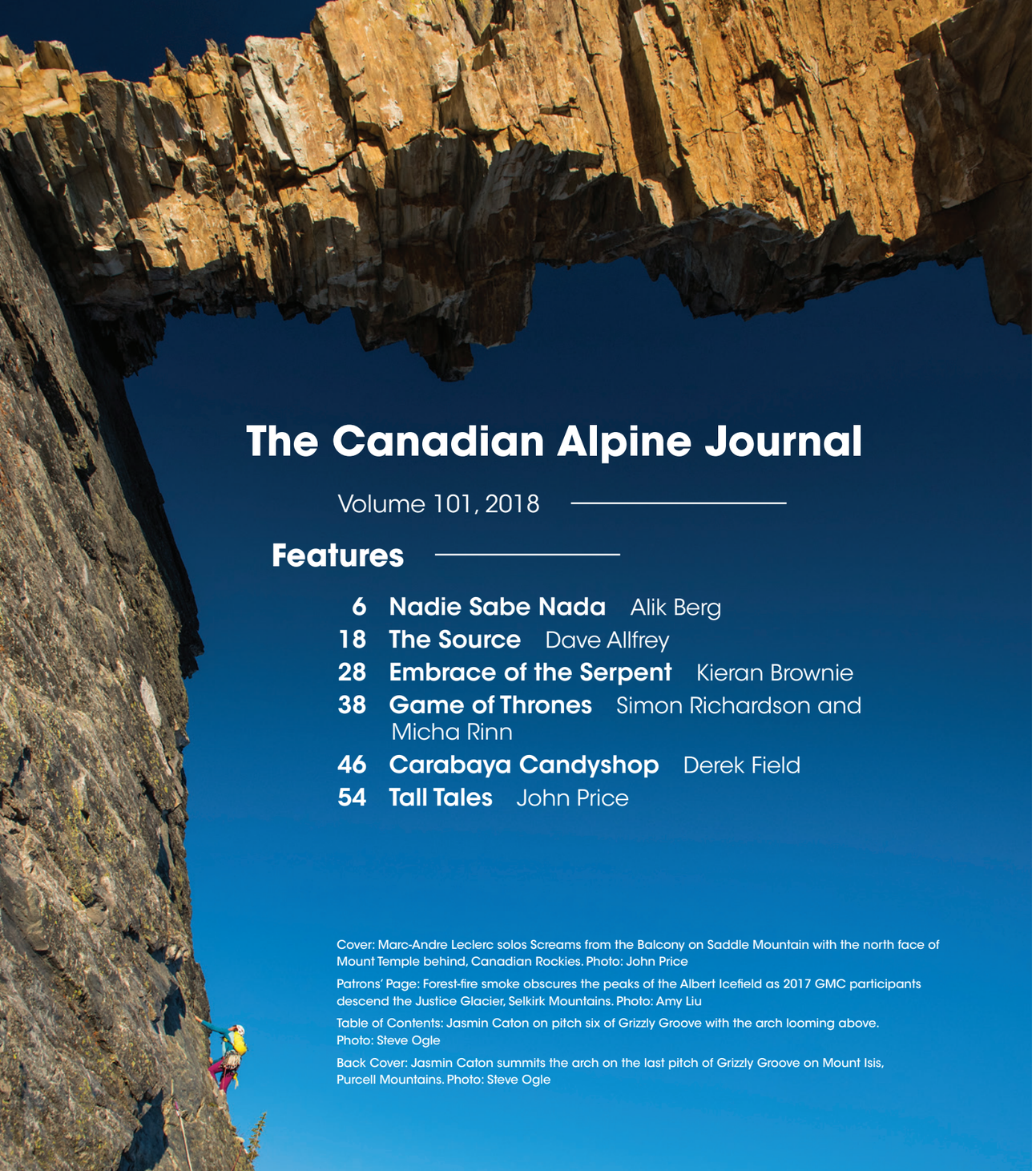

The Canadian Alpine Journal

Volume 101, 2018

Features

Cover: Marc-Andre Leclerc solos Screams from the Balcony on Saddle Mountain with the north face of Mount Temple behind, Canadian Rockies. Photo: John Price

Patrons' Page: Forest-fire smoke obscures the peaks of the Albert Icefield as 2017 GMC participants descend the Justice Glacier, Selkirk Mountains. Photo: Amy Liu

Table of Contents: Jasmin Caton on pitch six of Grizzly Groove with the arch looming above. Photo: Steve Ogle

Back Cover: Jasmin Caton summits the arch on the last pitch of Grizzly Groove on Mount Isis, Purcell Mountains. Photo: Steve Ogle

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INSTRUCTIONS TO CONTRIBUTORS

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

Risk Versus Reward

THE CONCEPT OF RISK versus reward is a clichéd equation used in outdoor pursuits, business, relationships and life in general. It is the idea that by accepting risk, in a somewhat calculated manner, we stand a chance to reap gains. The value of something can be measured by the unwillingness to lose it. Wager money and it may result in more money; wagering one's life could mean increased happiness, confidence, fitness, mental robustness—intrinsic value, if you will. However, risk wouldn't be risk without a possible negative outcome. The ultimate loss in money and life is, respectively, bankruptcy and death.

The threshold between risk and reward is different for everyone. Some people have a high tolerance while others are more conservative and require a much broader margin of security. This buffer can appear very slim, depending on a person's perspective and knowledge of the risk at hand.

To the non-climbing lay person, even straightforward top-roping may appear incredibly risky. But we, as climbers, understand that the strength of the anchor combined with a secured climbing rope combined with a trained belayer eliminates most of the danger. A non-climber might not clearly see or understand the buffer in place and, therefore, could easily assume that a climber on top-rope has a death wish. Of course, we know the opposite to be true, that climbers tend to be incredibly passionate about life and seek to explore the potential of mind and body working together. We pad our buffer with training, fitness, skill and knowledge—all of which directs us to make experience-based calculations. These constant ongoing calculations result in snap decisions that push and pull us towards, or away from, that invisible line of too much risk.

Now, consider soloing. Even to most climbers, soloing may appear as an unjustifiable risk. One false move and it's game over. The 2018 *CAJ* cover photo is the epitome of this risk-versus-reward discussion. Like other great Canadian soloists—Peter Croft and Guy Lacelle, for instance—Marc-Andre Leclerc knew the dangers of high-end free soloing. He also knew how to balance those dangers. His risk-management protocols were not external tools like a rope or an anchor or a partner, but, instead, he developed his internal tools—fitness and focus.

Sadly, Leclerc went missing this past spring while new routing in Alaska. He and his climbing partner Ryan Johnson completed a first ascent up the north side of the Main Mendenhall Tower. He was last heard from on March 5, 2018, when he sent a text message from the summit. When the pair failed to check in a few days later, extensive search-and-rescue efforts were deployed. Ultimately, these were called off after two ropes were spotted from the helicopter in the run-out zone of an avalanche-threatened descent gully.

At 25 years of age, Leclerc was already considered one of Canada's most accomplished rock climbers and alpinists. His rope-less resumé included mind-bending ascents of Cerro Torre, Torre Egger and Cerro Standhardt in Patagonia, Infinite Patience on the Emperor Face on Mount Robson in the Canadian Rockies, and two routes in a single day on Mount Slesse in the Cascade Mountains.

I only met Leclerc a couple of times in passing but had annual email communications with him about *CAJ* submissions. I looked forward to his stories each year because they were cutting-edge and inspiring, yet also written with elegant humility. This year's *CAJ* cover is a tribute to Marc-Andre Leclerc—a celebration of human passion and performance. May we always embrace the inspirational power of a life wish.

—Sean Isaac

Nadie Sabe Nada

Alik Berg

The idea to go to Peru wasn't sparked by some coveted unclimbed line or as part of some bigger plan. It was born simply out of convenience and practicality. As the winter season in the Rockies wound down, I was getting antsy to go on a trip. I had some ideas in Alaska I was keen on, but I'd already committed to road tripping with my girlfriend in the spring, so the timing didn't quite work. Peru seemed ideal. Big mountains in a country I had never been to, a chance to see how my body did at altitude, simple logistics and low costs to boot. My schedule would allow me a month to "train" (i.e. go climbing) for the trip, and I could go right in the middle of the dry season. Finding a willing partner with the same open schedule proved more challenging, but I finally convinced my friend Quentin Lindfield-Roberts to take three weeks off from his busy summer work schedule. I booked my ticket for six weeks in Peru, with no clear plan for the second half of my trip.

Quentin Lindfield-Roberts starts the crux pitch of The Devil's Reach Around on the east face of Chacraraju Este. Photo: Alik Berg

Upon arriving in Huaraz, we quickly found our favourite breakfast hang at Café Andino. Over an endless stream of espresso, we bounced ideas off each other for what to do with Quentin`s 18 days in Peru. Eventually, we agreed to forego a trip into the Huayhuash because the logistics of accessing that range would limit us too much with so little time. We decided to acclimatize in the Santa Cruz Valley in the Cordillera Blanca. The long gradual approach to base camp would be good for a slow acclimatization to 4,000 metres, and we would have the opportunity to climb the super-classic Alpamayo.

We departed a day later with packs heavily laden with good food and light on climbing gear. The first day and a half were a little soul crushing as we plodded along with weighty packs, enviously eyeing up the burro trains and the gringos who employed them, sauntering along with day packs. I`m still not sure why we didn`t bother coughing up the $20 to get our packs hauled in. After a rest day in Alpamayo base camp to get over a thankfully brief bout of butt sickness, we headed up to a moraine camp at 5,000 metres. Here the altitude became noticeable, so we called it an early day and enjoyed a riveting game of granite bocce ball amongst the boulders. The next morning, we slogged up to the Alpamayo-Quitaraju col and decided we still had enough daylight and energy to head up Alpamayo that afternoon. Ditching the camping gear, we relished the light packs as we slowly simuled the pleasant 300-metre ice face. We reached the summit just as the clouds lifted and the sun set—a beautiful moment cut short by the reality that our heads were swimming with the altitude and we needed to head down.

We enjoyed a leisurely start the next morning, thanks to the reliable midday cloud cover keeping temperatures down. We started up the north face of Quitaraju at the civilized hour of noon. Quitaraju is climbed far less than its more famous neighbour, and our friends Caesar and Vincent had climbed it that same morning for apparently its first ascent of the season. Alpamayo, on the other hand, had been getting climbed almost daily since early May. The route went quickly, and we were very grateful for Caesar and Vincent`s hard work in digging out some rather impressive snow bollards that we used on the descent. On our return to Alpamayo's base camp in the valley, we were dismayed to find that some gear and food we had left stashed had been stolen. We had hung it in a tree so the burros wouldn't eat the food, but it turns out, the animals were not our primary concern. On the bright side, our packs were somewhat lighter for the hike out.

Back in Huaraz we spent a luxurious morning at Café Andino, scarfing breakfast burritos, drinking coffee and hashing out a plan for the rest of Quentin's trip. We banged around several equally inspiring options in the Blanca, and eventually settled on attempting an unclimbed line on the east face of Chacraraju Este (6,001 metres). Chacraraju is a spectacular twin-summitted peak that rides the divide between the Paron and Llanganuco Valleys. The steep ice flutings of the south face sit above Laguna 69, one of the hottest tourist attractions in the area. This side of Chacraraju has been climbed by numerous routes, but the other aspects are rarely climbed. The direct east face has had several attempts over the years, culminating in Slovenians Jure Juhasz and Andrej Markovic finally pushing a route through the right side of the headwall over six days in 1999. In photos of the face, we had noticed an appealing corner system breaching the left side of the headwall and a potentially moderate passage snaking up the left edge of the lower wall. It was a bit of a gamble as we hadn't seen the face yet and didn't know how conditions would be this year. Picking a route from a 20-year-old photo has its risks in a range with such rapid glacial recession as the Cordillera Blanca. We reasoned that if the face was out of condition, we would still have enough time to re-route and make a

The Devil's Reach Around on the east face of Chacraraju Este. Photo: Quentin Lindfield-Roberts

Alik Berg regains the high point on the morning of day two on Chacraraju. Photo: Quentin Lindfield-Roberts

Quentin Lindfield-Roberts completes the key traverse on Chacraraju on the first day.
Photo: Alik Berg

one-day ascent of something on the south face.

We left town with six days remaining before Quentin's scheduled return to Canada. We decided to split the long approach into two days and approach from the Llanganuco Valley, which would intersect our planned descent route down the south face, allowing us to stash some gear. On the second day, we gained a 5,000-metre col below the southeast ridge of Chacraraju and began a surprisingly complex traverse to the base of the east face that involved some tricky route finding and technical scrambling.

We took a rest day to study the face and acclimatize, which was unfortunately quite exhausting due to the heat and total lack of shade in the bowl below the face. Both of us were not feeling 100 per cent and were concerned that we weren't acclimatized well enough for the hard climbing to come. The lower half of the face, which appeared moderate, would be threatened by falling rock and ice in the morning sun, and we needed to be able to climb swiftly through this section before sunrise to maintain a reasonable safety margin. Although I had my doubts that we would be able to climb this section quickly enough, Quentin, the eternal optimist, convinced me that it was worth a shot. If we went home empty-handed, we would feel a lot better at least having given it an honest effort.

We went to bed early and set the alarm for the ungodly hour of 9:30 p.m. We both barely slept, and I was battling waves of nausea, hopefully brought on by mild heat exhaustion rather than altitude. We quickly packed up camp and headed up the glacier. For the next six hours Quentin led. I sluggishly followed, the gentle tug of the rope on my harness the only thing spurring me onwards. Quentin led us through the first rock band—a pitch of splitter granite crack climbing. Seconding it, I was forced to focus on the tricky mixed climbing, and realizing it was actually kind of fun, I started to feel a bit better.

At the belay below the next rock band, I commended Quentin on his impressive lead block and offered to take over. Continuing to simul-climb, I deked way left until I could gain the deteriorating remnants of an ice fluting, which brought me level with and 80 metres left of the easy snow slopes we needed to reach. From below, this section looked blocky and featured but not dead easy, and it was one of the keys to the line. It was blocky indeed. Gingerly balancing over stacked blocks and loose flakes, I felt right at home though—just like the Rockies. Luckily most of the rubble was frozen together, and we finished the traverse just as things began to heat up.

Reaching the base of the headwall in mid-morning heat, we siesta'd for a few hours and hacked out a bivy ledge. Once things cooled off in the afternoon, I led the first pitch of the headwall—a full rope length of beautiful mixed climbing. Not too hard but intricate enough to be engaging the whole time and with perfect gear in bomber granite. I left the rope fixed and headed down for an early bivy.

Lying in the tent that evening, the air was perfectly still, and as the sun set, I left the door wide open and enjoyed the beautiful moment. Perched on our tiny oasis surrounded by stark granite walls and otherworldly snow mushrooms, I watched as tiny ice crystals tumbled down over the headwall and the stars came out one by one. I've never been a very spiritual person, but in that moment of stillness and tranquility, the raw power and beauty of the mountains was undeniably clear and held me transfixed. The climbing had been good, sure, but really this was what it was all about. I was at peace and right where I needed to be.

The next morning we started early. Quentin climbed the pitch I'd enjoyed the day before on self-belay and I jugged the line with the heavy bag. The next pitch held the last big question mark. The crack system I'd started up the day before dead-ended in large overhangs above, and we needed to connect to a small hanging snowfield to the right near the exit gully. Quentin traversed around the corner and found a steep crack choked with loose blocks. Concerned about the blocks, he tried another option on the right that dead-ended but put him within spitting distance of the first crack. With no pro but positive edges, he holstered his tools and carefully tiptoed his way back to

Alik Berg leads the crux of Nadie Saba Nada on the north face of Hualcán.
Photo: Aritza Monasterio

splitter hands and good pro and, before long, a good belay at the end of the hard climbing.

A couple more pitches of loose but easy simul-climbing brought us into the exit gully we had spied from below. Unfortunately, in the late-morning heat, the gully was running with water, and the first step of ice we reached promptly fell down when Quentin gave it the gentlest of taps. He brought me up to a sheltered belay and suggested I try climbing the rock to the right.

"Looks like 5.6 at the most," he said.

Without giving it much thought, I grabbed the rack, started up and quickly found myself gingerly balancing past some very precariously stacked blocks. Suddenly, the belay seemed a lot less sheltered and the climbing felt a lot harder than 5.6. A few tense minutes later, I gained another ledge and decided I'd had enough. I brought Quentin up to enjoy some all-time trundling.

The next pitch was obvious. Another short but steep step of ice with water pouring behind the pillar. With the summit so close and clearly within reach, we briefly tried to convince ourselves that the pillar was solid enough to climb. Luckily, common sense prevailed when we realized that the sun would be off the face in an hour or so and conditions would improve, meaning it was time for another siesta.

Once the sun left the face, the flow of water slowed to a trickle and the pillar refroze in a matter of minutes—an impressive thing to watch. I won a hard-fought rock-paper-scissors round and took off up a beautiful pitch of water ice that brought us to a wild ice cave below the final snow mushroom. In the final rays of another perfect day, I plowed a path up the steep sugar guarding the summit. After two full days of climbing, we found ourselves on the flattest ground since leaving the glacier, albeit in a somewhat exposed position. We dug into the facets and called it a night.

With Quentin's bus out of Huaraz leaving in a little over 24 hours, we decided an early start was a good idea and woke a couple of hours before dawn. In sub –20 C temperatures, we packed up and left

Alik Berg climbs the exit gully on Chacraraju.
Photo: Quentin Lindfield-Roberts

Aritza Monasterio climbs steep ice during the first day on Hualcán.
Photo: Alik Berg

the summit without ever actually seeing anything outside of the spheres of our headlamps. I assume the view was very nice. The south face afforded us a straightforward descent via 10 thousand V-threads and before we knew it we were jockeying for position on the extremely crowded Laguna 69 trail. Talk about culture shock! We made it back to Huaraz that evening, and the next morning I said goodbye to Quentin and embarked on the second half of my trip.

Aritza Monasterio, the owner of the hostel we had been staying at and a longtime local climber, had some free time at the end of July. We agreed to do some climbing after he finished guiding a group up Pisco. Elated to have found a solid climbing partner, I needed something to do for the next few days. Luckily, the weather is always good in Peru, so I decided to visit the Parón Valley to climb some easier peaks.

I spent four days alone in the beautiful valley. My first objective was the apparently classic Renshaw/Wilkinson route of Pirámide de Garcilaso. At the base of the route, I was sufficiently unnerved by the amount of serac debris below the normal line that I started looking for alternatives. A parallel less-threatened gully looked promising. I made it about halfway up before eventually capitulating to the fear a couple of body lengths from the end of the crux rock band. First the ice ran out, then the nevé turned to vertical facets, and then just as I ran out of sufficiently positive features to dry-tool, I realized I was standing on a flake that was coincidentally also a perfectly good rap anchor. I later learned that only a couple of days after my attempt, three climbers were tragically killed by serac fall on the Renshaw/Wilkinson on Pirámide and that there had been several similar incidents in past years. It seems that some of the old classics in the Blanca are no longer what they once were.

I salvaged my Parón outing by hopping across the valley and climbing the south arête of Artesonraju, which was a pleasant slog up another very picturesque peak. I headed back to Huaraz the next day happy to be done with solo glacier travel for the foreseeable future.

Back in town, Aritza and I discussed ideas for objectives for his days off. At one point, Aritza called me into the guestroom that holds his climbing wall. He pointed at an old photo of an intimidating-looking face that was pinned to the climbing wall.

"What do you think of this? Do you want to climb this?" he asked.

"What is it? I don't recognize it."

"North face of Hualcán. It's hidden from the road and not visible from any of the popular treks

so nobody knows about it. The face is 1,000 metres and has never been climbed," Aritza replied.

That was enough to get my attention. Turns out Aritza had first laid eyes on this face 12 years ago while attempting the south face of Ulta (which he later climbed in 2008), and he had returned a couple of times to attempt Hualcán but never had good enough conditions for a real effort. It was settled, and we immediately began making arrangements to make an attempt.

Our planned descent route would bring us down the opposite side of the mountain, so we left town prepared to carry everything over the mountain. With double boots on our feet, and day packs overloaded with kit and food for six days, we boarded the 6-a.m. bus to Chacas and settled into a comfortable but bumpy three-hour ride over the nearly 5,000-metre-high pass and through the Punta Olimpica tunnel. Not long after descending onto the eastern slope of the Cordillera Blanca, we were dropped off at the head of the valley that drains the north side of Hualcán and the south side of Ulta.

Starting up the pastoral valley, I confidently strode ahead up the open meadows and soon found myself mired in a small bog. Slightly embarrassed to have gotten off track so quickly, I looked back and found I was alone in the field. A quick scan of the valley found Artiza waving at me from the dry cattle track along the edge of the meadow. Variations of this continued for the next two days as we approached the mountain. Aritza's mastery of mountain-terrain navigation became clear, and my lack thereof even clearer.

On the second day, we gained the glacier and spent the better part of the day wandering through the labyrinth. This section had caused Aritza some grief on a previous attempt, and he was pleased that we were able to find a relatively painless though time-consuming route to the base of the face. By mid-afternoon, we had established a safe campsite on the glacier near the east end of the face. Unfortunately, the face had been enshrouded in clouds for the last two days, and we still hadn't

Aritza Monasterio seconds the crux pitch on Hualcán.
Photo: Alik Berg

Nadie Saba Nada on the north face of Hualcán. Photo: Aritza Monasterio

had an opportunity to study it in detail. The bottom few hundred metres of the face that were visible showed mostly dry rock where we had hoped to find ice. The face was clearly much drier than it had been in the 2006 photo that Aritza had shown me in Huaraz. Feeling the pressure of my impending departure, I began to stress out a little about the situation. The conditions were clearly not ideal, and I worried that we wouldn't even get a chance to try the face. Aritza was *tranquillo* about it all and pointed out that we still had plenty of time to play with. We just needed to be patient and let the mountains dictate the schedule.

The next day the clouds broke enough to give us a few brief views of the entire face. The mile-wide, kilometre-high face reminded me of the glacier-capped north face of Kitchener back home in the Canadian Rockies—only this face lacked the convenient couloir breaching the upper headwall. Additionally, Hualcán's central ice slopes were all guarded by smooth rock slabs along the base of the wall. Below the biggest (and most rockfall-prone) gullies, meltwater would freeze overnight, offering fleeting delicate passages through these slabs, but neither of us much liked the idea of entering these bowling alleys. Even under the lock of cold overnight temperatures, the amount of loose rock and unstable snow features draining into these gullies seemed like too much risk. After scouring the face for a better option, I came up empty. Everything else either looked too hard or was serac-threatened. Aritza, however, eventually spotted a slender, and partially hidden, snow ramp that breached the lower slabs on the right side of the face. It appeared to provide moderate and rapid access to the central ice slopes. The upper headwall was another story, but it looked featured enough to be worth a shot.

The next morning we started early under clear skies. The last remaining bit of glacier travel below the face proved more complex than expected, and we lost precious pre-dawn hours, but we easily found the start of the ramp and began simul-climbing up it around 5:30 a.m. At dawn, we reached the end of the ramp, and I led a tricky bit of mixed climbing to gain a thin ribbon of ice streaming down from the central ice face. By the time we were established on the ice slopes, things were getting hot. Pitch after pitch of calf-burning 60-degree ice in unrelenting heat followed, but the face remained quiet. Near the end of the ice face, Aritza led an impressive pitch of near vertical ice, and soon we were at the base of the headwall. Chopping out a bivy ledge took several hours before we could finally collapse into the tent after an exhausting day of climbing in the sun. Our tiny ledge provided just the right amount of respite from the exposure and stress of being on a big face, and soon we were brewing hot soup, recharging and talking politics and life. Before leaving Huaraz, we barely knew each other, but over the last few days we'd become good friends, balancing our time between pushing hard on the mountain and relaxing at the bivies. It was great to learn more about Aritza's path and philosophy in life from an upbringing in Basque Country to being a young guide in Huaraz and starting a family and business here in Peru. Spending time with someone in a two-person tent forces one to be so much more engaged and present than one ever will be at the pub or at the crag.

At daybreak we returned to the unfortunate reality of the looming headwall. Intimidating as it was, it did have the benefit of having a very obvious break, at least initially, so there was no question about where to start. Two rope lengths of challenging but not outrageously difficult rock and mixed climbing got us to a distinct crux—a short, gently overhung wall guarded an exit ramp that was close enough to lob a snowball onto. A steep squeeze chimney onto a small curtain of ice seemed like the way to go. I wormed my way as high as possible, plugged some gear and stretched out for good sticks in the curtain. Just like Haffner, right? As soon as I committed to the curtain, I realized the feet were terrible and I was weak as a kitten at this altitude. Who knew locking off on ice could be so desperate? Thankfully, it was only a couple of moves and soon I was back on my frontpoints gasping for air. One more pitch of mixed climbing brought us to easy ice slopes and the summit plateau just as the sun was setting. We dropped the packs, and after 30 minutes of post-holing we reached the rarely trodden main summit of Hualcán.

After a cold night on the summit plateau, we began the long descent down the south glacier, with Huaraz visible in the distance. Over the next 10 hours, we wound our way through glacier, moraines, alpine meadows, Quenual forests and, finally, farmland and the road. We dropped over 3,000 metres and experienced a temperature change of 40 degrees Celsius. At dusk our taxi dropped us off at Aritza's house, and we could finally remove our boots after a memorable traverse of the width of the Cordillera Blanca. Given that Aritza had been eying the face for so long, I asked him if he had an idea for a name for our route.

"We should call it *Nadie Sabe Nada*," he replied.

Roughly translated, it means "nobody knows anything." A nod to the fact that the north face of Hualcán had been veiled in obscurity despite a near 100-year history of climbing in the range and that many people consider the Cordillera Blanca to be climbed out. For such a well-trodden mountain range, the Cordillera Blanca still has plenty of unexplored terrain, and plenty of secrets yet to be revealed. I, for one, can't wait to go back.

Summary

The Devil's Reach Around (5.10 M6 90°, 900m), east face, Chacraraju Este (6001m), Cordillera Blanca, Peru. FA: Alik Berg, Quentin Lindfield-Roberts, July 14–16, 2017.

Nadie Sabe Nada (5.9 M6 85°, 1000m), north face, Hualcán (6125m), Cordillera Blanca, Peru. FA: Alik Berg, Aritza Monasterio, July 28–30, 2017.

About the Author

Alik Berg, 30, calls Canmore home and has been chasing dreams in the hills since the age of three. He works as a rope-access supervisor when not away climbing internationally or closer to home in the Canadian Rockies. You can read more of his climbing adventures on page 138, 150, 160 and 166.

The Source

David Allfrey

The plane engine roared to life.
It sped down the lake, went airborne
and disappeared out of sight.
The silence was like a vacuum.
The air was sucked out of our world.
We were alone. Luke and I stood on
the banks of Glacier Lake, the only
two people in thousands of square
miles of wilderness. The last climbers
in the Cirque of the Unclimbables had
left. The last canoes had pulled away
a week ago. The ranger station was
closed. It was just us and our boat, a
beautiful 11-foot inflatable raft.

David Allfrey on the crux pitch of The Source.
Photo: Pat Goodman

THE next morning, under stormy skies and high winds, Luke and I pushed the boat back from the bank into the current. We both took a deep breath. I adjusted my seating and kicked my feet under the thwarts. We were nervous. With a new route in the bag, the climbing portion of the expedition was complete, but now the real adventure was to begin. I definitely felt out of my element. We pulled into the tail end of Glacier Lake, rounded the corner and set up for the big drops of Britnell Creek. This was the time to make your strokes count and stay in the boat. Everything depended on staying in the boat.

WE HAD ARRIVED IN THE Northwest Territories nearly five weeks prior. Extensive logistics and a great deal of travelling deposited Luke Holloway, Carmen Cross Johnson, Colleen Weeks and me on Flat Lake, the headwaters of the Little Nahanni River. From this western edge of the MacKenzie Mountains, we had nearly 150 miles of boating to arrive at the take-out where we would porter our kit up to the Cirque of the Unclimbables, an adventure first done by Kurt Albert and team in the early 2000s.

The month of July had been very rainy, even for this region. When we arrived on July 28, it had rained every day of the month. Warren LaFave of Kluane Airways warned us the river was as big as he had ever seen it. A wonderfully hyperbolic storyteller, Warren regaled us with how he had just rescued a group of canoers from the Little Nahanni. They couldn't handle the high water and increased difficulty. Luke was unfazed.

Late in the evening, under the infinite sub-Arctic sunset, the four of us sat on the banks of Flat Lake, watching the airplane pull off the water, spin around and buzz right over our heads, tipping the wings side to side in a final salute. This was the first time we watched the plane leave, and the first time we experienced the sinking pit in the stomach and the incredible silence of the Northwest Territories' massive wilderness.

The shallow, winding creek exiting Flat Lake was a nice beginning. It beckoned us to continue downriver. Side creeks entered our wildly curving creek, and little by little the volume increased until we rounded a bend, joined a large side drainage and were officially on a river.

Luke called strokes, Carmen and Colleen followed my lead, and we dug in. We drove the boat from one side of the river to the other with Luke calling the shots. His 10 years of river guiding came back to him in an instant. The tone of his voice made it clear how hard to hit the strokes. "Forward two!" he shouted as we dug hard, driving from the legs, snapping our torsos back from the hips. The river was braided from the big volume, and we were running and gunning. It was onsight boating with no stopping to scout. The boat spun 45 degrees to the right, and in an instant, we were shooting down a narrow slot. Luke let out a whoop as we stomped right down the centre of the three-metre-wide chute and ejected into a wider portion of the river.

In the late afternoon, we pulled up to a small gravel bar, as we did each night on the Little Nahanni. We unpacked the well-laden boat, set up tents, dug out food bags, and then walked the edges of our gravel bar checking for animal tracks. Several nights we found grizzly bear and moose tracks the size of dinner plates.

Luke piloted *Angelita Azul* with precision—dodging and swerving around rock obstacles—and after six days on the river, we found ourselves at the mouth of Britnell Creek and the uphill slog to Glacier Lake and the Cirque of the Unclimbables.

"COME ON ALLFREY! The one time that you actually shut your mouth and won't talk is the one time you need to be spouting off!"

Luke was disappointed with my silence. The 40-kilogram haulbag stuffed with an 11-foot inflatable raft, the shin-deep moss and the steep-ass hill were keeping my attention focused on the task at hand.

"Do you really think it matters? Bears aren't going to mess with us," I quipped.

With a dead-serious tone Luke responded, "I think it's the only thing that matters. Shouting is the only thing that might keep us from walking around a corner and being face to face with a big ol' griz."

Luke grew up in the southeast United States and had been a hunter and outdoorsman his whole life. I started shouting and talking gibberish as I slogged up the remainder of the hill. I never knew that a 10-kilometre hike could be as long and difficult as hiking from the South Nahanni into the Cirque.

For the second time on the trip, we unrolled the raft, sewed the floor into the body, inflated it and piled all of our kit into the vessel, shoving off for the far side of Glacier Lake. Halfway across the lake, the unmistakable buzz of an airplane whirled overhead. We raised our paddle high, waving at the plane as it circled around, dropping elevation. It tipped its wings side to side to signal us. It circled once more and touched pontoons down onto water at the far end of the lake. Pat Goodman had arrived right on time; the climbing part of the trip had officially begun.

LUKE, PAT AND I STOOD at the base of the Tara Tower, the sister tower to the Lotus Flower Tower. Our packs had barely left our backs when the glacier at the end of the small cirque lurched and spit a refrigerator-sized block from the top edges. The block careened down the snow, smashed into talus and blew into a hundred pieces. A moment later, the massive funnel above us and to the left spit a volley of baseball-sized stones, pinging through the talus near us. The hair on the back of my neck was standing up, my Spidey senses were screaming. I barely had time to say that I was feeling a bit uncomfortable when Luke had already shouldered his bag and was 50 metres back down the talus hill; Pat was right behind him. I grabbed my bag and started leaping from boulder to boulder, our climbing day over before it began.

The weather was splitter. In fact, it was too

David Allfrey, Carmen Cross Johnson, Colleen Weeks and Luke Holloway paddle across Glacier Lake into the Cirque of the Unclimbables. Photo: Pat Goodman

good. This region rarely saw temperatures this warm for such sustained periods. While walking to the base, it was like being in a firing range; rocks, boulders and glaciers shifted, melted, cracked and fell from nearly every formation. We were all on edge, heads on swivels, snapping from the sound of one falling rock to another.

For another two days, the weather remained perfect. Luke and I charged up Lotus Flower Tower using our Yosemite tactics to climb to the bivy ledge. We were 11 pitches up the wall in a mere two hours. The previous 13 days on the move took its toll, and climbing the classic train-track cracks on the upper headwall was like swimming through Elmer's Glue. Our muscles were exhausted. We had done the grueling hike into the Cirque twice in the last three days, a hike I might honestly hope to never do again, and had been on the attack since we left the States, but we knew rest days would be forced upon us soon.

I found a stance, feet stemmed out, left fingers locked in the crack. My right hand grabbed for the ice pick hanging on my right hip; I scratched the crack above me with the tool; grass, moss and mud fell in clumps. I jammed a cam into the freshly opened crack, locked my fingers in above it and moved upwards.

We had returned to the Tara Tower; the weather had gone from too good to sub par, but such is alpine climbing. The wind blew cold, and snow fluttered in the air but never collected on the rock, so we kept moving up. Five pitches deposited us a third of the way up the route on a small knifeblade of rock leaning against the wall above. Luke lowered down from our perch off a giant horn of rock on the ridge. Above us and left was a 60-metre-long silver dihedral that we had been aiming for from the ground, constantly wondering what this incredible corner would bring.

Luke gardened and cleaned his way up the pitch, the only pitch on the route we had to aid climb first. One hour turned into two, two into three and finally the call of "Off belay!" pierced through the silence of snowfall and wind. I spun my arms to warm them up and pulled on my free-climbing shoes over socks. I tiptoed out and negotiated flakes and grips. Our hopes were high that we could climb across five metres of blank face to gain the corner, certain that the corner would climb free. I explored the movement on a self- belay with a Mini Traxion. I was ecstatic. The climb was difficult but doable. I ticked a few holds, scrubbed a few feet, rappelled down and tried the pitch again, having solved the major mystery of the route. But frozen to the bone and out of time, we once again retreated to the ground and to camp to wait out several more days of rain and sleet in the safety of our giant cave-like home.

We woke up early, hoping the weather would hold. It had been nearly three weeks in the Cirque. Time was ticking by and we could count the number of climbing days on one hand. It was summit day, and out of desperation we just needed to climb to the top of Tara Tower to at least finish our route and stand on the summit. We headed to the high point, jumaring past the long silver corner we had unlocked last time. It would have to wait for later because now we just needed to get to the top. We swung leads and worked up the wall, one pitch after another, until we stood below the base of the final headwall. Here, the two existing aid routes came together following a feature on the right margin of the headwall, an infeasible way to go if free climbing.

Luke explored the options, working above a small spire of rock and gazing up towards the aid routes and the roof above. Hope started to crumble, along with the rock, as Luke broke a diorite knob and fell a couple of metres, landing on top of the small spire; he stuck the landing and quickly retreated.

With defeat threatening to rear its head, Luke gazed left across the width of the grey headwall. A small rail traversed left, and we saw the potential to climb straight across the headwall. Luke journeyed out onto the face, placed a bolt five metres to my left, climbed up, stepped down, moved across, up, down, across. Another six metres and he found a small stance, drilling a second bolt then repeated the same up-down-left shuffle. Eight metres farther, he added a third bolt, busted a few moves and gained a perfect hand crack that sported giant black diorite knobs all around it. The final mystery was solved; we had passed the headwall.

It was now September 5. Summer was over, fall had come and gone in the mountains and winter was threatening. Once more we returned to Tara Tower. This far north, in the sub-Arctic, the seasons change quickly. The summer heat comes and goes in a week, the leaves change and winter sets in.

Once again we headed up. This time Pat was with us, our team of three finally together on the route. Pat's bad knee had prevented him from joining us several times, but that didn't stop him from exploring. We returned to camp several times to find him gone, having headed off to explore the biggest formations in the area, like Sir James McBrien. Pat scrambled and scouted several of the original routes on the nearby monsters. He kept notes, adding to his binder of information on the region. This was Pat's eleventh time to the area, nine trips to the Vampire Spires and two to the Cirque. He undoubtedly knew more about the region than anyone else.

Our goal for this final day was to free climb the crux and hopefully, reach the summit. We flowed through the beginning pitches. When you know it might be your last time ever climbing a route, there is a special enjoyment in it—the last time to admire the beauty of a line and a place.

I racked up and set off. The corner was perfect; it barely sported a finger crack in the back, offering just enough protection and perfect palms-down, feet-out stemming. The pitch was safe but kept my attention. Luke spurred me on. I was all smiles when I clipped the chains.

Four weeks after arriving in the Cirque, with nine days of boating and hiking to get there, the three of us sat on the giant ledge below the main headwall. A sharp, cold wind cut through the air. For five weeks we had been tapping into everything we had, finding the source of our motivation

David Allfrey at the top of the crux pitch on the last decent day in the Cirque. The last winter storm the team could tolerate moved in that evening, and the team left the following day. Photo: Pat Goodman

and draining it dry. We had constantly found challenges, obstacles, problems and adventures, and said yes to each of them. But with the sharp winter wind, none of us had the motivation to keep pushing. We had climbed to the summit, we had freed all the pitches, we had established a beautiful new route. And now we were done.

With sharp winds blowing, we rapped to the ground, returned to camp and packed up to leave. So often it seems the end of an excellent trip presents itself in a single clear moment. A moment of excitement becomes a full stop, and the motivation to go up is unanimously, instantly gone.

But in the spirit of the trip, of never saying no, Luke and I had one more objective. We had one more pipe dream. We wanted to try the first rafting descent of Britnell Creek.

Pat had left with the plane the previous day. We had slapped high-fives with him as the plane readied to leave. "You guys are sending, just keep sending," he said and climbed into the plane with all of our gear and the last group of climbers. On a stormy, cold day they barely pulled the overly full airplane off the lake and disappeared. Luke and I were alone in the woods.

Back across Glacier Lake, we dropped into Britnell Creek, which flowed nearly 200 vertical metres back to the South Nahanni River. We had five days of supplies, a stove, one tent and our sleeping bags. We donned our dry suits and life vests. We had two fuzzy photos of Britnell Creek for reference. For hours over the last five weeks, Luke had stared at the images, reviewing every blurry boulder, twist and turn of the water. Just out of Glacier Lake were the main question marks. We walked the shore for several hours. A six-metre waterfall poured into a 90-degree left turn and continued for a hundred metres before there was the chance to eddy out. The worst part was that we'd have to enter the falls by running through a maze of rocks.

"What do you think?" I kept asking Luke while walking the shore. He wouldn't answer. He hemmed and hawed. We walked down to the lower falls and back.

Finally he told me, "We can do this."

It was not a question. It was a statement. He knew it was possible, and he could see the line. So we scouted the rapids again and Luke pointed out little flips of water, rounded stones and logs, all markers on the line we were going to run. I was terrified.

Before we pulled away from shore, we practiced our timing for the drops, "One, two, three, boof!" One more time and we were off, around the corner and it was on. I am no boater, but Luke was in his element. He called the strokes to help me out, but we were working well together now. I saw where we needed to go, where Luke was steering us, and I worked with him, but his calls were essential. He was a real guide's guide.

On Britnell Creek, I was completely aware that staying in the boat was imperative. It was truly life or death. Luke and I weighed the odds, scouted the rapids and stomped our lines. The second day was filled with heinous lining of the boat, assisting it downriver around thickly downed trees and river-wide logs. We lined through a section of rocks where the river widened and too many large stones were pushed together to get past. But finally we were boating again, and we rushed down a quickly

Luke Holloway on pitch three of The Source. Photo: Pat Goodman

The Source on the south face of Tara Tower. Photo: Pat Goodman

dropping section of river with distinct steps of rock. Looking back up the feature, we could see how much vertical we had tumbled down. Weaving between boulders, boofing over the tops of round slimy stones and backpaddling across upwelling currents to reposition for more obstacles.

In the late afternoon of the second day on the creek, we stopped at a gravel berm guarding a dried-up branch of the creek. We scouted a tight chute in front of us, barely three metres wide, that cut between rock wall and boulders. We walked up the dry fork of the creek and decided that running this section didn't make sense when we could so easily carry the boat to the far side of the raft-shredding slot. We were feeling frazzled, strung out and on edge more than ever.

Earlier that day while scouting, we were cutting some small limbs from a strainer in order to pull our boat over. The rapids were raging below, and we moved carefully in the flooded banks of the swollen river. I stood on the lower of two logs, cutting with the saw, when my foot slipped. Shooting out in front of me, my shin slammed into the underside of the upper log and I fell straight down.

As I came down my right hip slammed into the log, striking the can of bear spray that was hanging from my waist. The can of spray exploded. Luckily, it blew out the bottom and instantly discharged into the river. Luke watched in terror thinking I was going into the river. Our eyes locked and he jumped back away from me, hands covering face. We both fled the scene, but the spray had covered my hands and the rear of my dry suit.

Luke stood upriver staring at me, furious and laughing in the same moment. I was mortified. I rinsed and washed. I had the taste of the spray in my mouth, but luckily it hadn't hit me. My hands were stained orange and burned with capsaicin. I sat next to the boat, washing with soap over and over, angry with myself and feeling so dumb. This could have been so bad.

The next morning, we donned our dry suits, packed up our small amount of gear, put on our game face and once again headed down the river. By early afternoon we had gunned our way down to the South Nahanni River, becoming, we believe, the first people to raft this incredible creek that only kayakers had attempted before.

The South Nahanni was not meant to be navigated by raft. When we finally saw the dock that marked the take-out above Virginia Falls, our backs begged us to be done rowing. Our time on the South Nahanni had been magical—northern lights, a wolf, a lynx, bear tracks and incredible views.

Luke and I were both ragged: physically, mentally and emotionally. We discussed how grueling the exploration in times past must have been, day in and day out, for years on end, without knowing what lay ahead.

Then we turned on the satellite messenger: "Plane down. Something broke. Fixing it now. Could be two days."

Our hearts sank. We were never going to leave these mountains. We sorted our food, barely a day's worth left, and that was being conservative. We each ate a bar that afternoon and wondered what was going to happen. The following day, we walked around the shut-down campground with nobody around. We examined Virginia Falls, an incredible 100-metre monster that spills around a giant spire of limestone.

Finally, the next afternoon we heard the familiar buzz of an airplane. Our kit was laid out on the docks ready to go. We grabbed our bags and finally got out of the Northwest Territories.

Summary

The Source, (V 5.12, 700m, 14 pitches), south face, Tara Tower, Cirque of the Unclimbables, Mackenzie Mountains. FA: David Allfrey, Pat Goodman, Luke Holloway, September 2, 2018.

About the Author

Hailing from Las Vegas, David Allfrey is best known for his big-walling but is an aficionado of all climbing styles. He pays the bills by rock guiding in Red Rocks and being an athlete for The North Face.

Embrace of the Serpent

Kieran Brownie

From Cerro Diablo, Kieran Brownie scopes Embrace of the Serpent on Cerro Pajarito. Photo: Paul McSorley

SPIDERS the size of baseball mitts scuttle through a splash of quicksilver on the clay wall of the dark hut, shimmering for a moment as if cast in liquid mercury, their metallic movements almost audible. A full moon has crested the sloping horizon of Colombia's Orinoco Basin, its light spilling forth like a great flood. Cerro Pajarito—an El Cap-sized dome of oblique granite, the largest of the three Cerros de Mavecure—looms over the hut, a dark void in the night sky. The hut is one of about a hundred small homes that make up the small indigenous community of Remanso located in Colombia's eastern province, Guianía, home of the Puinave people. I can hear my companions—Paul McSorley and Dave Allfrey—sawing logs in the other room while I, covered in sweat, try to welcome sleep. It's almost 2 a.m. The alarm will ring at exactly 2 a.m. The roosters won't even be up yet.

I PULL THE SPINNING BIT from the rock and holster the drill. Slipping a quickdraw from my harness's gear loop, pre-loaded with an expansion bolt, I wiggle it into the fresh hole. I ensure my stance is solid before reaching to my harness once again for the hammer. The roosters have been awake for five hours. Ting, ting, ting, ting! One, two, three, four, sink it to the hilt. Drop the hammer, grab the rope, clip it. Breathe. Shift weight. Left foot, right foot. Clip in the hammer, unclip the wrench, twist it till it clicks. I notice droplets of blood sizzling on the hot stone. In my haste, I had been careless. Crystals of occult origin had torn the soft skin of my knuckles, exposing pink flesh and a growing bead of deep red blood. I ram my hand into the bottom of my chalk bag, hoping to clog the offending leak before committing to the next moves. Singular crystals under tired fingertips, smearing hot rubber on hotter stone, hoping for a stance somewhere above, some glorious half-inch oasis is all I need in this world at this moment. It is not much to hope for, just enough crystalline matter bound together by mineral concrete to support my weight for the eternal seconds it takes to drill a two-inch hole.

WE HAD BEEN IN COLOMBIA for seven days and in the jungles of Guianía for barely 48 hours. It felt like weeks. The crew of experienced swashbucklers—Dave and Paul—are two dedicated full-time climbers who supplement their lifestyle with brief stints of guiding and rigging work. And then there's me, and well, I'm not entirely sure what I do yet. Paul and I had flown down from Canada, leaving behind a wintry-wet Squamish. Dave had made a slightly shorter journey from his desert home in Nevada. Paul and I hadn't climbed with Allfrey before, and I had never even met the guy, but all of us were game for an off-the-grid adventure climb and that was what mattered most.

After arriving in Colombia's capital city of Bogota, we had headed to Suesca, a small town an hour north of the sprawling city, hoping to stretch our legs and find some flow before submerging ourselves in the jungles. The slippery, compact sandstone—a mixture of steep, burly cracks peppered with perplexing face climbing and old-school grades—gave us an abrupt entrance exam. It was here in 1938 that a young German man by the name of Erwin Kraus and his European partners Enrique Drees and Heriberto Hublitz introduced technical climbing to Colombia, establishing the first three routes at Suesca in preparation for an ascent of Mount Huila, Colombia's highest volcano. As global attention was directed towards the remaining high-altitude ascents of the Andes, so began a slow seepage of mountain knowledge within the local communities. Our friend Alex Torres, a local guide and one of the first Suesca-born climbers, had laughed when we returned from the crag with our stories. It was a laugh I recognized. I had laughed that same laugh at home in Squamish. I had heard it in California, Utah, the Rockies, everywhere I had climbed. The low and slow laugh of the sandbagger.

That same laugh came up once more on a bus as we headed north out of Suesca. Alex was excited to show us another growing climbing area near Bogota, by the name of Macheta. As the bus barreled through the steep farm fields of the Andean lowlands blindly passing slow-moving trucks at breakneck speeds, Alex enthusiastically described what to expect. I listened cautiously.

"Forty-metre pitches, steep and exposed, beautiful sandstone," he said, then a pause, then that laugh, "but sometimes, it's just sand."

SYNAPSES CRACKLE AS I SNAP out of the daydream. The pressure in my toes has me standing with my heels on a half-inch ledge with my back to the wall, facing outwards. I open my eyes. Across from me sits the minor summit of Cerro Diablo, its 200-metre east face forming one wall of a valley, the rock at my back the other. A thin trail can be seen through the canopy beneath my feet, wandering out of sight around Pajarito's broad belly, connecting the hut in Remanso to the Yuca field at the base of our route on the northwest face. A speck of colour catches my eye: a red shirt against the greens and blacks of the Yuca field, the broad expanse of jungle emanating outwards

Mid-morning sun hits the wall as Paul McSorley follows pitch 10. Photo: Kieran Brownie

to an oblique horizon. This land has been home to the Puinave for millennia. Yet, they have spent the better part of the last century playing cat and mouse with waves of invasive humans. Uprooted from their homes during the rubber boom, the culture never really found its footing again despite having reclaimed the right to live in their ancestral lands—an all-too-common narrative.

What the newcomers had not yet grasped—and the Puinave had never needed to consider—is that to remove is easy, to replace is not.

Yuca (not to be confused with Yucca, a stubborn spikey thing commonly found in the Mojave desert of California and Nevada) is cultivated in fields cleared by slash-and-burn techniques; the potato-like root of the Yuca plant provides a stable foundation for the local diet. Each farmer has three plots, which are used in rotation: one that is allowed to regrow, one that is being burned in preparation for the next season and one that is producing Yuca. This cycle ensures that the soil remains rich, each fire redistributing the nutrients of the regrowth in a layer of ash.

The smell of carbon had still been lingering in the heavy air of the jungle night as I had trudged towards Diablo eight hours earlier. Paul and David had taken a left at the fork and headed towards Pajarito to begin climbing. I had turned right to retrieve a time-lapse camera. Walking alone, I became mesmerized by the suspended humidity in my headlamp beam, so thick it almost looked like rain, and then, it became rain. Only a sprinkle

Paul McSorley and David Allfrey take a breather from the heat on day two. Photo: Kieran Brownie

at first, though that's all it took for the black lichen that grows on the domes to glisten with deadly intent. I paused to consider the hazards of the low 5th-class slabs before committing, my pace quickening with necessity. Head down and heart pumping, I burst onto the summit with such gusto that the poor jungle porcupine that was hanging out on top had no choice but to retreat in the chaotic likeness of a deflating balloon, leaving behind a splattering of terrified turd hanging in the air. The escape velocity exhibited by the squat creature stunned me for a moment, until the increasing pitter-patter of the rain snapped me back to the task and I quickly began to descend. A wayward glance at Pajarito ensured me the boys had reached the base. The soapy rock was too slick to downclimb, so I resorted to surfing between choice clumps of jungle to reach the safety of flat ground and the light jog around Diablo to meet the guys.

The pair had experienced their own animal encounter on the approach.

Paul's tone was grave, "I was walking ahead with no headlamp and suddenly Allfrey shouted. When I turned around I saw a coiled snake, fire-engine red with a white band around its neck. Right where I had walked!"

David was wide-eyed, "Ya dude, that was gnarly. That thing looked like death!"

As our excitement subsided, the sounds of the jungle crept in. A few birds whistled in alarm at the arrival of the pre-dawn silky light as we waited for the rock to dry.

IT WAS ALMOST A YEAR to the day that Paul and I had retreated from high on Cerro Pajarito in a nighttime windstorm after having dodged thunderheads, and spent a day pinned to a small ledge by the oppressive heat, a veritable sweat lodge. The ledge was reached after abandoning our direct line to conserve bolts. We had dodged left for easier terrain. From this refuge, we had managed two more pitches, 120 metres of unprotected and crunchy 5.9 smearing with our overnight gear on our backs. We ran out of bolts 180 metres short of the summit ridge. In an age of limitless access to information, this seemingly ambigious location had inspired us. Remanso has a population of about 200. There are no stores, no restaurants, no phone, no power. With only one small flight a day to Inirida—the nearest so-called city, a 50-mile boat ride from Pajarito—we had tried to slim down our gear as much as possible to meet the weight restrictions. Our assumption that we would find natural protection was our downfall. Paul and I placed only one cam out of a double rack to #4. Instead the climbing required 44 bolts in 550 metres of climbing. Our retreat had been followed by two days of torrential rain.

On our last day, we managed to make an ascent of Cerro Mono, the middle mountain (the first time it had been climbed in many generations), thanks to a suggestion by a local named Wilson, who had befriended us. Wilson's ancestors had climbed Mono long ago during a sacred ceremony that involved jungle medicines. It was only right that he should join us. We climbed 200 metres of 5.8 climbing in three pitches, using small bushes for anchors. It was the first time I had seen a Puinave sweat. When Paul launched himself from the summit under his paraglider, Wilson cheered loudly despite having not found what he was looking for. Paul drifted in the centre of the triangle formed by the three domes, high above the rapids where the Inirida River meets the granitic bedrock.

THE SKY WAS BRIGHT NOW, and I was antsy to get moving. I racked up and climbed six metres up the still-damp first pitch and added a bolt before carefully picking through the last of the moistness to the second clip. Higher up, I high-stepped perfect chickenheads and mantled past the crux into a shallow scoop, a wide arc of rope trailing to the last bolt. David took the second pitch and wandered his way up water runnels, remarking with delight at the incredible stone, a mixture of Squamish granite and the textured testpieces of Joshua Tree. Paul then took a pitch and the cycle had begun. After five outstanding pitches up memory lane, chuckling at the outrageous runouts— a byproduct of last year's bolt rations. We arrived at the belay where Paul and I had scurried left the year prior, so we fixed our ropes and

descended for the day, making haste to be off the wall before the sun arrived.

We siesta'd the afternoon away, lazily moving between the hammocks strung up in the shade of the hut and the cool creek behind the village, recovering from the effects of the long days of cramped travel that had brought us to Remanso. A group of men carrying broad machetes returned from their day of work clearing a new Yuca field upriver. While some fished, others worked in the mines. The women also tend to the fields but more often than not, care for the house and the children. A neighbour of the family who was hosting us offered to make us dinner, a salty chicken broth served with Yuca and river fish. The fish was amazing, eyeballs and all.

As we hiked the thin trail from Remanso on the morning of our second day, I thought back to a day that seemed so long ago, yet could have been yesterday. I considered the disbelief I had felt when listening to Wilson's stories of his ancestors, yet theirs was not even the first of the daring free solos. The true first ascents of these domes are credited to Princess of the Inirida, a Puinave woman by the name of Densikoira (the perfumed woman) who climbed all three domes without a rope, barefoot and in a single push. The story began with a lusty suitor slipping Densikoira a vicious dose of a love potion derived from the jungle plant Pusana (also an original base for high-end perfumes). The powers of Pusana vary depending on the preparation, either lending its power for a beneficial purpose, or causing harm. Densikoira completed the impressive link-up in the throes of this particularly revengeful batch, finally seeking refuge on the summit of Pajarito. She remained there, too frightened to return to the village, and was never seen again. The villagers say that as she wept atop Pajarito her tears collected, forming long white streaks reminiscent of Half Dome's north face and its legend of Tis-sa-ack.

At the base of the wall David gave a shout. A colony of fire ants had been mining the salt from our sweat-soaked harnesses during the night. We liberated our gear and quickly ascended our ropes back to the high point. David took the first new lead of the trip—a full rope length, straight up, *directissima*. The cosmos was aligning. Face climbing up to 5.11 greeted him on the steep bulge and he seemed to find the rhythm of stance bolting with ease, the infrequent white dust of the drill trailing behind him. Paul and I each climbed long pitches after Dave, covering 120 metres of slightly easier climbing, and before we knew it, we had arrived at the ledge we had been aiming for: an island of greenery perched 500 metres above the jungle. The ledge was prickly and thick and at first not inviting in the least, but as we burrowed into the nastiness, we discovered a cave that only vultures had access to before this, though none were around to welcome us.

Our plan was to bivy on this ledge, or at least wait out the sun until the cooler evening hours, but we seemed to be moving well and the winds were keeping the temperature reasonable. David geared up for the steepest pitch we had faced and proceeded to style the full rope length of technical face climbing up an incredible groove.

"The best pitch of my life!" he exclaimed as we caught up.

He excitedly described the most gripping moments as stemming on friable edges and palming the sloping rim of the runnel, like the kid in the playground who always wanted to go up the slide rather than down it. I ribbed David about the eighth bolt on his 60-metre pitch since seven per pitch had been our highest count up till then.

It was beginning to feel like one of those magical days with good friends in an incredible position—the more we climbed, the better we felt. It looked like the route was going to go free, and onsight to boot. Following our noses, just questing up this expanse of seemingly blank stone, it felt like a proper way to experience these domes.

UPRIVER (SOUTH) OF PAJARITO, mines dredge large swaths of the Inirida in search of gold and other precious metals. Lately, a mineral called coltan has become highly sought after, a primary material in the circuit board of your smart phone. Illegal mines are a constant threat, leaving the surrounding jungles in chaos while simultaneously wreaking havoc on indigenous tribes, tempting them with "relatively" high day wages to risk life and limb for these precious metals. We had heard Wilson was away working at a mine. I hoped it was not one of these horrendous operations. In recent years, the Colombian government has been focusing to mitigate the destruction. Just last year in July 2017, 550,000 hectares (within the Puerto Sábalo Los Monos Indigenous Reserve and the Monochoa Indigenous Reserve) were signed into law, linking more than 10 million hectares of existing protected land and securing the title to the indigenous communities. This was a massive move forward for the preservation of these people's culture and the health of such an integral part of the global ecosystem.

Downriver to the north, the Inirida feeds

Paul McSorley repeats pitch three (5.11a), which was bolted by Kieran Brownie a year earlier in 2017. Photo: Kieran Brownie

As the sun rises, David Allfrey quests up virgin stone on pitch seven of Embrace of the Serpent. Photo: Kieran Brownie

into the Orinoco River. The rain that falls on the Mavecures only descends 150 metres in the 950 kilometres it takes to reach Venezuela's coastline. By the time it empties into the Atlantic, the Orinoco has a discharge volume of 37,000 cubic metre per second—the fourth largest in the world. There is energy here, not just ethereal vibrations but real blue-collar physical rhythms. Even the Guiana Shield and the forces that brought the Mavecures to the surface are enormous. Evidence of the Precambrian uplift is seen from Colombia to Brazil. From the infrequent pimples of granite that include the Mavecures to the Venezuelan highlands (pushing forth the legendary Tepuis) and finally the agitated shark fins of Brazil's chaotic landscape, massive plutonic creations of slow-cooled magma culminate on the eastern shores as an exclamation point of granite. There, in Rio de Janeiro, atop that final topographic hurrah of this tremendous tectonic event, stands an iconic white figure, Christ the Redeemer.

AND ATOP CERRO PAJARITO? WE found an empty pop bottle on the branch of a bush, probably not belonging to the princess. We had been toiling in direct sun for five hours. The last two pitches had been trying; even the wind that still howled around us could not keep the heat at bay. Paul had led a pitch of 5.10 till he ran out of rope. David had taken the last pitch, which ended up being half jungle, half rock. The spikes of stubborn plants left long white scratches on my burnt skin as I followed. The last anchor brought the bolt count to 85.

With humidity near 90 per cent and temperatures in the upper 120 degrees Celcius, the environment was beginning to feel hostile. Cowering in the shade of the summit jungles, we made an offering to the princess in the form of cheap beer and even cheaper cigarettes, the best we had. As we stood to leave, realizing our predicament would not end until we were back in the cool water of that small spring behind El Remanso, my head spun. Must be the dozen or so fire ant bites, I mused. The colony had not been pleased when I came stumbling through their nest while carving a trail from the top of our route to the true summit. It had taken an hour of dedicated machete craft to find a way through the web of vines. We retraced it in under five minutes.

With each repetitive motion of the rappel, our spirits grew higher. We returned to the cave and lay in the shade, dousing ourselves with water until the vultures returned to their nest. The massive birds eyed us up until they recognized us for the fools we were and promptly returned to the thermals to coast just overhead, calculating our demise. Rap, rig, pull, repeat. To the vultures' chagrin, we reached the jungle floor weary and semi-delirious but in good spirits and alive. My body was raw, my skin softened from constant sweat, and the straps bit into my shoulders under the weight of the pig. We trod down the trail, a sinuous thread of golden sand weaving through the lush green jungle, as the squawks of unseen monkeys echoed through the leafy canopy.

Summary

Embrace of the Serpent (V 5.11c R/X, 660m, 12 pitches), Cerro Pajarito, Colombia. FA: David Allfrey, Kieran Brownie, Paul McSorley, February 5, 2018.

About the Author

Kieran Brownie grew up as a skateboarder in Vancouver. Now, if not climbing, he can be found with a camera in hand trying to make sense of the madness. Whether he is tunnelling though the jungles of the Coast Mountains or reconnecting with the home stone of Squamish, he enjoys adventures with good friends.

David Allfrey drills from stances on pitch six (5.11a) of Embrace of the Serpent. Photo: Kieran Brownie

Game of Thrones

Simon Richardson
Micha Rinn

In August 2017 a British-German pair made the first ascent of the southwest pillar of Monarch Mountain deep in the Coast Mountains. Simon Richardson explains how the route came to be and Micha Rinn recounts the story of the ascent. ¶

Simon Richardson on the summit of March Mountain. Photo: Micha Rinn

Monarch had been on the agenda for a long time, 20 years in fact. I first noticed it on the horizon when traversing the Serra Peaks after climbing the Southeast Ridge of Asperity with Dave Hesleden in 1997. We'd been climbing for four days and were becoming concerned about the weather. We kept throwing furtive looks through the billowing clouds to the northwest where one mountain stood head and shoulders above the surrounding summits. Miraculously the weather held, and the Coast Mountains delivered one of the finest mountaineering outings of our lives. ¶

On our way back through Vancouver, we met up with Don Serl who explained that the distant summit to the north that we had seen was Monarch Mountain (3,555 metres). A truly great peak, Don explained, but rarely visited and exposed to poorer weather than the Waddington Range—but the seed had been sown. I was attracted by Monarch's isolation and dominance. Geographers call this singularity prominence, but for a mountaineer it was a more basic attraction. It was simply a mountain that had to be climbed.

Monarch exerted a similar pull on the pioneers, and its first ascent by Henry Hall was a tour de force. Hall first attempted the peak in 1931 and made three more visits to the mountain over the next five years before finally succeeding on the glaciated east ridge with Hans Fuhrer in July 1936. The second ascent fell to John Dudra and Fips Broda (see page 189) in 1953 when they climbed the west face. Later, Broda described their bold one-day ascent as "a most exhilarating climb… in parts it was quite difficult and quite exposed." These two routes are occasionally repeated, but the third route on the mountain has yet to see a second ascent. In August 1977, Dennis Mullen and Fred Beckey attempted the long south ridge but were stopped by a deep notch at one-third height. After a bivouac and some creative abseil tactics to bypass the notch, Mullen carried on alone to the summit.

As it happened, Don also had a thing about Monarch. He was attracted to the long north ridge, one of the largest features of the range. Don made five visits to the mountain before he was successful with Bruce Fairley and Bill Durtler in July 2000. Their three-day ascent, which traversed the north summit—the highest unclimbed subsidiary peak in the range—was one of the greatest routes of Don's sparkling career. It looked like all the major lines had been climbed on this massive four-sided pyramid, but in 2001 Guy Edwards, Vance Culbert and John Millar made the first continuous ski traverse of the Coast Mountains from Vancouver to Skagway, Alaska. They saw countless peaks during their five-month journey, but Edwards wrote afterwards in the *American Alpine Journal* that the scenic highlight was the view of the south side of Monarch. It was difficult to pick out any details from the grainy black and white photo that accompanied the report, but there was just the hint of a feature running up the southwest face.

By this time, I had several Coast Mountain trips under my belt and Guy urged me to go climbing with him the following summer. I hesitated, as Guy's ability and energy clearly outstripped mine, but then, tragically, he and Millar disappeared on the Devil's Thumb in April 2003. Under any normal circumstances, this would have been the end to the story, but in April 2007 mountain photographer John Scurlock made a remarkable flight around Monarch in his home-built airplane. His images revealed the southwest face in remarkable detail, and in common with his other mountain photos, he published them on the Internet.

Soon after, I received an email from Don Serl: "Hi Simon. Have you seen Scurlock's photos of Monarch? OMG…look at that route up the

Micha Rinn leads during the first day on Game of Thrones.
Photo: Simon Richardson

southwest face!" I clicked on the link and there it was—the perfect line running up the centre of the 1,300-metre-high wall. It was an alpinist's dream: steep, logical, and most importantly, it appeared to be objectively safe.

We resolved to climb it together during the summer of 2008, but life got in the way and our trip never progressed into the planning stage. Don attempted to pull another team together before retiring from serious climbing a few years later, but to no avail. Others showed an enduring interest too. In 2004 for example, Fred Beckey assembled a strong team on the glacier under the west face, but the weather was poor and they ended up climbing a new route on Princess Mountain instead.

My interest in Monarch was rekindled in August 2016 when Micha Rinn and I made the first ascent of the 1,600-metre-high Diamond Ridge on the Grandes Jorasses. It was a strong line, never too hard, but notable for being the third time the Tronchey Wall, the largest face in the Mont Blanc range, had ever been climbed. I had spent several years trying to persuade my climbing friends to attempt the route, but they had all graciously declined. Micha's strong technical skills complemented my wider experience, so when we were looking for a similar objective to climb the following summer, John Scurlock's images of Monarch immediately came to mind. With the ideal partner raring to go, it was a case of now or never.

—Simon Richardson

IT'S JUNE 2017 AND THE planning for Monarch has become an adventure in itself. Living in different countries—Simon in the U.K. and I in Germany—means the preparation process has become a significant part of the expedition. Exchanging ideas and talking with each other becomes all-important, and the urgency and complexity adds a certain spice. Our flight schedules mean that we have no time in Canada to purchase extra equipment or special food. Once we are on the glacier, everything has to be in place. It is a puzzle where every part needs to fit together.

Micha Rinn leads during the second day on Game of Thrones. Photo: Simon Richardson

Researching the mountain lets us dig deep into the history of the peak, its climbers and the stories behind their ascents. Browsing the Internet and spending time in the library reading through journals is one thing, but figuring out the current conditions of the face, is another. John Scurlock's photos are excellent, but have conditions changed over the intervening 10 years? We agree that we will check out our descent by climbing the Dudra-Broda route on the west face before we venture into the southwest face itself.

The flight from White Saddle to the Monarch Icefield on July 28 takes 40 minutes. It's my first time approaching a mountain by helicopter and everything moves very quickly. Helicopter minutes are precious, but as we come in to land we make an extra pass by the southwest face to assess the conditions before scouting out the glacier for a safe spot to site base camp. When you approach mountains by foot, they gradually come into focus and you have time to put them into perspective, but this is all so sudden and everything happens fast.

Our base camp is situated on the broad col between Monarch and Page Mountain at the head of the Empire Way Glacier. Monarch doesn't look that big at first, but I don't appreciate the scale. As each hour passes, I discover more details and my respect for the enormity of our environment grows. It takes me a day to put everything into context, and gradually, I feel more comfortable with where we are. Being a long way from civilization, alone together in this powerful and overwhelming place, feels very daunting. I am impressed by the sheer size of Monarch, the never-ending north ridge of Page Mountain and the enormous extent of the Empire Way Glacier.

Every time I think about our situation, it brings a smile to my face. The big difference between the Monarch Icefield and the European Alps is the wide, empty space and absolute silence. Nobody else is here. Every day we are alone with

Game of Thrones on March Mountain. Photo: John Scurlock

our thoughts, sharing our common dream to climb this beautiful mountain by a new route. The silence enables an even stronger focus. It is a rare and fantastic feeling.

The weather is poor at first, but on July 30 we cross the glacier and make a north-south traverse of a peak (2,625 metres). Our ascent follows a sinuous snow crest, and we descend to the col separating the Empire Way Glacier from the Monarch Icefield. There is a small cairn on the summit, and we presume the peak had previously been climbed via the south ridge from this col.

Two days later, we climb Monarch by the Dudra-Broda route on the west face. It is a long and complex outing with some exposed climbing on the Hanging Roof Icefield and a difficult mixed pitch leading to the summit ridge. We arrive back at the tent after a 16-hour day. The following afternoon, we descend from the col to scope out the southwest face. The view from the Dudra-Broda across to our proposed line had been rather disheartening as the lower part of the face is comprised of a series of vertical flat-topped towers separated by huge drops, similar to a set of skyscrapers standing in line.

This is the first time we have seen the face in full view, and we study it for a long time. The wall can be divided into three sections. The lower two are defined by pronounced spurs, and Scurlock's photos suggest we can link them with a horizontal traverse. The upper spur is the steeper of the two and the raison d'etre of the route since it leads to the apex of the wall, roughly level with the foot of the Hanging Roof Icefield on the west-face route. Above, the third section follows a lower-angled buttress leading directly to the summit.

We study the wall intently and eventually realize that instead of following the crest of the lower spur, it is more logical to climb directly up to the foot of the upper spur and avoid all the towers. The beauty of this line is that it is protected from rockfall by steep walls above and leads directly to the foot of the upper spur. We watch the face for over an hour and there are no falling rocks, despite being exposed to the full heat of the afternoon sun. We name the features: the initial ramp, the hidden snowfield, the triangular snowfield and the great icefield, all landmarks to guide us up this subtle and complex route.

When the alarm goes off at 2 a.m. the next morning, the wind is howling and snowflakes are blowing in the air. We soon realize that these flakes are not snow but ash from the forest fires raging in B.C. The sky is black with smoke, and we cannot see the stars. It feels threatening and ominous, so we hesitate. Our weather forecast is out of date, but a satellite message to my partner, Kirsten, who is climbing in Switzerland, brings back a revised outlook that is fair for the next two days. We decide there is nothing to be lost by going to "have a look," so at 6 a.m. we cross the bergschrund and start up the face.

The weather turns good, and just after midday, we reach the triangular snowfield where we realize that we are at the point of no return. A retreat from here will consume all of our rock gear, which means that there is only one way back to our tent. And this way leads over the summit of Monarch. There is no discussion about going down. We continue climbing, and soon we are fully committed.

By early evening, we are alongside the great icefield and at the foot of the upper spur. The climbing has become progressively more difficult. The volcanic rock is solid, but the holds slope downwards and the cracks are flared, which makes protection difficult to place. The upper spur is undercut at its base, and we can't find a way through. We try a couple of different options with no success, and as a last resort, we downclimb a fault to the right to where it fades. The overhang is smaller here, and we manage to pull through and fix a rope for the morning.

The next day, we slowly pick our way along the upper spur. The climbing is steep and sometimes run out, and often when we think our options are closing down, a single passage allows progress. Finally, after 18 pitches of tense and absorbing climbing, we emerge at the top of the upper spur where the angle abruptly eases. We move quickly up broken ground to the upper buttress that leads to an exposed bivouac site above a huge drop overlooking the west face. The night is cold and our bivouac is small and cramped, but we are excited because we know that just a couple of mixed pitches separate us from the summit ridge. We alternately doze off and watch the stars.

Micha Rinn and Simon Richardson on the summit of Monarch Mountain after the first ascent of Game of Thrones. Photo: Micha Rinn

We reach the summit of Monarch early the next morning. It is an overwhelming moment, and there is a lot of energy and happiness in the air. The weather is perfect and the view is breathtaking. To the southeast, Waddington stands out as a brilliant white wedge floating above a sea of pale-grey smoke, and to the north lie the intriguing summits of the Monarch Icefield. It is tempting to linger, but instead we carefully descend the west face and reach base camp later that afternoon.

Two days later, we cross the Empire Way Glacier for a second time and traverse the long ridge running north from the previously climbed 2,625-metre peak. We cross five summits and abseil a deep notch to reach the Sugarloaf (2,620 metres), the highest summit in the chain. As far as we know, this shapely curved tower is unclimbed. We stand back and proudly admire Monarch towering high above us. The last piece of the puzzle is finally in place and our adventure is complete.

—Micha Rinn

Summary

Game of Thrones, (ED2, 5.10a, 1250m), southwest pillar, Monarch Mountain (3555m), Coast Mountains. FA: Simon Richardson, Micha Rinn, August 4–6, 2017.

About the Authors

Simon Richardson lives in Aberdeen, Scotland, and is the author of numerous Scottish winter climbing guidebooks. He has added new routes to peaks all over the world from the Alps to the Himalayas and Greenland to South Georgia, and has made many visits to the mountains of Canada.

Micha Rinn is a trainer for alpine mountaineering at the German Alpine Club DAV and instructor for sport climbing at the University of Giessen, Germany. He has been active in mountaineering for more than 30 years, with expeditions to Canada, Patagonia, Nepal and Iceland under his belt.

Carabaya CANDYSHOP

Derek Field

After a fruitful trip to the Cordillera Carabaya in 2016, Aaron and Jeanne Zimmerman (U.S.A.) and I returned in June for more adventure and to pursue objectives of our daydreams. Our primary goals were two unclimbed summits, Gabarriti and Incaccapac, as labelled on the map created by Salomon Nuñez Melgar in 1967 and reproduced by Michael Cocker in 2007.

Aaron Zimmerman reaches the top of the second pitch of Peachy Corner during the first attempt on Incaccapac.
Photo: Derek Field

Jeanne Zimmerman crosses the Allinccapac Icecap below The Tooth on Kiru and Little Candle on Huchuy Vela.
Photo: Derek Field

IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT there exist numerous unclimbed Carabaya summits not labeled on the map. We also sought to explore virgin rock towers and repeat routes on more significant formations surrounding Allinccapac. Almost without exception, I led all the rock pitches while Aaron led all the ice pitches. We were self-funded and therefore restricted to an economy-level expedition (no mules or porters) that we nonetheless thoroughly enjoyed.

On June 10, we travelled from Cusco by *colectivo* to Macusani, capital of the Carabaya province. Long shadows cast themselves dramatically upon the snow-dusted Carabaya foothills when we finally came lurching into the dusty settlement of Macusani. Despite boasting a wealth of cultural and natural wonders, this region of Peru has seen minimal tourism. The sight of toothy-grinned North Americans strolling around the markets in bright, puffy jackets succeeded in capturing the attention of every villager. We checked into a triple room at Hotel Monterrey and felt satisfied sleeping under thick strata of alpaca wool. In the evening, we armed ourselves for our first objective—Incaccapac, the most significant of the unclimbed Carabaya summits. This peak is called "Incaccapac C1" on the Melgar map, though we could find no similar local name. The only mention of this mountain we found was from the only previous attempt, by the 1968 British Carabaya expedition, who settled for Chichoccapac (5,120 metres), a then-unclimbed sub-peak on the east ridge of Incaccapac.

On June 11, with directional assistance from fascinated townsfolk, we took a combi toward Ayapata, disembarking in Escalera, a 400-person village located about 1,400 metres below Incaccapac. Hiking west, we soon came to a large lake that locals refer to as Laguna Humanccaya (3,800 metres). It took us over an hour to walk around its north shore. Beyond the lake, a steep, grassy valley led us directly to the rubble at the base of Incaccapac's east face. At 4 p.m. we made base camp in a lovely protected bowl within the lower moraine at 4,300 metres, a few hundred metres from a gushing spring.

On June 12, we made a somewhat casual attempt at reaching the summit of Incaccapac, not leaving the tent until sunrise. Progress was severely hindered by intermittent rain showers. By sundown we had only barely breached the lower cliffs, doing so by way of a 100-metre dihedral with damp rock and copious moss that made free climbing extremely difficult. We called this Peachy Corner (5.9 C2). We rappelled three times down an adjacent crack system. The rain was so intense that we spent the next day drying out.

At midnight on June 14, we left our tent and began marching upslope under clear starry skies toward the aforementioned crack system, which contained three pitches up chimneys and slabs (5.8). This brought us to a 100-metre wall in the back of a cleft, which we surmounted via two excellent crack pitches (5.8). By 8 a.m., we had passed our 4,950-metre high point, the top of Peachy Corner. Opting to attack the upper cliffband on its left (west) side, we traversed 3rd-class slabs. Eventually, we discovered a ledge system tracing its way up to the south ridge, which we hoped would then lead to the summit. We followed this for two pitches (5.5) until a dead end, and then rappelled 15 metres to a lower ledge and traversed further left into a snow gully that finally gained the south ridge.

By 1 p.m. snow flurries began to fill the air. We continued our quest up the south ridge despite low visibility. Two pitches of mixed climbing (M3) left us with only a short snowy scramble to the true summit. A momentary break in the clouds allowed us to verify that we had indeed crowned the highest point. Our GPS recorded an elevation of 5,292 metres, 174 metres higher than the measurement on the 1967 Melgar map. Our route is called Ruta Escalera (500m, D+ 5.8 M3).

We built a cairn, and as the sun dove for the horizon, we frantically scoured the summit ridge for a bivouac site. Eventually, we found a tiny rectangular nook measuring a metre wide by two metres long, where we endured the miserable 10-hour night sharing one bivy sack. The orange sun rising over the sea of Amazonian clouds was a welcome sight on the morning of June 15. We melted some snow and wiggled our toes before resuming the descent, following the same path (reversing the 15-metre rappel by climbing a 70-degree snow gully) and reaching the relative comfort of our tent at 1 p.m.

On June 16, we hiked down to Escalera, stopping for a quick swim in Laguna Humanccaya. At noon we caught the combi back to Macusani.

After a much-needed rest day in Macusani, we headed back out to the mountains on June 18, hiring a taxi to drive us 45 minutes north to the head of Valle Antajahua, the base of Allinccapac's iconic south face. Packs loaded with 10 days of supplies, it took us two hours of hiking up the valley to reach the bottle-ridden shores of Laguna Allinccapac (4,960 metres), where we proceeded to set up our first camp. At sunset, I scrambled alone to the high point of the unnamed ridgeline north of Fiesta Peak (5,200 metres), stopping a few metres shy of the precarious summit due to frighteningly unstable rock.

June 19 was spent shuttling supplies across the glacier to a cache near the 5,200-metre pass between Allinccapac I and Japuma. On the morning of June 20, we retraced our steps across the glacier to the cache site. Loading our packs with five days' worth of food and all of our climbing gear, we started up the crux AI3 pitches of the west shoulder route on Allinccapac I. By 2 p.m. we reached a high camp on the glacier at 5,500 metres.

On June 21, we set off for the swooping saddle between Allinccapac I and Huaynaccapac II to explore aesthetic rock towers that flanked the north ridge of Allinccapac II. From the saddle, we descended into the centre of the adjacent amphitheatre, which we dubbed El Anfitéatro.

We started with a 30-metre rock tower that may have been covered in glacial ice the last time an expedition visited El Anfitéatro (1967 New Zealand expedition). Viewed from the south, it is easily identified as the distinct shark-tooth-shaped formation fixed between Cornice and Ispa Riti. With rock gear, we ascended a short pitch (5.4) up the staircase-like north ridge to the summit where we found no evidence of a previous visit. Slinging cordelette around a large horn for a rappel anchor, we

agreed to name the small tower Kiru, the Quechua word for tooth. The GPS read 5,615 metres.

Next, we climbed the smaller of two candle-shaped formations flanking the impressive north buttress of Allinccapac II. Two pitches of moderate mixed climbing up the partially snow-covered southwest face brought us to a straddle belay at the narrow, windswept col between the two towers. Aaron and I swapped micro-leads on the next two obstacles: a poorly protected five-metre ice step (AI3) and a difficult four-metre rock step (5.10). We continued up a moderate snow slope to the final easy rock pyramid and thence to the miniature summit cornice, taking turns standing on top. The GPS read 5,671 metres. We rappelled our route, leaving two pitons and some cordelette. Our name for this 100-metre tower is Huchuy Vela, a mixed Quechua/Spanish name meaning Little Candle.

On June 22, from our high camp, we made the fifth recorded ascent of the west shoulder route on Allinccapac I, finding it to be a straightforward and enjoyable means to mount the highest point in the range. Our GPS reading of 5,837 metres corroborates the measurement obtained by Nathan Heald during his 2016 ascent.

The three of us returned to El Anfitéatro on June 23 with the intention of climbing the north buttress of Allinccapac II, a massive red-rock escarpment rising above Kiru and Huchuy Vela. From high camp, we retraced our steps into El Anfitéatro before climbing to the base of this buttress via a 60-degree snow couloir. The first pitch ascended steep 5.8 hand cracks. Higher up, we encountered an uncomfortable 5.7 squeeze chimney. From there, sun-drenched snow slopes led directly to the corniced summit ridge. Carefully kicking steps above the precarious east-side cornice, we traversed two rope lengths of 50-degree snow to the true summit. Standing a few metres below the summit in fear of the unstable cornice, our GPS recorded an elevation of 5,807 metres. This was the fourth ascent of Allinccapac II.

Instead of rappelling our route, we continued along the main summit ridge, tracing its westward bend and subsequent descent to the 5,700-metre col on the east side of Pico Carol. We glissaded down a north-facing gully (the same one used in our previous circumnavigation of Allinccapac I) and ended up back in the heart of El Anfitéatro at 3:30 p.m.

Aaron and Jeanne headed back to camp, but I decided to take advantage of the glorious conditions and keep climbing. In a half-hour round-trip, I tagged the summit of Recce Peak (5,650 metres) via the south ridge, logging the mountain's third ascent. I reversed my steps to El Anfitéatro and at 4:30 p.m., when I crested the saddle between Allinccapac I and Huaynaccapac II, I saw the tantalizing summit of Huaynaccapac II hovering a mere 100 metres above me. I soloed up its southwest side on a 60-degree slope. Less than 20 minutes later, I stepped onto the 5,721-metre summit. This was the third ascent of Huaynaccapac II. I briskly climbed down the route using my ascent steps and returned to camp just before sunset.

On June 24, we descended the west shoulder. Around this day each year (the winter solstice), the inhabitants of the Carabaya region celebrate Allinccapac Raymi, the most important regional festival in honour of the apu (mountain spirit) of Allinccapac. It was quite a sight to see thousands of native Peruvians playfully sliding around on the enormous crevasse-ridden glacier below us. Hearts warmed from an interaction with some rather precocious children, we hoisted our heavy backpacks, turned our trajectory northward and started making our way down Valle Pacaje, eventually making camp at the gorgeous turquoise lake at the foot of Gabarriti. This is the name given on the 1967 Melgar map. Ronald Gutierrez, former Carabaya governor, noted that it may be a misspelling of Ccapac Riti, which means something like "the prosperous snowy mountain." Giant fingers

Aaron Zimmerman finishes the amazing 5.10a pitch on the summit block of Gabarriti.
Photo: Derek Field

The east face of Incaccapac:
1) Peachy Corner
2) Ruta Escalera
Photo: Derek Field

of ice probed the inlet, belying the lake's modest 4,700-metre elevation. After dunking ourselves into the frigid water, we kicked back and admired the marvelous south face of Gabarriti, the only remaining virgin peak labeled on the 1967 Melgar map, and our objective for the following day.

We left the tent at 5 a.m. on June 25 and quickly crossed the moraine. Carving a sensible line up the left side of the glacier, we climbed 60-degree ice onto a narrow hogsback ridge just below (and south of) the major saddle between the north and central summits. A full rope length of AI3 ice and a half rope length of mixed climbing brought us to a platform below the various summit towers where our GPS indicated an elevation of 5,080 metres. The final 100-metre summit tower—only marginally taller than its satellites—was steep on all sides. We chose a semi-detached pillar and left-trending ledge on the tower's west face. The ledge brought us to a 5.7 chimney and a poorly protected mantel (5.8) above the pillar onto a ledge. To our delight, the final pitch was a perfect 35-metre dihedral with twin hand cracks (5.10a), one of the finest alpine pitches any of us had ever done.

We scrambled one rope length along the narrow summit ridge to the highest point and recorded a GPS elevation of 5,209 metres, the first measurement ever reported for this illustrious summit. We lounged on the summit for almost two hours. When jungle clouds started to roll in, we rappelled our route and crossed the lower glacier and moraine, getting back to camp at 4 p.m.

While on top of Gabarriti, a gigantic rock tower on the northwest ridge of Trident had drawn our attention, so we decided to try it. On the morning of June 26, mixed terrain on the southwest face led to a chossy overhanging cliff at 5,260 metres. We called it a day and descended to camp.

On June 27, we descended the remainder of Valle Pacaje, a long and twisting gorge cut by a tributary of the Río Gabán. The journey was demanding, taking us steeply down through a myriad of ecological zones. We encountered no people inhabiting this valley, only cows wandering around in the fog.

After reaching dense cloud forest at 2,800 metres, we finally caught a glimpse of the sinuous highway below. Not long after, we were peacefully soaking in Ollachea's natural hot springs.

On June 28, we rode the combi back to Macusani and spent the afternoon with the Carabaya governor, Ronald Gutierrez, and his family. They were kind enough to drive us to the Puno-Cusco highway, where we boarded a bus back to Cusco.

Summary

Ruta Escalera (D+ 5.8 M3, 500m), east face, Incaccapac (5292m), Cordillera Carabaya, Peru. FA: Derek Field, Aaron Zimmerman, Jeanne Zimmerman, June 14, 2017 (first ascent of the mountain).

The Tooth (5.4, 30m), north ridge, Kiru (5615m) Cordillera Carabaya, Peru. FA: Derek Field, Aaron Zimmerman, Jeanne Zimmerman, June 21, 2017.

Little Candle (5.10 AI3, 100m), south-west face/south ridge, Huchuy Vela (5671m), Cordillera Carabaya, Peru. FA: Derek Field, Aaron Zimmerman, Jeanne Zimmerman, June 21, 2017 (first ascent of the mountain).

North Buttress (AD, 5.8 60°, 200m), Allinccapac II (5809m), Cordillera Carabaya, Peru. FA: Derek Field, Aaron Zimmerman, Jeanne Zimmerman, June 23, 2017 (third ascent of the mountain).

South Face (D, 5.10a AI3, 300m), Gabarriti (5209m), Cordillera Carabaya, Peru. FA: Derek Field, Aaron Zimmerman, Jeanne Zimmerman, June 25, 2017 (first ascent of the mountain).

About the Author

Derek is a 25-year-old alpinist from Calgary. Although he spent his childhood playing competitive sports, an increasingly prevalent fascination with the natural world prompted a shift toward a lifestyle of geologic research and technical climbing. Derek is currently working towards a master's degree in geology at Northern Arizona University.

The northwest face of Allinccapac II with the North Buttress route marked. The original 1960 Oxford Andean Expedition climbed the shaded gully up the centre of the face.
Photo: Derek Field

The South Face route on Gabarriti. Photo: Derek Field

Tall Tales

John Price

The Grand Sentinel, 2016

Nathaniel Boucher and Cory Chikie provide scale to the ever-iconic Grand Sentinel located just beyond Sentinel Pass in the Lake Louise group. Cardiac Arête is likely one of the most sought-after 5.10 multi-pitch routes in Canada. I had climbed the route earlier that day, and on the hike out decided to throw on a 400-millimetre lens and lay down for two to three hours joyfully photographing their entire ascent.

I am your classic Bow Valley cliché.

I am an Aussie who came here for a year to climb ice, fell in love with the mountains and never left. For me, photographing all styles of climbing is my passion. It lit a fire inside of me and has filled me with more purpose than anything I've ever felt before. I'm deeply grateful to the Canadian Rockies, which we are able to call home, and to the amazing community of climbers and friends who have encouraged me, and more importantly, pushed me to grow to where I am now.

In this new world where everyone is constantly inundated with shiny images and fluffed stories, our attention spans are becoming diminished and our connection with what we feel, anemic. I think the importance of honest storytelling has never been more pressing; thankfully, images help us tell such tales. Photography enables me to articulate feelings about life, mountains, climbing and friendship in ways I would never find with words.

My storytelling has a long way to go, but instead of looking back with regret, I tend to look forward with excitement. New ideas, new climbs, new partners, seeing things in a new way—it is an evolution of the imperfect. I think mountain photography should not only tolerate technical imperfection but celebrate it. It's gritty, real, uncomfortable and often somewhat dangerous. Finding the balance between being a photographer as well as a climber is challenging and at times frustrating, but in the end, it is a game of symbiosis. The climber motivates me to photograph, and the photographer motivates me to climb.

About the Author/Photographer

Based in Canmore, John Price is a climber and professional photographer who has spent the past six years travelling the world. His camera has captured adventures in Alaska, China, Japan and the Himalaya. He also teaches private workshops, creates editorial pieces and shoots for commercial projects for a range of clients.

Temple of Silence, 2018

When someone like Will Gadd says he has sent what is likely the hardest mixed route of his career, you have to wonder what it looks like—a 50-plus-metre rock roof of upside-down drytooling that finishes with overhanging ice. I'd worked with him before, had seen him climb. It is a privilege to shoot such high-calibre athletes, because you are not simply taking a single frame but, instead, capturing an entire life's worth of lessons, failures, successes, strength and mind control.

The Weeping Wall, 2017

Eyes closed, aware but calm, Barry Blanchard readies a rappel amid significant snowfall on the Weeping Wall. We were shooting photos and just about to pull the pin when a sizeable sluff flew over our heads and partially buried us on a ledge. I hope this image can act as a modern tether to Barry's past. Looking at it, I see his countless tales of avalanches, new routes, epic bivies and wild summits. It was a real honour to spend time in the mountains with this legend.

The Shining, 2015

The plan was vague, but the psyche was high. Joyanne Krupa and I were to climb to the right of the Diamond Face on Mount Louis while Sonnie Trotter and Brandon Pullan were on The Shining—a 5.13 route that Sonnie had established in 2011 with American climber Tommy Caldwell. Joyanne and I ended up climbing the obscure 1974 East Buttress route, which provided excellent positions to shoot across at our friends. It also provided a real alpine rock adventure. Route finding was challenging as we had zero beta, found no fixed gear and battled with typical Rockies' cruxes of poor pro, big runouts and loose rock. I came away from that day with my proudest images. My only regret was not carrying a third (longer) lens.

Wicked Gravity, 2017

Documenting Marc-Andre Leclerc's onsight free solo of Screams from the Balcony (5.11b, five pitches) on Saddle Mountain was likely the most beautiful display of human athleticism and focus I will ever witness. I pre-rigged my fixed ropes the day before and was nervous that night since I had never shot free soloing. Upon meeting Marc-Andre early the next morning, my apprehension was calmed. His demeanour was so relaxed, so humble. After the shoot, we hiked back down to Lake Louise and he was psyched to climb more, so we headed to Back of the Lake where I photographed him cruising solo laps on Wicked Gravity (5.11a).

Mount Athabasca. Acrylic painting by Glen Boles

The Cultural Ranges

The Science of Climbing

Adam Mintz

OVER THE PAST DECADE, alpine, ice and rock climbing have exploded and found their way into mainstream athletics. Now more than ever, climbing gyms are growing and local crags are populated with climbers of all different athletic abilities. I have integrated both my passion for climbing and my education as a neurophysiologist to approach the question "What is the science of climbing?" from a neurological perspective. To be more specific, what sensorimotor adaptations in the brain occur within a climber? I found through scientific experimentation that climbing leads to neuroplastic changes in the brain due to the skill demands of the sport. That is to say, the actual physical structure of a climber's brain changes and the ability to processes sensory information is enhanced.

As a neurophysiologist, studying sensorimotor transformations with the idea of what constitutes a superb alpine and rock climber is an intriguing notion. Professional athletes such as baseball and tennis players undergo neuroplastic changes that enable them to excel at their sport. The demands of the sport cause the cortex (brain) to adapt by altering grey matter (brain tissue) consisting of neurons. The altered grey matter results in an increased density of neurons or enlargement of a specific area of the cortex. These neuroplastic changes result in elevated processing speeds and increased availability of information. For the athlete, this manifests as an increase in performance.

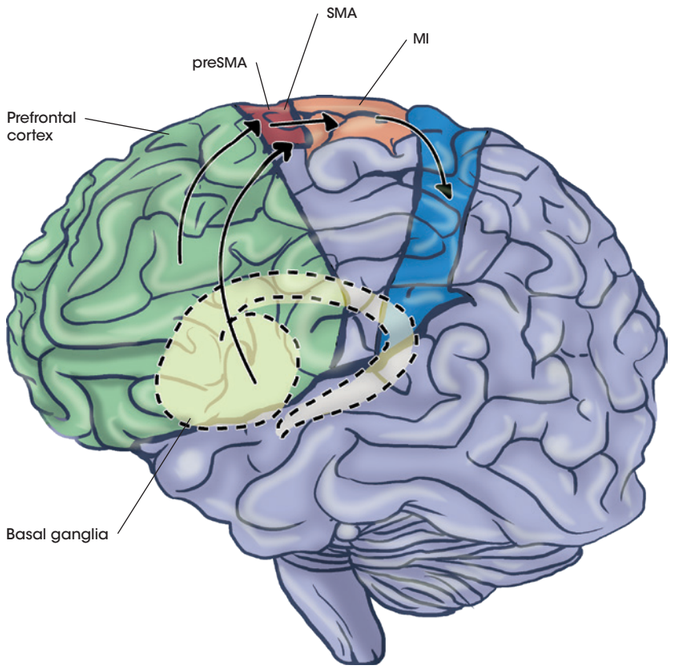
Being an avid ice and rock climber, I was curious to investigate the premise of neuroplasticity within climbers, which has never been examined until now. As such, I proposed my thesis at the University of Waterloo to examine the question "What is the science of climbing?" Drawing from my personal experience as a climber, I scrutinized what important neurophysiological aspects go into making an ascent. It seems the most essential factor of any climb is the processing of tactile information in the cortex, specifically, incoming tactile information from the hands and feet. In other words, it is the sensory information from the sense of touch that is sent to the cortex.

When ascending a climb, we use numerous styles of hand mechanics in the form of hand jams, crimps and pinches to pulling on big jugs. These hand mechanics are each unique in their own right. However, the commonality is they all send tactile information to the cortex to be used for movement planning and motor control. Furthermore, ascending sensory information is not limited to the hands, it also originates from the lower limbs such as when performing heel hooks and foot jams.

Sensory information that originates from the sense of touch is not limited to direct contact with rock but also indirectly when placing active and passive gear in a traditional climbing setting. For traditional climbers, the placement of nuts and cams are of extreme importance. For those of us who trad climb, we know the feeling of bomber versus unstable placements as well as the feeling of how an ice screw penetrates the ice. We determine the feeling and stability of our

placements by the sense of touch. Subsequently, this is identical as if we are in direct contact with the rock.

The sensory information originating from the hands and feet reach the same destination in the brain, the supplementary motor area (SMA). The SMA is the central region of my investigation. This area of the brain has been well researched and the consensus within the scientific community is that it has a role in planning movements and the processing of incoming tactile information. When comparing the roles of the SMA and the skill demands associated with climbing, it appeared there were commonalities. The SMA is theorized to contribute to four components of movement: 1) the precise timing of sequential movement; 2) planning of several movements ahead; 3) reacting to unpredictably external cues; and 4) initiating motor plans. The ability for a climber to determine and execute a sequence of movements while reacting to the quality of the rock enables a climber to overcome challenges on a pitch. In turn, a climber utilizes all four components of movement strategies that are produced in the SMA.



Whether a 5.7 or 5.13a, or an ice pitch that is WI4+, planning is essential for all climbers. However, traditional climbers have a greater reliance on route finding as the need to place passive or active gear becomes a matter of life and death. Route finding and movement planning is ongoing when ascending a pitch. Regardless of how automatic we execute a climb from the bottom of the crag to the summit, we are continually problem solving, in turn creating movement plans driven by the SMA. Moreover, learning a sequence of movements is not just limited to a crux, it begins on the ground. Every climber can attest to this as before any climb starts a ground-up evaluation of the route takes place figuring out holds, line of weaknesses and placements of traditional gear or ice screws. Hence, the focus of my experiment was to determine if neuroplasticity occurs in the SMA due to the skill demands of climbing.

So how is it possible to measure activity within the cortex? A technique called electroencephalography (EEG) provides a window into brain activity. Pads embedded within a cap are placed over the head of a participant, and each pad picks up electrical activity under the scalp, over top of a specific area; therefore, determining how much brain activity is localized to a specific region. So we have a way to evaluate activity, but how do we capture the activity within the SMA? A technique called median nerve stimulation is ideal. An electrode is placed on the wrist and elicits a small electrical pulse, stimulating the median nerve and sending electrical signals to the brain. The median nerve is the highway of the sensory information coming from the hands that leads to the SMA. Therefore, by stimulating the nerve, we can see how much traffic, sensory information is travelling within it. The activity of the SMA is measured by the "N30 potential" which occurs via median nerve stimulation. Thus, the amplitude of the N30 allows a measure to be compared between climbers and non-climbers.

Now that a measure and a technique can be employed, the last problem is participants. I recruited climbers and non-climbers and used median nerve stimulation on both their right and left hands, and then averaged over 3,000 trials and compared them. I had climbers with three years' experience to 12 years. My group included alpine climbers, ice climbers, boulders, trad climbers, sport climbers and top-ropers. In all cases, the results were intriguing and impressive. Statistical analysis revealed that climbers had significantly more activity within the SMA than non-climbers (Figure 1). The elevated N30 amplitude represents one of two things. Firstly, the SMA could have increased in size or that more connections within brain tissue (neurons) had transpired. In either case, it signifies that climbers had undergone neuroplastic changes due to the skill demands of the sport. The processing of tactile-based information, executing the precise timing of sequential movement and planning a sequence of movements are all driven by the SMA. These are all key elements in any type of climbing situation.

So why is this important, and, other than my own personal interest, what does it mean? Well, this is the first study in the world that has examined brain activity within climbers. So to answer my question "What is the science of climbing?", it boils down to the ability of the SMA to process tactile information, prepare and execute motor plans. Consequently, climbing changes the physical structure of your brain. The neuroplastic changes to the SMA have profound effects on a climber. The additional connections formed permits greater-than-ever amounts of tactile information to be processed. Moreover, the capacity to execute and plan sequences of movements becomes more effective, and as a result, climbing becomes easier. Recognizing solid crimps and hand jams are effortless, bomber trad gear and ice tool placements become trouble-free, a 5.10b seems like a 5.7, a crux disappears on a route, a line is painless to locate and the quality of rock is easy to distinguish.

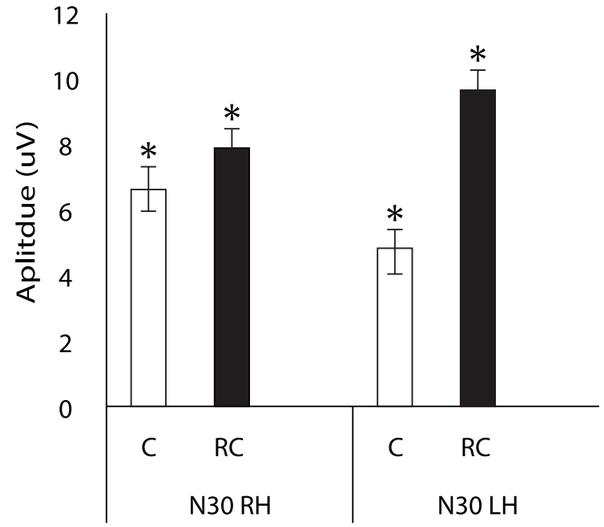


Figure 1: Group-averaged values of amplitudes of N30. (*) denotes a significant interaction (i.e. an important value).
C = controls
RC = rock climbers
RH = right hand
LH = left hand

Another discovery from my research revealed that all types of climbers undergo and benefit from neuroplastic changes. My diverse participant pool has shown that experts and novices will be subjected to neuroplastic changes. It appears there is no ceiling to how much cortex remodelling can take place. Moreover, this effect is not limited to a specific type of climber, but all sport, trad, top-rope and ice enthusiasts of all levels acquired the aforementioned benefits.

For those of us who climb, the next adventure is often on our mind because our minds have transformed. In the end, climbing has truly become a part of who we are.

The North

Sydkap Ice Cap

Greg Horne

FIFTEEN DAYS WAITING IN RESOLUTE BAY? Even the locals had an expression of sympathy on their faces. Or was that amazement? Resolute we were to get to Ellesmere Island. Louise Jarry and I wanted to visit another amazing polar landscape of Canada's Nunavut Territory.

The original plan was to be a west-to-east traverse of the main ice cap from Baad Fiord to Harbour Fiord over the west and east apex domes of the ice cap. This would have involved an all-day snowmobile ride from the hamlet of Grise Fiord on frozen Jones Sound to the head of Baad Fiord. Despite starting enquiries a couple of months ahead of time and having a driver lined up when we arrived in Grise, we were not able to arrange that paid ride. It was springtime and everyone with a reliable snowmobile had their own plans, like polar bear hunts, fishing derbies and ranger patrols.

By luck, Symon Ningiuk overheard us trying to line up a ride and offered his services in the evening after work. We had already down-scaled our drop-off logistics to Harbour Fiord. Instead of a full ice-cap traverse, we would make a loop excursion onto the eastern portion. Before leaving, Symon dropped off two qomatiqs to our ocean campsite, one for our pulks and the other for us to ride in. With friend Brandon riding double on the machine and pulling us, we headed out at 6:30 p.m. under the midnight sun on May 2.

Travel on the sea ice was straightforward. We stopped at a few seal holes to find signs of polar bears feeding on seals. The guys were cautious about thin ice—rightfully so, as strong currents can create weak areas. Plus, we were four travelling with one snowmobile, so no backup. Two and a half hours later, our ride ended the moment we left the sea ice and were on land. It was impossible for a machine to travel on 35 centimetres of depth hoar and pull two qomatiqs.

We accessed our first summit (Peak 1), on the Heim Peninsula, from near our drop off, the central of three conical volcanic-like cones. First, on skis to 440 metres, and then ice axe and crampons to the 722-metre top. Following the main valley at the head of Harbour Fiord, we quickly reached a significant outlet glacier (Glacier #17, area 46422B, Glacier Atlas of Canada) of the Sydkap Ice Cap. Just before the glacier, I noticed a disturbance in a snowdrift that caught my attention. Investigating, I discovered a recently abandoned polar bear den, complete with hair hanging on the ceiling, scat on the floor and marks that were made by very big claws excavating the den. The bear had picked the exact spot people would choose to dig a snow cave—firm snow with a drop-off below to clear dug-out material. Travel up Glacier #17 for the first three days to 800 metres was around and over wind-exposed ice hummocks. A couple of whiteout storm days held us in camp. In the morning after the second storm, we awoke to find very fresh Arctic fox tracks beside our campsite in the middle of the ice cap. Somehow in this near-featureless landscape, a fox had found us, curious no doubt, but did not actually touch anything, and then left.

Louise Jarry at the edge of Glacier #179.
Photo: Greg Horne

With calm conditions and clear skies, the highest point (Peak 2, 1,265 metres) of the eastern portion of the ice cap was reached on May 11 as a side trip from Camp 7. A 13-kilometre-long descent due south and an elevation drop of 450 metres brought us to the upper reaches of another outlet glacier (Glacier #179, area 46422C). From this next camp, three glaciated peaks off the ice cap were ascended on May 13 and 14 (Peaks 3, 4 and 5). Snow conditions were much different on Glacier #179 than the first outlet glacier. Glacier #17 showed evidence of heavy wind action, yet Glacier #179 was very smooth with no exposed ice and little sastrugi.

Hoping we had a straightforward exit off the glacier, we were nudged on by a brisk tailwind. As the final half kilometre on the glacier was reached, the terrain was not looking pretty. All edges were dropping off steeply, and full view of the slope below was lost. We parked the pulks and scouted options. Nothing simple presented itself to us. Managing a 50-kilogram pulk by lowering it down potentially vertical to overhanging ice faces was not desired. We retreated 2.5 kilometres up glacier to where a small side valley on the west side permitted the glacier to flow laterally and create a lower-angled ramp, allowing us to manoeuvre each pulk with two people—one in front and the other in back—off the glacier. A series of portage shuttles in a trough formed between the precipitous glacier side and steep mountain slope brought us free of terrain barriers. The piedmont glacier feature, like the near-vertical front, of Glacier #179 is the result of the advance of this glacier from 1984 to present by 300 metres. Of course, once at the bottom and looking up, a less-than-vertical exit was possible but not detectable from above.

A two-summit day would finish off our ascents (Peaks 6 and 7) and save the best views to the end. From Camp 11 at 154 metres, we skied to near the top of Peak 7 (788 metres) and continued to the long outlying ridge crest of Peak 6 (800 metres). Impressive views included the South Cape Fiord and the calving Sydkap Glacier to the west, dozens of outlet glaciers flowing off the Devon Ice Cap to the south and mountains near Grise Fiord to the east. The tidewater Sydkap Glacier, which has retreated nine kilometres since 1961, is still producing thousands of smaller icebergs seen frozen in the fjord and the only glacier flowing from the ice cap still to reach the ocean. It was one of those days you wished would never end. Homeward bound, we skied over the top of Peak 6.

Two days later found us crossing our route of two and a half weeks earlier at Harbour Fiord. Within seconds of stepping onto the sea ice, we saw polar bear tracks and, every few minutes continued to encounter fresh tracks criss-crossing back and forth searching every ice mound for seals. Without breaks, we quickly pushed on to get clear of this bear haven. Reaching the next eastern valley entering Harbour Fiord, we continued away from the ocean and the bear/seal zone. Four more days had us across the Lindstrom Peninsula to Grise Fiord and the hamlet.

Summary

Seven probable first ascents in the Heim Peninsula/Sydkap Ice Cap area on southern Ellesmere Island (197kms on skis). Greg Horne, Louise Jarry, May 2-23, 2017.

Unnamed Peak 1 (722m, 76° 36.505' N 84° 20.082' W) via north slopes/northwest face, May 3, 2017.

Unnamed Peak 2 (1265m, 76° 52.484' N 84° 56.895' W) via southeast glacier, May 11, 2017.

Unnamed Peak 3 (875m, 76° 41.864' N 84° 56.639' W) via north glacier, May 13, 2017.

Unnamed Peak 4 (928m, 76° 42.552' N 84° 57.628' W) via northeast ridge, May 13, 2017.

Unnamed Peak 5 (936m, 76° 42.843' N 85° 06.569' W) via northeast ridge/glacier, May 14, 2017.

Unnamed Peak 6 (800m, 76° 36.560' N 84° 49.709' W) via northeast ridge, May 18, 2017.

Unnamed Peak 7 (788m, 76° 38.051' N 84° 46.464' W) via north glacier, May 18, 2017.

Third Time a Charm

Eric Gilbertson

THUNDER MOUNTAIN (a.k.a. Mount Nirvana), the highest mountain in the Northwest Territories, has been climbed by the north and east faces, but as of early 2017, the biggest aspect of Thunder Mountain—the 1,000-metre-tall, two-kilometre-wide west face—was still unclimbed.

I had previously been on two expeditions to Thunder Mountain. In 2015, I made an unsuccessful attempt for the summit, helicoptering in from Watson Lake, Yukon, to climb the west face with Dave Custer and Susan Ruff. On that trip, we climbed to within a few rope lengths of the summit ridge, but retreated after encountering rock that couldn't be protected cleanly [see *CAJ*, 2016, vol.99, p.90]. In 2016, Len Vanderstar and I made the first unsupported ascent of Thunder Mountain. We paddled and bushwhacked in from Tungsten, Northwest Territories, climbed the east face, and then hiked and bushwhacked back out [see *CAJ*, 2017, vol.100, p.61].

Dave, Susan, and I returned this past summer for another attempt at the west face. On the evening of July 14, we helicoptered in from Watson Lake and set up base camp exactly as we had in 2015 at the edge of a small tarn. Our first plan of attack was to try a line on a buttress just left of our 2015 route. Unlike 2015, this time we established an advanced base camp (ABC) halfway up the face to shorten our summit day. We spent the first week hauling loads and fixing lines to ABC. It rained every day, even forcing us to bivy under an overhang to sit out a 36-hour rain event, but eventually we established camp.

On July 22 we got our first weather window, so we hiked, climbed and jumared up to ABC. The next day we simul-climbed across snowy, exposed ledges until we reached the southwest gully. We climbed two snow pitches up the gully then diverged from our 2015 route by traversing left on another ledge system. From the ledge, we climbed a featured face, an angling chimney, a fun hand crack, a rock-strewn ramp and a tricky changing corner. As the corner became harder, a light rain set in, creating a rainbow below us but also making free climbing difficult. Nevertheless, Dave aided up the tedious corner and crested the arête. By the time we all reached the exposed belay, it was dark enough to need a headlamp, and the drizzle and strong wind had stolen our warmth. The route above still looked difficult and exposed

Eric Gilbertson on one of the crux 5.9 pitches just below the northwest ridge of Thunder Mountain. Photo: Dave Custer

to wind. In those conditions, it was too risky to continue, so we retreated.

Six rappels and a bit of downclimbing led us back to the main ledge, where we traversed back to ABC, arriving 24 hours after we'd left. On the hike back down to our base camp, Susan twisted her ankle, which prevented her from climbing for the rest of the trip. The next week was a return to normal wet weather of the Ragged Range, and we spent this week back in base camp. In between rain squalls, I scrambled up an unclimbed peak just north of camp (GR 681617, 2,075 metres).

On July 31, Dave and I climbed back up to ABC. Our strategy this time was to try a different summit route—the south ridge. However, with more than 13 hours of climbing on August 1, we reached a difficult overhanging dead end and retreated back to ABC. We made a repeat attempt up the southwest gully route the next day, but eventually had to retreat due to melting snow above us that turned the gully into a steady stream of water.

It appeared any route from ABC would either require aiding or would be too wet to climb. Our next option was to try a route on the left side of the face via a promising-looking line I'd noticed in 2015, which was accessible from base camp. So over the next two days, we hauled all the gear and fixed ropes back to base camp and waited for another weather window.

On August 6, we set out from base camp at 6 a.m. After a few hours, we reached a ledge system near Trident Col, north of Thunder Mountain, and scrambled across to the right, eventually dropping down into the gully that separates peaks Scylla and Charybdis (the two peaks north of Thunder Mountain).

Dave and I swung leads up mossy cracks, across narrow ledges and around and through slabby waterfalls, eventually reaching a basin beneath Charybdis. From the basin, we climbed up to the crest of an arête to the right, and then rappelled down into the next snowy gully over. We then climbed a snow pitch and several overhanging chockstone pitches until it started getting dark out. The face above us appeared to be the crux of our route—a series of steep cracks that might reach the crest of the northwest ridge of Thunder Mountain.

We were reluctant to start the unknown crux pitches in the dark and were tired from a full day of climbing. Opting to bivy until daylight, we built a bomber anchor at a small scree ledge, clipped in and hunkered down for the night.

Restful sleep eluded us during the cold, exposed bivy. The next morning, our feet were numb and we were exhausted from the absence of sleep. We decided to retreat, not feeling up for the unknown crux of the route. We retraced our route and eventually staggered back into camp at 1 a.m., 43 hours after leaving.

Time was running out; we had time for one final summit attempt. We rose at 1 a.m. on August 10, and as I looked to the north, I saw green curtains shimmer across the sky. It was the northern lights. This was the only time we'd seen them on the whole trip, and we hoped they were a good omen.

We climbed the first pitch of our previous route in the dim twilight, and then no longer needed headlamps. Swinging leads, we reached the bivy ledge by 12:30 in the afternoon, nine hours earlier than in the previous attempt. There was now plenty of daylight for the crux of the climb.

Dave led a traverse pitch, a hand crack to a hanging belay and another shorter crack to a small ledge inside a chimney near its base. From here we stepped left to gain a gently overhanging crack system and continued up to the crest of the northwest ridge. Once on the ridge, we were greeted with a huge flat bench big enough to pitch a tent on.

The ridge above us looked quite sharp and technical all the way to the summit, but the terrain looked easier just below it on the north face. With five hours of light left, we moved onto the north face and swung leads across ledges and up faces, including some delicate traverses, until we were below what looked like the edge of the summit plateau. I wriggled up an off-width, and then reached the short, wide overhanging crack noted by Buckingham on the mountain's first ascent.

I climbed up the crack, pulled myself up over the lip and crawled onto a broad, gently sloping, boulder-strewn plateau. The summit was just a short walk away. To the north, a faint orange ribbon hugged the horizon in a narrow band of alpenglow as the last hints of sun retreated below the horizon. By 12:30 a.m., we both reached the summit just as it became dark enough to need headlamps. It was an amazing culmination to our trip, having summited in the last possible window after a month on the mountain.

After a half hour we were cold and walked back to the edge of the plateau. Through the night we reversed our route, down-leading, diagonally rappelling and traversing back to the nice ledge at the edge of the northwest ridge by 7 a.m. From there, we followed our previous rap anchors down the face and arrived in camp at 7 p.m., 41 hours after leaving.

Bad weather was forecasted for the next week, but thanks to Steve and Matt of Trans North, we managed to helicopter back to Watson Lake in the nick of time on August 13 and started the long drive back south.

The west face of Thunder Mountain.
Photo: Eric Gilbertson

Summary

West Face to North Face (V 5.9, 1000m, 30 pitches), Thunder Mountain, Ragged Range. FA: Dave Custer, Eric Gilbertson, August 11, 2017.

Unclimbed Peak (3rd class, GR681617, 2075m), Ragged Range. FA: Eric Gilbertson, July 30, 2017.

British Empire Range

Eric Gilbertson

BARBEAU PEAK IS THE HIGHEST PEAK in Nunavut, in far northern Canada, just under 900 kilometres from the North Pole. It is nestled deep in the British Empire Range of Ellesmere Island where existing topographic maps are unreliable, navigation-quality satellite images are virtually nonexistent and the compass needle points southwest.

Our Canadian and American team of Len Vanderstar, Serge Massad, Brian and Laura Friedrich and I hoped to climb Barbeau Peak and some other nearby unclimbed peaks during a two-week expedition to Ellesmere Island. On June 17, we flew a ski-mounted Twin Otter plane from Resolute, Nunavut, to the ice cap just south of Barbeau, landing in the early afternoon.

We soon roped up and pulled sleds for several hours to a sheltered campsite just east of Barbeau. A prominent summit (Peak NU0595, 2,258 metres) very close to camp was unclimbed, so after dinner Brian, Laura, Serge and I climbed up snow, and then hard ice, to the summit. We all returned to camp around 11 p.m., but Brian and I decided to hit one more mountain that evening, a peak on the east ridge from Griper Peak (Peak NU0096, 2,480 metres) [see *AAJ*, 1983, #57, vol.25, p.175]. The rest of the crew stayed in camp and got ready for bed while we roped up and started climbing.

Brian Friedrich traverses the east ridge of Griper Peak.
Photo: Eric Gilbertson

After navigating around some crevasses, we soon crested the narrow summit overlooking camp. The ridge continued and it was hard to resist climbing higher. Over the next few hours, we ascended the previously unclimbed east ridge to the summit of Griper Peak. It was a knife-edge snow ridge with terrific exposure of 500-plus metres on both sides, with amazing rock gendarmes sticking up intermittently along the way, requiring some exposed rock scrambling.

I led the way down to the Barbeau-Griper col, and then up the north ridge of Barbeau Peak, reaching the summit at 3 a.m. The sun was still high in the sky, and it was hard to tell it was the middle of the night. To descend, we dropped down to the north then traversed around the west side of Griper, passed through a col and staggered back into camp at 6 a.m.

I got a few hours of sleep, but by 10 a.m. the rest of the team was itching to get moving. We roped back up for another ascent of Barbeau, and everyone reached the summit that afternoon via the north ridge (a second ascent for Brian and me). Len officially became the first Canadian to reach the high points of all 13 provinces and territories in Canada, ending a tough decade-long endeavour.

On June 19, Brian and I set out to climb more unclimbed peaks near camp. We started with the huge pyramidal summit to the northeast (Peak NU0697, 2,359 metres). After crossing a flat basin, we climbed the steep, icy knife-edge southwest ridge to the summit, making a short detour to construct a cairn at a rock outcrop. I led the way down, carefully downclimbing the sharp east ridge until it leveled out. We descended steeply to the Henrietta Nesmith Glacier, and on the way, I punched through a few crevasses, but quickly rolled out with no problems.

Eventually, we reached a far ridge on a summit (Peak NU1395, 2,016 metres), and started following the ridge back towards camp to make a big loop. This time we got to follow several kilometres of fun snowy knife edges, with occasional rock bands to scramble over.

We passed over many minor peaks along the ridge before climbing steeply up to another summit (Peak NU0894, 2,254 metres), which was flanked by a huge rock cliff and hanging glacier, uncharacteristically steep for the British Empire Range. After a few more hours, we reached our last summit of the day (Peak NU0594, 2,246 metres). Brian tried descending what looked like snow, only to start slipping on what was actually dust-covered ice. We were roped together, and I instantly dove into self-arrest position on a snowbank, but Brian caught his fall in time, so my manoeuvre was unnecessary. Luckily, we'd brought a few ice screws and carefully belayed each other across the ice, about 50 metres, back onto snow. From here the hiking was easy and we arrived in camp, exhausted, at 2:30 a.m.

Over the next 10 days or so we headed south down the Adams Glacier, pulling sleds and climbing one more prominent unclimbed peak along the way (Peak NU0981, 1,893 metres). We exited the glacier above Atka Lake and trekked back to Tanquary Fjord for our flight out on June 30.

Summary

Unclimbed Peak (steep snow, Peak NU0595, 2258m), British Empire Range, Ellesmere Island. FA: Brian Friedrich, Laura Friedrich, Eric Gilbertson, Serge Massad, June 17, 2017.

East Ridge, Griper Peak (2480m), British Empire Range. FA: Brian Friedrich, Eric Gilbertson, June 17, 2017.

Unclimbed Peak (steep snow, Peak NU0697, 2359m), British Empire Range. FA: Brian Friedrich, Eric Gilbertson, June 19, 2017.

Unclimbed Peak (steep snow, Peak NU1395, 2016m), British Empire Range. FA: Brian Friedrich, Eric Gilbertson, June 19, 2017.

Unclimbed Peak (steep snow, Peak NU0894, 2254m), British Empire Range. FA: Brian Friedrich, Eric Gilbertson, June 19, 2017.

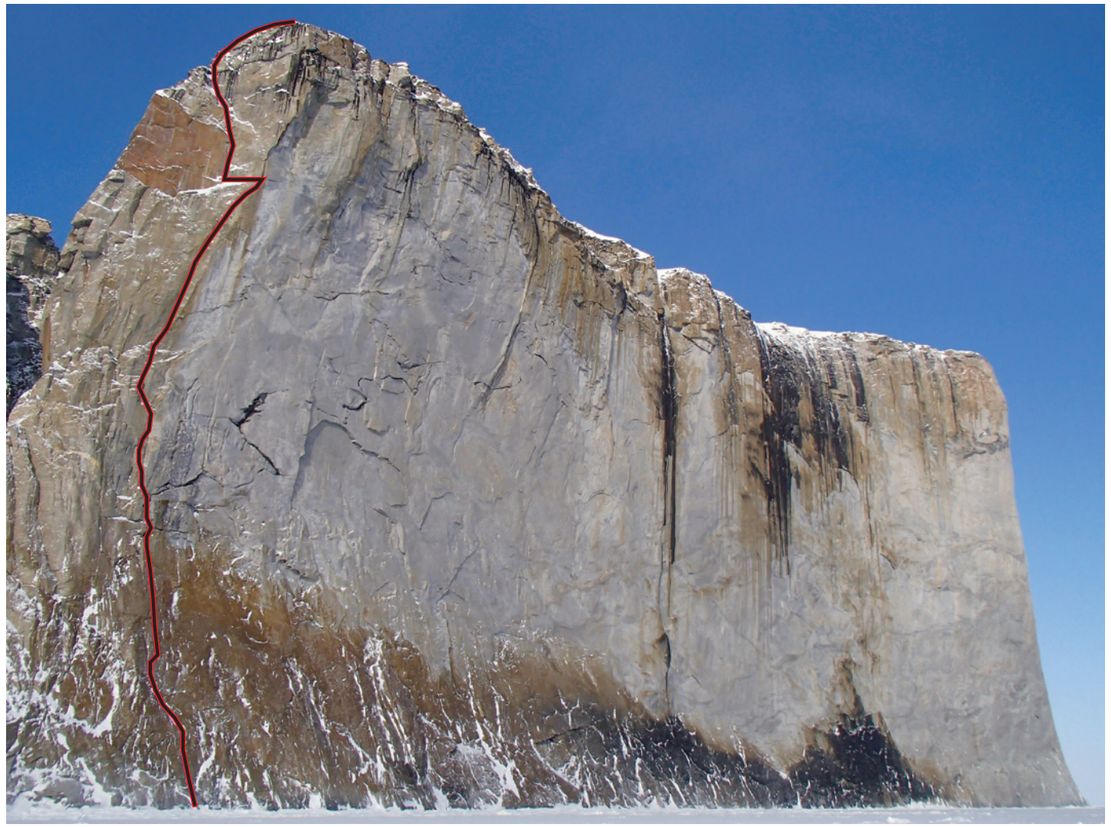
Unclimbed Peak (steep snow, WI 2, Peak NU0594, 2246m), British Empire Range. FA: Brian Friedrich and Eric Gilbertson, June 19, 2017.

Unclimbed Peak (steep snow, Peak NU0981, 1893m), British Empire Range. FA: Brian Friedrich, Eric Gilbertson, June 20, 2017.

Secret of Silence

Marek Raganowicz

Mantra Mandala on the east face of Ship's Prow. Photo: Marek Raganowicz



On March 3, my climbing partner Marcin Tomaszewski, and I arrived at Sam Ford Fiord on Baffin Island with an intention to put up a new line. Five years before, Marcin and I had made the first ascent of Superbalance on Polar Sun Spire [see *CAJ*, 2013, vol.96, pp.61-63], which was a climb of a lifetime, but we wanted more Baffin big-wall adventure.

Unfortunately, though, extremely cold conditions reaching down to –50 C and very strong winds forced us to give up on our original objective. The Arctic winter took its toll on us and Marcin returned to Poland due to light frostbite on his toes. I decided to stay and move camp further north to the base of Ship's Prow on Scott Island.

I spent a couple of days fixing my eyes on the walls around me, wondering where it would be possible to do new routes. I found a perfect line above camp on the north face, but it was still too cold for climbing in the shade. In the meantime, I discovered that the low temperatures were bearable for a couple of hours when the sun shone on the east face. My priority was to climb the north face, which is taller and steeper, but I would have had to wait a month for better conditions. Not wanting to waste any more time, I decided to pack my gear and start climbing on the east face.

My main goal was to climb without drilling. I wanted to keep a natural character to my routes. However, I had to drill six bat-hook holes but refrained from using any rivets or bolts. After 17 days on the east face, I established Mantra Mandala (VI A3+), naming it after a chapter in my soon-to-be published book.

I rested for a week, during which time I fixed the first few pitches on the lower section of the north face. The wind picked up and the climbing became more challenging. After committing to the wall for nine days, I finally topped out on May 1 and called my second route Secret of Silence (VI A4). I was proud of the fact that this route was completed without any drilling at all. On the last day of the climb, conditions became worse with lots of fresh snow and more strong winds, making the descent down the backside with the haul bags very tricky.

After seven weeks of being alone and cold, I was ready to go home to Poland. During my time in solitude, I had eight close interactions with polar bears. One stole a bag with a rope in it while I was sleeping, while another (maybe the same one) sniffed around my tent while I was inside. I will never forget that experience.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to my sponsors: Patagonia, Polish Alpine Association, CAN Offshore, MBC Ltd, Zamberlan, Atest and Monkey's Grip.

Summary

Mantra Mandala (VI A3+, 450m, 10 pitches), east face, Ship's Prow, Scott Island, Baffin Island. FA: Marek Raganowicz, March 23–April 8, 2017.

Secret of Silence (VI A4, 600m, 11 pitches), north face, Ship's Prow, Scott Island, Baffin Island. FA: Marek Raganowicz, April 16–May 1, 2017.

The north face of Ship's Prow: 1) Hinayama, 2) Secret of Silence. Photo: Marek Raganowicz

Youngest on Canada's Top

Naomi Prohaska

FLYING TO MOUNT LOGAN IN A yellow Helio Courier, the beast of the mountain was the most beautiful and the most intimidating thing I had ever seen. I was landing at the base of the tallest mountain in Canada, but I had only been mountaineering for two years. The feelings of nervousness and excitement tumbled around in my stomach until I couldn't tell them apart. Setting up base camp on the Quintino Sella Glacier, I was in disbelief. Having waited to be here since I was 13, I couldn't believe that I was standing at the literal base of my dream. In front of me would be the best and the hardest three weeks of my life. At 15 years old, I was by far the youngest member of the trip. Luckily, I was with my mountain-guide father, Rich Prohaska, as well as Holly Walker, Hana Boye and Magnus Byne.

Waking up and knowing that I would be breaking a personal record that day was the reality of most of my trip. Camp 1 on the King Trench was my highest camp ever and the second highest place I had ever been. It was so absurd to think about how I had decided to climb Logan after only one three-day ski-touring trip ever. Now, even at Camp 1, I had no idea how hard it would be. When we carried food and supplies up to Camp 2, I had a tough day. Reaching my then-highest point, I wrote in my journal that it "drained" me, but I wouldn't really know what being drained meant until summit day. At King Col (Camp 2), I was very worried about the rest of the climb; I knew it would be much harder than it had been so far, and I already felt very tired. It is insane how far you can push yourself mentally. I thought I was near my limit a third of the way through, but that didn't matter to me; I had to go until I couldn't go anymore. The day we moved to Camp 2, we talked to some skiers who were descending. They were a strong group of men, and they told us how hard it had been. That made me second guess myself again. If they had a hard time, how would I do?

The following day as I carried supplies up, I broke my elevation record again and ascended the steepest slope of the climb (apart from the summit ridge). Reaching Camp 3 was probably the best moment of my life at that point. I felt so very much farther up the mountain. The views around us were the best of my life; I was the highest I had ever been, physically and emotionally. Moving up to that camp was even better. I had minimal altitude effects and was feeling the best I ever had. I wish so much that I could have bottled up that feeling, or captured it in a photo, because I haven't felt the same since.

The days at Camp 3 were the coldest I had ever felt. After a rest day, we tried to do a carry to Camp 4, Prospector's Col (5,500 metres). It was snowing, windy and extremely hard to navigate, and we were all very cold. Even though we only climbed for a few hours, that was one of the worst days. The next morning, I awoke to a metre of new snow. It snowed all day, and I wanted to ski so bad. It was the middle of May and I was in the most snow I had seen in my life. It was bizarre to think about home, where it was 25 C, and how different our world was from that of my mom and sister. From then on, we knew there was a weather window coming, but it wasn't big, two to four days max. We decided to make a push for the summit.

The next day we climbed to our highest camp. Camp 4 was the windiest camp on the mountain, so we passed it at around 5 p.m. Passing over Prospector's Col is one of the things that makes Logan so dangerous, because if you get sick or injured on the other side, you need to hike back up to go down. It is very committing. That night we reached our camp at 8:30 p.m. and I was very tired. It had been our longest day yet. Going to sleep that night, we didn't know what we would do the next day.

Waking up at 5,200 metres—it was summit day. With leaving camp at 11:45 a.m., my dad thought that it would take eight hours to reach the top and return. In the Yukon, it doesn't get dark in May—the sun is up for 20 hours a day. Therefore, we didn't have a turn-around time; it was all about energy levels. We skinned up for two and a half hours then switched to crampons on our ski boots. Halfway up, I tried to eat a Clif Bar, but it is crazy how much the altitude diminishes your appetite. I think I ate only three bars on summit day, only 700 calories. From that point on, I had to try hard to keep focusing on the steps in front of me. I knew I was hours away from the summit and wished I could sprint to the top, but preserving energy is so important. Before I knew it, I was 20 metres below the summit. Being the most excited I have been in my life, I was minutes away from reaching my dream.

Standing on top of Canada was indescribable, but I will do my best to paint a picture of it. You are looking out at some of the highest mountains on the continent. The glaciers are hundreds of times bigger than the ones around Whistler, B.C. You can see thousands of nunataks piercing through the ice. You can see so far you think you must be able to see Vancouver. You are standing on the spot that you have been envisioning for two years. You have imagined yourself standing there thousands of times. How could a moment possibly meet the standards you have set, over all the times you have wondered about it? Somehow it is so much better than anything you've ever dreamed of. And then you are walking back down.

The descent on summit day were the hardest hours of my life. We had expected bad weather to come but not so soon. The wind ripped the heat from my skin and the snow tore through all of my layers. I was so tired I didn't think I could keep breathing. My body felt five times heavier than it had at the beginning the day. Every shaky breath that was forced out of my throat took warmth with it. I wasn't thinking about how sore my body was, how it felt like my lungs were frozen, or how far away the tents were. I was telling myself, *one more step.*

For the next two days, I was tent-bound at the 5,200-metre camp because of a storm. When the skies cleared and the winds slowed, I hauled my remaining food and gear up to Prospector's Col and back down to Camp 3. A day after that, as I sat in my tent at base camp, I could think straight. I had become the youngest person to climb Canada's tallest mountain. It had been the hardest thing I had ever done, and I was safe. All I had to tell the tale of that night was minor frostbite and thoughts that had been jumbled by lack of oxygen.

All those trips I had been on, all of the hours I had spent training, it was all for those 10 minutes on top. But really, the best part of it wasn't the summit; the best part of the trips wasn't that they gave me experience; the best part of the training wasn't that it made me stronger. The best part of it all was finding the thing that sets my soul on fire.

Naomi Prohaska skis from Camp 2 to Camp 3 on Mount Logan. Photo: Rich Prohaska

The West Coast

Welcome to the Wack

Tony McLane

AFTER MAKING FIVE TRIPS with four partners over two seasons, Dr. Jacob Cook and I finally completed the second ascent and first free ascent of Mount Slesse's east face, via a six-pitch variation to the original 1997 Easton-Edgar route. The first mission was an indirect line, traversing in from the top of the spur of the East Pillar into the upper half of the face. Familiarization would prove to be a strategic advantage for an eventual direct ascent in potential darkness.

My buddy Ian Strachan was keen for a look. We succeeded in completing two new free pitches branching off from the East Pillar route toward the East Face route. A barrage of rockfall and the ensuing nerves prompted retreat; however, the progress was hopeful.

A few weeks later, another friend, Paul Cordy, was game to see it go to the summit. We succeeded in establishing the East Face Indirect at 5.10d in a long day. [See *CAJ*, 2017, vol. 100, p. 88.] Paul followed almost the entire route after breaking holds and fingers in a committing position low on the route.

The next obvious move was a direct attempt. My friend Will Stanhope was interested. We climbed seven pitches, eventually turning back disheartened at the wetness, loose rock and difficulty.

Later that same summer, Jacob was fired up to join. He had seen the east face in the guidebook and figured it was just the challenge he needed. We made the now-familiar journey to the mountain, intent on establishing a new variation ending where Paul and I joined the upper route. Hauling a power drill and full bivy kit gave us plenty of opportunity for exploration. The thick forest-fire smoke provided us some respite from the hot morning sun. We spent the first night on spacious ledges from which, to our right, led into new terrain. After two dead ends, five bolts drilled and all the moves freed, our variation brought us within 30 metres of our goal. Having lacked a proper free ascent to this point made for an easy call to bail. The multi-day sacks only added to that decision.

With the path clear, the urgency to return for a single-push free ascent weighed heavily. The intricate factors of weather and schedules became an obsession. Luckily, a dry season was in our favour, so our chance came in early September.

Jacob's extensive background of sketchy British face climbs showed in his speedy confidence. We used double ropes in the traditional Euro way Jacob is accustomed to. The prior knowledge and bolts placed was instrumental in making the ascent in good time. Through the upper portion, I took the lead, simul-climbing through several pitches with minimal or no gear between us. We un-roped for the couple hundred feet of easy terrain, content that we'd make the descent in the daylight. We stopped briefly on the summit in a cloud of mosquitos to make a short summit-register note. Three hours of downclimbing and rappelling the southwest buttress saw us safely back at the propeller cairn.

Jacob Cook seconds pitch 14 on Welcome to the Wack. Photo: Tony McLane

Tony McLane runs it out on pitch five of Welcome to the Wack.
Photo: Jacob Cook

Summary
Welcome to the Wack (5.11d, 1000m, 26 pitches), east face, Mt. Slesse, Cascade Mountains. FA: Jacob Cook, Tony McLane, September 5, 2017.

P1: 5.9. Start next to the Northeast Buttress ramp and climb slab moves to reach ledges that traverse left. A #1 and #3 Camalot is needed for the anchor.

P2: 5.11a. Easy cracks lead to a grassy crack through a small overlap. Some thin gear protects the least probable-looking option (bolted anchor).

P3: 5.10b. Traverse far left up a left-facing corner then up and right along a ledge without much pro (bolt anchor).

P4: 5.11b. Climb the right-facing corner (clip a bolt then a fixed Bird Beak) to reach a roof and a right-leaning arch (bolt anchor).

P5: 5.10a. Undercling right to a left-facing corner then take ledges trending up and right to a gear anchor.

P6: 5.10a. Face climb up ledges toward a steep wall with a bolt and piton anchor.

P7: 5.11a. Face climb up and right on thin flakes past two protection bolts. Climb the left-facing corner to a steep finger-crack corner. Small cams are needed for the anchor.

P8: 5.11d. Climb up and clip a bolt then step down and reach left into a thin layback corner. Continue up pleasant cracks above to a gear anchor (#.75 and #4 Camalots).

P9: 5.9. Traverse left and up the loose corner to a long traverse left along the ledge to a gear anchor (#3 and #4 Camalots).

P10: 5.10b. Go up the short right-facing corner to the obvious right-facing off-width. Belay at the top of the tower using finger-sized cams for the anchor.

P11: 5.11c. Face climb up to the roof (bolt) then traverse left to a stance (another bolt). More loose face climbing leads to a leftwards traverse and a ledge with a bolted anchor. Seventy-metre ropes were used to establish the rappel line straight down from this belay.

P12: 5.10a. Traverse left towards a steep crack (possible fixed cam from original aid ascent). The anchor requires #.4 Camalots.

P13: 5.10b. Go up the loose left-facing corner, past one ledge to a second ledge. The anchor consists of one bolt without a hanger and a finger-sized cam.

P14: 5.10. Face climb up and right then boldly back left along loose sharp flakes. Enter the large left-facing corner, which features good rock and protection.

P15: 5.10. More good corner climbing then up and left to giant ledges.

P16-26: 5.8-5.10. Traverse left on the ledge towards a left-facing corner then wander up ledges and interspersed with face climbing towards the summit.

Welcome to the Wack on the east face of Mount Slesse.
Photo: Jacob Cook

Eighteen Days of Solitude

Fred Giroux

Max Fisher on pitch four of Melquiades on Mount Grenville. Photo: Fred Giroux

IN THE SPRING OF 2017, Max Fisher and I embarked on an expedition to the Coast Mountains of British Columbia. This trip was made possible by the John Lauchlan Award, which is given every year to a Canadian team willing to explore new areas and challenge themselves. We were lucky to be recipients.

We spent all winter ice climbing and skiing in preparation for our expedition, and when spring arrived, we were feeling psyched and ready. The trip started when we met up at Horseshoe Bay and travelled by ferry to Vancouver Island. All the food was purchased in Campbell River and packed at Strathcona Park Lodge. The following day we boarded the ferry to Quadra Island and made our way towards Discovery Island Lodge where we would charter a boat up Bute Inlet the next morning. Packing our backpacks that night provided us with the harsh realization that we would be carrying a heavy load. We had 18 days of food and all the necessary gear to ice climb, rock climb and ski. We eventually named our packs Soul Crusher and Suffer Sac. Fun times were bound to happen.

The morning boat ride went smoothly thanks to our great captains Albert and Kate from Coast Mountain Adventures. We made it to the head of Bute Inlet where lies Homathko Camp, an old logging camp owned by Chuck and Sheron Burchill. After a quick stretch to loosen up the limbs, we shouldered our backpacks and marched into the heart of the Coast Mountains. We walked for three days, following in the footsteps of past loggers, to finally reach the toe of the Bute Glacier. From here we skied over the Homathko Icefield for two days to our base camp situated near Mount Grenville and Peak 9332. Thanks to modern communication technology and our friend Bill who was forecasting for us, we were able to prepare our base camp for the incoming storm. During our two days tent-bound, we got news of a high-pressure system arriving. Climbing was finally going to be on the agenda.

On our first good weather day, we decided to attempt the west face of Mount Grenville. We made our way across the glacier and looked up at the face to see how the storm had affected the conditions of our potential objective. Thankfully, the storm hadn't dropped too much snow and our line looked to be in stellar condition. Max took the first

Melquiades on the west face of Mount Grenville. Photo: Fred Giroux

lead and brought us past the bergschrund and into a beautiful gully filled with névé. Above this, the ice looked sun affected, so we decided to bypass that section by climbing two beautiful pitches of granite mixed climbing. The rock eventually lead us back onto the ice, which we followed until it turned to snow. We simul-climbed the snow to the summit ridge. The beautiful skyline allowed us to stand on our first summit of the trip and granted us phenomenal views. Being conscious that we still had to get back to base camp, we quickly packed our things and made our way down the northeast face. The descent was uneventful as it was a giant snowfield that we could walk down, and before we knew it, we were back in camp enjoying hot drinks and food.

We knew that the following day would be nice weather, so we started packing for our next objective that evening. We were going to attempt the northeast face of Peak 9331, which had never been climbed before. The next morning the alarm went off at 4:30 a.m. After a quick cup of coffee, we made our way down to the bottom of the face, which was actually several hundred metres lower than our base camp in the adjacent cirque. Once below our intended route, it was apparent that we had to move fast to avoid the overhead exposure created by the morning sun. The ropes came out and we simul-climbed the lower 200 metres of snow to a relatively safe belay stance. One short pitch of AI3 led by Max and we were back to simul-climbing the remainder of the route. After a lot of snow climbing and one short rock step, we found ourselves on our second summit of the trip after just 2.5 hours of climbing. Although the route wasn't technically hard (we even joked that someone might ski it some day), it was a beautiful line and our main expedition objective was checked off the list. Getting down from the summit was a simple walk off the back side.

The day before we had spotted two people skiing on the icefield, and they happened to be

camped nearby. We figured we should go and introduce ourselves and see who our fellow explorers were. They were two friendly Americans doing a traverse of the Homathko Icefield then rafting down the Southgate River. We shared stories while sipping on some whiskey and dreamt about what other adventures we could do in this area. It was nice to meet people equally stoked.

Having climbed both of our main objectives, our thoughts drifted towards finding a fun ski line. We decided that the west face of Mount Grenville was the obvious choice for the next day. Since there was a good melt-freeze cycle, we would tackle the face in the afternoon to allow the sun to soften up the snow and provide good skiing. We made our way to the base of the west face and climbed up the slope, which was still frozen from the nighttime chill. We arrived at the top of our ski line much earlier than anticipated and the snow was still too firm for optimal skiing. Max and I discussed whether we should be patient and wait a few hours, or simply ski the northeastern glacier, which was our descent from two days before. Impatience won and we settled on skiing the north side. We put our skis on and followed our old tracks to the top of our new ski objective. The morning sun had softened up the snow, which provided fantastic turns down the glacier and all the way to our base camp.

Once at camp, we looked at our inReach and got news that there was another storm approaching and would likely be over us in a few days. We decided to leave our base camp the next morning and make our way back towards the Bute Glacier. Leaving so early assured us that we would have good weather to travel back across the Homathko Icefield and potentially offer us another climbing day before heading back to civilization. The travel back towards the Bute Glacier was much faster than when we came in—a full day faster to be exact. We set up camp and quickly discovered that the sun had melted a lot of our potential alpine climbing objectives. This was a non-issue since we were camped next to Galleon Peak, which had a beautiful dry, south-facing granite wall. Having spent most of our previous days slogging in snow and sporting big boots, the thought of wearing climbing shoes and climbing dry rock was really exciting.

We woke up and had our morning hot drinks while searching for a weakness in the endless sea of granite above us. There was no obvious continuous crack system that we could see, so we ended up traversing on a ledge system looking for something climbable. The ledge eventually ended, and we were able to climb mossy rock to a nearby snow patch. The snow lead us towards another rock buttress that looked promising. Max was the lucky one by winning rock-paper-scissors and got the first lead. He climbed up the initial steep part and solved the cruxy thin corner. The next pitch was more along the lines of runout face climbing and felt similar in terms of difficulty. After these two pitches, the angle eased off and we were able to scrambled to the last pitch that was guarding the summit. Some more runout granite climbing and finally we were topping out on our third peak of the trip. We did one rappel off the summit and found a different way down the mountain that was mostly downclimbing on steep snow. Our arrival back to camp was well timed with the beautiful sunset colours.

The next day found us packing our camp, leaving behind our snowy alpine paradise and entering the coastal temperate rainforest. Rain had started to fall and what had initially taken us three days to walk was completed in one long day. We arrived back at Homathko Camp feeling ecstatic about our trip. That feeling was amplified by Chuck and Sheron's incredible hospitality and lots of cookies. Because we still had four days to wait for a pick up, we had plenty of time to appreciate our surroundings, help out around the camp and rest our tired bodies. The boat ride back went smoothly. Maybe the beers that our friends Shane and Carrie had brought had something to do with it. After a couple of fine beverages, we were back at our vehicle where the whole trip had started 18 days prior.

Reflecting back on this experience, I find myself appreciating how lucky we were to have such a successful trip. We climbed our main objectives, skied a great line and stayed healthy and safe the whole time. There was a lot of time and energy put into this expedition, and we definitely couldn't have done it without all the help and support we received along the way. We are grateful to be a part of such a wonderful mountain community that values exploratory expeditions.

Acknowledgements

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Macondo on the south face of Galleon Peak. Photo: Fred Giroux

Summary

Melquiades (M4+ AI4, 350m), west face, Mt. Grenville, Homathko Glacier, Coast Mountains. FA: Max Fisher, Fred Giroux, May 25, 2017.

Remedios the Beauty (AI3, 600m), northeast face, Peak 9331. FA: Max Fisher, Fred Giroux, May 26, 2017.

Macondo (5.10 C1, 600m), south face, Galleon Peak. FA: Max Fisher, Fred Giroux, May 30, 2017.

Guide's Choice

Teresa Yau

Guide's Choice on the southeast shoulder of Mount Dione.
Photo: Klemen Mali

THE FIRST TIME THAT I HEARD about the Tantalus Range was from Klemen Mali in 2015. That summer, Klem and his friend Luc took me along for a helicopter ride as they were being dropped off to begin the Tantalus Traverse. Flying over the range was the first time I had a glimpse of how isolated and beautiful the area was. The jagged peaks that towered over the skyline was an image not easily forgotten.

The next summer, Klemen planned to go up to the Tantalus again, this time for alpine climbing. The plan was to fly up in August and have our base camp situated on the glacier near the southwest face of Dione. The team comprised of Klemen, Uschi Günzler and me.

We set off from the heliport as Darren, the pilot, took us up. Remembering the ride from the previous year, my stomach was grumbling with hunger for the upcoming adventure. The helicopter ride ended all too quickly, and we were alone on the glacier for the next three days.

As a mountain guide, Klemen frequented the Tantalus and had eyed up a line looker's left of the gully used to access Mount Dione. With years of route setting and a lifetime of experience, Klemen took the lead. He flawlessly chose a route, a line of least resistance through the face, and found a nice ledge to belay us up on. This was the first time that I have ever heard Klem sing. This was his happy place, the thing he loved the most.

The rock here was surprisingly solid. Each edge was holding with ease as I trusted my weight on it. As expected in the alpine, there was loose rock, but the face itself was amazing. Klem brought us to the top in two more enjoyable pitches.

My mind was swirling with questions and I blurted them out at the top. Klem just laughed and handed me his hammer and piton. Taking my first swings, Klemen explained that piton size and location were the first step, and then one must listen for an ascending tone with each strike. The hard part was actually taking the piton out, pounding it side to side to finally dislodge it. Thinking back when pitons were the standard rack, it was hard to fathom all the additional obstacles early pioneers had to overcome.

At the top of the climb, we had a spread of salami, cheese and bread. Never having been there before, Uschi and I scrambled to the top of Dione while Klem relaxed. Knowing him, he probably had a great alpine nap.

Le Petit Dione on the southeast shoulder of Mount Dione.
Photo: Klemen Mali

We descended via the gully to the right of the route, but in preparation, brought up a drill and bolts to put in new anchors for a safer rappel down, removing old worn-out tat and loose boulders along the way.

Before heading back to base camp, we detoured to look at a steep golden wall with multiple vertical cracks of varying sizes. I was immediately drawn to the rightmost crack, which looked to be hand size. It split the lower section of the wall. Klem quickly pointed out a line that he saw that went straight up past the hand crack to a large ledge then connected to the ridge above.

I looked at Klem, and blurted, "Can I have it?"

In truth, I so badly wanted to lead, to experience what he loved so much, to do something that I've never done before and possibly climb something that no one else has climbed before. I recalled numerous times that Klemen spoke of his mentor, Marko Prezelj, but what stuck with me the most were three words: steep, unexpected, unpredictable. At that moment, I found myself relating to those words, but instead of feeling nervous or scared or uncertain, I felt ready to embrace it for what it was—an experience.

I packed my bag before the sun went down, ready for next day's adventure. The approach to the climb was easy and gave me time to look at the route again. We arrived at the base and went through the usual routines and checks. As Uschi was putting me on belay, I could tell that she was excited for me. A deep breath in and out and my body started moving up the wall. I was entirely in the moment, moving without pause. The rock was cool, just entering the morning sun, and the crack was surprisingly clean. Every so often, I removed a loose bit and tossed it away from my belayer below, but even then, the quality of the climb was stellar. At the top of a low-angled ramp, I took a moment to look up at the crux. In addition to being steep, this was the only part of the climb that had lichen and dirt on the inside of the crack. Pulling through this, I felt pleased and climbed happily to the end of the crack, built a gear belay and secured myself.

I belayed Klemen up, and as he bolted the station and prepared for the next pitch, I brought up Uschi. High-fives were exchanged, and we quickly moved to the next task at hand. Looking at the rock, we had two options: follow the hand crack as it cut left and disappeared to an unknown face climb before reaching the big ledge, or leave the crack and climb a few metres on the face to access a right-facing crack to possible easier climbing above to the ledge. Looking to the right, it made sense to go that way being able to see the moves and knowing that it was within our ability to reach the crack above.

Klem set off from the belay, commenting on the aesthetics of the movement and positioning, and every so often, flashing a giddy smile at us until he was out of view. Stepping off the belay, with nothing but air below us, Uschi and I made our way up to the large ledge and Klem's belay. Looking up from the ledge, I saw a crack that undulated with the protruding rock and widened as it went. Glad to have brought a #4 Camalot, I took a moment to prepare myself for some possible layback and off-width climbing—the weakest of my crack techniques.

Leaving the security of the ledge, I set off for the unknown. As I got higher, I was surprised as face holds and solid protection presented themselves, and before I knew it, I was at the top of the crack and scrambling to connect with the ridge. I remember Uschi saying, "Looks like you're really enjoying this." Throughout the climb, everything just flowed easily and came together effortlessly. I was in a trance that I've never experienced before.

We climbed the rest of the ridge to the top, staying focused on our movement as the terrain became quite loose. Descending via our newly established anchors, we were back at camp celebrating the climb.

As usual, I got away sketching the topo of the route and reflecting on the climb. It took a while to process what just happened. No way! Did I just climb my first true onsight in the alpine and did we potentially put up a first free ascent from ground up? Unable to fathom my luck, I turned my attention to planning the last day. Klem saw a potential route that went up a face and described each section as my eyes traced an imaginary line on the rock gradually leading to the top.

The next day Klem fired up the first pitch, and without disappointment this pitch presented diverse climbing and interesting moves. I lead up the next pitch through a featured groove and belayed at a right-facing corner, but I could have easily gone up through the face to the left. Klem then took us up to the top in two more pitches, navigating easily around obstacles and exposed sections along the ridge. On the rappel down, we decided to name this climb Blue Jeans, White Shirt after Klemen.

That afternoon, we packed and waited for Darren. The helicopter picked us up and we were lifted into the air, looking at the rocks we had just climbed and watching as it quickly disappeared beneath us. Within minutes, we were back at the heliport. What a contrast being surrounded by machinery, people and noise after three days of isolated bliss. Looking back at the summer before, when I was first introduced to the Tantalus, my dreams of going there have come true. The unknowns and firsts of this adventure made it all the more rewarding, and learning and sharing this with good friends in the mountains made the trip. We drove home together while Klemen put on a CD from Lana Del Rey. The first four words of the song were "blue jeans, white shirt" and we all broke out in uncontrollable laughter.

Summary

Guide's Choice (5.7, 100m, 3 pitches), southeast shoulder, Mt. Dione, Tantalus Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Uschi Günzler, Klemen Mali, Teresa Yau. August 16, 2016.

Le Petit Dione (5.10+, 250m, 5 pitches), southeast shoulder, Mt. Dione, Tantalus Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Uschi Günzler, Klemen Mali, Teresa Yau. August 17, 2016.

Blue Jeans, White Shirt (5.8, 220m, 4 pitches), southeast shoulder, Mt. Dione, Tantalus Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Uschi Günzler, Klemen Mali, Teresa Yau. August 18, 2016.

Blue Jeans, White Shirt on the southeast shoulder of Mount Dione.
Photo: Klemen Mali

Jupiter Shift

Brette Harrington

Brette Harrington starts up the first pitch of Jupiter Shift. Photo: Marc-Andre Leclerc

IT WAS LATE FEBRUARY in southern British Columbia. The icy arctic winds had pushed out any remaining warmth from the January warm spell, leaving behind a bone-chilling cold that settled into the mountain valleys. As per our usual routine, Marc-Andre and I returned to the Mount Slesse cirque in the North Cascades to attempt some more of our winter climbing projects. This was my sixth visit to the mountain this winter, and for Marc, even more. Over the years, the Nesaquatch valley has become a home to us—one in which we have explored the ins and outs of, but even still, holds many mysteries. It holds beauty and quiet in its silence. Marc grew up in a nearby town and had some of his first alpine climbs in this area. At age 15, he had his first overnight epic on the Northwest Buttress—an experience that drove him back to the mountain countless times. Slesse became his training ground for alpinism, but one which was much bigger, larger and scarier than one would ever expect.

Marc-Andre first introduced me to the Nesaquatch River valley in 2014, when we simul-soloed the classic Northeast Buttress. At the top, he wrote in the summit register how he never thought he would be soloing this climb with his girlfriend, the climb that had taught him much about the challenges of alpinism. Together, we have established many lines, including mixed and rock routes, and even ski descents, in the area. He returned in the winter of 2015 and soloed the Northeast Buttress, claiming it as his most challenging solo climb to date. The big terrain and steep slopes make for excellent powder skiing, and then when the snow firms into a crust, the alpine climbing becomes very good. This is what brought us back time and time again, despite the long approach.

THIS TIME WE HIKED IN WITH the notion of attempting the East Pillar, a route Marc had been wanting to try for a long time. I looked at the forecast and imagined what it would be like shivering cold on a dark north face in the dead of winter for two days during an Arctic outflow. There was going to be a whole lot of suffering that I would have to endure. I knew that this mountain meant so much to him and that this was most likely the last opportunity to climb it that winter. He had dedicated the past two winters to living in southern B.C., waiting for the ice runnels to form. I would put in my suffer time for him.

The access road into the Nesaquatch valley was buried under a deep snowpack, so we parked the car at the Chilliwack Lake Road then began the long ski tour in. The valley had been entirely coated in a crisp white from the previous night's snowfall. The morning sky glistened with ice crystals and the air had a biting chill. As we skied up the road, the winds of the Arctic outflow blew through the spruce and fir trees, speckling the white ground with needles and branches. With each step, we sank to our knees in the deep powder, making trail-breaking an exhausting effort. I wore my thickest base layer, a hat and mitts, and yet I never broke a sweat. That's how cold it was.

We followed the long road through the forest to where it meets the river. We stopped there for a snack before crossing the river and making our way up the switchbacks to the memorial plaque (Slesse is a commemorative site for a 1956 plane crash). From there, we got our first view of Slesse and spotted our objective—a prominent strip of ice feeding down from a large cave high above on the East Pillar. The route looked to be in superb condition; however, the approach slopes at the base did not. There was no sign of avalanche debris at the base, meaning the slopes were still waiting to slide. This would make accessing the climb highly risky. We continued upward to reach our gear, which was stashed a few kilometres up the trail. When we reached the poor little fir tree that held our gear, it was nearly buried under snow, revealing only its crown. Marc dug down and pulled out our colourful duffle bags that held our tent, boots, crampons, ice tools, climbing gear, ropes, food and gas. We spent the next while stamping out a level platform to set our tent in the soft snow. The warm rays of the sun had long since left the valley, leaving behind the blue tinge of numbing cold. Despite all of our stomping around, I could feel my feet losing blood flow—an inevitable consequence of being a Californian with poor circulation. Once the tent was set up, I hurriedly climbed inside. I wished I had the flexibility to warm my feet on my own belly because my hands were like popsicles. Marc-Andre sat down across from me, and with his gentle smile said he would warm them up for me on his belly. He then stated that he wouldn't do this for any of his other partners, not even if they asked nicely. I laughed at the thought then I told him I felt very lucky.

Over hot meals we discussed strategy. The morning sun should hopefully cause the slopes to release, but we would wait it out to be sure. That night the temperatures dropped to –20 C. I slept in two sleeping bags and my 8,000-metre jacket and down pants, but despite everything, my feet still froze. It was a slow and painful process to get out of our bags the next morning because everything needed to be warmed up, including us.

A misty cloud pooled behind Slesse's sharp

summit as it found shelter from the strong north-easterly winds. The winds howled through from the notch between the first and second peaks. As the sun hit the upper wall, we watched small avalanches cascading down the east face. The face was active and the slope was unstable. We looked at each other and in mutual agreement decided this was not the right time to try the East Pillar. This was the right day to go powder skiing.

We clicked into our skis and dashed down fluffy powder fields below camp. The snow was light, creamy and very deep. I followed Marc-Andre, bouncing off drops and diving between trees. When I reached him, about 1,000 metres below at the basin, he was beaming from ear to ear. Marc-Andre had a quiet contentment about him, a peaceful energy that emanates from somewhere deep, deep within. He was able to see the full picture, absorb what was around him and appreciate everything at once. He and I had come to know this mountain so well. We had discovered its secrets, and could simply enjoy them. As we toured back up to camp, we stopped for a moment to admire the valley below. Completely covered in snow, it looked like something out of a dream. We agreed that this was the most unique and most beautiful view we had seen yet of the Nesaquatch valley—a reminder of why we go into the mountains.

Turning my view back towards the ski track, I noticed that Station-D peak was perfectly framed between the trees of the old logging road. Hiding from view was a beautiful and mysterious line we had referred to as "The Andromeda Strain Line" (due of its resemblance to the classic Rockies route.) Marc-Andre had sent me a photo of this line a year previous, after he had spotted it from a perched vantage from Slesse.

"Marc, what do you think about trying The Andromeda Strain Line?"

"Well, it depends on the condition of the slopes below, but yeah, for sure that could be a good idea," he replied.

It was settled. We would go for that the next day.

The morning sun rolled slowly over the mountain peaks and warmed the frost from our tent walls. We prepared the usual breakfast of maple and brown sugar oatmeal with a handful of dried fruit, and then began the ski up to the base of the mountain. Our packs were gigantic. I cringed under the weight. My shadow was cast into the snow, looking more like a Sherpa than a fast and light alpinist.

Marc's voice called up, "These bags are stupidly heavy! With this load, we're preparing for an overnight epic. Let's ditch half the gear and make do with what's reasonable."

I agreed, so we ended up leaving behind one double rope, the tag line, a handful of pitons and some cams. This meant we would be committed to reaching the top and walking off the opposite side of the mountain then traversing to a steep gully to make a single rappel or two.

We continued the hike to the base of the climb where we dug out a small stance on a snow arête to rack up and stash our skis. At this point, I had noticed an exceptional pain coming from my frozen feet. They would get frostbite if I carried on without tending to them. I looked at Marc-Andre, his expression calm and patient.

"No worries Lil' B. Let's warm them up."

After about a half hour with my feet warming under Marc's jacket, we finally began up the steep snow one at a time, mindful of the avalanche potential. Reaching the choke of the couloir, we built a belay to start the technical climbing. We looked up into the funnel of the mountain. The line looked superb: compressed snow gullies leading into steep rock chimneys and a roof exit to where we could not see above. It was difficult to tell how long and how hard the climbing would be. After one more feet-warming session, I racked the gear onto my harness then started up the squeaky névé. I stopped about 20 metres up to pound in a knifeblade piton into a thin seam in the otherwise compact granite. I tied it off short with a sling then continued up the pitch. Soon I found another knifeblade seam, but again I had to tie it off. This reminded me of a climb Marc-Andre and I did the previous year. The north face of Lady Peak had very minimal gear opportunities, which were marginal at best, for the entire route. I hoped this would not be the case today.

I reached a ledge at the rope's full 60-metre length where I found a perfect belay stance, and to my luck, found two bomber #1 Camalots for an anchor. Marc cruised up to me so fast and causal that he wouldn't have needed the belay. Nonetheless, we were both having fun, stoked to be out there together. We had already discussed that I would lead the entire route because it was my winter project line and Marc-Andre was stoked to support me and get rope-gunned up the route.

The second pitch started out with better protection, but the climbing was a bit more challenging. This pitch consisted of sustained mixed climbing in a chimney. I arrived below an overhang and couldn't think of how to possibly climb it. I contemplated my next move: left looks hard, right looks hard, straight up looks hard.

"I don't know how to get through this overhang!" I called down.

Marc answered, "What do you mean? You know how to climb overhanging rock!"

I laughed. Of course I know how to climb overhanging rock, but this rock was buried under a wave of overhanging snow and a thin veneer of ice. I began inching my way up one move at a time, uncertain of where it would take me. I stemmed as wide as I could—my right crampon points on the *verglas* face, my left crampon on the lip of the roof smeared onto a slab. I dug through the offending snow bulge to the boulder above. With the snow gone, I reached my tool around the block and, to my surprise, found the most amazing hook. A hold crafted perfectly for my pick. I matched both hands on my tool then proceeded to layback up the corner with my tools. The climbing continued in an engaging and sustained nature until I reached the roof where I built another belay with a nest of micro cams, wires and pitons.

I watched as Marc-Andre blissfully climbed the pitch, tip-toeing his frontpoints between small edges and ice blobs, delicately tapping his tools into the veneer of ice. When he reached me, he was cold. He had been shivering at the lower belay.

"Soul-shatteringly cold," he said.

Brette Harrington on pitch three of Jupiter Shift.
Photo: Marc-Andre Leclerc

Pitch three was the crux roof traverse that began with some deep snow digging. I squeezed my knees into my chest, making my body as small as possible to fit into the chasm under the roof, pressing my hands in opposition against the blocky features for support. Carefully, I stepped my frontpoint rightward on micro edges until there were no more edges but sheer slab. Once again, I ran into a crux where I didn't know what to do.

Marc called up to me again, "Try a Stein Pull in that block!"

What, I thought to myself, *which block*? He was confusing me.

"Flip your tool over and crank down on the handle!"

"Ah, Marc, that's so sketchy!"

But alas, that was my only option. I carefully pressed the frontpoint of my right crampon into the slab, doubtful that it would hold, and pulled down on my inverted tool. Then, being sure not to move my lower body, I reached my right tool far around the corner and miraculously found a blind hook. That was the end of the physical crux, but next came the psychological crux.

I stood up into a precarious stemmed position in a corner. The corner was very thin without any obvious holds. One move at a time, I progressed up the delicate corner on questionable holds the entire time. The ice was too thin and breakable to hold my weight, but the small amount of dirt that had accumulated in the corner was just enough. I'm sure I could have pounded in a knifeblade or Bird Beak at this point, but the climbing was too demanding to take my hands off my tools. Nonetheless, I reached the snow gully above and with a breath of relief continued up to the end of the rope. Everything was covered in a thick layer of rime, so it took me a long while before I found a semi-decent belay. As Marc-Andre climbed up, the sun was setting behind Slesse, sending a cast of colours into the sky, illuminating the ridge lines in a blue and yellow contrast.

He met me at the belay and we simul-climbed together to reach the summit just as the light was fading. We high-fived but did not take a summit photo, which I later regretted. I wish I could have captured the energy during that moment in a photo or video. But I know that even through a photo, it is only the person who lived the experienced who can appreciate it. It's the feeling of camaraderie, a partnership, where each person is working towards the betterment of the whole, no longer an individual but a pair.

It was very cold on top, so we hurriedly packed up the rope and hiked down the western slope to reach a notch. We made two rappels off pitons to enter into a steep couloir, and then we downclimbed back to our skis. It was a dark and starry night as we skied down to camp over the snowy mounds of glaciated granite with the light of our headlamps illuminating the way.

Reflecting back on the climb, we are aware that this climb was not particularly groundbreaking or life changing. It was neither the biggest nor proudest line we have established together, but this was a climb where we were synchronized. We listened to the environment and made choices based on what we were told and based on each other. It is in these moments of simplicity that we find peace and contentment.

We never know when will be the last time we get to climb with someone. We will never know when the last time is that we will share such a beautiful moment together. It is important to be present and appreciate what you have while you have it, because nothing lasts forever. I hold the simplicity of this adventure close to my heart for it was not about the climbing but about the experience. Skiing out with heavy packs on our backs, the familiar pattern of life kicked into the subconscious and led us to where we needed to go.

Summary

Jupiter Shift (M5+, 200m), north face, Station-D Peak, Slesse Mountain, Cascade Mountains. FA: Brette Harrington, Marc-Andre Leclerc, February 20, 2018.

Shoulders of Giants

Chris Trull

LOOKING THROUGH THE *Squamish Big Walls* guidebook (Maddaloni, 2013), Jon Rigg and I were drawn to an unfinished route up the Grand Wall, first explored by Andrew Boyd and Ken Sharpe circa 2002. The route starts just right of Moving to Montana and briefly climbs up to Perry Beckham and Dave Lane's Zorro's Last Ride before shooting horizontally right across an immaculate seam and finishing two pitches shy of Bellygood Ledge. We were psyched!

After getting the "giv'er boys" from Boyd to continue this aid project, we decided to lay siege—Squamish style—on this route and finish it up to Bellygood. Right from the get-go, we came across sustained difficulties. Quality aid climbing up seams that involved tipped-out Peckers, equalized heads and dubious hooks brought us onto Zorro's for a quick respite. Leaving Zorro's, we encountered the first serious pitch of very difficult aid—a horizontal sealed-shut seam. Tipped-out #1 Peckers and heads for days. This pitch was mind-bending and only just goes without holes—an aid connoisseur's delight! Next up was Jon's pitch up the clean wall above. A combination of very difficult aid with free-climbing moves interspersed with a crazy mantel on top of a hook got Jon to the final Boyd/Sharpe anchor, completing the second ascent of the old aid project and leaving us with two virgin pitches above.

The penultimate pitch entered an area of loose rock beneath a roof that I found terrifying. After trying to gain a feature for a while but unable to get any of my hooks to work, I tagged up "Big Rigg" Jon to find a way through the ever-moving matrix. Jon summoned the courage and gracefully found a way until the features ran out and he had to drill a bolt. Jon tagged me back in to deal with the final crux hook move that led to sinker beaks above. The final pitch was no gimme and included more thought-provoking nailing and brought us to Bellygood and celebratory beers.

We named the route Shoulders of Giants after the famous Sir Isaac Newton quote, because we felt that we were stepping off the shoulders of Boyd/Sharpe and Beckham/Lane to complete this route. A tribute to the skill and boldness of the previous generations of Squamish wall crawlers that explored this realm of the Chief before us. The route is very difficult, sustained and ultra classic. One of the finest and hardest wall routes in Squamish that requires nailing wizardry, heading mastery and shenanigan ingenuity—all with the impeccable stone and position found on the Grand Wall. We decided to not grade individual pitches to further preserve the adventure for future parties.

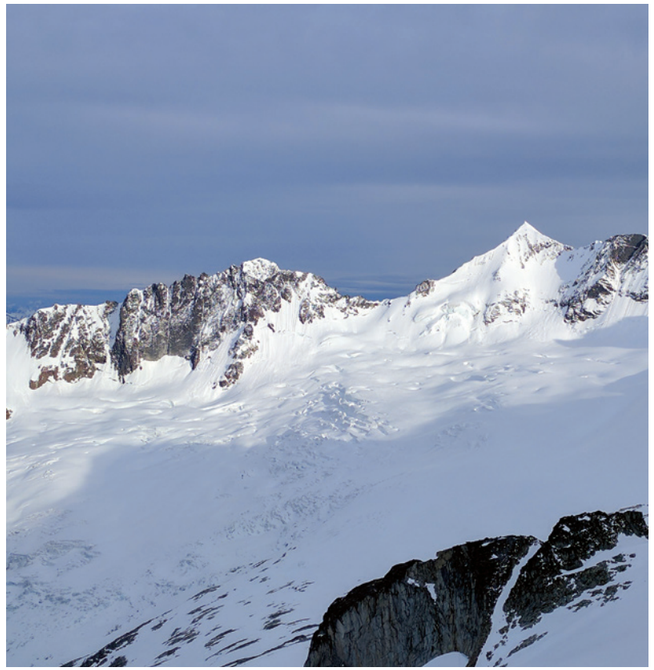
Summary

Shoulders of Giants (V A4+ 5.10, 9 pitches), First Complete Ascent: Jon Rigg, Chris Trull, August 26, 2017.

Jon Rigg on pitch eight of Shoulders of Giants. Photo: Tom Archdekin

Mount Priestley

John Gill



The east ridge of Mount Priestly ascends the lefthand ridge. Photo: John Gill

DREW AND I HAD THE CRAZY idea to try and climb a mountain that had never been climbed before in Canada. Initially, I thought that there wouldn't be any. Surely, all the ones worth climbing had been climbed.

We discovered a list containing 20 unclimbed mountains with a high prominence. We started plotting them on a map and ruled out any that were too remote or too far away. We eventually narrowed it down to Mount Priestley in northern B.C. We started searching for anything we could find about this mountain but found nothing helpful. Drew managed to get in touch with a pilot who had taken some photos and revealed a bit more about the area.

Mount Priestley sits in the Nass Valley, north of Terrace. It's the home of the Nisga'a Nation and was the site of a volcanic eruption back in the 1700s. We got in touch with a local guide who ran tours of the volcanic site to ensure that climbing Priestley wouldn't involve trespassing any prohibited land. He said our planned route would be OK and that he hadn't heard of previous attempts on the mountain. All good news!

Next, we had to find a third person for our team. Drew put the word out, and our friend Jordan replied to the call, so we were set to go. We planned to leave on June 16 and drive the 1,500-plus kilometres from Vancouver. We made good time and got there early afternoon the next day. We spent the evening planning food and sorting gear for a five-day trip.

The next morning we got up early to start an epic bushwhack. By late afternoon, we emerged from the forest into an open alpine area, which we labelled the "bald shoulder." We had been plagued by mosquitoes all the way up the bushwhack and were hoping they would go away when we got to the alpine. Sadly, they only got worse.

From the bald shoulder, we ascended a scree slope to the north to gain a high ridge, which we hoped would be non-technical and reveal the way to the Priestley massif. We were in luck. The ridge was great and dropped us onto a small glacier that we then followed to a rocky notch. From this vantage point, we got our first (and last) proper views of Mount Priestley.

Priestley looked a lot further away and a lot bigger than I had anticipated. I must admit, my initial thought was "Well, that's it, we can't climb this thing, let's go down." After some discussion and more time to come to terms with the scale of the area, our spirits improved and we downclimbed to the glacier to make camp.

That night, the rain and the wind picked up and battered the tent. We all had a restless night. Drew poked his head out of the door the next morning and shook his head. Poor visibility and bad weather meant a summit attempt wasn't going to happen that day.

We managed to keep ourselves busy with poker, whiskey, devising more climbing plans and going a little insane. That night the temperature dropped further and the rain turned to snow. We spent the night holding the walls of the tent up to stop it from collapsing in the wind.

The third day dawned terrible again and we expected to spend another day in the tent. But by midday, the skies cleared a bit and we decided this was our shot. Due to the long daylight hours at that latitude, we still had enough time to climb, even starting that late.

We geared up and started across the glacier. Although there were some pretty large crevasses, the route across was pretty straightforward. Soon the cloud descended again and the snow started to fall. By this point, we had reached the base of the route and hoped to be able to ascend by memory of the previous day's images.

The first section consisted of a steep snow slope that traversed under a rocky buttress, which we nicknamed Moonraker. An error in communication meant we took a wrong turn and ended up on the wrong side of the rock. Drew attempted to climb around it, but it looked too dangerous, so he rappelled back down to us. We descended to the point where we had gone off route and continued up the right way. This involved navigating around some hidden crevasses and under a big cornice to gain the east ridge.

We weren't sure what to expect once we gained this ridge, as we had not been able to get a good look at it from base camp. Fortunately, the ridge was wider than we expected and exposed rock on one side meant we didn't have to worry about cornices. We were enjoying the ridge so much that before we knew it we were on the summit.

Sadly, we never got a view. We were stuck in a swirling ping-pong ball of blasting wind and snow. The only way we even knew we were on the summit was being able to see the west ridge dropping into the void below. We took a few minutes to celebrate and take photos with Steven, our mascot stuffed horse, who we ended up naming the route after. It was quite a surreal feeling, knowing that no one else had likely ever been there.

The following morning's weather was horrible again, so we were happy that we'd pushed for the summit the day before. We packed up camp in freezing fog and snow then hiked back up to the rocky notch, now an icy mixed climb. Drew stepped up again to lead this pitch and, considering the conditions, managed to find decent protection.

The easy glacier, which we had run up a few days prior, was now a sea of white. We stumbled around in the whiteout and got lost several times trying to get back on the ridge. After a few wrong turns and backtracks, we spotted some of our old tracks and followed them to safety.

The rest of the descent was fairly uneventful, and we managed to stumble our way back along the ridge, down through the alpine area and bushwhack (with a bit of uncertainty) back to the forest service road where we had a spot of luck. Some forestry workers were clearing a landslide and one of them offered to give us a ride down. The ride in the dune buggy was a hoot, but Drew accidentally gassed himself with bear spray.

Back at the car, we couldn't quite believe that we'd done it and returned (mostly) unscathed. The climb had been fantastic, and although there were some difficult moments, we all really enjoyed the trip.

I think that the amount of research and planning helped us to bag this peak on the first attempt, even in poor weather and unfavourable conditions. The route was not technically difficult, but the remoteness made the hazards and the possibility of getting lost very real.

The big draw of this trip for me was not so much to climb a mountain that no one had ever climbed but to experience true exploration. With no trip reports, photos or really any information at all, we had to entirely rely on our own skills. We were utterly cut off (other than the satellite phone), and it felt truly wild.

Summary

The Steven (AD-, 550m), east ridge, Mt. Priestley (2359m), Nass Valley, Coast Mountains. FA: Drew Copeland, Jordan Craven, John Gill, June 20, 2017.

Ledge Mountain

Brette Harrington

Marc-Andre Leclerc on pitch three on the north face of Ledge Mountain. Photo: Brette Harrington

It was mid-December 2017 and winter alpine climbing was just coming into condition in southwestern British Columbia. My partner, Marc-Andre, was tipped off about a climb on the north face of Ledge Mountain that had not yet seen a winter ascent after Drew Brayshaw made a post about it online. The summer route was established in 1969 by George Walter and Ed Zenger at around 5.8 or 5.9. Marc-Andre recalled having seen this line, while climbing the neighbouring Sky Pilot Mountain in 2013 and was intrigued. A striking funnel dropped directly through the steepest part of the mountain filled with snow, ice and névé. This would hopefully make for an interesting winter climb. Ledge Mountain, along with Sky Pilot and Mount Habrich, sits high above a lofted valley overlooking the Howe Sound and the town of Squamish.

Our first attempt on the climb was unsuccessful. The early winter snow conditions were visibly bleak. I ended up spending the vast majority of the day belaying Marc-Andre on the first pitch while he negotiated an unprotectable and committing move over an unconsolidated snow bulge. Eventually, he found some unusual gear: a DMM Bulldog smashed into dirt between loose rocks and a Black Diamond Bird Beak smashed into compact snow. He managed to complete the pitch, but given the lack of daylight, we ended up bailing after climbing one more pitch.

Our January schedule was packed full of mixed climbing, ice climbing and skiing in the North Cascades and the Canadian Rockies. It wasn't until February that we found time to return to the north face of Ledge. By that time in the season, we felt well-conditioned on our tools and well-prepared for the challenges to come.

We packed a double rack of cams, a handful of pins, ice hooks, nuts, a single 60-metre rope, a 60-metre tag line and two ice screws, and then started up from our friend's house in Squamish at 4 a.m. We drove up the service road behind the Sea to Sky Gondola, ski toured into the mountains and arrived at the base by 11 a.m. To our benefit, the first pitch had entirely filled in with snow, making for a fun and easy snow climb with a short rock crux. Marc-Andre then began up pitch two, which was the crux of the entire climb—a blocky chimney system leading to a sloping slab to gain a stance. Here the wall steepened to 90 degrees and the difficulty kicked up. The sheer wall had just enough cracks to torque the tips of ice picks into, but the feet were nonexistent. With a series of no-feet lock-off moves to start, the climbing was relentless and continuous for about 15 metres. It was luckily well-protected with fixed pitons from the first ascent party. The face was encrusted in a layer of sn'ice, which had to be cleaned off, thus making the climbing both tedious and strenuous. Marc-Andre climbed the pitch with delicacy, and then belayed me up to the anchor.

The following four or so pitches followed a chimney system filled with squeaky névé but still required a lot of cleaning of loose snow. Many moves were made on very suspect snow placements that did not hold the tools well, and care was taken to equalize our bodyweight to avoid a fall.

Around 5 p.m. the sun had set and the winds picked up as we continued onto the upper snow pitches. The crux of the upper pitches was finding belay anchors under all of the snow. As we moved higher up the mountain, the winds became stronger. We weaved around on snow slopes and through rocky outcroppings. The climbing felt exposed with the harsh wind in the dark of night. A low fog rolled into the valleys, allowing only the mountain peaks to poke up into the night sky. We marvelled at the beauty of the environment—this cold and quiet realm perched over a sea of cloud.

The summit arrived almost too suddenly. It was 11 p.m. and we were at the top. This was the first time we had summited a mountain in the dark together in winter, a stepping stone in our climbing together. We snapped a quick photo, exchanged a few words of excitement and laughter, and began the descent.

We made a series of rappels off of rimed-up trees to get us into the north-face couloir, and then downclimbed and made one final rappel over a cliff to arrive back at the snow slope. We sat in a snow cave for about half an hour, boiling water for hot apple cider and relaxing. It was 1 a.m. and we still had a long descent ahead of us. The ski out was very enjoyable, and we chatted about the climb the entire time. We arrived back at our friend's house at 4 a.m. for a true 24-hour push house to house.

The north face of Ledge Mountain. Photo: Brette Harrington

Summary

North Face (M7+, 85, 500m), Ledge Mountain, Sky Pilot Group, Coast Mountains. FWA: Brette Harrington, Marc-Andre Leclerc, February 10, 2018.

Northern Lights

Hunter Lee

FEELING MENTALLY and physically haggard, I was legitimately concerned about our descent off Mount Harmston. My headlamp had died on the summit; the bitterly cold temperatures had nuked the battery that its fancy circuitry runs off of—just what you want when descending in the dark. We were two rappels down a dark gully when Malcom arrived, only to tell us that his headlamp powered off as well. All I could do was smile and laugh. Forced to go down without a headlamp definitely spiced the program up a notch or two for me. No one said anything but there was a realization that one wrong turn, or a mistaken rap line, could turn our night into a full-blown epic. It's not very often that I'm worried about frostbite on the Island, but the situation we were dealing with did leave a disconcerted feeling radiating within me.

AFTER IMPATIENTLY WAITING through fall 2017 for the winter climbing season to show up on Vancouver Island, Ryan Van Horne, Malcom Nicol and I were delighted to see a climbing-friendly forecast just as winter officially set in. After the usual "what are we gonna climb" conversations, we set our sights on the unclimbed northeast face of Mount Harmston. Rising 700 metres above the beautiful Milla Lake, the face caught my eye almost a decade ago. As with other mountains within this region of Strathcona Park, access has always been an issue for Harmston. Fortunately, pressure has been mounting on logging companies that own large amounts of the Island to open their gates and give recreational users access to the vast network of back roads that link Island communities and provide ideal access to Strathcona Park. The social and political pressure worked in our favour and the stars aligned as we drove past an open gate and proceeded down Comox Lake to the Cruikshank Mainline, eventually parking within a 30-minute walk of Strathcona Park.

With a big route ahead of us and some trepidation being felt, we set up camp on the Iceberg Peak /Comox Glacier col and tucked in for a cold sleep. The alarms rang and we geared up in the dark. Our spirits were high—optimism marked with nervous anticipation, as our climbing objective was ambitious. Unfortunately, our stove of choice for the trip didn't pull its weight that morning. Our Jetboil melted water at a snail's pace. That was our first winter trip of the year, so sometimes lessons from previous years fade away until you're cursing at a canister stove for its poor cold-weather performance (again). Ryan and Malcom opted to skip their hot breakfast and patiently waited for me to boil some water and hastily eat half-cooked oatmeal. As discussed, we packed the stove along for the climb, though its dreadful performance meant we would burn a lot of time should we need water again.

The clear skies that we enjoyed the previous night had been replaced with dense fog above Milla Lake. As we crossed the frozen lake, the start of the route presented itself. Once geared up and anchored at the first belay, all the nervous energy faded away. With a section of vertical ice looming above us, I racked up and set off.

Malcom Nicol on pitch three of Northern Lights. Photo: Hunter Lee

Northern Lights on the northeast face of Mount Harmston. Photo: Hunter Lee

The first pitch was a good warm-up for the day, an easy WI2 pitch with solid ice. A rope length up, we set up shop and I precariously set off to climb the WI3+ curtain we viewed from our camp. We swapped leads from then on as we wound our way up steep terrain that mixed ice, rock, snow and trees together. After seven pitches of climbing, we were stoked to find ourselves looking up the upper snowfield with a clear shot to the summit ridge. As we plodded up the snowfield, the magnitude of the climb reared its face and our progress slowed. The rope stretched 60 metres below me as we simul-climbed our way up. Fortunately for us, the deep snow was well-consolidated.

With light all but gone at the top of the snowfield, we were greeted with a short near-vertical section of snow and ice that had a cornice hanging over it. After a few delicate moves, I found a stemming position and began to body-saw through the overhang of snow. I'm usually a silent climber. The internal dialogue is boisterous enough, and I don't talk out loud through situations as some do, but the cornice forced a handful of colourful adjectives to reverberate aggressively outwards. Fortunately, the profanity-laden, body-saw technique worked, and we found a wind-protected flat bench 10 metres past the cornice. With solitude from the wind, we stopped, ate and drank what little water we had. Ideally, we would have brewed up as well, but the thought of waiting for the Jetboil to work its magic was as enticing as spending the night out on the hill.

Feeling rejuvenated and ready to find the summit, Ryan took the rack from me. After a

couple of rope lengths of simul-climbing, he found a nice belay spot, anchored off and brought me and Malcom up. Now fully dark and above 2,000 metres, our line of sight extended well beyond Vancouver Island. The mainland mountains of Cypress, Grouse and Seymour were visible to the east and the Island's largest ski resort, Mount Washington, dominated the northern view. With temperatures still dropping, our remote location and environment added an element of survival to the climb. Fortunately, the summit was an easy stroll from Ryan's belay. We were elated to stand atop Mount Harmston for its second recorded winter ascent.

The day's events were now cementing their effects on us, both mentally and physically. Even though I had climbed the mountain in summer via the standard route, I was nervous about taking one of the wrong gullies down. With our phones beeping as we reached cell reception near the summit, I gave two of the Island's mountaineering historians and authors a call, hoping they could shed some light on our desired descent path. Unfortunately, both Phil Stone and Lindsay Elms were out (though Lindsay later told me that he was elated to hear the message when he got home). On our own, we checked the guidebook recommendations once again and started our descent. That is when my headlamp died. Luckily, I had the foresight to pack a charger, so I plugged in my headlamp and stuck it in my pack, hoping it would take a charge.

With a general direction in mind, we downclimbed as far as we felt safe to do so. If we all had working headlamps, we possibly would have downclimbed our gully of choice. But the thought of rock, ice or snow falling on us, compounded with my lack of illumination issue, tipped the scale of reason and we opted to rappel. The first two rappels went smoothly. Our system was working; I would rappel second with Ryan below and Malcolm above assisting me as much as possible with their functioning lights. Still feeling a degree of uncertainty regarding our rappel trajectory, another memorable moment occurred. Upon reaching the third rappel station, we learned that Malcom's headlamp had also died.

Here we were high up on one of the Island's biggest peaks, in a remote location and a dark environment with freezing temperatures, and now operating with one working headlamp between the three of us. After a quick laugh and comment about what else could go wrong, a feeling of desperation struck. Frantic for options, I pulled the previously dead headlamp out, unplugged the charger and reconnected the battery. We were happy to see it work again after 70 minutes of charging. Malcom, who has obviously watched more MacGyver episodes than I have, immediately pulled out some duct tape and turned his phone's flashlight app on. With his phone now taped onto his chest, our previously dire situation suddenly seemed somewhat normal.

One more rappel down and we found ourselves in walkable terrain once again. Still concerned about missing the easy walk-off to the col between Mount Argus and Mount Harmston, we pulled out our GPS and traversed a couple of hundred metres to casually walk down to the Argus/Harmston col.

On the move for 16.5 hours, we stumbled back into camp completely haggard and ready to crash out. One litre of water for the climb had left my body so dehydrated that I felt as though I was constantly on the verge of throwing up but too dehydrated to do so. After a quick brew of water, we all tucked into piles of down for another cold sleep.

The route presented just the right amount of spice. We each had some funky climbing to deal with, but at no point were we in over our heads. The trip allowed us to visit a beautiful part of Strathcona Park that has a few more gems waiting to be climbed in winter. After sleeping in, we made our way down the Kwieshen valley. The trip must not have beaten us up too much, because all we could do was talk about what route we'd climb the next time.

Summary

Northern Lights (WI 3+ M3, D+/TD-, 700m), northeast face, Mt. Harmston, Vancouver Island Ranges. FA: Hunter Lee, Malcom Nicol, Ryan Van Horne. December 22, 2017.

Life on Mars

Jason Ammerlaan

ON FEBRUARY 1, ALISTAIR DAVIS and I climbed a new winter route on the south face of Mount Habrich. I had been watching the conditions on the face come close for a few weeks. We had been experiencing some cold weather in Squamish, but most periods of cold were quickly followed by warm Pineapple Expresses, which wreaked havoc on the low-lying ice.

Near the end of January, Kris Wild posted a tantalizing photo on the West Coast Ice Facebook group that showed potential for protectable ice on the south face of Mount Habrich. However, it was questionable if it was going to last through the next wave of weather that was rolling in. Habrich sits just shy of 1,800 metres in elevation, and the solar exposure does not lend itself to long-lasting ice. It was a classic conundrum: warm weather mixed with winter climbing. What will the ice be like, which may have never been any good in the first place, after 50 centimetres of snow followed by 2,000-metre freezing levels?

All one can do is try. Alistair and I rode the gondola up for a casual 10 a.m. start. It was another *Squamonix* day. We had a group of splitboarders start down just ahead of us, and then while I threw my skins on, another couple of skiers swung by, and as we trotted along the road, two *randonee* skiers gracefully sped by us. No other ice climbers that day though. The creeks beside the road were flowing freely, and while we sweated up the road in our T-shirts, we contemplated the idea of a south-facing ice climb.

The approach up to the climb was as simple as could be. The 50 centimetres of snow and warm temperatures had caused a sizeable wet avalanche down the main gully a day or two before, and we were able to move quickly frontpointing up the impenetrable debris. When we arrived at the base of the climb, the forecasted cold front had started to move in and we were gifted with a cold wind and some flurries, which kept the face from seeing any sunshine.

The ice line was in Styrofoam condition with a few bits of steeper blue ice. Three rope stretches of WI3 climbing brought us to the big ledge below the summit where the rock climb Life on Earth tops out. Shortly after, we were standing on the summit in a thick blanket of white, but we both felt somewhat underwhelmed in the effort it had taken to climb the route. We had armed ourselves for the climb with stubbies, Spectres, pitons and headlamps, imagining we would find some more challenging climbing. Looking back on the day, it is obvious that the challenge was not about pulling steep moves or unprotectable moves, but instead it was the classic combination of scoring the right partner, getting lucky with conditions and having the motivation to go exploring.

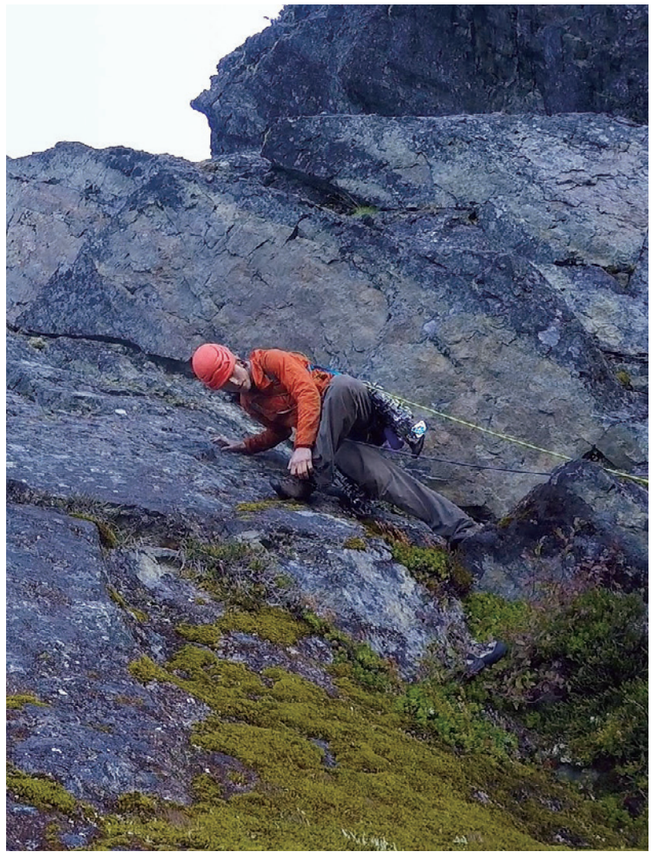
Life on Mars on the south face of Mount Habrich. Photo: Jason Ammerlaan

Summary

Life on Mars (WI3, 180m), south face, Mt. Habrich, Squamish, Coast Mountains. FA: Jason Ammerlaan, Alistair Davis, April 1, 2018.

Pilsners and Pop-Tarts

Gary McQuaid



Tim Russel starts up Pilsners and Pop-Tarts. Photo: Gary McQuaid

KNOCK, KNOCK, KNOCK! I was pulled out of a deep sleep to see a disgruntled man in his mid-50s peering at me through the box-cap window of my Ford Ranger. I sat up trying to get my bearings. My watch read 4 a.m.

"What's going on?" I asked myself.

I pulled out of my sleeping bag and crawled out the truck box to stand face to face with the foreman of a logging crew that was getting ready to start work.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

I told him I was camping to get an early start on a peak situated a kilometre beyond the cut-block uphill from us.

"We're logging up there!" he stated with exasperation.

I jumped in my truck and drove up valley to seek other adventures. That was my first attempt at the 300-metre tower of rock situated in the Howson Range, located 50 kilometres southeast of Terrace, B.C.

A couple of weeks later, Kris Pucci and I sorted gear in Terrace's Canadian Tire parking lot to prepare for another climbing attempt of the tower. The sky was clear and the forecast was good. However, as things are the way they are in the Howsons, it started to rain as we drove up the Kitnayakwa valley to access the range. It kept raining for the 2.5-hour hike to our campsite. It continued to rain as we approached the base of the tower to stash our gear. Although we didn't notice, it rained on us as we dodged basketball-sized rocks while they tumbled towards us out of the snow gully that we were ascending. Throughout the night and the next morning, the rain fell on our tent. We retrieved our gear and bailed.

A few weeks later, Tim Russel and I were brushing our teeth at 4:30 a.m. in my camper that was parked high up the clearcut that accesses the valley where the nameless tower stood (the loggers had since moved on). At 9 a.m. we stood at the tower's base looking up at what we came to do. Tim won rock-paper-scissors as usual and jumped on for the first lead.

Sometimes it's good to lose. I had this thought while I watched Tim work to keep his wits together as he negotiated intermittent bits of choss in the steep, wet corner. As I followed, repeating the moves, I was even more thankful for losing the contest. Only after a couple of moves of climbing, my feet were completely soaked. To add a little more spice, the rock was cold and sharp in places. As I neared the end of the pitch, I took a short ride when the hold I grabbed detached from the wall. While I was thankful that this happened while I was on top-rope, my attention was further sharpened for the rest of the day's leads.

I looked up at pitch two and it was wetter than pitch one, which is saying a lot. The sun had yet to crest the surrounding mountains, so it was still cold. I opted to traverse left on a ledge for 20 metres and ascend a gully that turned slightly overhanging. I found myself pulling over bulges while stemming on wet walls. I protected myself through some of the moves, but back-cleaned my protection in order to keep plumb with my belayer after I traversed back right. My deke put me approximately 30 metres directly above Tim. The next 20 metres consisted of enjoyable face climbing.

The sun finally reached us and the rock was drying. Tim charged up pitch three, which started with exposed face climbing that he led with confidence. About halfway through the pitch, he traversed far right to find a well-protected corner with fun stems and jams. This led to another big belay ledge.

For the next pitch, I tried to traverse along a ledge, which forced me to climb over some scary stacked blocks. Upon realizing it went nowhere, I had the pleasure of downclimbing the Jenga choss back to the belay. I set out again straight up off the belay on a steep face. The rock was dry and quite wonderful at this point. As the face got steeper, the gear ran out. I placed a bolt and climbed to the base of a bulge. With no gear in sight and the committing prospect of climbing overhanging terrain, I placed another bolt. The bulge turned out to be easy, and I found myself at another big belay ledge.

We were now on the summit ridge. After 35 metres of 4th-class terrain, the ridge narrowed to a sharp fin. Tim tied in and climbed on. After 15 metres of airy walking on a knife-edge ridge, he was faced with a large bulge. After working the moves for a short while, he surmounted what ended up being the route's crux. The exposure on the bulge was wonderful, as either side of it presented a 300-metre drop.

Since Tim's last pitch was so short, he went off to climb the next. At this point we wondered if we were actually on a sub-summit and would have to rappel off of it to get to the real summit. After Tim made easy work of the pitch, he yelled, "We're on the summit!"

Of course, I had to yell back, "You sure?"

He answered, "There's nowhere else to go!"

The tower's summit was about the size of a small bedroom. We took photos, gave high-fives, ate food and briefly discussed the rappel descent. It wasn't long until it would be dark, but on the way down we still took time to try to clear away loose rock for future ascents. Everything was going rather smoothly until I was making our last rappel and noticed that one of my ropes was stacked funny on a ledge far to my right. I soon realized that it was a separated section of my rope. One of the trundled rocks must have severed it. Thankfully, there was still enough line to reach the bottom of the last rappel. A climber doesn't need a vivid imagination to see that this could have turned out to be a grim situation. Tying a knot in the ends of your rappel ropes is not a guaranteed safeguard when the knot is cut right off.

Before I made the last rappel, I told Tim that upon my reaching the bottom I would traverse the base to hide under an overhang before he started his rappel. This was to avoid the rocks that Tim may knock off. While waiting for Tim under the overhang, I stood up to stretch my back just to have a baseball-sized rock whip by my face. It was so close that I could hear its vibrations and even feel it passing. The rock was dislodged as Tim was adjusting the ropes. It missed me but hit Tim in the ankle. Luckily, he was only bruised.

After Tim made it to the base, we laid down on the alpine heather and took a much-needed nap. Soon after, we made the march down through the treeline and dark forest back to the camper. It was either really late or really early in the morning when we returned to our camper. We had plenty of food to cook a nice meal, but being as tired as we were, we settled for a Pilsner and a box of Pop-Tarts.

Summary
Pilsners and Pop-Tarts (IV 5.10, 200m, 7 pitches), southeast face of unnamed peak, Howson Range, Coast Mountain. FA: Gary McQuaid, Tim Russell, September 3, 2017.

P1: 5.9, 50m. At the base of the tower, traverse right on a ledge above a gully bank till the ledge ends at left-facing corner. Ascend the corner through bulges to a bolt then a left-leaning crack. Follow the crack to a stance and find another bolt to the right. Traverse past this bolt to gain a ridge. Follow the ridge to small ledge with a bolted anchor.

P2: 5.8, 50m. Due to poor conditions, we traversed far left and ascended a gully then traversed back far right to gain plumb with the route. The natural line is to climb a little left up another crack system above the belay. This would negate the need to traverse far left and back right. The pitch ends at a small ledge with a bolted belay.

P3: 5.8, 50m. Traverse rightwards off the belay to a shallow groove. Continue up to a large right-facing corner. Instead of climbing this corner, follow a ramp to the right to the ridge and climb a shallow right-facing corner to a large ledge with a bolted belay.

P4: 5.9, 30m. Climb above and slightly left of the belay up the steep face. Traverse left under a bulge past two bolts then through another bulge to large ledge with a bolted belay.

P5: 4th class, 35m. Scramble up the right side of ridge to a bolted anchor.

P6: 5.10, 30m. Walk the knife-edge ridge to a steep bulge (crux) then continue climbing to a bolted anchor on the right side of the ridge.

P7: 5.7, 20m. Follow the ridge to large wedged block and gain a wide left-facing corner. Follow this to the summit.

Descent: Rappel the route from bolted anchors.

Pilsners and Pop-Tarts on an unnamed tower in the Howson Range.
Photo: Gary McQuaid

Sacred Stone

Evan Guilbault

On August 5, 2017, Colin Landeck (Santa Cruz, California), Zoe Manson and I set out for a nice cruise up Powell Lake in Norbert's boat. Smoke had just finally funnelled down the inlets from the Interior, creating that optimistic apocalyptic look. Dropped off at the dock at the head of the lake, I was looking forward to my first real climbing trip into Daniels River valley. I had done two reconnaissance trips in 2016, hacking in a trail and getting photos. I immediately became reacquainted with the familiar "Daniels Style" named for the tactics required to approach up the bush-filled Daniels River valley. So how does one transport 100 kilograms of gear and food to base camp 24 kilometres up a logging road? Well, you grab your hatchet and fabricate a rickshaw by strapping three bikes together with sturdy alder (any wood of your choice). Our six-wheeler managed to roll 16 kilometers in four hours—unreal efficiency. As the road is a bit brushed-in from there, we resorted to shuttling loads the final eight kilometres to Stokemaster Camp directly beneath the improbably long white tongue of granite, which beckons the beginning of the gothic wall known as Super Unknown. Welcome to B.C. big-wall country.

By noon on August 6, we had all of our gear at camp. Organized and comfortably gawking from our hammocks at these stone sentinels, we began building the trail to the wall that evening. In a straight line from camp, we macheted a quad trail to the river. It was now less than 10 minutes from camp to river. Now cross the Daniels River. In August, it is an incredibly tame river compared to the Eldred. We continued our quad trail into the old-growth ancient rainforest. With a glimpse from the toe of the wall, we headed home for a final dinner full of "who knows."

The next morning, with the help of Zoe, we finished the trail through the majestic groves of ancient cedars that lead to the base of the Schoolyard Slabs—400 metres of shimmering

The jury-rigged, two-bike rickshaw used to transport 100 kilograms of gear 24 kilometres up the Daniels River valley.
Photo: Robin Munshaw

glacial-polished slabs extending from valley floor to the base of our intended route, and onwards into the sky a mile high.

The morning of August 7, Colin and I walked with Zoe to the end of the logging road and watched as she, equipped with all the necessary gear imaginable for steep-sided fun, went singing into one of the most powerful places on earth I have ever felt. Zoe would be solo in the alpine for the next five days, rambling and bouldering in some fine country with not a soul in sight.

By 8 p.m that night, Colin and I had lines fixed up the Schoolyard Slabs to our first bivy. The big-wall kit was now entirely at the base of the big wall. Game on! Colin started us up the route on the morning of August 8. We chose to lead in blocks of two. The first two pitches were pure friction. Colin wove us up 120 metres of foreshortened slabs to the base of the multi-corners: six perfect corner systems all stacked atop one another. This led us up and over the "gusher gully" on clean, impeccable crack and corner systems. Camp was made on top of pitch six underneath the 300-metre-tall amphitheater, making for quite the position.

Evan Guilbault frees pitch 10 of Sacred Stone. Photo: Robin Munshaw

The next morning started mellow, but two pitches in saw me mantling the first 5.10 moves of the climb on body-weight placements. Beautiful finger cracks took me to a perfect tree belay 60 metres higher, right beneath Coastal Ledge—a Jurassic mass of thimbleberries and devil's club extending from and clinging to the cliff 600 metres off the valley floor. Colin led an incredible jungle pitch, slashing his way through thick devil's club with an ice axe. This brought us onto aforementioned Coastal Ledge, a potential world-class crack-cragging venue mid-wall. Colin then gently nailed his way up pitch 10, the most beautiful of the climb. The main feature is a flawless 35-metre off-vertical finger crack in a corner. Straight up to a perfect belay pedestal, Colin handed me the rack as daylight disappeared, proclaiming in sandbag fashion, "It's 10 metres of 5.5!" This perfect corner system yielded jamming and stemming in unbelievable clean hand cracks. I hooted and hollered up this glorious sandbag, which was actually a full 60-metre pitch of 5.8 hands. I finished by headlamp, and away we were, hacking the devil's club to create a bivy for two.

Day three dawned. We were roughly 700 metres up the route with nearly 900 metres to go. Our water was running low, and we were smack dab in the most intimidating section of the wall. Surrounded by overhanging crack systems, we simply had to have faith and trust our abilities. We decided to leave our bivy gear on top of pitch 12 and head out light and fast in an all-out summit push. The morning started with a pendulum into another perfect corner system. Some bouldery moves off the belay took me up another flawless pitch, mantling onto the "rickshaw ramp"—a 70-metre 3rd-class ramp situated in an overhanging cave of ridiculously steep terrain. The ramp was our salvation that took us on to the Golden Headwall.

From there, the pitches started to blend together. Colin would run the rope 60 metres, I'd hand him the rack and he would then put the rope up another 60 metres. Then my turn, then his turn, then my turn again. This went on for 14 pitches. Most of the climbing was on glorious 5.8 to 5.9 corners with perfect cracks. We were flowing up this behemoth stone, tapping into a power source we rarely get to taste. We were committed. At the twenty-sixth belay, I racked up and set out on the last 70 metres of the climb. Around 9 p.m., just as the sky was lit on fire, Colin and I topped out the Super Unknown wall. A vertical mile of climbing had brought us here. We ecstatically embraced and ran to the true summit. We had just climbed a dream route, our first true grade VI adventure.

Summary

Sacred Stone (VI 5.10 A1, 1600m), Super Unknown, Daniels River valley, Coast Mountains. FA: Evan Guilbault, Colin Landeck, August 7–10, 2017.

Sacred Stone on Super Unknown. Photo: Cameron Moustaffi

Red Alert Wall

Travis Foster

Travis Foster on pitch 25 of Jungle is Massive. Photo: Drew Leiterman

"RED ALERT… RED ALERT… Rock climbers: There's a 3,500-foot granite cliff on the south side of the upper Daniels. Go do it. Red Alert… This is not a drill." That was the call to arms John Clarke had written nearly 30 years ago [*CAJ* Vol. 73. 1990, p.58]. And even though this was indeed "not a drill," it somehow managed to elicit a response entirely undeserving of a red-alert alarm. The wall, to our knowledge, and much to the lore of the valley, had only one previous attempt in the late 1990s, and they were unable to reach the top for various reasons.

The Daniels River valley is approximately 22 kilometres north (as the human finds its way) from the head of Powell Lake, just outside of the beautiful community of Powell River. Within this narrow watershed, you will find some seriously neck-cranking walls. At the time of this writing, there are still two other big walls soaring well over 1,300 metres. This is not a drill!

Our objective was to climb what locals had been tentatively referring to as Red Alert Wall, a marvelous unclimbed 1,500-metre chunk of the good stuff we all know and love. It sits high and mighty, foreboding but also modestly inviting, like the first time you meet your girlfriend's parents.

After an agreeable exchange with the loggers in a currency found most receptive at the top of the lake—24 Lucky Lagers—Drew and I saw ourselves being dropped off approximately 10 kilometres away from our soon-to-be base camp by a particular logger we've since took to calling "Steve: Man of the Daniels" for his accurate and prophetic stories of the land. Steve told us about how every now and then a grizzly will come over to the Daniels from Toba Inlet and be "pissed right off" that there is no salmon. He found three dead black bears one year that he believes were from this certain marauding grizzly.

While sitting around the fire after dinner on our first night at base camp, we were suddenly roused by a calamitous racket coming out of the bush 15 metres down hill. Promptly assuming a defend-the-fort position, Drew and I rushed to where we could see what was going on. To our relief, we saw that it was only a black bear side-hilling through the alder, until moments later, a full-grown and "pissed right off" grizzly came thundering after him! Neither of them (especially the black bear) paid much attention to us, but regardless, we slept with one eye open that night.

Our route started after almost a two-hour hike with heavy bags southeast from base camp, since referred to as Camp Toba Grizzly. From there, some mild scrambling took us to the base of a corner system where we began the climb. We broke down our route into obvious sections to help us manage the intimidating size of the wall. The first 570 metres of the route climbs up what we've decided to call the Miami Slabs. They take their name from a song by the band Against Me!, which bears the same title (and more importantly, the same feeling).

It took us two long days to climb and haul these pitches, which by 11 p.m. on the second night saw us staggering on to the feature we named Halfway Highway. Really it's only one-third of the way up, but it sounds better. The next morning, after a well-deserved sleep-in and a nice breakfast with much prospective reflection, we decided to ditch and stash a bunch of gear and move on light and fast.

That day, we casually put the ropes up two enjoyable pitches and rapped down to Halfway Highway for the night. In the evening, for the first time since we arrived in the valley, the air felt heavy. So being the "do it right" kind of guys that we are, we rigged the fly of the portaledge off a cam and left the actual ledge in its bag. We laid our sleeping bags on some nice level ground a distance away and went to sleep.

Next thing I knew, at some ungodly hour, we woke to the laughing rain. We dashed as quickly as we could to the fly and wrapped ourselves in it like a blanket, passing the rest of the night trying to sit-sleep. As soon as it sounded like the rain had abated, we moved our condensation-soaked selves to action and rigged the portaledge properly. It was still raining on and off, so we took the opportunity for more sleep and woke around noon to promising conditions. It was evening before things were dry enough to think about climbing and our morale was increasing faster than things were drying.

On the fifth day, we woke early and jugged and hauled the two pitches in good time. Climbing four additional pitches, we topped out the section we've since been calling Cracks of Doom—a massive 380-metre right-facing corner system of mostly clean, mostly fun free climbing with little doom. The next morning, we slept through our alarms and woke both agreeing that to push our three ropes up would be a success for the day indeed. Ahead of us was the biggest question mark we had on the route: a section called the Choss Band, which didn't appear to have any passage consistent with the difficulty of ground we had already covered.

Drew started up with terribly wet and tricky aid, sticking to the route we had planned from the valley, but it proved too wet and too tricky, so he down-aided and decided to free climb out left instead. From the top of this pitch, I continued on the same trajectory through fun, balancey face climbing with thin protection in small cracks and flakes. The next pitch was a 70-metre straight right traverse now skirting the top of the Choss Band, followed by another full rope length through easy terrain heading up and right. After some interesting hauling, we made our high camp underneath the great frown feature, marking the end of the Choss Band.

While making camp at the base of the Incredible Headwall, with the weather looking good and feeling happy with our position and provisions, we decided that we would fix our three ropes again the next day and come down early for a relaxing evening of macaroni and hot chocolate. From the top of the third rope length, the summit looked antagonizing close, but after some unassumingly difficult free and aid climbing, we chose to stick to the plan and run for the top in the morning.

By 7 a.m. we were at our previous day's high point and ready to fire it to the summit to be back at high camp for lunch and celebratory Captain Blacks. Unfortunately, the Incredible Headwall had a different idea. What looked to be cruisy climbing kept true to the character from the previous day and, once again, we were treated to wet and thoughtful aid. The summit pitch took hours inside a saturated and mostly crack-less left-facing corner. After some small slimy nut placements and balancey hooks, I saw myself top-stepping on a perfect horn before grabbing thick branches and gleefully swimming my way through the foliage to gain the summit by 5 p.m.

After our special bro moment on top, a bite to eat and some photos for our moms, we started making our way uphill to a position directly above high camp where we built a cairn to mark the spot where we started to rappel. We hand drilled a single-bolt rappel route to Halfway Highway

Jungle is Massive on Red Alert Wall.
Photo: Travis Foster

where we were able to continue on with the previous party's descent line.

It must be said that Powell River is a truly remarkable climbing destination. Even in just the Eldred and Daniels watersheds alone you will find many lifetimes of new big-wall routing, and all less than 150 kilometres from Vancouver, as the crow flies. The rock is of impeccable quality. During our 11 days on the wall, we pulled off a small amount of loose rock. That being said, it is coastal and does require, at times, much gardening. But if you want to climb virgin big walls and can't afford a plane ticket to the Arctic, then a bit of cleaning is, in my frugal opinion, a more reasonable price to pay.

We named our route Jungle is Massive for many different reasons. The coastal bush and brilliant green cracks; the scourge of mosquitos, no-see-ems and mice, which, like faithful cheerleaders, danced for us all the way to the top; but most of all, we just really like the introduction to Ali G Indahouse. We took nine days to climb this route and another two days to descend. I am under no illusion that this was by any means an impressive ascent, but it sure was a good time. And for two bush-league believers on their first big wall, we certainly impressed ourselves.

Summary

Jungle is Massive (VI 5.10 C2, 1565m, 25 pitches), Red Alert Wall, Daniels River valley, Coast Mountains. FA: Travis Foster, Drew Leiterman, July 14, 2017.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the MEC Expedition Fund for the support.

Tantalus Winter Adventure

Max Fisher

ON FEBRUARY 2, 2017, Mike Loch, Jeff Tarshis and I were hanging out in rainy, cold Squamish. Things had just started to thaw out from the two-month-long cold spell. Mike and I had just spent the past five days skiing in Steep Creek, and Jeff had come up to meet us for an alpine mission into the Tantalus Range. We decided to go human-powered.

So, on February 3, we loaded a canoe with skiing and alpine-climbing gear and floated down the Squamish River to the Lake Lovely Water trailhead. We unloaded our gear, stashed the boat and headed up into the hills for some alpine adventuring. Our main goal was to climb the east ridge of Mount Alpha (2,305 metres) and ski its southwest face.

The snow was to valley bottom, and with the recent warming, we had awesome conditions on the approach. At 800 to 900 metres, we put our skis on and skinned the rest of the way to the lake. After four hours on the go, we set up camp beside the Tantalus Hut (1,173 metres), dug out the outhouse and were psyched we didn't have to melt snow as the out flow of Lake Lovely Water was still open. That night as we were cooking dinner and settling in, we decided to check out Mount Niobe the next day.

After some maté and breakfast, we put our skis on, grabbed our climbing gear and headed out in splitter weather. We skied across the lake and up the northwest side of Niobe. As we neared the top of Niobe, we took a 100-metre couloir to the summit (AI3). It was around lunchtime, so we chilled on the summit for a bit then started to ski our way down to the Niobe-Pelops col and, ultimately, the lake. Despite the bullet-hard wind slab, the descent was rad and we were back at the hut fairly quickly. We spent the rest of the day chilling out, eating and getting ready for Mount Alpha. We wanted to get an early start so were in our sleeping bags shortly after dark.

We woke a 3 a.m. and again had some maté and breakfast and were on the go by 4:30 a.m. Our ascent up onto Mount Alpha's north glacier went smoothly, and we were quickly making our way to the east ridge. The sunrise was amazing. We knew the east ridge was an ultra-classic summer rock route and that Marc-Andre Leclerc had climbed it in winter-like conditions, saying it was around M5. Loch started up with tools in hand and quickly racked them having found good jams and chimney moves up onto the ledge. Jeff and I followed. I took the next lead and made a few exposed insecure moves and we were soon moving quickly up the ridge. After a sweet lead by Jeff, Mike took us to

Mike Loch on the first pitch of the east ridge of Mount Alpha.
Photo: Jeff Tarshis

Wish You Were Here

Steve Janes

AFTER RETURNING FROM a 10-day ice trip to the Lillooet area in B.C. with James Rode, we were keen to get into the alpine on Vancouver Island for a serious attempt on an unclimbed line he'd recently sent me pictures of on Kings Peak (2,065 metres) in Strathcona Park. Kings is one of the most accessible and popular peaks on the Island and is many an Island climber's first Strathcona peak.

With less than ideal snow conditions and a weather report that could have been better, we made the approach up the well-developed trail off Highway 28 just outside Gold River. In heavy snowfall we set up camp below the peak on the North Glacier. After a good night's rest, we awoke to a heavy fog, only occasionally offering a glimpse into the vastness above us. Quietly and with some trepidation, we held a safety meeting while brewing up. The fog and gloomy skies were of no concern as we loaded our packs for the day. We listened to Zeppelin as we pushed up through the previous day's snowfall to the Kings-Queens col and the base of the route.

After a little over an hour of ascending deep snow, the skies began to clear and the fog lifted. Very soon we were staring up at our route—a thin line of ice trickling down a series of steep steps in a broken rocky chimney that tightened toward its base into a small vein of ice pouring over a gap in the rock. We ducked under a boulder near the base of the route to gear up and discuss our options.

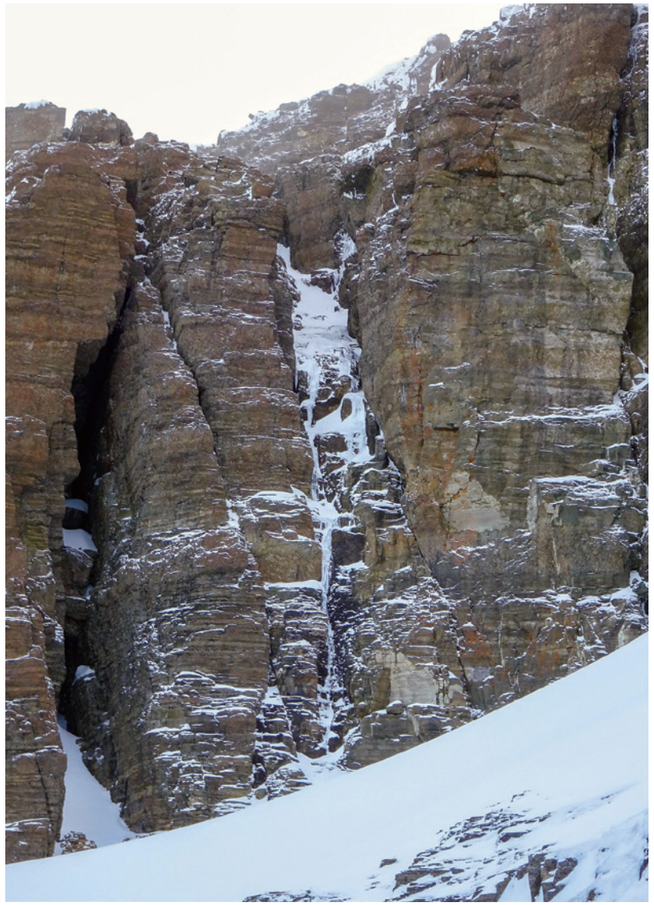
James felt a little out-classed, so it was decided I would do the leading on this day. Looking up at the first pitch from below, we wondered if I'd find any reliable protection in the broken rock. It was clear the ice wouldn't take good screws. With a solid belay in rock, I started up the chimney over a series of balancey and technical drytooling sections, knocking away the loose rock and clearing bits of snow and ice to search for pro. The gully tightened, and I placed a knifeblade piton in a loose and mungy crack to the left. Not a good piece but I continued, stemming and scraping up the rock as the terrain steepened beneath the crux—a thin column of ice seeping over a tight notch in the rock above and barring access to easier ice and what looked like a good rest.

This is where things began to get interesting. As I stood beneath the ice wondering if I'd climbed into an irreversible trap, and knowing I couldn't downclimb or lower off without a good piece of gear, I searched for a screw in the mush at my waist about two metres below the lip but found nothing but airy white ice. Feeling too pumped to remove the manky screw, I clipped it and committed. With the jingus ice screw below and a bad knifeblade somewhere toward the beginning of the pitch, I locked off with my right tool in some questionable ice and reached high with the left tool to search for a good stick. I delicately tapped the pick of my left tool into the space between the ice and rock and pulled down. It seemed solid, but just as I shifted full weight onto it, the tool sheared through and the whole chunk of ice broke away. My feet cut loose and I came heavily onto the right tool. I stared at the right pick in disbelief. Amazed to still be firmly attached to the pitch, I looked up and surveyed the newly exposed rock in front of me. Underneath where the ice had broken away and just within reach was a solid crack just the perfect size for a good pick torque. I reached high with the left tool again and cranked the pick into the crack. I removed my right tool from the questionable ice, and turning it sideways, gently tapped the pick of my left tool a bit deeper into the crack. With hands matched, I cut loose with

Steve Janes on pitch two of Wish You Were Here. Photo: James Rodes

my feet and made a high step onto a tiny rock edge on the left and was able to stem across the gap and pull into the slightly easier terrain—and a well-deserved rest above.

The second pitch was shorter and began with a steep ice column and some excellent mixed stemming off the belay. This was followed by the longer third pitch, which offered sustained WI4 ice for 40 metres or so before ramping out. These two pitches went much smoother, offered a bit better protection and provided some of the finest alpine mixed and ice climbing I've found on Vancouver Island. The route finished just below the main summit of Kings Peak. We unroped and James led us up to where we were greeted with stellar views of Strathcona Park and the peaks of the Elk River valley. We lingered on top for some time. After enjoying the atmosphere, we descended into the evening, broke down our camp and managed to make it back to the truck just before dark, only to spend 45 minutes getting stuck in the snow on the way back to the highway.



Wish You Were Here on the west face of Kings Peak. Photo: James Rode

We decided to call the route Wish You Were Here in memory of a very inspirational member of the West Coast climbing community whom we recently lost: Marc-Andre Leclerc. Marc-Andre and his partner, Brette, and I had made the second ascent of The Theft (WI6X M7+ 240m), a hard Lillooet mixed line unrepeated since the first ascent in 1996, only a few weeks earlier. During my 10-day ice trip through Lillooet with James, I'd received news that Marc and his climbing partner Ryan Johnson had gone missing near the Mendenhall Towers in Alaska. Sadly, their friends and families announced a short time later that they were lost. Marc-Andre was the humblest, most inspiring and talented climber I have been lucky enough to spend time with. The motivational spirit he left behind will inspire generations of climbers for decades to come.

Later on, Lindsay Elms, a well-known Island climber who has been around many years longer than I, wrote to me and spoke of the "new direction" he felt that this line, and others like it, are taking the Vancouver Island winter-climbing scene. Perhaps it's true. Perhaps modern alpine mixed routes like these, while technically easy, and of relatively mediocre quality, when compared to classic mixed ice lines of the Canadian Rockies, are the "new" thing on the Island. And perhaps, lines like these just might inspire other climbers to explore the vast mixed potential that we have here in the Island Alps.

Summary

Wish You Were Here (M5+R WI4, 130m), Kings Peak, Strathcona Park. FA: Steve Janes, James Rode, March 18, 2018.

Garibaldi Park Speed Traverse

Christian Veenstra

GARIBALDI PROVINCIAL PARK covers almost 2,000 square kilometres of mountainous terrain in southwest British Columbia—basically everything on the east side of the Sea-to-Sky Highway between Squamish and Pemberton, aside from a small chunk carved out for the Whistler Blackcomb ski resort. Despite the size, there are only five official access points. Close to these access points the park can be quite busy, but, by and large, the park is a wilderness alpine area with only two of the access points even connected by a trail.

Of course, in ski season, the presence or absence of a trail becomes less important—bush is covered, crevasses are filled in. The park is criss-crossed by a number of established ski-touring routes. For years now, I've been dreaming of linking together most of these routes—Wedge-Currie, Spearhead, McBride and Garibaldi Névé traverses—into one long traverse essentially crossing the entire west side of Garibaldi Park. As far as I know, nobody has ever attempted to link all this terrain together as anything other than a long expedition-style traverse. *Exploring the Coast Mountains on Skis* by John Baldwin recommends 14 days and describes it as: "…a longer route traversing the full length of Garibaldi Park…a strenuous undertaking of 100 kilometres with an elevation gain of 8,400 metres. It has only been repeated a few times." I wanted to do it in a single push.

The backbone and most remote section of the traverse, the McBride Range, is typically a five-day venture, but has been done "quickly" a handful of times already. In 2009, Keith Reid, Alex Wigley and Craig McGee showed the world it was possible when they did it via the shortest variation (from the top of the resort on Blackcomb to exit out via Garibaldi Lake) in 18 hours and 21 minutes. I, like many others, was blown away. The McBride Range had a well-deserved reputation for its remote nature, difficult navigation and lack of escape options. In many ways, reading their trip report opened my eyes to the possibility of covering real, remote terrain in a short amount of time. Later that same year, Andy Traslin skied between the same endpoints, solo, in approximately 41 hours. I was inspired to try it myself a few years later (2011) and skied that route in 48 hours with Nick Matwyuk and Laura Morrison (sleeping twice), which was the closest thing to a speed traverse I'd ever done at the time. In 2015, Bruno Bagneres and Geoff Dunbrack did a slightly longer variation from Brohm Ridge to Whistler in about 28 hours. Finally, in 2016, Eric Carter and Nick Elson did the McBride in 15 hours 36 minutes, starting at the bottom, not the top, of the chairlifts in Whistler Village and exiting via Garibaldi Lake.

As the season drew to a close it seemed like another year would slip by without the conditions aligning, but from a hotel room away from home, I exchanged emails with good friends Nick Matwyuk and Lena Rowat to create a window of opportunity despite the 53.5-hour work week and red-eye flight. They would start on Friday. I would catch up to them on Saturday, ski with them for a bit, and then continue when they stopped to camp Saturday night. I arrived in Vancouver Friday night and—after putting my daughter to bed—hurriedly packed. But on Saturday morning the weather was bad and the forecast had pushed the clearing trend to later in the week. I went back to sleep.

Later that morning, I drove with all my gear to Whistler where I managed to get a hold of Nick and Lena as they came in and out of cell service. I figured they would be tired from a day of whiteout navigation and suggested we cut things short, ski the Blackcomb-Currie opposite each other and trade cars.

They said, "No way! We're going for it! The clouds are keeping things firm, making for fast travel, and the visibility isn't too bad most of the

time. You should at least come up and see how things go."

I called home to my wife, and she convinced me I should go for it. So I did. I used telemark skis with skinny and full-width skins. I also packed ski crampons, a home-made whippet attachment, a helmet, crevasse rescue gear, stove and pot, sleeping pad, quilt, extensive repair kit, extra socks, Crocs for hiking, toothbrush, 1.8 kilograms of food and capacity for 1.8 litres of water.

Despite starting at almost 11 a.m., I had good conditions basically all day on Saturday. Although I'd long missed the hard morning crust, it never got really hot or mushy. And although there was some poor visibility, there was never a real whiteout. The terrain flew by: up the Mount Currie trail, across the headwaters of Mystery Creek, past Mount Moe and The Owls and down onto the Weart Glacier. Everything went super-smooth until quite low on the descent down to Billygoat Lake and Wedge Pass when I had some excitement getting boxed in between two rivers in steep terrain and had to make a bit of an interesting crossing. I managed to keep my boots dry though. The crust reformed for the evening during the 1,200-metre slog back up to the alpine in the Spearhead Range and I summited Shudder to beautiful clear skies just after sunset after a short detour back down to retrieve my sunglasses, which I dropped while putting on ski crampons. I watched them skitter down the glacier to my horror, but, fortunately, they did not go all that far.

I caught up to Nick and Lena after crossing over the Spearhead portion and dropping down the Naden Glacier. They'd set up their second camp beside some running water and invited me into their Mega Light Tent where I hung out for a bit while I fixed a broken ski-pole basket using the substantial repair kit I'd brought and finally had an excuse to use. It was nice to sit for the first time since I'd left the car, and chat with my friends—the first people I'd seen since I left the 4×4 rally on the logging road by the Mount Currie trailhead. They invited me to set up the sleeping pad and quilt I'd brought (just in case) and join them, but I was still feeling great, so I continued towards the McBride Range under a half moon.

After some ski-descent bushwacking, I was lucky to find a crossing to the Upper Cheakamus River on some avalanche debris and enjoyed quick travel and dry boots on the south side. The 1,000-metre slog up the McBride Glacier was quite enjoyable at night, and I was able to cross over Sir Richard and pass The (infamous) Gatekeeper before twilight. Navigation became easier again as dawn broke somewhere on the Snow Bowl Glacier, and I was in full morning sun by the time I had looped around Fake Peak and hit Drop Pass and Sinister Ridge. Sinister Ridge—a convoluted mess of blowholes, cornices and steep rock—is probably the technical crux of the traverse. I think it also generates its own cloud cover. The only clouds in the area seemed to be forming in the bowl to the east and drifting up, enveloping the ridge. Tales of whiteouts for this portion on otherwise good-weather days are not uncommon. After some whiteout shenanigans, travel was quick again, and I used up the last of the morning crust passing by Hour, Isosceles and Luxor. After the long descent around Gray Pass to the base of the Phoenix Glacier, I was skiing on mush.

Pulling up onto the Phoenix Glacier in the full heat of the sun and after about 25 hours on the move, I started to feel the effort for the first time. Although I'd thus far managed to eat almost 50 grams per hour, my body started refusing. Everything, including water, started to taste bitter and acidic, and I felt nauseous. I couldn't really tell if I was under- or over-hydrated, lacking salt or just too hot. I seemed to be able to eat snow, though, and putting some on my neck felt good, so I went for that. I didn't really notice a lack in performance, but I became really worried about the possibility and dialled myself back accordingly. Running out of gas in the middle of some glacier, solo, isn't really an option. The now-mushy snow didn't exactly make for fast travel anymore either. Coming around the corner by the Glacier Pikes and looking out over the Garibaldi Névé, I felt home-free, just as if I was looking at the car park, but then I realized I still had to cross it and, yeah, it's actually still kind of far.

Fortunately, as I crossed the névé, clouds rolled back in and gave occasional bouts of shade. My digestive system got a second wind, and I was able to stomach an energy gel or two and a bit of water. I waved at two other skiers passing under the Gargoyles just as I crossed Ring Creek. I hadn't even seen a set of ski tracks since I left Nick and Lena by the Naden Glacier. As usual, I made inefficient navigation of the confusing forested micro-terrain between Ring Creek and Elfin Lakes. Passing Elfin Lakes at around 28.5 hours, I thought for sure I'd finish in under 30 hours (my estimated time), since I have routinely made it (uphill) to Elfin from the car park in 1.5 hours. But, even with a second wind, the overall downhill and skinny skins, the mushy snow got the best of me and it ended up taking slightly longer. It didn't help that the snow ran out before the car park and I had to boot-pack. At least I was able to make use of the Crocs I'd brought for the occasion.

I called Nick and Lena from the car park. They'd opted to ski back through the Spearhead and were in Whistler Village. They were even going to retrieve my car for me. And I was able to bum a ride into Squamish from a pair of hikers. I grabbed some dinner in Squamish and fell asleep on the lawn outside Canadian Tire while I waited for Nick and Lena to arrive. I can't thank them enough for making this trip possible. They convinced me to give it a shot after I'd given up on the weather, gave me some tracks to follow for a portion of it, a cosy tent to raise my spirits mid-trip, and even picked up my car and drove me back to Vancouver afterwards. And, of course, thanks to my wife, Line, for supporting my strange desire to do things like this. I felt surprisingly good again on Monday morning, although I had a tough time squeezing my slightly swollen feet into my cycling shoes for the bike commute to work. Somebody even passed me on the way!

Summary

Garibaldi ski traverse from Mt. Currie trailhead to Red Heather car park (30 hours 18 minutes 30 seconds, 104km, 8700m elevation gain). Christian Veenstra, June 3–4, 2017.

Vancouver Island Report

Lindsay Elms

AS THE LAST DAYS OF December 2016 faded towards the new year, Ryan Van Horne, Marie-Lou Piché, Michael Loch and Jeff Tarshis were found skinning up the Elk River valley in Strathcona Park for some early season winter climbing. The forecast looked good with a predicted week of decent weather. Putting skis on at the trailhead, they made it to the cascades at eight kilometres on the first day, and by the end of day two had established their base camp at Elk Pass. Over the next few days, they climbed Rambler Peak (January 2) followed by the first winter ascent of both El Piveto Mountain (January 3) and Mount DeVoe (January 5), the last two on skis. Unbeknownst to them, Josh Overdijk also arrived in the upper Elk Valley in the first few days of January. After bivying in a hemlock grove up the east branch of the Elk River, he made a solo ascent of Rambler Peak on his splitboard. Overdijk had previously soloed Rambler Peak in winter in 2015.

As part of Canada's 150th birthday, the Vancouver Island Section set a goal of collectively climbing (at least) 150 Vancouver Island and Gulf Island peaks during 2017 and recording the summits reached on an interactive online website along with summit photos. Members, although slow at first, really got into the spirit once the spring /summer arrived. The results were broken down

by the month and the outcome was predictable. By December 31, 2017, 208 individual summits had been climbed.

The page can be visited on the ACCVI website, but here is the monthly breakdown:

January – 2	July – 32
February – 12	August – 33
March – 11	September – 11
April – 23	October – 7
May – 27	November – 2
June – 35	December – 11

On February 6, Heidi Muhlbacher and Christine Portman made the first recorded winter ascent of Mount Adrian after one previous attempt a few days earlier. It received a second winter ascent five days later by Ahren Rankin and James Rode. A week later (February 13), Stefan Gessinger and Evan Devault made the first winter ascent of the rarely climbed Mount Maitland, above the Kennedy River along Highway 4 to Tofino. March 4, saw Kris Mutafov climb Mount Hooker (FWA) in the Nanaimo Lakes watershed. On March 19, Phil Jackson and Matthew Lettington, after several attempts, squeaked in the first winter ascent of Mount Milner in the Prince of Wales Range. Rod Szasz and Matthew Lettington skied Mount Hall and Coronation Mountain behind Ladysmith on March 27. Usually, both peaks are a short climb due to easy access by logging roads, but with low snow levels this year the round trip took 13 hours.

During the winter/spring, the Newman-Foweraker route (one of the best winter-ice test routes on Mount Arrowsmith) received numerous ascents as conditions remained awesome. But the highlight was a new three-pitch mixed line on Mount Arrowsmith near the Beehive Wall, put up by Steve Janes and Hunter Lee on April 14. They named their route Scottish Soup Kitchen. Two weeks later on April 29, Lee and Janes put another new mixed route up on Mount Arrowsmith, calling it Irish Yoga.

Over two days (June 3–4), Evan Devault and Stefan Gessinger traversed the Mackenzie Range from Poncho Peak to Redwall Peak. This was the first traverse that included the three spires: Poncho Peak, Razorback and Sunrise Peak to the east of six well-known Mackenzie Range summits. Three weeks later (June 21), Lindsay Elms, Valerie Wootton and Caitlin O'Neill visited the Haihte Range near Zeballos and climbed the Triplets and the Pitchfork, rarely climbed peaks to the south of Rugged Mountain.

In July, Dave Sutil and Ken Wong returned to the heart of Strathcona Park with Tak Ogasawara to help him complete his quest of climbing the Island 6000 [see *CAJ*, 2017, p.104] by ascending the last of the 53 summits—the Golden Hinde Northwest. Island 6000 has been recognized by the executive of the ACCVI, and at their AGM it was acknowledged that it would now be called the Charles Turner Vancouver Island 6000ers Award, in memory of the late Charles Turner [see *CAJ*, 2014, p.147]. The summit was reached on July 9, and Tak became the fourth person to complete the challenge. Several ascents were made of the southwest face of Rugged Mountain in the Haihte Range (Rob Kiefer and Henrik Hinkkala (July 8), and Ahren Rankin and James Rode in August).

Rankin and Rode had visited the Haihte Range earlier in July, climbing the North and South Blades. In July, Rode completed a solo traverse of Mount Tom Taylor, Big Interior Mountain, Nine Peaks and Mount Rosseau. Another notable traverse in early July was undertaken by soloist Walter Moar. Beginning at Elk Pass, Moar traversed Mount DeVoe, Cervus Mountain, El Piveto Mountain, Ptarmigan Pinnacles, Mount Haig Brown, Mount Cobb, Mount Filberg and Mount Laing. On July 23, Ryan Van Horn, Marie-Lou Piché and Hunter Lee climbed a new three-pitch route, called Great Expectations, on the south face of Kings Peak.

Walter Moar was back in Strathcona Park in August, this time traversing Mount Titus, Mount Con Reid, Mount McBride, Morrison Spire, Marble Peak and Mount Phillips. In September, he climbed Mount Burman, the Golden Hinde and the Behinde. Further up island, Karsten Klawitter and Hunter Lee climbed a new route on Victoria Peak on August 10. The first six pitches involved climbing up to 5.10a, and on the seventh pitch, they had to aid through a difficult overhanging section. Once up the face, they opted to climb the upper headwall of the west ridge. Three more pitches of climbing up to 5.9 led to an airy traverse and one more short section of climbing before finding themselves on the summit. This was Lee's second attempt on the route. A few weeks earlier, Lee and Andreas Hinkkala turned back at the top of the third pitch due to weather. The 600-metre route, Summit or Plummet (5.10a A1), is 13 pitches.

Two weeks later (August 27), Lee and Ryan Van Horne climbed a new route on the east face of Mount Colonel Foster. After soloing up a low-5th-class approach ramp, they then proceeded to climb the arête directly above Cataract Falls rather than rappelling down to the waterfall. After seven pitches of climbing, they found themselves on the upper glacier. They called the route Exposure Arête.

From August and into the fall, Chris Jensen spearheaded the building of the Island's first Alpine Club hut on 5040 Peak. ACCVI members and non-members were called to step up and volunteer, and by the end of the year, donated 4,500 hours. The on-site manager, Chris Ruttan, did an amazing job directing the construction, and by late October there was a big push to get the hut to lock up before too much snow accumulated. Next year should see the hut completed and open for use.

The Section's successful Kids and Youth Program completed its tenth year and started with a ski/snowshoe trip where the kids learned to build quinzhees. Their largest trip was a three-day climbing camp on Quadra Island that included nine adults and 11 youths. Other outings included daytrips where local summits were climbed, a ski trip to Mount Cain, and a hut work party and trail maintenance trip to 5040 Peak. Derek Sou and/or Stefan Gessinger led all of the trips, while Iain Sou served as a youth leader on the majority of trips. In all, 20 kids aged seven to 18 from 10 families participated in the program.

Throughout the summer, while the weather was at its best, ACCVI members were ticking off many of the Island's classic peaks, but by the middle of September, the weather began to change unseasonably early. However, on October 5, the weather improved dramatically, and Lindsay Elms took advantage of the spell to climb Kleeptee Peak, a remote peak on the north side of Muchalat Inlet overlooking Nootka Sound. This appeared to be only the second ascent of the peak since the surveyors from the mid-1940s, who left a large cairn on the summit. Late October and into November, Phil Jackson, Matt Lettington and a few others took advantage of the occasional good weather (and sometimes not-so-good weather) to climb a few of the infrequently climbed northern peaks: Mount Genesis, Mount Juliet, Mount Elliot, Mount Nora, Mount Romeo and Marmot Mountain.

One of the most outstanding attempts this year occurred on the weekend of December 16-17. Josh Overdijk's aim was to snowboard down the west couloir on Mount Colonel Foster. After carrying his snowboard in 10 kilometres to Landslide Lake, he set up camp. The next day, he continued on toward the south col where he was finally able to strap his splitboard to his feet, but about halfway up he realized he had brought the wrong kit. He should have had more climbing gear. However, he was determined to continue. Once in the west couloir, it was obvious that a descent on his snowboard was out of the question. Leaving his board behind, he frontpointed to the summit ridge, but due to lack of gear, he was unable to continue to the summit. On the descent, he managed a few turns down from the south col to his camp at the lake before he quickly packed up and headed back to Cumberland, arriving 40 hours after leaving.

December generally is not the best time to attempt the bigger mountains on the Island, but Overdijk's effort was not the last for the year. Ryan Van Horne, Malcom Nicol, Hunter Lee had one last kick at the can. They climbed a new route on the northeast face of Mount Harmston on December 22 [see page 102] the second official day of winter. This is probably the second winter ascent of Mount Harmston—the first being posted December 29, 2014, by John Waters and Aaron Smeeth. After they posted photos of the climb on Facebook, there was the usual congratulatory banter, but the final word was "Game on!"

The Interior

Grizzly Groove

Vince Hempsall

IT'S A FUNNY THING TO IMAGINE a group of grizzlies dancing in a meadow. Sometimes I picture them in full rave gear—glow-in-the-dark bangles adorning their giant paws, baby soothers swinging from their necks as they shake their rumps to dubstep. Mostly, though, I envision ghostly, humpbacked spirits swaying to the rhythm of the wind, an image that is far more in keeping with the lore surrounding Jumbo Valley in the Purcell Mountains.

Qat'muk is the word the Ktunaxa Nation use to refer to the area in the southeast corner of British Columbia that encompasses the Jumbo-Toby Creek watershed. It's a sacred place where the grizzly bear spirit is born, where it celebrates in ceremonial dances and where it eventually dies. It's appropriate given this zone is one of the most important grizzly corridors in North America. The closest large community, Invermere, is about 55 kilometres west; but otherwise, the region is mostly uninhabited by humans. The masterminds behind the controversial Jumbo Glacier Resort are hoping to change that by plopping down a massive alpine ski development in the middle of the area, but, so far, environmental groups and the Ktunaxa have stymied those plans, and the grizzlies have been left to roam—something that was top of mind as I hiked there last July to access one of the most spectacular natural rock features in the country.

I was with ACMG guide and Patagonia athlete Jasmin Caton, her father, Dale, celebrated filmmaker Nick Waggoner and professional photographer Steve Ogle. It was Steve who had first spied the arch feature from a small aircraft eight years earlier. Located in the Egyptian group of spires near Mount Amen-Ra, the natural arch spans about 100 metres across a knife-edge ridge line, and the heart-shaped opening is so large a helicopter could fly through it.

We had decided to access the base of the climb via the popular camping area of Monica Meadows. From the parking area, we hiked the trail for about 45 minutes then veered off of it in a southwest direction, walking mostly open areas through bogs, over streams and onto a talus slope that lead through a col. Another 75 minutes of hiking through meadows brought us to a tiered system of small alpine lakes at the base of the ridge where the arch is located. All told, it was a surprisingly easy three-hour hike, and because we were conscious of making a lot of noise, no bears were spotted during the journey.

Although we had been on the move from our homes near Nelson, B.C., since 5 a.m., we were anxious to examine the quality of the rock leading to the arch, so Steve, Jasmin and I grabbed gear and picked our way up the talus and snow, made an awkward move past a bollard and cautiously stepped through loose gravel and stones to reach the main corner that leads to the arch. The rock in the corner proved to be too choosy to climb, but we were delighted to find good-quality rock on the slab about five metres to climber's left.

By then it was early afternoon, and since we had seven hours of daylight left, we resolved to start climbing. We swapped leads on the first pitches, and the seconders dodged a hailstorm

Vince Hempsall on pitch five of Grizzly Groove.
Photo: Steve Ogle

of softball-sized rocks that the rope kept sweeping off the face. By the fourth pitch, the terrain steepened, the falling debris lessened and it wasn't long before I was sitting directly under the arch, belaying up Jasmin and Steve and wondering about the forces of nature that had caused such a natural anomaly (and hoping it wouldn't collapse). One more pitch brought us to the top of the ridge just as the sun was starting to set and Steve was frantically trying to get into an optimal position to shoot while shouting at us to hurry and get to the top of the arch.

It's no small feat to keep calm while hurrying over virgin terrain on a six-metre-wide rock arch that is wondrously defying gravity 300 metres above the deck as a photographer hollers, "Hurry up! We're losing the light!"

But Jasmin did exactly that and reached the apex of the arch just as the sun's rays shifted to a buttery pinkish glow. Steve's frenzied shouts turned to delighted whoops.

Far too soon, the glow was gone and Jasmin had to backtrack to my belay station at the north end of the arch. We'd been exerting ourselves since stepping out of the trucks 13 hours earlier, but the hardest part of the day was yet to come. In the failing light, we rapped down the face to the skier's right of our route, zigzagging between small trees. Water ran out, darkness engulfed, legs cramped, and to complicate matters, a belay device was dropped. The last two abseils had us leave gear behind to expedite the process, and it was with great relief we finally reached the base of the wall. We slung the bollard, rapped the snow slope, weaved our way down the talus (in my exhausted state I did a total header into a boulder and slashed my palm—the only injury sustained during the adventure) and arrived at camp at 1 a.m., 20 hours after having walked out our front doors. We hugged, laughed and toasted our achievement with Scotch. We were too tired to dance.

Grizzly Groove on the southwest face of Mount Isis.
Photo: Steve Ogle

Summary
Grizzly Groove (AD 5.7, 300m, 7 pitches), southwest face, Mt. Isis, Jumbo Pass, Purcell Mountains. FA: Jasmin Caton, Vince Hempsall, Steve Ogle, July 26, 2017.

Gear: Full set of cams from 0.2" to 3" plus doubles of #1 and #2 Camalots. Gear belays. Two 60-metre ropes and webbing for rappels.

P1: 5.7, 45m. There are many loose rocks at the base of the route and spread throughout different sections, so tread lightly and be aware of your rope. Start four metres to the left of the main corner and climb the low-angled slab to a large ledge.

P2: 5.5, 60m. Continue up the slab, placing small pieces in discontinuous cracks to a small stance.

P3: 5.5, 60m. More low-angled slab climbing.

P4: 5.7, 60m. The wall steepens slightly. Continue up low-angled then veer right to a stance about 20 metres under the south side of the arch.

P5: 5.7, 20m. Move up through the large loose blocks to a stance beside a triangle-shaped horn on the north side of the arch.

P6: 5.7, 60m. Step right then downclimb three metres before traversing right and into a dihedral. Place gear then continue up and right to another fist-sized corner crack. Follow this to its termination then step left into easy terrain to the top. The quality of rock on this pitch is spectacular and the jamming is excellent.

P7: 5.7, 50m. If you're so inclined, climb onto the top of the arch. From a spot about 10 metres down the east side of the main ridge, make an awkward move over a chasm onto the arch proper and climb the easy terrain, making sure to go over the large boulder feature rather than around it. Descend the way you came to the main ridge.

Descent: There's a small tree one metre below the main ridge that's northwest of the north side of the arch. Using two 60-metre ropes, rappel off that to another larger tree about 40 metres directly below. From there, do another 35-metre rappel, trending skier's right, to a slung horn. From that station, keep rapping skier's right for about 55 metres to a large group of trees. The next rap is a full 60 metres and deposits you on the large ledge where your first anchor was located. There's a two-nut anchor there, and another 55-metre rap takes you to near the base of the route (be careful of loose rock). One more 20-metre rap off an anchor left behind made of two stoppers and #1 Camalot leaves you at the top of the snowfield. We rappelled off a snow bollard at the peak of the snowfield to avoid hiking down the slippery slope. A 60-metre rap landed us about 20 metres above the rock talus.

Jasmin Caton admiring Grizzly Groove on Mount Isis.
Photo: Steve Ogle

Albert Icefield GMC

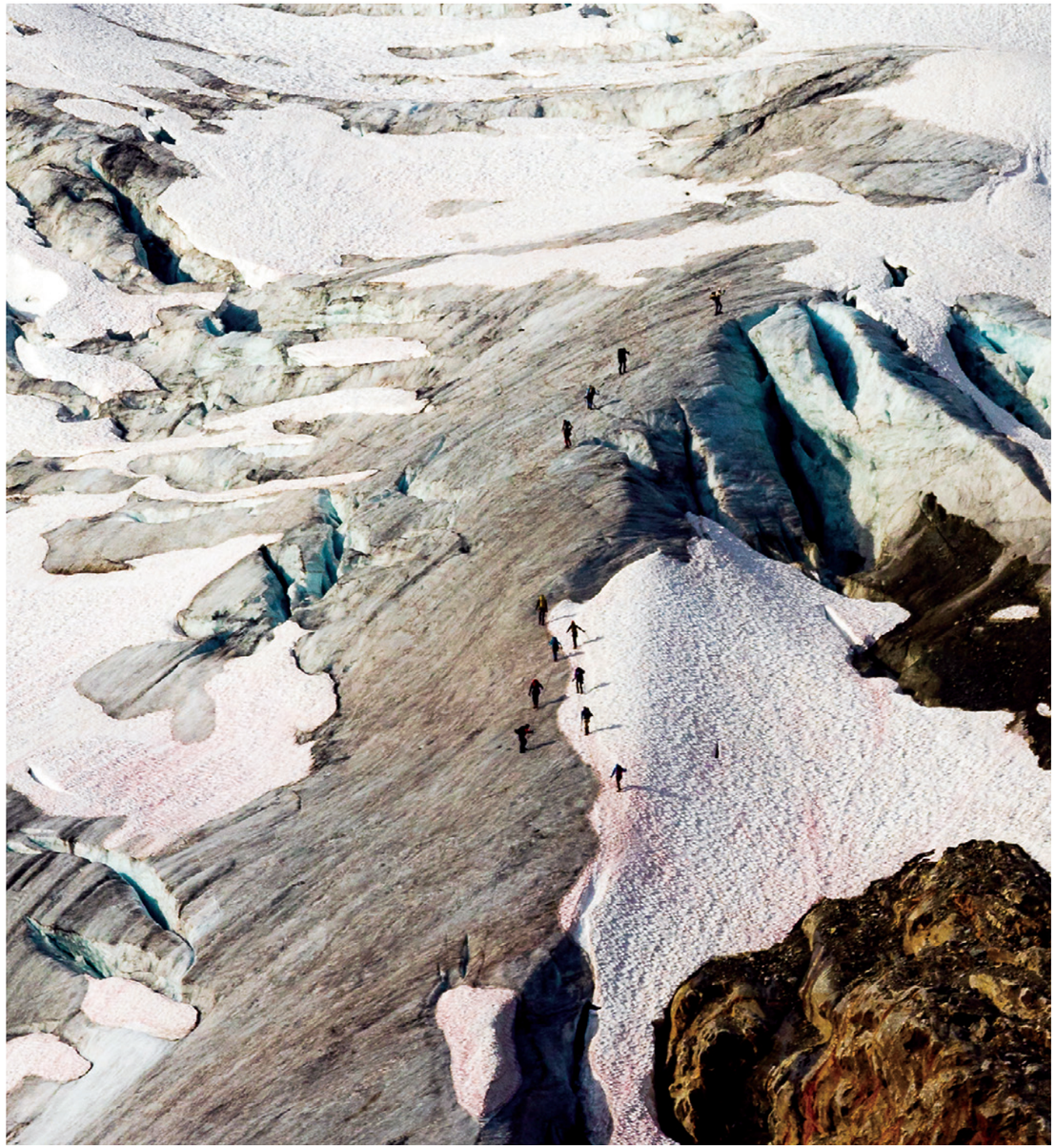
David Dornian

WE MADE UP FOR THE FACT that our helicopter staging was right beside the Trans-Canada Highway, and not at some distant, dusty terminus of an abandoned and overgrown logging road, by consistently giving people conflicting instructions about how to find the turn off the highway. Paying participants of the GMC rode the team bus, of course, and never missed a Saturday exchange. But it made for an ironic introduction to the camp, when folks learned their leaders were lost and wandering the highway, or heard they were turning circles in the Canyon Hot Springs parking lot kilometres away. The theme carried for the whole summer.

We had chosen the location for the 2017 General Mountaineering Camp (GMC) because the camp committee had been talking about wanting to look at the Albert Icefield, and because we site the camp at a location to the north or to the south of the highway in alternate years. It was maybe a little better known than some of the places we typically go, because of the proximity of the Glacier National Park boundary just to the east and because of the winter ski touring hosted from nearby Selkirk Lodge. But the simple attraction was that almost nobody, ever, goes to the place during the summer mountaineering season. The peaks are wild and attractive, but access is steep and problematic for small parties. There have been only occasional visitors in the time since the group was first explored in the later 1960s, and there is no doubt that some of the climbs made during our summer in the area were first ascents or new route variations.

If you recall the summer of 2017, you'll remember that the weather was splitter forever. There were few(er) bugs. The winds were high and hot and swept insects away to the Prairies. Those same winds also fanned the fires that consumed the province of B.C. We could climb every day of the week that I was at the Albert Icefield GMC, but you couldn't neglect your whiteout navigation skills, either, for the pall of smog that would descend over some of the glacier crossings. And you could spend a whole visit with no views from summits. You'd sit down with your group, pull out a sandwich, look at the grey and say something like: "Over there to the east—if we *could* look to the east—that would be Cassiope, the peak we stood on yesterday…."

We got to the top of them all, though, and then some. The geological orientation allowed for interesting reverses and traverses and link-ups of the summits and glaciers. Once people found their feet, and with snow conditions and crevasse exposure permitting, you could happily bop up and down and over everything connected to the Primrose Icefield—Cassiope, Primrose, Campion—and then return via a different route, in a relatively relaxed day. Up the headwall east and north toward Albert, the ridge could be run from the sunny, goat-habituated Hidden Peak, scrambled, step-kicked, short-roped and even mined over modest tops all the way out to Fulgurite and beyond to "What time is it anyway? Best to be getting back for supper." The big snow dome of Justice was regularly traversed in both directions. Purity was the aesthetic mixed one, and you could manage several other points to the south on your way back to the col and the glissade to Victoria Lake and home. Virtue, to the northeast of camp, was the mofo—the deal- and group-breaker—requiring early starts, ruthless pacing, extra up with reduced down, more weeds than views and heavy dues paid for any miscalculations in the brush or talus. There were a couple of evening meals delayed on its account. But, good enough, there were a few extended stories told about it too. And, every camp location needs a bogeyman, doesn't it? I think that's what they call "adventure."



2017 GMC participants crossing the Justice Glacier.
Photo: Amy Liu

Playing Devil's Advocate

David Lussier

VARIOUS VALHALLA CLIMBING pilgrimages were made during the summer of 2017. Some of these trips ventured into the most remote parts of the range, while others were located in the more easily accessible alpine rock-climbing areas. The main goal was almost always to explore new routes on unclimbed backyard walls with good friends. Sometimes the goal was to establish significant routes on the steepest wall, while other times it was all about finding more moderate routes that could be enjoyed by the majority of climbers.

After a moist and snowy winter, a resident high-pressure system parked itself over southern B.C. from mid-June onwards, giving dry and stable weather conditions well into late August. The weather trend was so predictable that one could schedule a climbing trip several weeks ahead and have it unfold as planned without any adjustments. I even became complacent after a while and repeatedly left my rain jacket at home without a hitch. Unfortunately, this weather pattern was largely responsible for the unprecedented forest-fire season and very smoky atmospheric conditions.

Jonas Furger on the first pitch of Helix on the south face of West Wolf's Ear. Photo: David Lussier

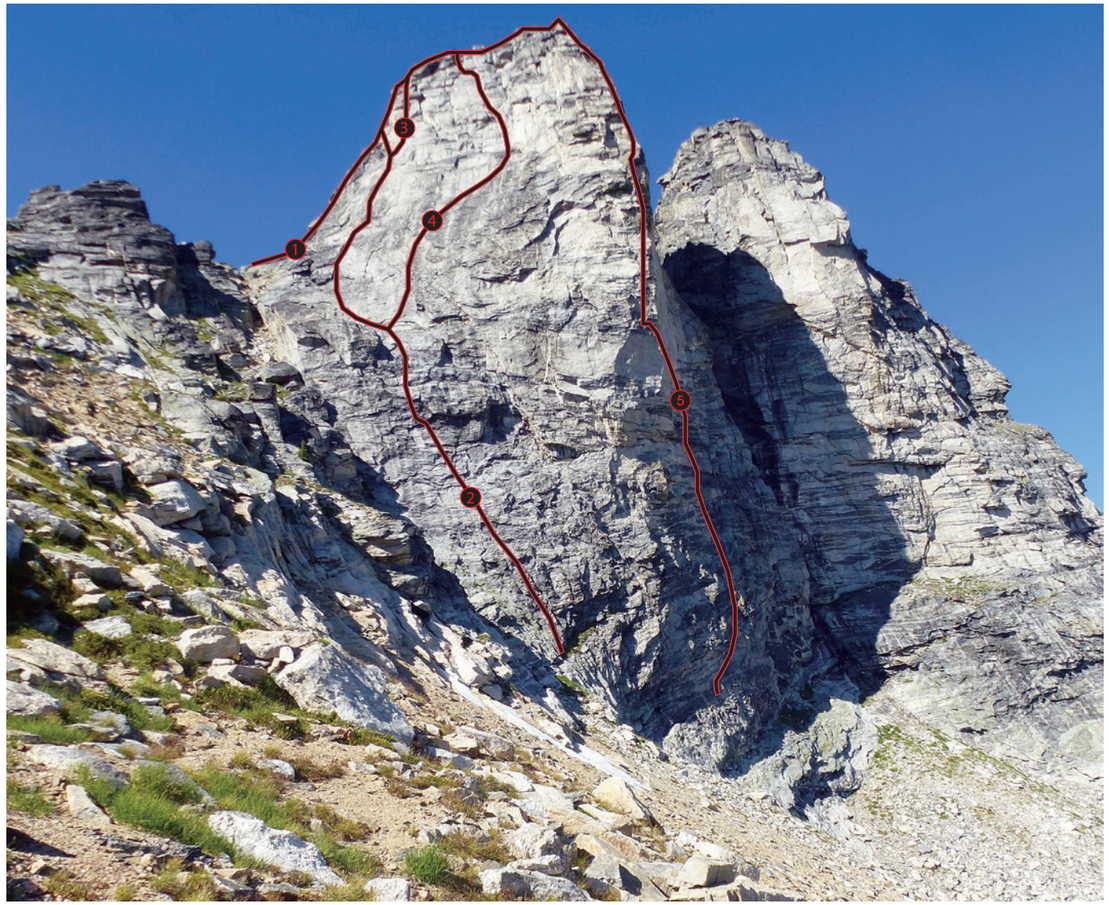
June and July were spent exploring new routes in the relatively easy-to-access Mulvey group. During that time, I made three visits to the south side of the West Wolf's Ear, establishing two new quality routes. Located in the headwaters of Robertson creek, this area is about a 2.5- to three-hour walk from the Gimli trailhead.

In early August, Jason Luthy and I made a successful four-day trip to the eastern section of the Devils Range, a remote sub-range in the central Valhallas. After a full-day hike/bushwhack from the Drinnan trailhead, we established our camp at 2,300 metres on beautiful rock slabs below the northwest face of Banshee Peak. From here, we climbed two interesting new routes: The Devil's Advocate on the northwest face of Banshee and Purgatory Ridge up the north ridge of Satan Peak.

The Devil's Advocate is located on the far-left side of the dramatic northwest face of Banshee Peak. We started about 50 metres right of the prominent banana-shaped couloir leading to the Banshee-Diablo col. The route follows a crack system on the left-hand side of the northwest face, leading directly to a large overhang halfway up the ridge line that defines the left side of the face. The upper route follows the ridge itself. It was a very good climb; however, many pitches were quite dirty with moss-filled cracks and black lichen.

Purgatory Ridge can be accessed via the Devils Spire-Satan Peak col or the Cariot-Banshee col. From our camp, we contoured around the base of Diablo's north ridge in an easterly direction to access Satan's north ridge. The route begins on the east side near the toe of the ridge on a slopping ledge above a short cliff at 2,210 metres. It is a great moderate route with decent rock and good views of surrounding peaks high above Evans Lake.

An underlying goal of all this Valhalla exploration is continuation of a long-term guidebook project that I am working on for this special and poorly charted mountain range.



The south face of West Wolf's Ear:
1) West Ridge
2) Helix
3) Antihelix
4) The Piercing
5) The Gift
Photo: David Lussier

Summary

Helix (D 5.8 or 5.10/11 via the Antihelix, 200m), south face, West Wolf's Ear, Valhallas, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Vince Hempsall, David Lussier, Troy Swanson, July 7, 2017.

Gear: Single set of cams from 0.2" to 3" (doubles from 0.4" to 4" for the direct finish or variation) and single set of nuts.

P1: 5.8, 45m. From the left-hand side of the grassy ramp, climb up low-angled flakes and slabs leading to a steepening quartz dyke. The upper section of this dyke system is compact and aesthetic, and is protected by two bolts and one piton. A two-bolt belay is located on a small ledge at 45 metres below the left-hand side of a narrow rectangular roof sporting orange lichen.

P2: 5.6, 30m. Climb up and left passing one bolt (seasonally wet) on steep featured rock. Continue up and right on easier ground towards the right hand of two (the shallower one) right-facing corners. Climb this short corner on good gear, and then up to a large sloping ledge

The Devil's Advocate on the northwest face of Banshee Peak. Photo: David Lussier

(loose rocks) and a two-bolt belay.

P3: 5.7, 45m. Traverse left nearly 10 metres, and climb a left-trending weakness on sparse gear (5.4) towards a shallow but well-defined right-facing corner halfway up. Gaining the corner is a little awkward (crux) but short-lived. Continue up the corner more easily on good rock to a spacious ledge and a two-bolt belay.

P4: 5.8, 45m. Climb straight up slabby ground above the belay, passing one bolt, towards an appealing vertical crack system. Follow this obvious weakness via a nice crack on excellent rock with good protection to another nice ledge with a two-bolt anchor.

P5: 5.3, 25m. Step left and follow a left-trending ramp, passing one piton, along a compact corner system to a two-bolt belay on the crest of the west ridge route. Two 30-metre variations—Antihelix Right (5.10) and Antihelix Left (5.11)—can be climbed above belay.

P6: 5.5, 30m. Climb the last pitch of the west-ridge route to a two-bolt anchor near the summit.

The Piercing (D 5.10, 200m), south face, West Wolf's Ear, Valhallas. FA: Jonas Furger, David Lussier, Yann Troutet, July 29, 2017.

Gear: Single set of cams from 0.2" to 4", doubles from 0.2" to 2", single set of nuts.

P1/2: Same as for Helix.

P3: 5.8, 50m. Climb the slab up and right, passing one bolt towards a long vertical left-facing corner and flake system. It is also possible to bump the belay to the right (under a roof) and climb the corner from the beginning. After 30 metres, the corner veers diagonally right to easier ground and a gear/sling belay below a small horizontal ledge.

P4: 5.6, 25m. A short, rambly pitch gives access to upper corners. Traverse right on ledges for about 10 metres then climb up 15 metres, passing a short steep step, to a gear belay on a spacious ledge at the base of the upper left-facing corner systems.

P5: 5.10c, 40m. Climb up and left, passing a few pitons, and gain the clean left-facing corner above. Stem, jam and layback the finger crack up the beautiful corner (one piton), passing a 5.10 crux at mid-height. Interesting moves past a final piton lead to a gear belay on the left side of a sloping ledge above the corner.

P6: 5.7, 15m. Climb the short, steep crack above the belay then trend right passing a loose ledge and eventually a short, steep wall to good gear-belay options near the summit.

The Devil's Advocate (D+ 5.10+, 325m), northwest face, Banshee Peak, Devils Range, Valhallas. FA: David Lussier, Jason Luthy, August 2, 2017.

Gear: Double set of cams from 0.25" to 3" with one 4" piece, and single set of nuts.

P1: 5.8, 40m. Cross the moat then climb flakes and a double crack system to a good ledge.

P2: 5.9, 30m. Climb a shallow, open-book corner with a thin crack to a ledge at the base of a large dihedral.

P3: 5.10-, 55m. Climb the long, right-facing corner using the righthand face and/or vegetated crack to a hanging belay above the corner. This is a long pitch, which would be ultra classic if it was clean.

P4/P5: 5.10-, 35m. Move the belay left about five metres (5.7) to the base of a left-facing corner. Climb the vegetated left-facing corner (5.10-) to a sloping mossy stance belay with one piton. Pitch three and four or pitch four and five may be combined with careful rope management.

P6: 5.10+, 35m. Continue up the corner with increasing difficulties. The left-facing corner becomes a right-facing corner with a steep bulge finish to a belay at a small ledge below the large overhang on the upper northeast ridge.

P7: 5.10+, 45m. Climb up and left via underclinging arching flakes on thin gear to a two-piton lowering anchor below the large roof. Lower down three to four metres (or downclimb) then swing left across a difficult slab section (or free climb at 5.10+ while trending down) past marginal protection and one piton to easier ground. Ascend back up and left until level with the left side of the big roof and belay on sloping ledges.

P8–11: 5.8, 150m. Climb up and right over 5.8 ground and gain the ridge. Follow it with great positions and generally good rock to the northeast summit of Banshee Peak.

Purgatory Ridge (D- 5.7, 450m), north ridge, Satan Peak, Devils Range, Valhallas. FA: David Lussier, Jason Luthy, August 3, 2017.

Gear: Single set of cams from 0.25" to 4", doubles from 0.75" to 3", and single set of nuts.

Scramble up 4th-class ramps (treed) for 50 metres to a narrow rope-up stance. Climb compact rock on the east side of the ridge for two pitches to gain the actual ridge. The first pitch features a short left-facing corner with a small roof. The second pitch tackles compact slabs and cracks up and right, leading to the ridge. Pitches three to 12 follow the crest of the ridge with increasing exposure while bypassing significant difficulties on the left side when required. Loose blocks are present here and there. The last two pitches along the narrowing crest leading to the summit are super fun and exposed.

The north ridge of Satan Peak follows the obvious sun-shade line. Photo: David Lussier

Bugaboo Triple Crown

Will Stanhope

IN AUGUST 2009, MATT SEGAL, Jason Kruk and I motored north from the Outdoor Retailer Show in Salt Lake City, loaded up on food in Invermere and marched into the Bugaboos intent on finding new free routes. Upon arriving, sweat-soaked and exhausted from the hike, we found plenty. We were like kids in a candy store. There was so much to do. And for the motivated few, there still is and always will be.

We hiked over into East Creek and set our sights on the un-freed west face of the Central Howser Tower. After a couple of tries, we did it. Kruk was really the man of the hour on that mission. He managed a cryptic 5.12+ slab traverse that cracked the code and allowed the route to go free. The route, Chocolate Fudge Brownie, was no joke, stacked with burly crack climbing and took us about 18 hours round trip.

The next year, I climbed the 1,000-metre North Howser Tower via All Along the Watchtower with Andrew Rennie. Somewhere along there, the idea of linking up the major west faces of the three towers free in a day crept in. Inspired by my heroes such as Peter Croft, Dave Schultz, Leo Houlding, Sean Leary, Tommy Caldwell and Dean Potter—all of whom have enchained multiple walls free in a day in Yosemite—the idea germinated that a similar link-up was possible in the alpine arena of the Bugaboos.

In 2013, on a blustery day, my girlfriend, Jo, and I climbed the South Howser via the eternally classic Beckey-Chouinard. Having completed all the pieces of the puzzle, I just needed to bide my time and find the right partner—specifically someone who was fast, safe and fun.

In January 2016, I sent Leo Houlding an email out of the blue with an image of the towers and spilt my guts to him. Given his busy schedule and young family, I didn't really think he'd be able to swing the trip. To my surprise and elation, he responded that he was most definitely in. The next summer we teamed up for a couple of weeks in the Bugs and climbed the Beckey-Chouinard, the Watchtower and a new free route on the Minaret. The trifecta, though, seemed intimidating, enormous and out of reach.

In August 2017, Leo and I arrived in the Bugaboos with a crew of psyched characters, including Waldo Etherington, Wilson Cutbirth and Adrian Samarra, to get some virtual reality footage of the Beckey-Chouinard and hopefully make a small film of the Bugaboos Triple Crown. I was feeling nervous beforehand at having convinced these guys to come to the Bugaboos to document a project that I truly didn't know was even feasible. But, as always, a little blind faith never hurts.

We ended up fixing the Central Tower essentially top to bottom to facilitate Micro Traxion training laps and to enable a fast descent. After two weeks, we were still on the fence as to whether it was remotely safe to climb the North Howser after climbing the Central. And then the Beckey-Chouinard on the South Tower after that? The sheer amount of hardcore simul-climbing was unnerving. We vowed to play as safe as possible and "stay on the right side of the wild line," as Leo put it.

On the evening of August 28, we saddled up at the East Creek bivy boulder and all took a nip of Captain Morgan's Spiced Rum, toasting a gorgeous sunset over the wild, uninhabited valley to the west.

The next day we awoke at 3:30 a.m., marched up to the base of the Central Howser and started climbing at dawn. After about five hours freeing grueling cracks, corners and the delicate 5.12+ slab, we reached the summit. Buoyed by our fast time, we zipped down our fixed lines to the base, guzzled some Red Bull and discussed

Will Stanhope on pitch eight (5.12-) of Chocolate Fudge Brownie on Central Howser Tower.
Photo: Adrian Samarra

dropping into the committing basin beneath North Howser. The approach to its base involves a handful of rappels followed by a mad dash across a bowling-alley snowfield that often gets bombarded by rockfall from above. And it was around high noon—the most dangerous part of the day. Plus, once we were on the route, retreating wouldn't be easy at all. With a few cracks in the armour, but feeling more or less OK, we nervously dropped into the basin and committed ourselves to the face.

The next few hours up the first half of the North Howser were the most demoralizing of the day for me—low angle, tedious climbing with a huge rack, and a heavy pack with water and crampons, all in the blazing afternoon sun. I was worried that this might have been a really bad (i.e. stupidly dangerous) idea. Luckily, Leo seemed to have hit his stride and playfully teased me out of my negative thoughts. This pattern repeated itself throughout the day—both of us riding the undulating waves of psyche with one of us picking up the slack when the other was feeling down.

Once the sun started to set, I instantly felt better just as we started up the centerpiece 200-metre, open-book corner of All Along the Watchtower. Just as it was getting dark, we both fired the powerful and footsy 5.12c crux pitch. With the redpoint crux of the day behind us, Leo took the lead and guided us through the technical maze of ridge climbing to the summit of the North Howser Tower.

After a technical descent and bergschrund hop, we looked at each other and asked, "Are we going to do the South Tower as well?" Though basically a formality at this point and nowhere near as hard as the Central and North, the Beckey-Chouinard is still a 15-pitch, 600-metre route. Back at camp, the boys had prepared some food for us and were visibly jazzed about our progress. Fueled by their psyche, and after some more caffeinated and electrolyte beverages, Captain Leo announced, "We leave in 15 minutes, yeah?!"

With the boys in tow, we marched to the base of the South Howser Tower. Around 3 a.m., when the talus turned to 5th-class terrain, we left them behind and took off in a simul-climbing blur of endless granite hand cracks, with Leo in the lead. At the "bivy ledge" a few pitches below the top, Leo groggily handed over the sharp end to me. It was my turn to take the reins, and I gunned it to just below the summit ridge as the sky turned from pitch black to a muted gray. At the top of the South Howser, with minutes to spare before the 24-hour mark, we gazed over at the Central and North Towers. The sky had turned a smoky orange due to the wildfires still blazing across B.C. The fatigue was strangely gone, and I was effused with boundless energy thanks to the sunrise. We shuffled down the rappels and arrived back at camp to another sip of Captain Morgan and hugs from the boys.

It took a few weeks for me to fully process our Bugaboos trip. In that time, one of my big toes remained numb, and I felt distant and dazed towards the world around me. Eventually, pure gratitude for the experience seeped in. The word "inspiration" is perhaps an overused cliché these days, but I'd like to extend a warm tip of the hat to our fallen friends, Sean "Stanley" Leary and Dean Potter, who, in no small way, helped spawn this idea. And thanks, of course, to Leo, who I've looked up to since I was a kid.

Riffing off the feats of my friends and heroes, and finding something new and original in a landscape I cherish so much, is about as good as it gets in my books.

Summary

The Bugaboo Triple Crown (the west faces of the Howser Towers free in a day): Chocolate Fudge Brownie (5.12+, 11 pitches) on Central Howser Tower; Spicy Red Beans to All Along the Watchtower (5.12, 34 pitches) on North Howser Tower; and Beckey-Chouinard (5.10, 15 pitches) on South Howser Tower. Leo Holding, Will Stanhope, 6:54 a.m. on August 29 to 6:30 a.m. on August 30, 2017.

Leo Houlding in the main corner (5.11) of All Along the Watchtower on North Howser Tower.
Photo: Waldo Etherington

Pain and Pleasure

Joshua Lavigne

Alik Berg stems up the central chimney (pitch six) to get around the first difficult aid pitch on Pain and Pleasure. Photo: Joshua Lavigne

WHEN YOU LOOK UP at the Central Howser Tower from the west, it looks like it is squashed between two bigger siblings. It is the runt of the family with the elegant and younger South Howser Tower on the right and the imposing older sister, North Howser Tower, on the left. The long sweeping buttresses to each side of the Central Howser leave it ignored and tucked away.

Originally attempted by Todd Offenbacher and Nils Davis, the two climbed to the top of the imposing headwall on the west face and turned around in a blizzard just short of the summit. The resulting free and aid route was named Fear and Desire and used three pendulums and some A3+ hooking to climb a direct line up the west face.

Sean Isaac and Brian Webster proceeded to add Chocolate Fudge Brownie via the same lower corner system shortly after in the summer of 1999, which became the first completed route on the west face. A decade later, it was freed by Jason Kruk, Matt Segal and Will Stanhope via the North Vancouver/Miami Variation—a sustained crack system reached by a slabby boulder problem. Their variation circumvented "The Pillar of Despair, Touch if You Dare" thus establishing a beautiful 500-metre free climb up an intimidatingly steep headwall.

I had attempted to free Chocolate Fudge Brownie with Simon Meis, unknowingly only a few days after the Vancouver/Miami crew had freed it. We retreated in a severe hail and lightening storm just two pitches from the top. I had wanted to return and try it again.

In 2017, Alik Berg and I had partnered up for some climbing in the Bugaboos. Mentored by his father, Alik is a younger climber and a solid trad master. His talent is immediately evident. Immaculate footwork, laser focus and stoic resolve during long run-outs. With Alik, our team would have a couple of extra cards up our sleeves.

We set out from Applebee campground early on August 22 with the intention to hike then climb as high as we could. We climbed through the crux tenth pitch then descended back to the East Creek bivy. Our weather window was small with only 48 hours, so we returned to the wall the next morning and launched for the top, knowing the first and second traverses were possible.

A slightly wet but sustained clean 5.11 section of climbing got us off the ground. At pitch four, a slight downclimb and traverse got us established in the massive central chimney that splits the upper headwalls. From here, our first variation was a 5.12a handrail on the overhanging left-hand sidewall of the gully. Once we exited the gully and did a short descending traverse left, the route reconnects with the original line and climbs up a continuous headwall, starting with a thin-hands splitter and leading into a series of off-width flakes.

The traverse at pitch 10 was the missing piece that really put the puzzle together. It traverses left across a blank headwall, avoiding overhanging flakes and an A3+ pitch, and connects a 200-metre corner system that eventually leads to the summit. Alik calmly climbed across this unprotected 5.10+ and continued up a series of flakes, shallow corner systems and overhangs climbing up and across this gem. The 10 metres of rope swooping out from the belay never slowed him down and the intricate gear just spurred him on.

The remaining four pitches to the top were steep and surprisingly clean. With an overhanging 5.11 roofed corner, we pushed to the summit and quickly found ourselves finishing our lunch in the lee of a boulder. With an additional free route on the Central Howser Tower, the so-called runt of the litter is slowly broadening her shoulders amongst her towering siblings.

Joshua Lavigne follows the traverse on pitch 10 of Pain and Pleasure. Photo: Alik Berg

Summary

Pain and Pleasure (5.12a, 600m), west face, Central Howser Tower, Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains. FFA: Alik Berg, Joshua Lavigne, August 24, 2017.

Tutti Frutti Summer Love

Vlad Capusan

I had been planning a trip from Europe to the Bugaboos for a long time, and together with my good friend Tom Schindfessel, we finally decided to go for it. Our goal was to climb as much as we could and fully enjoy our time in the mountains. We also had a major desire to climb a new line on the seldom-seen north face of Bugaboo Spire.

Tom Schindfessel on the upper section of Tutti Frutti Summer Love. Photo: Vlad Capusan

From Vancouver we travelled with 80 kilograms of food and gear and spent our first day and a half at the Bugs hauling gear to the Applebee campground. The result was one broken haulbag and two broken backs.

The weather was too good to waste time, so we spent the first two days getting warmed up on Sunshine and the first part of Sweet Silvia, both on Snowpatch Spire. We had the pleasure of meeting Kevin Jorgeson and Jacob Cook, who were there to free climb the Tom Egan Memorial Route.

We had trouble finding consistent information about the only two existing routes on the Bugaboo Spire's north face. We were surprised by the isolation and new-route potential on this face. After carefully studying the face, we identified a nice-looking line, but we weren't sure if it was feasible due to the apparent technical difficulties and the rock quality. We wanted to climb using only trad gear and no bolts.

On August 8 we started at first light, passing through the Bugaboo-Snowpatch Col, reaching the base of the face after seven hours. We started up the face capsule-style the same day. The wind steadily blew down the glacier, but other than that, the weather was perfect. Being a northern aspect, we did not see a lot of sun, but towards the evening we enjoyed the most beautiful sunsets across the Vowell Glacier.

We established our first camp on the first large ledge. From our camp, we continued climbing 50 metres to the left up the cleft between the ledge and the main pillar. The rock was unexpectedly clean with big flakes, and we enjoyed every pitch.

The next day, we followed a crack system with two difficult sections where we had to clean off-width cracks. This took us to the second ledge where we made our second bivouac. We quickly realized that the biggest problem was going to be water. The wall was extremely dry, so we knew that our multi-day climbing plan would need to be halved.

The north face of Bugaboo Spire:
1) North Face Direct
2) Tutti Frutti Summer Love
Photo: Marc Piché

On the third day, we woke up very early and pushed for the top with only the rack and a small haulbag. After 150 metres, we moved onto a beautiful golden face to the right of the corner system. We climbed thin cracks and small corners that connected upward through immaculate stone. Our tiny crack closed unexpectedly, forcing us to aid (A3) the section. We then followed some overhanging flakes, probably the most difficult climbing of the route. We managed to free climb it even though the rock was not very clean.

Towards the end of the long day, we reached the third ledge. From there we decided to push for the summit. The upper part of the wall seemed quite friable and loose, ready to shed its skin. We snuck past loose blocks like cats and reached the north summit at 7 p.m.

We struggled with stuck ropes while rappelling, so we finally ended up settling in for another bivy after 19 hours of climbing. Continuing the descent the next morning, we celebrated with a much-deserved bath in the nearby glacial lake. It was an amazing adventure, and I cannot wait to go back.

Summary

Tutti Frutti Summer Love (5.11+ A3, 600m, 16 pitches), north face, Bugaboo Spire, Purcell Mountains. FA: Vlad Capusan, Tom Schindfessel, August 8–11, 2017.

The Rockies

Remembering Fred

Kris Irwin

IT'S BECOMING LESS COMMON TO FIND high-quality pure trad mixed lines in the Canadian Rockies. The Rockies are far from being climbed out, but one has to look beyond what you can scope from any highway. Early fall is the best time to scout potential new routes before the snow gets too deep and the increase of avalanches makes ice and mixed climbing a higher-risk endeavour, or a major exercise in trail-breaking patience.

I recently took to trail and mountain running. The freedom of moving over sub-alpine and alpine terrain with little on your back is incredible. With a light pack, a pair of runners and a few provisions, it's amazing how much ground you can cover in a casual afternoon run. It's also a great opportunity to see new areas in a fraction of the time it would take to walk it. Early in October, while on one of these runs with Sherri Castiglione, I spotted a wet line in a break on a cliff above O'Brien Lake near Mount Bell, just north of Castle Junction. There was no visible snow or ice, just a wet streak, but I made a mental note to return in the fall to explore.

Busy work schedules prevented my good buddy John Price and I from sharing a rope all summer. On October 23, with some downtime in our schedules, we decided to check out that wet streak with low expectations.

"We might be taking the gear for a long walk JP, but hey it's only October," I said while running the plan by him.

As we approached O'Brien Lake, only 2.5 hours of easy walking from the car, we spotted a wild-looking slender pillar where that wet streak was three weeks earlier. It looked steep, but our plan was simple—go have a closer look.

That closer look turned into three pitches of high-quality mixed climbing on good quartzite rock. The pillar went down easier than we expected, but a light touch was needed on the early season ice formation. We got turned around attempting pitch four: a runout M5 with very little trustworthy protection. On the hike out, we made plans to return with a hand drill and a bolt or two to protect the fourth pitch.

Armed with a homemade hand drill (courtesy of Brian Spear), we returned on October 30 and felt more confident the route would go. I've hand drilled into limestone a few times and it feels like work, even with fresh arms, the best hammer

Kris Irwin on pitch six of Remembering Fred.
Photo: John Price

Remembering Fred.
Photo: John Price

and a good stance. My attempt at drilling one in quartzite while on lead and standing on a precarious ledge with a ground fall was futile. Instead, I hammered my tool into a thin piece of frozen dirt, clipped it to the rope and finished the pitch with my one remaining tool. I thought I was being creative, but John laughed at the probability of that tool holding anything but bodyweight.

John led us across a snow ledge to the base of a short chimney. Above that, two pitches of cracks and corners with excellent gear would take us to the top where we enjoyed the warm afternoon sun. Man hugs, howls and summit pictures were in order before the casual 1.5 hour walk off that brought us back to our packs at O'Brien Lake. Another beautiful day in mountain paradise with a good friend.

We named this climb after Fred Beckey, who passed away at the age of 94 after a long life lived in the mountains. He was one of the greatest climbers of all time and established many routes throughout the Canadian Rockies and around the world. I had the pleasure of spending time with Fred over the past 10 years. Climb on, Fred.

Summary

Remembering Fred (M6 WI5, 350m), Taylor Lake, Canadian Rockies. FA: Kris Irwin, John Price, October 30, 2017.

Approach: Park at Taylor Lake trailhead just off the Trans-Canada Highway a couple of kilometres north of Castle Junction. Just before Taylor Lake, approximately seven kilometres in, take the trail posted for O'Brien Lake and hike for another two kilometres. As you approach the lake, look up and left (south) and you'll see the skinny pillar that is the second pitch. Hike up the boulder field on the left near the end of the lake to access the start of the route. On the first ascent, we geared up at the lake to expedite our hike out after the walk off. It is a total of nine kilometres and 840 metres of elevation gain to the base. Most of the approach is on a good trail and takes three to 3.5 hours. Later in the year, consider skis or snowshoes.

John Price on the first pitch of Remembering Fred.
Photo: Kris Irwin

P1: WI3, 30m. Start from the bottom of the route or scramble up eight metres to a sheltered belay under a rock prow just right of the iced-up corner. Excellent climbing with good gear to a sheltered belay in an alcove next to the base of the skinny pillar.

P2: M6 WI5, 40m. Drytool directly above the belay to gain the pillar where it fattens up. Mix climb up the base of the next pillar and clip a few pins under a roof before launching up the upper part of the pillar. The belay is up and right just after topping out. Best pitch of the route and most of the climbing is on ice.

P3: WI3, 60m. Wallow up a short snow slope and into a sn'iced-up corner to another short snow slope. Another excellent pitch. From here, we bumped the belay up 25 metres, but there was nothing for a decent anchor. We hammered in a pecker for the belayer, and fortunately, the terrain is not steep there.

P4: M5R, 30m. From this pitch on there is no ice and the nature of the route changes. The climbing isn't hard, but the gear isn't very good on this pitch. Drytool up the corner on the left with some decent frozen moss sticks to gain the next snow slope. We left one piton at the belay up and left. You could go straight up from the belay into a shallow scoop, but we didn't explore this option. The gear might be better, but the climbing is steeper.

P5: 3rd class, 80m. Traverse the snow slope up and right approximately 80 metres to a solid belay just right of a blocky corner system. From here you can see the summit ridge 70 metres above. It looks like you could continue right into the next corner for a possible easier top-out.

P6: M5, 30m. Step left and into a short chimney with good gear and frozen mossed-up corners and cracks. A few options for gear belays exist.

P7: M6, 40m. Step left and follow corners and cracks with good gear to a small cornice exit. Belay off one of the huge quartzite boulders.

Descent: From the top, hike south to the pass between this peak and the adjacent peak, and hike down (right) low-angled slopes to the valley. This is the descent valley for Mount Bell and leads to O'Brien Lake. We walked the edges of the small frozen lakes to help avoid deeper trail-breaking in the forest. It took us 1.5 hours from the top of the climb to our bags at O'Brien Lake. You could rappel the route easily from the top of pitch four before the traverse.

Prodding the Beast

Tony McLane

SIPPING COFFEE UNDER a clear, calm sky soothed my apprehension after a long, restless night below the north face of Mount Geikie. The Lowe-Hannibal—750 metres of beautiful quartzite topped by 450 metres of icy mixed ground—was going to be my day. Apprehension began to ease as I sat on my pad watching the sun lift over the horizon, and fear of squandering a great opportunity with a premature retreat outweighed the anxiety.

I packed my bag: two ropes, a light rack, a stove, an ice screw, an ice tool, crampons, an air pad, a day's food and two days' worth of coffee. Harnessed up, I began the approach, eyes enthusiastically soaking up the details of the wall above. I roped up for the bergschrund. Getting from the snow to the rock had some tense moments dealing with sandy, loose insecurity.

For the next few hundred feet, I free-soloed cracks, chimneys and open face in rock shoes. The pack was on my back, and I tagged a rope behind me. Every so often, I'd pull it up and pile it on a ledge. Eventually the buttress steepened, and it was time to belay in pitches. The rock was of excellent quality—dark, purple and with good protection.

The next pitch took an abrupt turn to the right with a tension traverse off an old piton. This took a considerable amount of time and effort and tense work to climb out then reverse and clean the gear. I found myself on a large ledge and took off my harness for a rest. Taking stock of the terrain above, doubt began to creep in that I'd make the top that day. I discovered water, and happily sat drinking and soaking in the spectacular surroundings. I reached for my camera but discovered it was gone. The strap must have broken in one of the chimneys.

The Lowe-Hannibal on the north face of Mount Geike, soloed by Tony McLane. Photo: Marc Piché

The next few pitches passed with less effort and brought an end to the real difficulties. I swapped back to boots and scrambled through a few hundred feet of sandy ledges strewn with running water and patches of snow.

By then, the remaining daylight looked favourable, but I had already covered 900 metres and fatigue was building noticeably. Concern began to creep in at the chance of making a weakness-induced mistake.

The Lowe-Hannibal rose above through a maze of rock and ice couloirs, but I took aim for a broad buttress to the left that promised a dry rock passage to the summit. I didn't get far before I came upon an amazing flat ledge, and the decision to spend the night there was easy. I ate the rest of my food and settled in for a sleepless night without a sleeping bag. Squats and jumping jacks helped keep the cold away.

The morning sun was welcomed with black coffee and rising spirits. The summit was only a couple of hundred metres away. The final pitches wove a convoluted path through an unnerving world of dubiously stacked blocks and wet patches. I stood on the summit only to immediately lie down in the hot morning sun and brew what I would later discover to my horror was my last coffee packet.

I spent several tiring hours descending the west face then hiking back around to the north side of the mountain. I breathed a sigh of relief as I walked down the final scree slope leading to the valley, its grass and water as welcoming as ever. I walked away with a sense of having prodded a great beast and slipping away unnoticed.

Summary

Solo ascent of Lowe-Hannibal (VI 5.11a A2, 1200m), north face, Mount Geikie, Canadian Rockies. Tony McLane, August 8–9, 2017.

Jeannette Peak

Pascale Marceau

THERE ARE UNCLIMBED MOUNTAINS in the Rockies? And only 45 kilometres from Valemount and Jasper? Exploration can still be had? A year ago, on a road trip through northern British Columbia while checking out potential places to live, we landed in Valemount. A few months later, when researching potential climbing projects, Jeannette Peak caught my eye. It was at the top of the list of unclimbed peaks in B.C. due to its ultra-prominence and location right out of Valemount, and that's what landed it on our "someday" list.

Almost exactly a year later, upon Lonnie's return from an attempt to solo Mount Hunter in Alaska, the explorer was not satisfied with simply hitting the ice crags around Canmore, so up popped Jeannette. A bit of research revealed that the mountain was unofficially named after the ill-fated USS Jeannette, an arctic exploration ship that became trapped in the ice from 1879 to 1881. Although the ship ultimately succumbed to the pressures of freeze-up, the 33 crew survived the sinking, but 20 died later while sailing towards land. It was believed that with their ship trapped in the winter sea ice, polar explorers could use the ocean-current drift to traverse across the Pole. As a young explorer, while researching sea-ice drift for his North Pole expedition, Lonnie read *The Voyage of the Jeannette* by George W. De Long. Climbing Jeannette Peak seemed a fitting coincidence given his polar exploration background. As it stands, the mountain has no officially registered name, but it may have a First Nations name, which we are currently investigating.

Within a week, after a thorough combing of topographic maps and Google Earth, we were in Valemount at the Robson Helimagic helipad with laminated printouts in hand. Ski-in and snowmobile options had to be abandoned due to inherent overhead hazards in getting to the base of the climb.

The 10,000-footer stand-alone mountain has remained unclimbed until now, likely due to its narrow avalanche-prone valleys and a perimeter of knife-edge mountains at its base. Jeannette's upper ridges are also in a horseshoe ring holding a significant plateau glacier. This cool geographical feature and its prominence sure make it stand out among neighbouring peaks.

The research is one of the best parts of any exploratory project. Aside from two sentences on Bivouac.com, and with nothing in journals or on Google searches, we had to explore—in the greatest sense of the word—our own potential routes for this peak. However, with that unknown also came a certain anxiety about the flash decisions that needed to be made during a brief 10-minute fly-over regarding which route to tackle based on options A through C scribbled on our printouts while also considering a safe place to land. None of our planned routes materialized. The projected west ridge was knife-edge and loaded with challenging rock pillars, and the northeast slope was a huge avalanche bowl. Google Earth had sandbagged us—things sure didn't look the same in real life as they had on that computer screen.

Just when we were about to return home without even landing, we saw a potential approach and a safe landing zone at treeline. Overhead hazards were present, but snowpack conditions were relatively stable, so we went for it. We tackled the mountain from the northwest glacier side and found some potential options that did not previously appear feasible on our Google Earth research—go figure!

With the arrival of the first spring thaw, a recent avalanche cycle and friends being caught in an avalanche the previous day, we had avalanche hazard at the forefront of our mind and were on edge the entire trip. That moment when we were dropped off and the chopper flew away was priceless. What a special feeling to know that we may be one of few, if any, to ever be in this high mountain valley. The stillness and the reality of the task at hand really hits you—the excitement of chasing a unique objective

Lonnie Dupre on the north ridge during the first attempt to climb Jeannette Peak.
Photo: Pascale Marceau

where almost everything is unknown. How can one not be addicted to exploration?

Day one was fantastic. We worked our way east up the valley and camped at the col at 2,745 metres, which would make our summit day an easy 300-metre push. With such great progress we went to sleep in high spirits. We felt like we had Jeannette in the bag. Of course, that was not to be.

In the morning, we progressed south up a narrowing snow slope onto the ridge, carefully navigating rotten snow wells around rock outcrops. Lonnie's leg broke through a cornice—a sobering reminder of the inherent dangers of mountaineering. At 2,940 metres, a surprise crux came into view, an intimidating steep slope on questionable snow followed by a technical rock pitch. In the brisk wind, we assessed the crux and decided to bail. We were just 120 vertical metres from the summit. With the avalanche risk still high in our minds, we were worried that the slope would slide.

During our climb up the valley, we had spotted a snow ramp onto the glacier. It re-energized us and we headed down to that. Armed with snow-picket anchors, Lonnie headed out on belay, but ultimately we called it on this approach too. The avalanche risk was simply not worth the consequence. Heavy wind slab was resting on facets with a cliff below.

Back down the valley, we went towards our landing spot to set up camp. On the flight in, Lonnie remembered seeing a possible way up a snow slope that appeared to lead onto the glacier parallel to the west ridge, so that became the plan for the next morning. We were once again optimistic and driven by the excitement of exploration; of pioneering routes on an unclimbed peak but still very on edge about avalanches.

Lonnie spotted some animal tracks down near our landing area where we had stashed some extra food and fuel. I dismissed it as a snowball pinwheeling down the slope making tracks, but he was insistent that it was an animal. As we got closer, we were amazed that it was indeed wolverine paw prints. We were even more surprised that the wolverine had not clawed into our duffle of food. We named our base camp Wolverine Camp (2,005 metres).

On day three, we headed up the snow ramp on heightened alert for snowpack conditions. We chose to hug a rock band to stay clear of steeper, more avalanche-prone slopes but that exposed us to some overhead cornices. Luckily, we were on a cooler northern aspect and the cornices were not yet sunbaked. Finally, the moment came. We crested that last steep slope and were rewarded with a vast glacier and Jeannette's summit, far away on an involved ridge walk.

Though the terrain did not present any apparent show-stopping difficulties, it was a long way away. It was noon and a forecasted storm was clearly rolling in. Lighting was flat so not great for navigating crevasses. We'd gone fast and light, hoping for good weather that was not to be. It was not the route that stopped us this time but rather a culmination of circumstances. We did not have enough energy or food to weather the storm and try again afterward, knowing the storm could potentially deposit enough snow to force further delay as we waited for the avalanche cycle to calm.

Once the decision was made, things moved fast. We hoofed it down to ensure we could get picked up that afternoon. Exhausted from our three valiant attempts, the roller coaster of highs and lows, days of decision making and terrain assessment, worrying about avalanches, and soaking up sun and wind, we were ready to go home.

Now armed with exceptional route beta, we knew we could get her. The only questions was how long until we turn around and go back for seconds.

We were lucky to have the flexibility to wait for another weather window for our second try. Two weeks later—as a team of three with good friend and mountaineer Vern Stice added to the adventure—we headed back in.

Our plan was to bring all of our gear for a high camp just in case the route was not as straight forward as we'd hoped. Landing once again at Wolverine Camp, we started up the snow slope in cold winter conditions. We reached our high camp and named it Shark Fin Camp (2,663 metres) for its obvious feature. We put up our camp in a spot relatively free from cornice fall and avalanche runouts and promptly set out towards the summit. The west ridge looked snowy enough to attempt, thereby avoiding our original plan to climb a few pitches up the summit's northwest ice face.

Soon we were detoured by an icefall and chose to gain the ridge sooner rather than later, fully expecting some rock crux to turn us around. At every little rock high point, we were delighted to find a way around. The thrill of exploring a new route was super high at this point.

Jeannette has two small summit plateaus. Unsure which was the actual summit, we went to both. We determined that the east summit was slightly higher. On April 2, 2018, at 5:10 p.m., we reached the summit of Jeannette Peak (3,089 metres) via the northwest shoulder and west ridge. With a cold wind nipping at face and hands, summit celebrations were brief. We only spent 15 minutes at the summit eyeing a sea of lower neighbouring peaks in all directions. The clouds were rolling in fast as forecasted.

The north-ridge route could be made by a good team looking for a challenge. We would recommend it be done in good snow conditions with at least two snow pickets, some rock pro and possibly a couple of ice screws. We could not see well beyond the crux, but one should be prepared for 200 metres of jagged ridge. Our estimate is a likely alpine grade D. Both routes would likely be more challenging during summer months when there is little to no snow.

Shark Fin camp on the north shoulder of the west ridge of Jeannette Peak.
Photo: Pascale Marceau

As goes with all exploration, there are multiple failures before success can be attained. In the excitement of pioneering this unclimbed mountain, we played through a wide range of emotions. Projects always seem easier after they are completed, once the unknown is known. We spent a year researching and planning for this climb and were prepared for serious mountaineering.

Summary

West ridge (PD, 1085m), Jeannette Peak (3089m), Selwyn Range, Canadian Rockies. FA: Lonnie Dupre, Pascale Marceau, Vern Stice, April 2, 2018.

The Manhole

Raphael Slawinski

FOR YEARS, EVERY TIME I DROVE down the Smith-Dorrien Trail in the fall, my eyes would be drawn to the squat shape of the The Fist. My imagination filled the dark gash on its northeast face with ice, but reality, as seen through binoculars, appeared to be the usual Rockies fare of loose snow over dry rock. It didn't help that those who ventured for a closer look came back with tales of unprotectable compact rock. Tellingly, none of them returned for another go. But in the middle of last October, with the weather too crappy for rock but still too warm for ice, Alik Berg and I decided to finally make up our own minds about the infamous, if obscure, gash.

With the aforementioned compact rock in mind, we came armed with technology to tame excessive runouts. Imagine our shame when we topped out on the first pitch only to find an old gear anchor. We consoled ourselves with the thought that whoever had left it probably enjoyed at least a smattering of ice where we scratched up rock and moss. That, or they had bigger cojones. [Editor's note: Rob Owens led this first pitch with Sean Isaac in 2004.]

The second pitch started out overhanging, but bomber hooks and gear made for moderate climbing. After a few body lengths, the rock petered out into a fat snow ledge below the upper chimney. And the chimney looked far better than expected, which perhaps said more about our low expectations than the quality of said chimney.

Be that as it may, it gave excellent climbing on blocky but not loose rock. Granted, there wasn't a lick of ice anywhere, but the snowed-up rock with the occasional bit of turf had a downright Scottish flavour. Well, maybe except for the bolts. For once, pitches that looked desperate from below proved easier than expected on closer acquaintance. And how often does that happen?

Higher up, we entered the guts of the gash, in places climbing in the twilight under giant chockstones. The only thing that detracted somewhat from the enjoyment was the haulbag full of hardware we'd brought—expecting an epic struggle—but never used. The westerlies howled overhead, occasionally sending clouds of spindrift down the gash. In its depths, though, we stayed reasonably sheltered. And at least we didn't have a loaded snow slope overhead.

We topped out from the gully just in time to enjoy the last rays of the sun setting over the early winter Rockies. Like alpinists of old, we didn't immediately start down the other side but scrambled up to the summit proper. It helped that it was only five minutes away. The headlamps didn't come out until we'd returned to our packs at the base.

Summary

The Manhole (M5, 300m), northeast face, The Fist, Canadian Rockies. FA: Alik Berg, Raphael Slawinski, October 15, 2017.

Approach: Hike to Tryst Lake and up the scree slope to the base (two hours).

Gear: Cams from #0.1 to #4 Camalot with doubles of #1 and #2, a few nuts and pitons and a 60-m rope (if you're planning to walk off).

Route: The route is climbed in seven pitches. The first four pitches have climbing up to M5, and then the terrain becomes more moderate. The first three pitches have bolted stations.

Descent: From the top of the route, it's possible to go down the gully in front of you, but it's better to go through a small notch to the next gully to the right (north). The summit is five minutes away. After visiting it, scramble down the gully to a col. From the col, contour right (north) and eventually back to the base of the route (one hour).

Alik Berg on the upper pitches of The Manhole.
Photo: Raphael Slawinski

Big-Wall Sportaineering

Tyler Kirkland

JUNE 20, 2017, WAS A MOST splendid day in the mountains with one of my best friends. Mark Carlson and I have shared countless joyous moments together in those hills and on those walls, but that day had a particular sweetness to it. We had finally made a full redpoint ascent of our 21-pitch project after nearly 40 days of effort over 16 months.

This obsession for me started many years ago. The route is on a cliff that is neither remote nor obscure. It has been catching my eye every time I enter the mountains travelling west from Calgary, since I first began exploring these cliffs and summits as a young man. Most climbers in the Bow Valley have heard of Yamnuska and have likely stood atop that iconic mountain, but its neighbour to the southwest, Goat Mountain, is in my opinion, the real gem. The Goat Wall and Goat Buttress share a col on the west end of Yamnuska. When the sunrise hits this southeast-facing wall of Goat Mountain, it accentuates the spire-like buttress, creating a very alluring view. This view has continually inspired me over the years, always dreaming of finding my way up onto that aesthetic wall while knowing that there is no simple or easy way. I knew I would have to gain many skills and much strength before I could realize this dream.

The Bow Valley Rock guidebook describes the wall as steep and compact with little natural protection, making the existing routes on the wall serious undertakings that are rarely repeated and obviously no place for novices. As years of gaining skills and strength passed, I could no longer resist—the wall had been on my mind for far too long. I began more serious research of the existing lines, trying to gather information from anyone who has been up there. Peter Gatzsch is the only person known to have climbed every route on the wall. Having made many of the first ascents, he seemed like the best source of information. When I started quizzing Peter, he was very excited that someone else had interest in Goat Wall and suggested many of his routes were still waiting for second ascents. So why are these routes not getting any traffic I wondered? As I gathered more opinions from others who had ventured onto the wall or know Peter, I began to realize why this wall was not receiving the same amount of attention as Yamnuska, which is literally less than half a kilometre away. Peter's grading structure is a three-part system: 5.9, hard 5.9 and freaking hard 5.9. That translates to 5.10, 5.11 and 5.12 by modern grades. Peter is also known for "not wasting" bolts on easy climbing. He explained to me how his drill yields 20 bolts per battery, and his routes often went up in one or two days, so none of his routes will have more than 40 bolts, with the majority being reserved for belays. Doing the simple math would suggest for success on Peter's routes one would have to be keen on very long runouts on sometimes loose rock. In addition, there is no easy walk off from this cliff with the only descent options being somewhat complex and time-consuming.

Needless to say, most climbers are not as hardy as Peter, and that is possibly why his routes have gone unrepeated. There is of course the classic Goat Buttress, first climbed in 1977 by Chris Perry and Trevor Jones, but that route also has a reputation of loose rock, runouts and poor protection. With the existing "old school" routes seeming less than attractive to me, I began to recall the guidebook's mention of the possibility of new routes on Goat Wall with "modern ethics regarding bolt protection." The more research I did, the more a new modern-style route became an enticing idea.

Mark and I have been developing new rock routes for a few years, so we already had practice in most skills required for such a task. When I proposed climbing a new route up Goat Wall, Mark was instantly on board. After much time looking through binoculars studying the wall, we found the face immediately right of the buttress to be the most seductive. With a line in mind, an

Tyler Kirkland traverses diagonal bands on pitch 11 of Fluffy Goat. Photo: Dan Kim

enthusiastic partner and having positioned myself free to indulge in a year without any real job, it was obvious the time for a large-scale project had arrived.

February 2016 was abnormally warm in the Bow Valley and with much excitement for the project, I started working out the approach and caching gear. The first hike up to the cliff was rather demoralizing and had me second-guessing the whole plan. More than three hours of GPS navigating over logs, side-hilling washouts and scrambling up mossy rock bands was not encouraging. Maybe the cliff is too far, too tall, too steep and too lose. Maybe that is why no one seems to go there. Luckily, any time I second-guessed if this goal was best left as a dream, my motivation was quickly rejuvenated with a quick glance back at the towering buttress and the perfect wall beside. With persistence and clever route finding, we eventually weaved a path that avoided the worst terrain and shaved the hike down to one hour and 45 minutes.

With a trail to the cliff, a bucket of gear at the base and stoke now raging, we made the first foray up onto the wall in the beginning of March. Feeling heavy with a rack of cams, nuts, hammer, drill and bolt hardware, we quickly climbed the first 120 metres of lower-angled rock. At that point, the wall quickly reared up steep and overhanging. Our quick pace was halted. We had hoped for many speedy gear placements, but, as warned, the wall is very compact, so drilling holes and placing bolts for protection and belays was our only option for trustworthy anchorage to the cliff. Drilling holes and placing bolts while free climbing on lead was going fast on easier

Tyler Kirkland on pitch 18 of Fluffy Goat.
Photo: Dan Kim

ground, but it quickly became painfully slow A0 as the climbing became more difficult. Etrier ladders, fifi hooks and quarter-inch aid bolts proved much more useful than cams and nuts on the compact rock.

Each visit would see us free climbing up to our previous high point with backpacks full of bolts and hangers, and then pushing the route a little higher and rappelling off at the end of each day. By the time we were up 10 pitches—barely halfway—we had a 16-hour day from the car but only managed a few hours of real progress before heading down. This strategy was no longer efficient for such a long route, and big-wall tactics were in order. With the help of many friends, about 600 metres of rope got lugged up and fixed for ascending. With the ropes fixed, we could quickly jug up to our previous high point and carry on with upward progress. Each lead would take two to three hours. The leader would turn on some music, often to mask the sound of thunder that was ever present that spring, and set off searching for handholds and solid stone in the steep limestone yonder. The belayer would often nestle into the haul bag, being woken up for more slack every so often and occasionally having to swing out of the path of chossy trickling from above. Each time we jugged up the lines and every pitch higher, we could see our efficiency improve. We had inadvertently become aid climbers, but this was only a temporary means to find the best free climbing.

After a busy spring, often on the wall three or four days a week in June, we made the top of the route on Canada Day. Lightning and thunder danced in the prairies only a few kilometres away as the hordes of people on the summit of Yamnuska likely wondered why there was so much yodeling and hollering coming from the seemingly vacant wall to the southwest. We were indeed very excited to have found our way to the top of the wall for our first time. There was worry that we would be foiled by loose rock and blank faces, but with a willingness to fail trying, we were greatly rewarded in the end. However, despite having reached the top, there was much work that still remained before we could make a free ascent of our line.

That summer in the Bow Valley was rather rainy, so we did not make it back onto the wall until September. With so few gear placements over the 600-metre route, it now seemed reasonable to fully bolt it and prune it into proper sport-climbing shape. This plan lead to several days of jugging to the top of the route and rappelling with crow bars and hammers, scaling away thousands of kilograms of dangling death blocks and exfoliating flakes. We removed all the aid bolts and installed the permanent three-eighths stainless-steel bolts for free climbing. The route was ready for free climbing just as winter arrived, so the project would have to wait until the next season. After so much jugging, I was in need of a winter of training before I would have the strength to pull off such an ascent anyhow.

With the route as my mantra, I was motivated all winter long. I gave up my normal spring skiing to head south and get an early start to the rock-climbing season to ensure I was strong and ready as soon as the wall emerged from winter. This project was at my limit and I would have to work hard if I wanted a chance at making it up. The moment the route was snow-free, I was up there rope-soloing laps on the fixed lines to dial in beta and gain endurance while rehearsing the intricate and cryptic sequences. To take some performance pressure off, Mark and I spent several sessions redpointing just a few pitches each day, eventually redpointing every pitch on the route. We would jug up to that day's pitches and have a nice cragging day up high on a big wall.

After a couple of weeks of "training" on the route, we were feeling psyched and ready for a full one-day free ascent. After a couple of rest days, we hiked up to the wall the night before to ensure a fresh start early the next morning. We started up the wall as the first morning sun kissed it. With finesse and grace, we flowed up the puzzle of limestone, smiling and savouring the hundreds of hours of effort now culminating into one sensational and satisfying day. The blissful ascent lasted for almost 10 hours before we once again stood atop the cliff greeted by a mist of rain. This long journey was complete, and we could really celebrate now.

Mark Carlson on pitch 20 of Fluffy Goat.
Photo: Dan Kim

This route is a very modern addition to a wall historically known for serious traditional climbing, and is very fluffy by Goat Wall standards. However, as one of the longest multi-pitch sport climbs in Canada, it is sure to lure many to this forgotten gem.

Summary

Fluffy Goat (5.11b/c, 600m, 21 pitches), Goat Wall, Canadian Rockies. FA: Mark Carlson, Tyler Kirkland, July 1, 2016. FFA: Mark Carlson, Tyler Kirkland, June 20, 2017.

Apollo Mission

Mark Klassen

I HAVE A LOVE-HATE RELATIONSHIP with Rockies' limestone climbing. On one hand, there is a lot of rock, and it is located in one of the most beautiful places on earth. On the other, so much of it seems inaccessible. If you head for the features that are protectable by the traditional methods of piton, nut and cam, you are likely to encounter rubble and the inherent unpleasantness that it entails. If you gun for the good stone on the less-featured faces, you often deal with runouts and mediocre belay anchors.

I started climbing in the Bow Valley in the mid-1980s, and at that time there were a handful of multi-pitch routes that had decent rock, protection and anchors. Of course, there were other climbs that had good movement on solid rock, but due to their runout nature (often on old, rusted pitons), there was an element of risk to them that you didn't often find on multi-pitch test pieces in the other areas we road-tripped to during that era—such as Squamish, Leavenworth, Yosemite and Colorado. As time went on, a few more routes began to feel accessible due to climber traffic slowly cleaning off the worst of the loose rock and bolts replacing fixed pins.

Mike Stuart on pitch seven of Apollo. Photo: Mark Klassen

As we moved into the '90s, sport-climbing tactics began being utilized to tackle a few of the blanker faces, but these were few and far between and often created routes in the harder grades. I quit chasing hard sport-climbing grades at the crags and runouts on the traditional routes a long time ago. As we moved into the 2000s, there were still relatively few routes to climb for a normal Joe like me, considering the amount of available rock.

In 2011, bored with repeating climbs, I decided to explore beyond some of the traditional venues. I started with two thoughts: to accelerate the process of cleaning a route by doing on the first ascent what often takes years to accomplish with climbing traffic, and to ensure reasonable spacing of protection and safe anchor locations on moderate multi-pitch climbs.

That fall, Todd Anthony-Malone and I established Aftonroe on Guides Rock (5.7, 8 pitches). A few weeks later Kris Irwin, Conrad Janzen and I climbed Rundlehorn on Mount Rundle (5.5, 11 pitches). Little did we know that both these climbs would immediately become some of the busiest routes in the Bow Valley, with lineups at the base being a regular occurrence. These routes were established ground up, although on Aftonroe, we sometimes climbed easier or more-protectable rock to the side to work some of the pitches from above. Rappel descents are required for both.

In 2012 and 2013, several of us worked on The Raven crag on Sulphur Mountain, with Plutonian Shores (5.9, 7 pitches) and Lost Lenore (5.10d, 7 pitches) being the result. Audrey Hébert, Conrad Janzen, Greg Golovach, Ken Bélanger, Kris Irwin, Mike Stewart and Tom Wolfe all spent time on these routes. Both of these routes were first worked top down due to the nature of the cliff. The descent is a simple walk-off.

After those routes, I wanted to move into more of an alpine environment, so in fall 2013 and summer 2014, we started on the west face of the south peak of Mount Cory. In addition to the first route on the face, Cory Crack (5.7, Gmoser/MacKenzie, 1960), climbers have wandered around on this wall for years. I had previously climbed a line on it that utilized some old, widely spaced fixed pitons without much else for protection or anchors. It had avoided much of the good rock. With some exploring, we came up with Mountaineer's Route (5.8, or 5.7 via the French Connection variation, 10 pitches). This winds back and forth across the chimney system of Cory Crack. From the top of the pitched climbing, half an hour of 3rd-class scrambling takes you up to a nice summit and a hiking descent.

Another feature on Cory that intrigued me was Moss Crack. Graded 5.6 at some point in the fog of history, the route came to be described as climbing a prominent right-facing corner on the lower part of the face. Having attempted that corner and retreating due to difficulty and poor protection, I was quite sure it was not 5.6. Reading the first ascent description in the 1970 edition of the *CAJ* showed that indeed John Moss did not mention ascending that corner but instead climbed the crack to its right. This leads me to believe that Moss Crack (5.6, Moss/Steenkamp, 1969) and Arboreal Delight (5.5, Pilkington/Smith, 1971) are the same climb. My friend Geoff Thornton-Trump climbed the difficult corner in the 80s (thinking it was Moss Crack), but other than that, any information on early ascents of the feature is unknown. We incorporated this corner into Hoka Hey (5.9, 9 pitches). This climb includes five pitches where cams are required and has the same scramble to the summit. The descent is also the same walk-off as Mountaineer's Route. I feel Hoka Hey has the highest quality climbing of the routes we have established in the area.

Ian Jackson, Conrad Janzen, Dani Loewenstein, Steve Patten, Larry Stanier, Mike Trehearne and Simon Trudel worked on these routes, with pitches established in a combination of bottom up and top down.

After these climbs, I decided to gain even more elevation. While working as a ski patroller at the

Lake Louise ski area in the ’90s, on every clear day I had looked at Mount Hector and often wondered what the rock was like on the south ridge. In 2014, I finally got a close view of it when I skied to the base, and it looked good enough to warrant further investigation (it’s also a good corn-snow run down).

Preoccupied with Cory, I didn’t get onto Hector until 2015. There is a beautiful approach hike through open forest, meadows, boulders and an exposed ridgeline—but, it is three hours long. The first pitch starts at 3,000 metres. This combination meant that willing partners and appropriate weather days were in short supply. Regardless, three days of work and two partners later, we were four pitches up before fall caught up to us.

The summer of 2016 was a cold one and the three days I spent on the route were difficult. Hand warmers in the chalk bag and moving slowly were the order of the season and only one more pitch was established. In the end, I diverted my attention to another project I had scoped the previous fall—The Finger, a prominent spire in the Sawback Range between Banff and Castle Junction.

I had climbed the Board Route on this peak during a guide exam in 1993. Loose rock, poor anchors and a terrible descent did not have me hankering to go back anytime soon. Yet I did remember one stellar pitch on the edge of the bedding plane that constituted the summit ridge, and I wondered if that could be linked to similar features lower. A hike to the south side of the peak on a cold day in 2015 sadly disabused me of this idea.

A few weeks later, I went to look at a cliff called Bumpers Buttress. Not seeing much of interest there, I turned around to walk out when I realized that I was beneath the north ridge of The Finger, and it looked appealing. A couple of hours later, I was about two-thirds of the way up the route. The ridge was a continuation of the bedding plane that I had climbed on years before and was composed of mostly solid, grey limestone. I climbed back down with the intention of returning someday. So when it became apparent that 2016 was too cold for Hector, we established Napsihu Ridge on The Finger instead (5.8, 12 pitches plus scrambling sections).

I feel this climb is as good as the Kain Route on Mount Louis. Tim Johnson, Margie Smith and Larry Stanier put time in on this one, and we established it ground up, with a deviation on easier terrain to the side on the lower section in order to work the first steep step from above. A rack of cams is required, and the descent is made with 11 rappels and some downclimbing.

In 2017, we finally finished the Hector route. Three more days, including a hot and windless summit day, were required to establish the final five pitches. Apollo (5.9+, 10 pitches plus some scrambling sections) is my favourite of them all. A variety of rock types require different climbing styles. There are vertical grey walls with crimps, yellow dolomite jugs with good cam placements, a steep stemming corner and a perfect hand crack at nearly 3,400 metres. This is all set in a high-alpine, wilderness environment with stellar views in every direction. There is some mandatory loose rock, but with good protection points these sections don’t feel too bad.

Aaron Beardmore, Marco Deleselle, Carla Demyen, Tim Johnson, Margie Smith and Mike Stuart worked on this climb. It was established ground up, with pitches three and five being bypassed on easier ground to enable coming into them from above. A rack of cams is required. The descent consists of 17 rappels.

With a discerning eye and a willingness to put in a lot of hard work, the rock climbing in the Rockies now seems to me to be nearly limitless. However, after watching what has happened with many of the routes we have created, I do have some misgivings. We have caused considerable human traffic in areas where there was little before. When initially working on these cliffs, we were always alone, but now that the routes have become established, it is harder to find that same solitude. Not only does this affect the human experience of the climb, I wonder how it affects wildlife. Initially, I was hoping to spread climbers out from the standard routes of the day, but what has happened instead is that people are concentrated in new places where they hadn’t previously gone to.

Apollo ascends the righthand skyline ridge on Mount Hector. Photo: David P. Jones

I think back to the days when I was younger, bolder—quiet days on Yamnuska with my partner, the only other person I would see all day, working my way up grey limestone faces with the rope a clean arc to the last piece of pro many metres below. The new routes—especially the ones where we are establishing pitches on lead with racks of gear and a drill hanging off the harness while launching into unknown terrain with no one else around—have much of the same feel as that. But as soon as the route is completed, that feeling is replaced with something different—more sheer fun but less commitment, more human interactions but less wilderness, more psyched but less psyched-out.

Which experience is better? Maybe neither. Maybe both.

Summary

Apollo (5.9+, 10 pitches), southwest ridge, Mt. Hector (3394m), Canadian Rockies. FA: Aaron Beardmore, Marco Deleselle, Carla Demyen, Tim Johnson, Mark Klassen, Margie Smith, Mike Stuart, September 6, 2017.

Suntori Integral

Raphael Slawinski

Raphael Slawinski on the snow slope above Stairway to Heaven. Suntori continues up the left-hand ice smears. The right-hand curtain is the unformed Living in Paradise. The middle ice is unclimbed.
Photo: Alik Berg

THE STEEP GULLY, HEMMED in by walls of featureless limestone, opened up into a small snowfield, but higher up, it necked down again. As the beam of my headlamp swept up the nearly vertical chimney, instead of the hoped-for snow bowl, it revealed nothing but blank, bulging rock walls. I'd led us into a dead end.

Traversing to a snow arête bordering the gully on the right, crampons scratching on rock under a thin covering of snow, I looked down into another couloir. It seemed more open than the one I'd been following. Maybe it was the right one? I traversed back into the dead-end gully and pounded in a knifeblade. Adding a stubby screw, I shouted down, "Secure!"

A few minutes later, a headlamp appeared below and soon thereafter, Alik himself. After a brief discussion of our options, he tensioned over and down into the other gully. Removing the screw and leaving a carabiner on the piton, I followed, the jury-rigged top-rope cutting into the faceted snow of the arête separating the gullies. After pulling the rope and retying in, I continued my lead block. Some hard snow, a step of thick ice and a vast snow bowl opened above me, more guessed at than seen in the darkness.

MOUNT WILSON IS TO ROCKIES ice climbing what Grotto Mountain is to its rock climbing. You can spend a whole winter season (or several) on its flanks, and still have more ice to dream of. One of the finest routes on the entire south face has to be Suntori: a pencil-straight line leading to the base of the white quartzite towers crowning the summit ridge. It was first climbed in a three-day effort by Cory Balano, Dave Edgar and Dave Marra. Treating it like an alpine route, they took it all the way to the summit ridge and descended the huge avalanche funnel of Lady Wilson's Cleavage back to the road.

The formidable team of Jay Mills and Eamonn Walsh made the second ascent. Not only did they free the mixed crux, but after an early start from the road, they topped out with daylight to spare. I didn't think Alik and I could match their speed. However, I had another plan in mind.

A drop of water falling from one of the bone-white towers on the summit ridge would flow down the discontinuous ice of Suntori, here and there dropping through thin air to splatter on an ice pedestal. It would then percolate through the avalanche slope below the route, before dripping from the lip of the snapped-off dagger of Stairway to Heaven and free-falling for an entire rope length. Tired now after all the excitement higher up, it would meander down the rolling ice of Midnight Rambler, before coming to rest among the trees broken by the huge avalanches that, once or twice in a winter, roar down from nearly a vertical mile above.

I'd always thought retracing the drop's path in reverse would be the best way of climbing Suntori: scrambling up Midnight Rambler in the dark; arriving at the base of Stairway to Heaven at first light; above its overhangs, walking straight up to the start of Suntori; and finishing through the quartzite towers, likely once again in the dark. Planning an early start, Alik and I drove up the Icefield Parkway the night before. A warm wind whooshed through the evergreens in the valley bottom. It wasn't quite the high pressure we'd have liked, but conditions seemed good enough to try. Walking a hundred metres into the darkened forest, we spread out our mats and sleeping bags, and settled in for a few hours of restless sleep.

After cruising Midnight Rambler in the pre-morning darkness, we got up Stairway to Heaven in two pitches by linking pitches. Anything to save time since the days are short in January. Above, we walked up avalanche debris straight to the start of Suntori as flurries swirled down from a grey sky. Nothing to worry about—or so we hoped.

The first pitch looked trivial, but the rotten, detached ice required some non-trivial gymnastics. On the other hand, the second pitch proved surprisingly straightforward with good gear and short cruxes. Even the sun put in an appearance. A few rope lengths higher, Alik led what was probably the best pitch of the route. A short icicle gave access to a nearly vertical ice hose, almost reminiscent of an Alaskan runnel.

Another two rope lengths higher, the headlamps came out. Fortunately, it was supposed to be the last "hard" pitch—unless, that is, you left the main drainage higher up and went questing up another gully to the left.

After slogging up the snow bowl below the quartzite towers, we pulled into a sheltered cave at their base. At this point, we'd been going for 15 hours or more. We stopped to have a brew and regroup before facing the last few pitches through the towers and the descent. After finishing the soup, we stepped out of the cave and into the steep gully above. Climbing between white walls and pulling over chockstones, we weren't sure if the gully was going to dead end in overhanging rock

Alik Berg starts up the best pitch of the 1,500-metre route. A short icicle leads to a near-vertical ice hose.
Photo: Raphael Slawinski

until we saw it roll over into the gentle humpback of the summit ridge.

We plunged down the other side, downclimbing steep snow around walls of glacial ice, rappelling here and there when the ground below seemed too steep to downclimb. Eventually, we reached the low-angled trough of Lady Wilson's Cleavage. After changing batteries in our fading headlamps, we continued: walking, downclimbing and rappelling. Eventually, we found ourselves walking in our crampons down the snow-covered Icefield Parkway, almost 24 hours after we had left it.

Summary

Suntori Integral (M7 WI5, 1500m), south face, Mt. Wilson. FA: Alik Berg, Raphael Slawinski, January 7, 2018.

Alpine Ninjas

Jon Simms

SO IT BEGINS. RURAL LIVING REQUIRES hard work and perseverance. The crux of the trip. I find myself building a fenced pen for a new arrival to the ranch. I should be packing my gear and researching the route. A new tenant with a Yukon husky puppy is arriving to the cabin, coming to rent for the winter months. Some of the final moves of the project. A fresh-built house and nine months with minimal recreation. The pains of building are now diminishing. A new chapter of life begins. My alpine gear has just been pulled from storage. Still in boxes. I pack, research and hit the hay by 2 a.m.

My 5-a.m. alarm goes off. I rise with a touch of a hangover from beers and fence erecting. I turn on the preloaded espresso maker and prep some leftover pasta to go. The Braz shows up. Always on time. Psyched and ready for what we both have been thinking about for a few years now. The southwest face of Mount Assiniboine. We ponder what we're in store for. I've already prepped the rack, which isn't much but hopefully enough. The rack consists of eight nuts, three cams and three knifeblades, and a 30-metre single rope. Of course for routes like this, crampons and two tools each are required, one being a technical tool. I have a brand-new ski rig I've fantasized about using on technical lines. I need the confidence and performance of a ski-hill set-up to have the ability to drive the ski through changing snow conditions. The three key things I need are: 1) a boot with a 130 flex that walks good; 2) a binding with a superior din setting I am confident with; and 3) a ski that I can drive through. The rig I have come to love is the Delbello LupoT1 boot, the Marker Kingpin 13 and the Rossignol Super 7 ski. I've never publicly endorsed anything, but this is my first. This set-up just may save lives.

Chris Brazeau approaches the southwest face of Mount Assiniboine. Photo: Jon Simms

We arrive via my 2007 GMC 4x4 Silverado to the Baymag mine site, and park. There was not really a need for a truck; we could have taken in a commuter car. The access to tree line below Assiniboine's southwest face took about seven hours. Evening brings a toasty fire and inspiration on what is in store for us.

The 5-a.m. alarm bells chime for the second day in a row. A frost layer coats the inside of the Megamid. Braz and I brew. A little breakfast in bed before we rise. Travel has been excellent. Although a little lean on coverage, the great travel continues. We tour up the initial bowl below the face by headlamp and visualize the summer route description in our minds. The entrance couloir finds us, and we are drawn into the gate of insanity. Skis on the back, tools out and crampons on. I lead up the pipe. The stair master begins with clear skies and morning light. Glimpses of the valley-fog inversion below and, in the distance, the Columbia Valley that we call home.

The entrance exam goes on and on. Maybe 350 metres up to a small, narrow gully and saddle. We discuss our options. Straight above looks like good mixed climbing—a place for another sport with proper climbing kit. Out right is the summer route navigating through salt-and-peppered snow and rock and small steps of waterfall ice. I contemplate the ice. Will this be OK to air on the descent? Definitely a no-fall zone.

Faceted-out wind crust with a firm layer below provide great travel. The crampons provide good bite. Braz takes charge. Up and right. Steady. I draft him, conserving energy for the car-to-car 2,350-metre trip. The face itself, I believe, is a 1,400-metre journey from our tent. The Braz is out of sight. It almost looks like the boot-pack is slightly overhanging. I finish taking photos and join him at our first crux. We ponder the options: 5th-class rock or a short ice pillar. I vote ice pillar and tie into the rope. We sling the base pillar for the piece of pro that will keep me attached to the mountain. It's a short step but quite overhanging, so we give it an ice bouldering grade of IB4 rather than a waterfall-ice grade.

I plant the tools over the lip, leaving my pack, skis attached, with Braz. The sound of steel in the plastic ice reminds me of a samurai thrusting his sword into his defeated opponent. The ice tapers off to WI2, and I haul my bag from a stance. Continuing up, we stretch our short rope to its full 30-metre length. A pin, a small nut and a questionable cam is all I find. Braz joins me and leads the way up the miracle snowfield. We continue for another 300 metres, topping out the snowfield/couloir to exposed talus, which is a wind-exposed mini-ridge in the middle of the face, around 3,150 metres. We continue left through the rocks and link rock ledges below short pitches of waterfall ice. We are still on the same track as Bill Corbett's route description.

Heading left brings us to a hanging snowfield, which we later ski. I decided to punch it up an ice gully just right of the feature. This gully takes us to the Assiniboine-Lunette col, which I was curious to look over into Alberta, seeing Kananaskis Country and the plains in the distance. The daunting east face looms above and right. I retreat a few feet back towards were I've come from and head left along the base of the rock. We crampon left until in line with the centre of the southwest face. There are a few options. One is a bunch of 5.9-looking terrain that is quickly ruled out.

Chris Brazeau leads the first pitch of the mixed section. Photo: Jon Simms

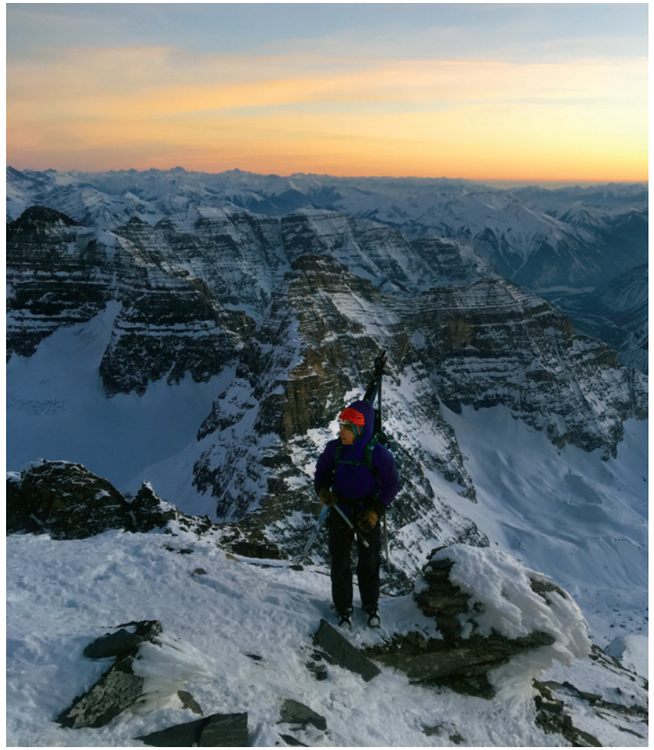
Another weakness presents itself. Braz takes the gear and ties in. There is zero avalanche hazard, so I make the call to strip down our packs to essentials by leaving behind the avalanche safety gear and an ice tool each. Thinking light, it's mixed climbing time. Skis on the pack, Braz leads the first pitch. A choss mantle to a slabby M2 crux. I follow with gloves off while drytooling with one hand and rock climbing with the other. I remove his pre-crux cam and join him at the belay. A bombproof #1 Camalot. Braz leads on. The flavour of this pitch is down-sloping limestone slab shelves with crampons and a ski rig on the back. Sounds fun, eh?

The weather is beautiful, but it still feels slightly wrong to be mixed climbing with skis on the pack. The next belay doesn't look that inspiring, so I try not to look at it too closely. A single nut. I take the lead and head up left

The **Rockies**

through more down-sloping slabs with minimal gear placements. I do, however, find a cam placement in a horizontal crack that provides forward momentum. The next fun part is a one-handed mantle to a slushy ledge. It takes a minute to commit to the moves, but I do move forward, drawing inspiration from the scenery and the style we are creating. Braz joins me at the belay. Always good to be out in the hills with him. There is no red tape unless we decide where the red-tape line is. He asks me the time, and I give him the answer. It is 3:15 p.m., and we are at 3,500 metres in December. It might be a cold, dark night. Well, at least we have good weather. The restriction of the short rope, slim rack, time and continued mixed terrain has Braz talking about descending. This is the moment in time where we are either allowed passage or denied access by the mighty Assiniboine spirit.

Chris Brazeau on the summit snow ridge late in the day.
Photo: Jon Simms



"All we need is a snow gully," I say.

He moves left and finds what we're looking for. An M2 Scottish ice gully pitch that leads to the summit snowfield—a fantastic pitch in a fine location. I join him at his stance on the top of the pitch. He is smiling. I know what that means. Success is close. It is 3:45 p.m. We both head up the snowfield and onto the final wind-swept ridge to the summit. A memorable day in our lives. Something special has happened. We high-five and Chris says, " Right on, Jonny! We are halfway there."

The views are outstanding. A setting sun. Three hundred and sixty degrees of majestic Rockies' summits. The driving wind. Cold but nothing too intolerable. After a few minutes of grasping this moment in time, we change from one action suit to another. Every trick in the alpine tool box is being used. A journey of experience has led us to this style. We are humble. We are alpine ninjas.

The ski descent begins down the west ridge. Shredding the soft snow on the ridge proper, linking into the summit snowfield. We enjoy these turns in the quickly diminishing light. Arriving at the Scottish gully exit pitch, Braz spots a cairn out skier's left. We follow the trail of descent to the "more travelled" southwest-face route. Again, switching into the other action suit and pulling out the climbing gear ready for descent. We have a small rack and a 30-metre rope to get off this mighty mountain. I lead the rappels; 15 metres sure doesn't feel like you're going places. I stretch the rope and slide off the ends onto a faint ledge trail. Following another cairn down and skier's left, we find some tat and use it. This rappel leads to another small ledge with more down-sloping limestone in every direction. It's almost dark. Chris spots more tat about 10 metres further down, but there is no more rope left to get there. I sling a large frozen rock and creep down to the tat.

Darkness engulfs us. Having fresh headlamp batteries at hand for maximum performance, we both have learned to embrace the night. The forth rappel takes us down into lower 5th-class terrain. I find a good crack, and a nut fits perfectly. I clip into the nut and drive my weight onto it while still backed-up on rappel. The rock explodes in my face, confirming that it is always best to test things before committing to them. I reset the nut deeper and back it up with a second one.

I continue down the fifth rappel and find my crampon has just come off my ski boot. Well, that's inconvenient. I find a horizontal crack in a sea of compact slab rock. The green Metolius fits nicely. I'm a little suspect of being on one piece of gear in the vertical darkness, so I back it up, bashing a small hex sideways. Continuing down the sixth rappel and finding a bomber #1 Camalot to leave, Braz takes over the duty. Six nuts, one cam and three pins remain of our already meagre rack. He enters an inviting gully and slings a horn for the seventh rap. Down he goes and ponders the moves to be had at the ends of the rope. A few M2 moves reach the ground. We touch down on the top of the snowfield and wander back to our possessions left a few hours earlier.

Locked into skis, the descent speeds up for some headlamp extreme skiing. Wind blowing facets in the face, speed-bump-sized sastrugis to negotiate, we make turns on the 50- to 55-degree slope. The snow conditions have stiffened up from softened corn back to a chattery freeze. Sections are like the men's downhill course at Lake Louise but in a place you don't consider making an error. I give thanks to my ski rig. I'm enjoying the terrain and the conditions, driving the ski into the ice and jump-turning in the right spots. I have a habit of choking up on the ski poles in these sort of steeps. It feels right at home like a Golden local skiing the Horse, like a billy goat looking for his line.

Braz is always right there. Like an experienced cowboy who can handle any cold-backed horse. He takes position in the front. We both are attentive and engaged from our surroundings. The wind-whipped facets continue much like being in a vertical snowstorm with headlamps. Following our boot-pack tracks is the life line to safety. We both stop and observe the terrain below us—a fantastic place. Chris spots vehicle lights far below somewhere near the mine. We have a good chuckle at what a person would think if they saw our headlamps on the face.

High above the ice-bouldering pitch, we continue to make jump turns for another 300 metres until it's time to switch back into the climber action suit. Crampons on, tools out, rack out. Tie in and search for a rappel to negotiate the steep ice, which is a challenging task in this area with so much loose or compact rock. I leave the pack and skis and climb down below the snow nose that we have ended up on. It doesn't look appealing to down-solo exposed low-angle water ice in ski boots and crampons, so I come back up and search climber's left and find a crack that will take our last remaining mid-sized nut. The last technical rappel. I stretch to the ends of the rope, stomping down on the snow, relieved that we will no longer need any more of the rock pro for anchors.

Braz and I take 10 and have a leisurely break, switching back into steep ski mode. First, the small waterfall ice steps need to be negotiated. We both ponder the strategy: downclimb or air it. I work towards the nose of the diving board. Ice tool in the uphill hand, ski pole tucked between my pack and body. I inch a little closer then commit to the air—small although quite committing in such a hostile place. Touching down on the frozen surface and driving the skis to the right reminded me of good times on CPR Ridge at Kicking Horse Mountain Resort. More jump turns lead to a very narrow gully we previously ascended, less than two metres wide in places. A little side-slipping through the near-vertical constriction and I'm through. This is another reason I've chosen to shrink my desired ski length to just under 180 centimetres in this type of terrain. The stair-master entrance pipe proves to be a little sporty, but again the smaller ski length makes it manageable. A leg-burner descent through this section and we're down. An official opening of a truly unique line.

Chris and I found ourselves back at base camp at 9 p.m. We were in awe of what had happened. A truly special experience. The way of the alpine ninjas.

Summary

First ski descent of the southwest face of Mount Assiniboine. Chris Brazeau, Jon Simms, December 11, 2017.

Rockies Ice Report

Ian Welsted

Jon Simms on pitch two of Paradise City in Protection Valley. Photo: Jon Walsh

IN 2017, THE FOCUS FOR first ascentionists in the Canadian Rockies community seemed to shift away from alpine routes toward ice and mixed cragging in the winter, and new bolted rock routes in the summer.

A striking exception, and by far the biggest news in alpine climbing this year (and for many years to come, one imagines) was the first solo ascent of Mount Geikie by Tony McLane, climbed in August 2017 [see page 81], which shocked the few who had previously made ascents of this face—one of the biggest in the range. Also, big news was a visiting Coastie's solo ascent of Mount Deltaform's Flying Buttress (5.7, 800m) by Marc-Andre Leclerc in spring 2017.

In a more traditional alpine vein were new routes by Bow Valley climbers. Hiding in Plain Sight (M5 AI5, 600m, Alik Berg, Quentin Lindfield-Roberts) climbs moderate ground and steep ice pillars on the east face of Mount Tuzo to the south ridge and onto the summit, all visible from Moraine Lake. Remembering Fred (M6 WI5, 330m, Kris Irwin, John Price) was climbed on the day Fred Becky died. Located above O'Brien Lake, it climbs the north aspect of an unnamed peak south of Mount Bell, featuring quartzite drytooling, no major avalanche hazard and a walk-off [see page 142].

On one fruitful day in November 2017, two new routes were climbed on the same wall. Full Moon Corner (M6 WI4R, 400m, Noboru Rob Kikuchi, Toshiyuki Yamada) ascends one of the many lower faces of the north side of Storm Mountain. Meanwhile, 200 metres left of Full Moon Corner, Simon Richardson and I climbed an unnamed and previously unreported 400-metre gully with ice up to WI3. In cases such as these two routes, where fixed gear is found during the climb, it is imperative climbers inquire as to previous ascents and use judgment when claiming firsts.

Multi-pitch ice routes were established in bunches where new low-hanging danglers formed. In Field, right of the ice route, Twisted, Jon Walsh, Michelle Kadatz and Sebastian Taborsky opened Nasty Habit (M6 WI5, 4 pitches)—not to be confused with Nasty Habits on the Upper Weeping Wall. It climbs a previously unformed pillar to a bench then bolt-protected drytooling to a thin drip. Just left, a yet more-improbable line, Blob Blob Blob (M6+, 2 pitches, Raphael Slawinski, Sarah Hueniken) was put up on gear and a few bolts. And between the two is Fat Tug (M7+, 2 pitches, Quentin Lindfield-Roberts), which was bolted on rappel. When the avalanche hazard spiked, as it often does mid-winter, there were numerous parties wisely vying for these relatively safe lines.

Protection Valley, north of Castle Mountain, came into form early in November. Visible from the Trans-Canada Highway, it was seldom visited before this fall. New routes starting right of the existing Superlight (5.10 WI5+, 230m), which happened to receive its probable second ascent by Jon Walsh and Michelle Kadatz, include: Mix Fix (M7, 150m, Jon Walsh, Jeff Mercier) in a deep cleft; Paradise City (M6 WI4, 110m, Jon Walsh, Jon Simms) near the unformed Paradis Perdu; Grab the Cupcakes (M6 WI4+, 310m, Kris Irwin, Jay Mills) in a gully/chimney with thin ice; Dirtbag Dreams (WI4+, 210m, Jon Walsh, Landon Thompson, Paul Taylor); and Safe Space (M7R WI4, 7 pitches, Alik Berg, Steven Kovalenko, Raphael Slawinski), which finished prematurely when the team did not want to follow on a poor anchor. With the power of the Internet, this previously quiet hanging valley became a regular cragging venue for numerous parties.

Tom Ballard paid a visit to the area and surprised many with his onsight of the Waiparous drytooling testpiece, Nophobia (M10, 5 pitches), which was lacking the key exit ice. He also made the second ascent of Tainted Love (M9 WI3, 320m, Slawinski et al.) with Alik Berg, directly above Canmore for all to see. To add to his visit, with Slawinski he completed the first free ascent of Tupperware Tea Party (M8+, 2 pitches), an old Dave Thomson project next to Stairway to Heaven on Mount Wilson. The most hard-fought new drytooling route this year was Gord McArthur's completion of Storm Giant (D16, 80m), which took him three years to send and is now claimed to be the world's hardest drytooling route. Established in a style similar to Nophobia (drilled pockets, painted holds), the route's grade will unfortunately be difficult to corroborate as the climb is closed due to access issues.

High-profile crags are a rare place to find a first ascent, but Jon Walsh did just that, nabbing a thin smear 400 metres right of the Upper Weeping Wall, called The Lynx (WI5, 130m, Jon Walsh, Ixchel Foord, Cecilia Buil). Also at the Upper Weeping Wall, Raphael Slawinski and Juan Henriquez added Dance Dictator (M7+ WI5+) as a bolted single-pitch drytooling variation to the start of the very rarely formed Master of Puppets. Walsh also teamed with visitor Greg McInnes to contribute an indirect start to the unformed Silmarillion at the Storm Creek Headwall, which involved progressing past old bolts (rumoured to be another Dave Thompson project). Also at the Storm Headwall, Niall Hamill, Jeremy Regato and Paul Taylor chose to eschew the fruit-naming convention of The Peach and The Plum, by establishing Ikiru (M7+, WI5+, 160m) to the right of those two routes. Meanwhile, Noboru Kikuchi and Toshiyuki Yamada accidentally established Overslept (WI5, 70m) while they thought they were on Dr. Evil. In the Ghost, Alik Berg established Ophidiophobia (M7, WI4+, 140m) with Maarten Van Haeren. In Kananaskis Country, Berg also climbed The Manhole (M5, 300m) with Raphael Slawinski, which is the obvious gash on the north face of The Fist [see page 150]. The first pitch had been previously climbed a decade ago by Rob Owens (on lead) and Sean Isaac, complete with a cartwheeling ground fall, but was tamed in the end with the ubiquitous bolt.

Finally, 200 metres down and right of Saddam's Insane, Paul Taylor and Ryan Patterson claimed Insane Alligators (M6, 150m), rap-bolting the route in six pitches and adding a bolt to the previously climbed first pitch (Axes of Evil) in the process. Much to Raphael Slawinski's chagrin, he found their bolts while on lead on what he thought was a ground-up first ascent with Henriquez. They continued on to Alligators, calling their variation Tasty Texting (M6+ WI5, 40m).

Paul Taylor starts up Dirtbag Dreams in Protection Valley. Photo: Jon Walsh

The East

Chignecto Unchained

Greg Hughes

NOVA SCOTIA'S CAPE Chignecto Provincial Park holds the largest concentration of accessible multi-pitch ice routes in the Maritime provinces. Unfortunately, the aspect of these lines is southerly, making the window for good conditions relatively small. If the stars align and you get a two-week period of cold temperaturess in December, you can find a long stretch of coastline with stellar multi-pitch ice and mixed climbing. In December 2017, temperatures dropped to near record lows long enough for Max Fisher and I to plan a trip to Cape Chignecto. This would be my second visit and Max's fifth. Both of us had some time over Christmas holidays to make the trip happen, and we made the two-hour drive early on Boxing Day morning.

Tides play a huge role in determining your fate here. Screw up or get hurt and you're looking at being trapped by water that rises oh-so-fast. Approaching the climbs at low tide is a breeze—an easy one-kilometre beach walk. A little more than an hour outside of low tide means you'll be climbing up and down frozen seaweed or barnacle-covered rock, which progresses to choss. I'm not sure what was sketchier: the barnacles or the choss.

After parking the car, we approached during the falling tide and moved fast along the beach on the hard-packed slate-coloured sand, making it to the area of our first objective in two hours. From the beach, we sized up two long excellent-looking lines. We chose the easier of the two, deciding to leave the harder one for day two. After racking up, we opted to leave the ropes in packs in an effort to be more efficient with time. This worked well for the first 80 metres on rock and ice that led to a long steep pillar. I tied in and Max put me on belay. I soaked up the afternoon sun and that blissful feeling of moving up perfect steep ice in plastic conditions. An adventurous top-out on broken rock put us into the trees. Max climbed up to join me at the top. It was now late afternoon, and we opted to head for our backcountry hut accommodations.

The next morning, we got an early start and headed for the harder line we spotted while on the previous day's climb. We rapped down to the water's edge. The tide was on the rise, so we quickly simul-climbed rock and ice up to the business—a 20-metre column situated about two-thirds of the way up the route. The pure ice pitch was pouring water, so Max opted for the mixed start to the right. At the halfway point on the column, he transitioned left onto the ice and cruised the final 45 metres to the top. The rope came tight and I was on belay. I began up the rock portion and the intricacies made me wish I'd paid closer attention while Max had climbed it. After following the pitch, we traversed westward through the trees near the top of the plateau heading toward unexplored terrain. By now the tides were starting to fall, so we were in good position to explore even further down the coast. After walking about half a kilometre, we eyeballed a large ice-filled bowl with two distinct lines and decided to drop back down to the shoreline. We downclimbed tuckamore, ice and rock for about 100 metres then rapped the final 30 metres to the bottom. We sized up the two best routes in front of

Greg Hughes on the first pitch of The Key.
Photo: Max Fisher

Max Fisher on the crux pitch of Chignecto Unchained.
Photo: Greg Hughes

us and realized they would be fairly easy solos, so we each picked one and went to work.

It was now late afternoon and the sun's warmth had produced more splendid ice conditions. It felt good to move freely on easy ice. The two routes veered away from each other and after reconnecting at the top, we realized we were once again out of time. That was OK though, because the next day's objective was already agreed upon—an area further along the coast that Max was able to scope out before climbing his line. It was almost dark when we got to the hut. It had been another great day of climbing, but the weather was about to take a drastic change.

We woke up to thick fog and a big drop in temperature. Add to that a strong wind and things were suddenly to the point where I was questioning if it was wise to climb. It was –35 C with wind chill so who could blame us for hesitating, but after reminding ourselves this was the final day of our trip, we got our collective asses out of the hut and onto the approach. The fog made it more difficult to find our way back to where we were the day before. We followed the same descent path as the day before, but this time we were blanketed with freezing fog that coated everything with rime ice. It was nearly full tide when we made it to the bottom, making travel to the new area a challenge. Luckily, we were able to find a passageway into the next cove, the location of two stellar ribbons of ice. We chose the most doable line considering the conditions—a moderate-looking mixed route that led to a cool ice-filled gully that broadened near the top. I took the mixed pitch. The rock was shite, as per usual, but not that difficult. I found a spot for one good pin and continued up, happy to reach the ice 15 metres later.

Soon after that, I could no longer feel my hands. I found a semi-decent spot to belay, built an anchor and belayed Max up. The final 30 metres of ice looked great. Max climbed quickly while I relished in the new-found warmth of my belay parka, so much so that I was not willing to take it off to finish the climb. I followed the pitch with still-numb hands, doing my best not to drop the screws I removed.

At the top, I slowly began to feel the life come back into my hands and the screaming-barfies rebellion engulfed me. We rapped down, and when we made it back to the beach we realized that we were being handed a near-perfect exit pass. The way the tides were lining up meant if we left now we could walk the entire beach back to the car with no shenanigans on seaweed-covered choss. Given the bleakness of the conditions, the choice was easy between climbing another route with cold fingers or walking out. There would be another day, and it would probably be on Christmas vacation the next year.

Summary

Boxing Day Bash (WI3+, 150m), Cape Chignecto, Nova Scotia. FA: Max Fisher, Greg Hughes, December 26, 2017.

Chignecto Unchained (M4 WI4, 155m), Cape Chignecto, Nova Scotia. FA: Max Fisher, Greg Hughes, December 27, 2017.

Shore Thing (WI2, 120m), Cape Chignecto, Nova Scotia. FA: Greg Hughes, December 27, 2017.

Cozy Warm (WI3, 150m), Cape Chignecto, Nova Scotia. FA: Max Fisher, December 27, 2017.

The Key (M3R WI4, 70m), Cape Chignecto, Nova Scotia. FA: Max Fisher, Greg Hughes, December 28, 2017.

Route des baleines

Stas Baskin

Stas Baskin on pitch two of Route des baleines.
Photo: Daniel Martian

SAINTE-MARGUERITE RIVER is a very special place. The approach is not very long, only eight kilometres, but the winds can be nasty. If deciding to camp on the river ice, you must be aware of changing water levels that make huge air pockets between ice layers. One day when we came back from the wall, we found our tent had dropped down almost a metre. The location of the wall makes it a sun collector, so the difference between nighttime and daytime temperatures can be vast. We experienced temperature fluctuations of more than 20 C in the course of a day. It's an adventurous place, but it's worth it. Such a concentration of hard mixed lines is tough to find anywhere else in the east. There are currently six existing big rigs with a potential for more.

I spotted Route des baleines last year, when we came to climb another line, L'Appartament. We came too late in the season—the climb started to fall on us, so we had to bail. This year, we returned with the intention of opening a new line that had captured our imagination. The first day we climbed Le Mulot and rappelled down our new line, cleaning unstable free-hanging ice and drilling some bolts. Our vision was to put up a mixed line, using traditional gear when possible and supplemented by bolts where the protection was bad or non-existent. Our goal was to establish a classic. It was a long day, and we finished very late. Sleeping in the next morning, we decided we might as well check out the line despite our late start. The first two pitches went smoothly, but the third pitch took a long time. After getting all the moves dialed, we went down to rest up. The next day we sent the line—and what a line it was. In-your-face challenging climbing for 180 metres from bottom to top. Verglas, daggers, blobs, mushrooms, overhangs, chimneys, off-widths—just name it and it's there. The line is of unbelievable quality: three long pitches, each one very special in its own way. Neither of us had ever climbed anything like that before, which made it a route of a lifetime.

Summary

Route des baleines (M9 WI7-, 180m), Sainte-Marguerite River, Fjord-du-Saguenay, Quebec. FA: Stas Baskin, Daniel Martian, February 19, 2018.

P1: WI6, 40m. Start 20 metres to the right of Le Mulot in a thinly iced, left-facing corner capped by a little roof. Mount a free-hanging dagger and climb ice to the base of the second dagger (four bolts).

P2: M7 WI6+, 20m. Gain the dagger above (two bolts). These first two pitches can be linked into one 65-metre pitch.

P3: M9 WI6, 45m. From the little cave on the right side, climb the ice pillar into a bomb-bay chimney and burly off-width. Climb a thin ice seam and finish on ice blobs in the big cave (eight bolts). Bring some gear to soothe the runouts.

P4: WI7-, 75m. Climb technically difficult ice with poor gear from the cave. This pitch is a rope stretcher, and the belayer needs to unclip from the anchor to provide the leader with enough rope to top out.

The Monster

Max Fisher

Luc Gallant and Michel Martin approach The Monster and Mega Wet Dream. Photo: Max Fisher

CLIMBING IS RAD, AND MOST PEOPLE reading this probably feel similarly. So on that note, I'm so glad that I came back to the Maritimes in winter after I learned to ice climb. I love the Rockies and Quebec, and there is still so much more to climb there. But for some reason, the coastal maritime ice is close to my heart, and I find myself thinking of the unclimbed projects waiting for ascents when I'm somewhere else. So this past winter, I chose to live on the East Coast to take advantage of the coastal ice.

In early January, Fred Giroux made a rare appearance on the East Coast. We headed out to Cape d'Or. With the tides not being ideal, we missed our window to get around to what I wanted to climb, so we opted for a different, more obscure line. We soloed up easy ice and mixed terrain for 80 metres to where the cliff steepens. At that point, we built an anchor and roped up. The first pitch was super fun, albeit loose mixed climbing. Pitch two traversed right and up on rock into a gully where we followed ice to the top.

A few days later, Lucas Toron and I headed back and climbed a new route called The Reckoning. It was bloody cold, and we tried moving as fast as we could so we didn't get frostbite. Turns out I got a little bit on my right hand anyways.

Everytime time I drove out to Cape D'Or and Cape Chignecto, there was often a conversation about Joe's routes and the Raven Head Wilderness Area climbing.

In the winter of 2010, Joe and Dan Kennedy climbed three beautiful routes on the 60-metre sea cliffs close to Apple River. At the time, there was no wilderness area; actually, it was being actively logged. Now most of the 60-kilometre coastline from the UNESCO World Heritage Site in Joggins to Cape Chignecto is protected as designated wilderness area or provincial park.

In December 2016, Luc Gallant, Michel Martin and I headed in there. Temperatures were very warm, so our expectations to climb were low. As we got to the top of the sea cliffs, we realized that the potential here was huge.

That day we saw many beautiful steep lines, and since then, I have wanted to return and get on some of these exceptional steep routes.

During the winter of 2016-17, Luc, Michel, Greg Hughes and Marty Dude climbed few beautiful WI5s—all 30 metres long. They also stood at the bottom of The Monster humming and hawing about the ice roof three-quarters of the way up. Alas, they walked away.

On January 21, 2018, Luc and I headed back. We rapped in, which is mandatory for this area, and had a look around. All the lines that had been previously climbed were in pretty good condition and a few other lines were marginal. Everything was super wet, so we chose to climb a line right of what has been dubbed The Monster. We called it Mega Wet Dream because it was an amazing route and we were soaked—like water-running-down-your-butt-crack soaked! We were shivering violently by the time we topped out.

That was my last day of climbing before going to Patagonia [see pages 179, 182] and no one ventured back there until March 24. Michel, Luc and I had an early start as we needed to be back to our respective homes at a reasonable time. We moved quickly through the forest and over fresh snow to our rap station. At the beach we went straight to The Monster.

It was in amazing condition. We quickly chatted and Michel said it was between Luc and me. So Luc and I did a one-and-done rock-paper-scissors. Luc threw paper and I threw scissors, so I racked up and started leading.

The route started with some one-arm lock-offs since the base of the ice didn't touch down, because it had been washed away by the tide. After getting established on the first of three pillars, I had 50 metres of vertical, aerated cauliflower ice to the top. The next day, Greg Hughes and Michel Martin did the second ascent.

Summary

Choss Factory (M5 WI3, 135m), Cape d'Or, Nova Scotia. FA: Max Fisher, Fred Giroux, January 2, 2018.

The Reckoning (WI4+, 90m), Cape d'Or, Nova Scotia. FA: Max Fisher, Lucas Toron, January 6, 2018.

Mega Wet Dream (WI5+, 65m), Raven Head Wilderness Area, Nova Scotia. FA: Max Fisher, Luc Gallant, January 21, 2018.

The Monster (WI6, 55m), Raven Head Wilderness Area, Nova Scotia. FA: Max Fisher, Luc Gallant, Michel Martin, March 24, 2018.

Fred Giroux climbs the first pitch of Choss Factory. Photo: Max Fisher

Courage Highway

Steve Charlton

HOW MUCH CAN YOU DETERMINE from the name of a route? When you hear the name Courage Highway, you're probably thinking some committing trad nightmare with run-outs. When you learn it is the name of a modern sport climb, maybe you'd think it's a bit satirical. The route is actually named after a local Northern Ontario stretch of the Trans-Canada Highway, and both are in honour of Terry Fox.

Courage Highway on Mount Olympus. Photo: Aric Fishman

I first spotted the line approximately 20 years ago while working on the nearby route Passage to Valhalla. It was especially the third pitch that attracted me. It just looked like a lot of fun! I had also often looked at what would become the first pitch, but the crack stops after only about five metres. I returned to the area in 2015 with the intent of establishing the first pitch. It was put up as a mixed trad and sport pitch with climbing up to 5.11a. Hanging at the anchor at the top of the pitch, I realized there was a good line leading up and left that would end at a ledge and give access to the upper part of the wall.

After thinking about the route for two years, and the need for bolts (in my opinion) for 80 to 90 metres of the 95-metre cliff, I began to consider establishing the remainder of the pitches as a modern sport climb. The only problem being that the first five metres was 5.10+ trad with some of the gear placed behind a hollow flake. How would people feel if I bolted it? I was the first ascensionist, but I don't own the rock. In addition, the bolting of the crack portion is contrary to the local ethic regarding installing fixed protection where adequate trad pro is available. It also went against my own personal ethic against unnecessary fixed protection. I have established some climbs in the area that still have seen few, if any, ascents after close to 20 years. Would this route end up being another obscure route that nobody climbs? That would be kind of sad. After discussing the idea of retro-bolting the first pitch with the climbers who were active in the area, it was agreed that maybe a few bolts weren't such a disgrace after all.

So, with this in mind, I returned in 2017 and decided to rappel from the top to clean the loose rock and find the best line for free climbing. I had previously established almost all my new routes ground up, but with this climb—eventually being fixed for sport climbing—the risk versus reward seemed questionable. I no longer live in the area, so I contacted some of the local climbers actively developing routes to join me on the climb. Over the course of a couple of days, we rappelled down and cleaned the route. We took turns top-roping the upper three pitches so that the best possible bolt placements could be decided dependent on the person's height and actual holds each person used. Finally, the bottom five metres were retro-bolted.

We retuned the next day to free all the pitches, and declared the route open for everyone to enjoy. I really look forward to more people being able to enjoy a place I love so much. To see a route go directly up the centre of the wall and have the moves go at such an attainable grade is truly a gift from the rock gods.

Summary

Courage Highway (5.11b, 95m, 4 pitches), Mt. Olympus, Orient Bay, Ontario. FA: Kyle Brooks, Steve Charlton, Andy Noga, October 7, 2017 (Jody Bernst, Aric Fishman and Duncan Hutchinson also contributed).

Gear: 15 quickdraws (13 short and two long).

P1: 5.11a, 25m. Climb up the flake/corner to the fourth bolt then step out right to a few more bolts before continuing straight up to the hanging belay (12 bolts).

P2: 5.11b, 23m. Climb up and left then continue straight up to the belay ledge. The "summit" register is located here; please record your ascent (12 bolts).

P3: 5.10b, 35m. This pitch offers unique and varied climbing with nice position and some decent exposure. Climb up and right towards a sloping ledge offering a rest on the arête. Continue straight up to the belay ledge (13 bolts).

P4: 5.10a, 12m. Climb straight up from the left side of the belay ledge (five bolts).

Descent: Rappel the route with one 60-metre rope in four rappels or two rappels, with two ropes (recommended).

Steve Charton on the first pitch of Courage Highway. Photo: Aric Fishman

Foreign

The Christmas Tree

Will Gadd

SOME IMAGES CHANGE the course of your life. In 2017, I saw a picture of the most amazing ice ever. It was titled "The Christmas Tree. China." That was it. No location, no mountain range, nothing. Massive ornamental ice pillars hung randomly in space around a central trunk, while spray-ice had formed elegant white branches off the sides. And at the bottom, just to make it perfect, was a small pillar with no branches, the tree's base. It truly was a 180-metre frozen Christmas tree, and it had to be climbed.

The next six hours were spent chasing down information and getting in contact with the first ascensionist, Chuan "River" He. I finally reached him via Facebook, which took a few weeks as China uses the "Great Firewall" on Facebook and Instagram. River kindly said he'd show us where it was if we came over, so 2018's ice season started to revolve around climbing The Christmas Tree.

Mr. River said the tree was only about six hours from Beijing in the Taihang Mountains. As usual, Sarah Hueniken (my partner) was also psyched. I wanted some really great pictures of it as well, so it didn't take any arm twisting to convince John Price to join us.

The only other ice climbing pictures I'd seen were from the Shuangqiaogou region, near Chengdu in Western China. This area is substantially higher and colder, and while it offers a tremendous quantity of ice climbing, I'd never seen a route like The Christmas Tree there. The Taihang Mountains are only at about 1,000 to 2,000 metres in elevation, so the temperatures aren't as cold as they are farther west, but River said there were other routes to climb as well, even if it is warm. In the weeks leading up to the trip, I emailed with River often, and he informed me when the ice came in, then fell down, and then was forming again. When we arrived at the airport, River said, "We go to the tree now, warm and warmer."

A very late-night drive later, we arrived in Linzhou, a small town of about a million people. A cluster of jetlag and random packing and another one-hour drive that took three had us facing a locked gate at 10 a.m. Rock walls soared above us as far we could see in any direction. If you're not an ice climber, there are enough rock options to keep anyone busy for a lifetime with no established rock routes on 99 per cent of the endless walls.

The gate keeper and River had a long discussion, a lot of phoning, and then more discussion. This ended when the small but fiery Han Han charged the gate and sorted it all out. She's a force of nature. After 30 more minutes of walking on a very good trail, we rounded the corner and there it was. The temperature was maybe –3 C, and the forecast for the next few days was for it to increase to 10 C. We were badly jetlagged. It was two in the afternoon, dark by five, and there were four very engaging pitches above us. Sarah and I discussed the climb's integrity and decided it was OK simply because it was so massive and there was no water running on the wall. Some features stuck out a solid 10 metres from the wall. I know ice bonds to rock amazingly well and have never seen that bond fail when cold, but man, this was pretty wild-looking. Huge blocks formed a jumble at the bottom. River said that was from the last time the whole tree fell down.

Will Gadd and Sarah Hueniken on the third pitch of The Christmas Tree. Photo: John Price

In the end I put a full rock rack in my pack, in case we had to retreat on the rock to the side of the climb if the ice warmed up too much or just seemed too dangerous. I always want an out. Sarah was not convinced but charged the pillar at the base with intention. The initial pitch wasn't bad, but the next three took everything I've learned in 35 years of ice climbing to navigate—and it was navigation. At one point, we climbed for 20 metres inside the trunk. I've climbed ice sort of like this in Norway and learned that you're basically defusing a bomb while standing under it. You've got to take down the features that are going to break if you try to climb them without knocking yourself off the climb. It's sort of like playing massive Jenga, and it's as much an intellectual puzzle as it is physically difficult. Time doesn't pass when the climbing is that engaging; it just doesn't exist internally. I've always said that if an ice pitch takes you more than 30 minutes to lead then it's too hard for your skill level and you shouldn't be there. All of my pitches took more than 30 minutes.

As we climbed, dozens of tourists arrived at the base, which was dangerous as we were sending down some massive missiles. Han Han took charge of crowd control. River wanted to climb with us but had broken his ankle badly and was still recovering. His ankle was a mess of scars, and when I asked about the fall and rescue he just said, "I crawled."

There is no rescue. I thought of that as I danced with the pillars and pulled the wild roofs in a race with darkness. Sarah was mentally peaking. Leading that sort of climbing is sometimes easier than watching someone lead it.

When Sarah and I topped out, we were both yelling with stoke but also aware we had to get back down some very tricky terrain. I never really celebrate a climb until I'm down. We rapped off into the dark, clearing more hang fire. Sometimes ice climbing is more about construction and careful demolition than just pulling up. Less than 48 hours after leaving Canada, we'd done the likely third ascent of the most beautiful route in the world. Even if we didn't climb anything else, it was worth the trip, but we still had another 10 days to climb.

We spent four of them climbing in the Taihang area, but the warm temperatures kept us from climbing more than a half dozen or so new routes and a whack of existing routes. There is a ridiculous quantity of ice there, but a lot of it is on private land or land that is leased to someone. There were always discussions about what we could do, and then we would climb, but without a knowledgeable local we would have climbed nothing. River would often fly his drone up a valley, and then say, "Yes, maybe good. Let's go." We'd charge up a random side valley and find more ice, but the warm temperatures kept shutting us down.

The Taihang Mountains are truly amazing. There is great rock climbing waiting to be developed – plus paragliding, ice climbing, kayaking and all kinds of wild Chinese-style attractions, including some truly insane walkways pasted onto the side of the cliffs. China's middle and upper class is booming, and during the Chinese New Year, they charge the Taihang for recreation and fresh air en masse. It's not wilderness, but it sure is wild.

The last half of the trip was spent two hours north of Beijing near River's house and the town of Miyun, where, again, there's a lot of ice despite the arid climate. Beijing is surrounded by granite mountains to the north, a big attraction for the citizens of Beijing. There is even the Chinese version of Ouray, with amazing farmed ice and hordes of people trying out the sport. We found more great routes and destroyed ourselves climbing them. The temperature was relatively constant, which allowed some really insane ice features to form. In Canada, the temperature fluctuates fast and randomly, but not as much in China.

Beijing, a city of 20-plus-million people, has amazing rock and ice climbing within an hour's drive. Finding the climbing is tricky though without a local. China is just not set up yet for foreigners outside of the big cities. You'll need a local to get much done, and I'm not telling exactly where it all is until we get the best rigs done. We're going back in 2019 for two weeks, and looking forward to climbing with a healed River. The possibilities are endless. And there are some very, very good Chinese ice climbers today as a result. They have travelled to Canada and Europe and repeated some of our hardest routes, and there's a growing Chinese-Canadian connection as a result.

Ladies in Patagonia

Michelle Kadatz

HANNAH PRESTON AND I ventured on our first trip to Patagonia this winter with intentions of climbing Cerro Torre or Cerro Fitz Roy. We were based in El Chalten for five weeks; however, generally poor weather made for difficult climbing conditions and our options were limited.

During the first weather window, we climbed two smaller towers accessible from Niponino, both via beautiful multi-pitch rock routes. We climbed Voie Des Benitiers (5.12b, 400m) on El Mocho and Rubio y Azul (5.11b, 350m) on Torre Medialuna. Although we were exhausted from climbing, at the end of the second day we hiked 18 kilometres back to town as we didn't want to get caught in a storm.

We also made an attempt on the Ragni Route on the west face of Cerro Torre. This route is a king line famous for its rime ice, with the crux being the final summit mushroom. We approached the west face via the Standhardt Col. The conditions on the col were challenging with many open crevasses and several feet of fresh snow. During the night, a large avalanche ran down the left side of the col, nearly missing our friends who had camped on the glacier. We opted to give the snow time to settle and waited until evening for cooler temperatures before continuing up the col. It was strenuous wallowing, but we reached the top of the col by sunset. We rappelled to the base of the glacier and set up camp beneath the steep face. By the time we reached the west face of Cerro Torre the next morning, it was melting in the sun. We climbed as far as we could and shivered through one cold night on the mountain. The end of the weather window prevented us from going any higher, and we retreated below Col de la Esperanza, returning to town via the Marconi Glacier. After five days out and nearly 80 kilometres of rugged slogging, we completed a circuit of the range. Although we did not summit, we had an intense experience and stunning mountain views.

During the last week of our trip, we climbed Aguja Guillaumet from town in a day. Seven hours after leaving town we reached the base of Guillaumet. The winds were howling, so we found shelter behind a boulder and our friends made us tea while we waited for the wind to calm down. We climbed the Giordani route, which traversed the northeast ridge into the Comesana-Fonrouge (5.11a), covering 700 metres of quality granite. The winds died down near the end of the day, allowing for a beautiful summit.

Hannah Preston climbs a splitter hand crack on pitch seven of Rubio y Azul on Aguja de la Medialuna. Photo: Michelle Kadatz

When the weather was raging in the mountains, we immersed ourselves in the sport climbing and bouldering around El Chalten, made new friends and ate Calafate berries. Local legend states anyone who eats a Calafate berry will return to Patagonia one day.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the Jen Higgins Grant for Young Women from The Alpine Club of Canada and MEC for supporting us on this adventure.

Ruby Supernova

Paul McSorley

In June 2017, I joined Ines Papert, Luka Lindic and Joseph Pfnur in Munich, Germany, for a trip to the promised land of sun and stone: South Africa. Our first stop was the Du Toits Kloof Mountains, about an hour north of Capetown. We started with a warm-up at the Yellowood amphitheater. These impressive 300-metre quartzite cliffs had an adventurous flavour with an emphasis on route finding, physical climbing and natural protection. Next, we stationed ourselves in the nearby vineyards of the Slanghoek Valley, home to several massive sandstone walls.

For a second "warm-up," we made a repeat of A Private Universe on Slanghoek Mountain. The route is 550 metres long and rated ED1 7a A1 (VI 11d A1), established by South Africans Hilton Davies, David Davies and Mathew Sim, and later free climbed by Dave Birkett (UK) and Tinie Verseveld (ZA) at 7b+ (12c). Previously, A Private Universe was the only existing route up this stunning overhanging amphitheater, which was dubbed one of the last great problems of South African climbing by legendary alpinist Dave Cheesmond. The South African team used 100 bolts for anchors and protection to make the first ascent of this intimidating wall in 2002. Until our visit, this stood for 15 years as the only passage up this tsunami of a cliff.

Joseph Pfnur on pitch seven of Ruby Supernova.
Photo: Franz Walter

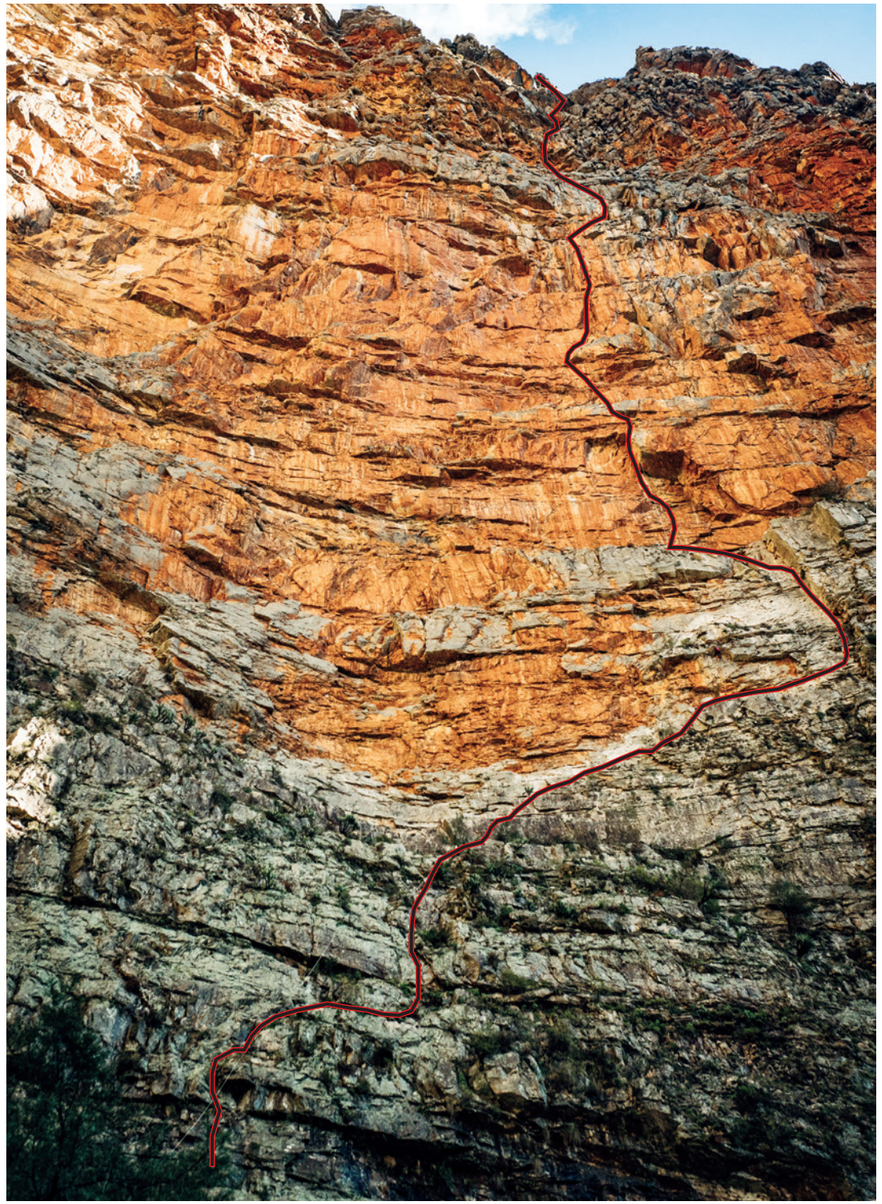
After repeating A Private Universe, we set to work on a new route up an obvious corner system on the right side of the wall. In two separate teams, we pushed to within a hundred metres of the top, onsighting every pitch. With only one big day needed to finish our climb, a destructive storm cycle rolled in hard, snapping mature timber, flooding valleys and striking a nut-punch to morale.

A weeklong séjour to Rocklands and the Penticton-esque Montague boosted our psyche and gave the line a chance to dry. Returning as soon as the weather cleared, we climbed nine pitches of familiar ground to a good bivy ledge and topped out the following day, rappelling roughly the same route.

We named the route Ruby Supernova after the colour and quality of the stone and as a reference to the cosmic theme of the cliff. We used no bolts or fixed protection, finding mostly excellent-quality quartzite-like sandstone, which protected well with natural gear. Only a handful of stoppers and pitons were left behind at anchors for rappels.

This trip was made so much better by Hilton Davies, who provided logistical support, invaluable route beta and gracious hospitality. After completing Ruby Supernova, we had the pleasure of climbing with Hilton and Tinie Verseveld on Table Mountain, enjoying the classic climbing with two pioneers of the zone. South Africa has some of the finest adventure climbing our crew had ever experienced. The potential for new routes in this incredible country is as endless as your imagination.

Summary
Ruby Supernova (VI 5.12c, 520m, 13 pitches), Slanghoek Mountain, Du Toits Kloof Mountains, South Africa. FA: Luka Lindic, Ines Papert, Joseph Pfnur, Paul McSorley, June 15–16, 2017.



Ruby Supernova on Slanghoek Mountain, South Africa.
Photo: Walter Franz

The Way of the Hemul

Max Fisher

WELL, THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN the most physically challenging expedition that I had ever been a part of. Felipe Cancino, Willy Oppenheim and I travelled 130 kilometres through the forest and over rock, ice and snow to and from Chilean Patagonia's Campo de Heilo Norte (Northern Icefield). Our expedition name, El Camino de la Hemul (The Way of the Hemul), came on our second day of travel when a Hemul (the endangered Patagonian deer) stared us down and walked within three metres from us and casually continued grazing. We knew then something special was to come.

After spending a few days in Coyhaique, organizing gear and finalizing logistics, we loaded Felipe's car and headed south to Puerto Bertrand. There we would load a small boat and head up Lago Plomo to meet Quacho Ramon Sierra, who was going to help us move our food and gear by horse closer to the icefield. Once at Ramon's, we shouldered what would be our lightest packs of the trip except when climbing. The next day, we met Ramon and his brother some 20 kilometres up the valley where the horses could go no further. From there, we shuttled our 20 days of food and gear up the next 20-plus-kilometre Nef Glacier and up onto the Northern Icefield. During our back-and-forth shuttle missions, we had exceptional views of Cerro Cachet and Cerro Largo as we hiked in. We also had views of Pantagruel (our main objective) and Gargantua to its north.

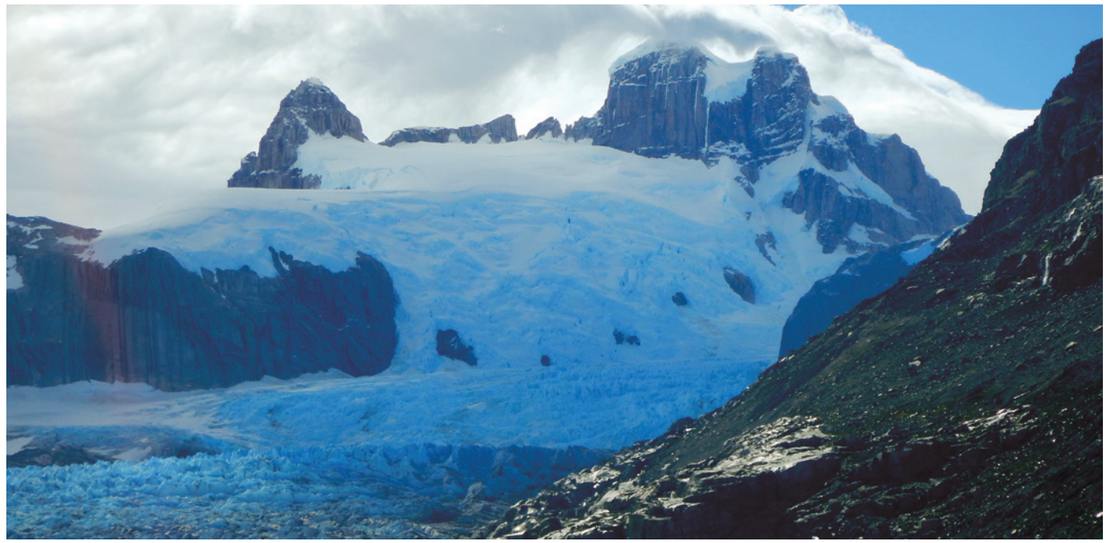
Max Fisher starts up the last pitch to the summit of Cerro Pantagruel. Photo: Willy Oppenheim

We ended up getting everything to our high camp over an eight-day period, which included two storm days and a full night spent awake holding up our double-poled tent in some super intense winds.

During the approach, we kept getting word that a window was coming from our forecaster Frank Preston. So, as things got closer, we knew we wanted to be in place on February 9 to climb on February 10 and 11. Regardless of snowy, windy winter weather, we pushed up to our high camp in a moat at about 1,600 metres. That night, we organized gear and got ready for what seemed to be our opportunity.

As the sun rose so did we, and we were quickly on the move. We were soon navigating the bergschrund on the east face of Cerro Pantagruel. We climbed by linking snowy ledge to snowy ledge with small steps of rock to where things steepened on the south ridge. Felipe lead us to the ridge by climbing a wide crack and through a chimney. From there, I headed around to the west face and weaved my way through rimed-up cracks and steep sections of rock around the gendarme protecting the summit. We had made it through the crux and had one more pitch to the top. On the summit, we had amazing views of the icefield. We had Patagonia at what felt like its calmest moment. We then descended the north ridge by linking ledges and one 60-metre rappel. We called our route Brisa Suave. We chose this name because Frank often told us we would have *brisa suave* (soft breeze), which wasn't always true.

That night in the tent, we planned to head to some unnamed peaks past Pantagruel to see what they had to offer us. The forecast seemed to be holding, so we went to sleep with ease that night.



Cerro Pantagruel (left) and Gargantua (right), Campo de Heilo Norte, Patagonia, Chile. Photo: Max Fisher

We woke with the sun, and after a nice round of maté we were on the go again. As we approached, we saw what looked like a snow-and-ice line of weakness up the southwest face. At the base of the steep glaciated face, we roped up and climbed five pitches up to AI4 and 80 degrees to the ridge then simul-climbed to the summit. As we gained the ridge, our weather turned to rain and wet snow, wind and a whiteout. We moved fast and smart and spent little time on the summit, finding solace back on the southwest face in a crevasse where we cooked some food and rehydrated before heading down. We slogged back to camp in high spirits despite being soaking wet.

The next day was the last day of the weather window. We contemplated going for one more route, knowing that the forecast was calling for 100-kilometre-per-hour winds and one to two inches of rain per hour. So, though it was hard to walk out of the hills in calm bluebird skies, we knew it was the right decision. That afternoon, after drying out our stuff, we moved down to a lower protected camp to be back in the shelter of the forest. The weather moved in strong, and as we finally got to the forest, the rain and winds came in full force. We were so happy to be in the protection of the beautiful Lenga forests.

I'm still processing this amazing experience and how special and fortunate we were to be in the right place at the right time to get the extraordinary weather window that we did. For those who want to venture to Patagonia, it is good to note that when the window opens, you need to go—don't question, just go and be ready for everything. Don't fear the failure that may come, embrace it, because regardless of how hard you work, Patagonia doesn't care, and sometimes you're in the right place at the right time and everything falls into place.

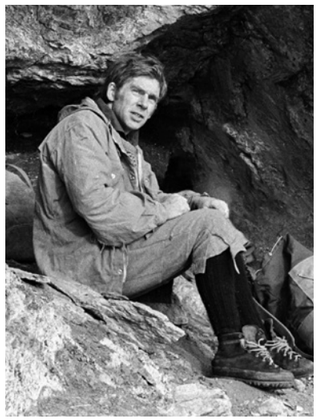
Summary

Brisa Suave (M6 C1 70, 350m), east face, Cerro Pantagruel (2411m), Campo de Heilo Norte, Chilean Patagonia. FA: Felipe Cancino, Max Fisher, Willy Oppenheim, February 10, 2018.

Southwest Face (AI4, 300m), Cerro Fantasma (2252m), Campo de Heilo Norte, Chilean Patagonia. FA: Felipe Cancino, Max Fisher, Willy Oppenheim, February 11, 2018.

Remembrances

Brian Greenwood
1934–2018



"Climbing seemed important. It was what I did. It was the image I had of myself. It's not necessarily important, but it was at the time." Brian Greenwood, one of the great pioneers of Canadian mountain climbing, died on April 6, 2018, in Duncan, B.C. He was 83 years old.

Brian inspired a generation of young Canadian climbers with his difficult ascents and his modest demeanor. His name is still revered today by hardcore climbers. Over a period of 18 years, from 1957 to 1974, Brian amassed an impressive record of first ascents throughout the Canadian Rockies. He has 12 new routes on Yamnuska to his credit, including the classics Red Shirt, Gollum Grooves, Pangolin and Unnamed; a dozen great rock climbs scattered throughout the Rockies, such as Grassi Ridge on Wiwaxy Peak, the northeast face of Ha Ling Peak, Reprobate on the East End of Rundle, Bass Buttress and Catch 22 on Castle Mountain; and the test piece of them all, the east face of Mount Babel. He put up two new routes on the north face of Mount Temple, made first winter ascents of Mounts Louis, Hungabee, Victoria and Eisenhower Tower on Castle Mountain, and pioneered new waterfall climbs, including Bow Falls and Bourgeau Right-Hand.

In the Bugaboos, Brian established two new routes on Snowpatch Spire, a new route on the west face of Howser Spires, and made early ascents of the east faces of both Snowpatch Spire and Bugaboo Spire. When the Calgary Mountain Club went to Yosemite in the early 1970s, Brian was with them and climbed South Face of Mount Watkins, Northwest Face of Half Dome and Salathe Wall and West Face on El Capitan. But despite this impressive record, Brian said that he "was doing things that they were doing in Europe in 1920. I wasn't doing anything new, only new in Canada."

Brian was a founding member of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (1963), and wrote the organization's first bylaws and ran the first mountain guides course/exam in 1966. Brian was also a founding member of the Calgary Mountain Club (1960), and his name will always be associated with the CMC.

But even to his friends, Brian remained a mystery to the end. A reticent Yorkshireman, Brian had little time for small talk. Ambition and getting ahead did not seem to be important to Brian. He just didn't care if he received recognition or not.

Brian was born on August 16, 1934, in Hebden Bridge—a grey industrial town in Yorkshire, England, dominated by smokestacks from the woolen mills. The '30s, '40s and '50s, the years of Brian's childhood and youth, were a hard time of depression, war, austerity and rationing. His father, William, made clogs (wooden-soled shoes with leather uppers). He had lost a leg in World War I and is reported to have been a silent and bitter man.

Brian's mother died when he was four years old, an event that must have had a huge impact on young Brian. In later years, he never talked about his mother and her death. According to Nancy, Brian's second wife, "When Brian was young he had to bury his heart—there were no hugs, no kisses, no warmth."

Brian's childhood friend, Ina Lord, said that he was a very lively boy and very clever but set out on purpose to irritate or provoke his teachers. This was in the day when teachers could use corporal punishment on their students and no doubt Brian got his share of smacks. According to Ina, Brian had lots of friends, but they were all naughty little boys like him.

Brian graduated with his A Levels (university entrance) in 1952, but, as he told me in a 1996 interview, he had no aim in life, no intellectual aspirations. So he joined the Royal Air Force (military service was compulsory in Britain at that time) and served as a radio operator from 1952 to 1955, stationed in Cyprus part of the time.

Brian loved sports and was a good athlete. He particularly liked cricket, where he was a good bowler, and played semi-pro in the Lancashire league. And he could set a challenge for himself: one of his favourites was to run from school at lunch break, five kilometres across the moors, to a memorial tower called Stoodley Pike, ascend the tower, and then race back to school in time for class.

Brian came to Canada in July 1956, and having arrived in Calgary at Stampede time, he quickly decided that this was a town he could like. From 1956 to 1960, he worked at various jobs in the oil industry, and from 1960 to 1966, he worked for Texaco Canada as the assistant to the general manager of the production department.

Brian met Antonia (Toni) Traugott in 1958, and they were married four years later. Brian and Toni had four children: three boys, Robin, Brandy and Dorn, and one daughter, Arwen. From the early 1960s to 1973, Brian and Toni and their children lived in a big house in the prestigious Elbow Park district of Calgary. Toni raised dogs (Hungarian Kuvasz) and Brian sold climbing gear out of the basement.

Toni remembered, "We both liked puzzles of all sorts and were addicted to crosswords, especially the English cryptic and anagram puzzles. We used to do jigsaw puzzles on a winter Sunday afternoon and could knock off a 1,000-piece puzzle in a few hours. I think that was one of the reasons that Brian liked climbing—he was never interested in peak bagging—he wanted to solve the puzzle of a good route up an appealing shoulder or a challenging face."

It was during this period that I met Brian. My climbing partner Gerry Walsh and I would drop by his house on a rainy weekend and make our way to the basement where we would admire the Charlet ice axes, the Galibier climbing boots, the Cassin pitons, the Jamet tents, the Viking ropes and the Himasport down gear. If we had some money, we would perhaps purchase something. Afterwards, we were thrilled if Brian would invite us to stay for tea. In the living room, we would sit on a dilapidated couch in front of a fire of scrap lumber, admiring his climbing books and talking climbing. Brian always had time for us, inspired us and encouraged us.

Charlie Locke and Don Gardner, who were also teenagers at that time, lived only a few doors from Brian and spent a lot of time around his house. Don would babysit Brian's children, and Charlie eventually did some of his greatest climbs with Brian. Charlie recently remembered, "I and our small group of young Canadian climbers felt flattered to have the opportunity to climb with the icon of climbers at the time—Brian Greenwood. He gave us confidence that we too could climb where others hadn't and inspired us to create new routes where others feared to tread."

Brian quit his job in the oil patch in 1966 to devote himself to climbing. He moved the climbing-gear business from his basement to a local sports shop called Premier Sports, located on 7th Avenue in downtown Calgary, and for a few years, attempted to make an income as a climbing-gear salesman. But Brian wasn't really cut out for regular work, and he could often be found across the alley from the sports shop in Carr's Pool Hall. Brian was a good snooker player and often could pick up a few dollars at the table.

Brian and Toni parted ways in 1973, Toni taking the children to Toronto while Brian continued to live in the house with roommates. The paint was falling from the walls, the lawn and hedge were uncut, and in the kitchen, the floor had not been mopped for years. An old chip pot of bacon grease sat on the stove. Many climbers passed through the house in these years, including me.

It was during this time that Brian began to make a living as a roofer, working first with Walter Batzhuber, and later with Joe Henderson. A roofing accident in January 1976, which severely damaged Brian's right knee, put an end to his mountain career. But Brian had already ceased to climb around 1974. He confided to me in 1996, when asked why he quit climbing, "I found I was

getting too careless. I think it scared me a bit when I realized what I was doing."

In 1979 Brian moved to Golden, B.C., where he met Nancy Jakusz, the community librarian. Nancy remembered, "I was so intrigued with him. He looked like he had secrets to tell, unexpected stories."

In 1980 Brian and Nancy started their life together and two years later moved to Duncan on Vancouver Island where they lived in a little white house at the end of a quiet street. Nancy described Brian's later years, "Brian transitioned from climbing to sailing and spent the next 10 years sailing the inside waters, often single-handed in his 27-foot sloop. At home, he dug a basement under their hillside cottage with a shovel and wheelbarrow. In their garden, he built dry-stone walls and granite terraces and rock stairways. When his sailing days were over, he started cycling and continued into his 80s. He loved to garden, and he grew the best strawberries in the whole world."

"Being with Brian all these years has given me the most exciting and beautiful life."

Brian was elected an honorary member of the Calgary Mountain Club in 1987, an honorary member of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides in 2003 and received the Banff Mountain Film Festival Summit of Excellence Award in 1995.

Brian died peacefully and is survived by his wife Nancy, his four children Robin, Brandy, Arwen and Dorn, his first wife, Toni, three grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Brian had one sister, Alice, who pre-deceased him in 2008, and a step-sister, Olive, who lives in Hebden Bridge.

"The best thing that I ever did was completely unintentional—I introduced a lot of people to climbing."

—Chic Scott

Boris Kaschenko
1959–2018

Boris kaschenko was a man always striving to reach new heights. This was true in his personal life and career, and more literally on mountain peaks and rock faces. In all these dimensions of his life, Boris was known for his methodical, calculated and calm approach. It was through this approach, not just the successes and summits, that he showed us what you can achieve with a vision, hard work and determination. Boris taught us all to aim high and to make room for what you love every day. And that is a lesson that will forever inspire everyone who was lucky enough to cross his path.

Boris was an only child and grew up surrounded by loving parents and relatives in Kharkiv, U.S.S.R. His dad taught him to sail at a young age, and in the winters would take him to the Carpathian Mountains where Boris learned to downhill and cross-country ski. Summers spent on rocky Black Sea beaches had Boris quickly fall in love with the beauty of outdoors from a very young age. One year, Boris and his mom holidayed in the town of Verhniy Baksan (on the border of Georgia), exploring trails near the famous Mount Elbrus. He didn't know it then, but Boris would return to this region many more times, attending and leading mountaineering expeditions.

In the U.S.S.R., mountaineering was defined as a type of sport: a combination of alpinism, trekking and climbing with the goal of arriving at valleys through mountain passes (cols) rather than summits. Mountaineering routes were graded by difficulty. Boris mastered the first three categories and started to lead trips in his late teens, and over the course of 15 years, managed to reach the top of the ranking. In addition to leading and participating in trips, Boris became the chair of his university's tourist club in 1982, and for 10 years coached his university mountaineering team that competed at city, republic and Soviet Union level.

It was in the buoyant culture of mountaineering competitions that Boris met his wife. Boris and Rita were married one week after a climbing competition on May 11, 1984. The wedding rings wouldn't fit properly because their fingers were still swollen from climbing. Their two older children, Veronika (born 1985) and Kyryl (born 1987), were taken along to the mountains from a young age as Boris and Rita continued to participate in mountaineering trips.

In 1994, their youngest daughter, Anastasia, was born, and a mere six months later, the family emigrated to Canada. They left behind a collapsed Soviet Union where even basic food became unavailable, hoping to give their kids a better life overseas.

Boris's ambitions were not restricted to the mountains. Trained as an aerospace engineer, he received his Masters of Science in his home city, only to graduate and never work a single day in his specialty. Instead, he became a self-taught computer programmer and quickly grew to prominence with a small software company started with his friends. It was these skills that would prove invaluable as he looked for his first job in Canada.

The first few years were tough: penny pinching, couponing and extreme frugality to ensure the growing family survived. But, relentless to the core, Boris worked his way up. His most recent and final role was as a solutions architect at Scotiabank, where he led various projects for over 15 years.

Even in the early days, when finances were very tight, Boris found ways to go outdoors and travel their new country. Cramped in a used van, the Kaschenkos drove all over the East Coast, camping in provincial parks, exploring trails or climbing at crags.

As the family became more established—largely due to Boris working more and better paying jobs—he was finally able to make the trek to the alluring West Coast and its mountain ranges. Trips out west became an annual pilgrimage, taking the children on increasingly difficult adventures as they gained their mountaineering stripes.

The whole Kaschenko family joined the ACC Toronto Section on two trips: Lake O'Hara in 2007 and Wheeler Hut at Rogers Pass in 2004. In addition to western trips, each summer also meant many weekends at local crags and Bon Echo, where they had many adventures for 20 years.

Boris spent the last 23 years as one of the most active ACC Toronto Section members. He was an enthusiastic and reliable leader, in both summer and winter, and on local weekend and longer western mountain trips and camps. But Boris's most lasting contribution to the Toronto Section was as a member and subsequently long-time Chair of the Leadership and Training Committee. During this time, Boris significantly changed the Section's approach to leadership and training by greatly increasing the number and breadth of courses offered; by instituting course standards; by involving professional instructors; establishing standards for participants; supporting a mountaineering mentoring program; by improving course administration and promotion/publicity; and by utilizing the wider commercial/professional climbing services available in the Greater Toronto Area. A testament to Boris's effectiveness was that the leadership and training courses became increasingly popular and were nearly always over subscribed. Boris also succeeded in "succession planning" by continuously recruiting competent committee members and chairs to continue his efforts.

Boris managed to make time for other hobbies outside of climbing. He was an avid long-distance runner and proficient cross-country and downhill skier. Less known was Boris's talent for baking and poetry, reserved for close family and friends. Yet there is no doubt that it was the mountains that defined Boris and shaped his and his family's life. Although we will never know exactly why he was drawn to climbing, we have some clues: his glowing smile when returning from a mountain trip, the energy in his eyes when looking up the day's objective and the tightness of his hugs on the summit. We think it was a combination of that sense of accomplishment when you feel on top of the world, as well as a reminder of how magnificent the world is.

As we go on with Boris in our memory, on the journey he bravely carved out for our family, he continues to be our guide. Our inspiration to live life to the fullest, to explore the incredible outdoors, and to pursue new heights until we reach the heavens and meet again.

—Margarita Kaschenko

Bruce Chambers
1949–2017

Bruce chambers died peacefully at home at the age of 68 on December 18, 2017, after a lengthy struggle with cancer. He was a neighbour and friend for 14 years, during which time we shared a love of the mountains and family socializing.

Bruce had an early connection with the outdoors in Ontario through fishing trips with his dad. He left that behind to concentrate on his career that began as a police constable in the Niagara region, rising to chief in the cities of Thunder Bay and Vancouver. After retiring from policing, he and his wife, Joy, moved north to Prince George where Bruce took charge of the BC Ambulance Service. After retiring for a second time in 2006, Bruce looked for something new to challenge himself physically and mentally, and he turned to the outdoors of his youth. He began hiking and bivouacking in the mountains east of Prince George, and he volunteered with the Prince George and Vanderhoof Search and Rescue groups.

As his fitness and mountaineering interests grew, he enrolled in a Yamnuska mountaineering course and, determined not to hold back more youthful climbing partners, began working out in earnest. He set himself a tough physical training regimen that included hiking the hills around our Prince George neighbourhood with his energetic canine companion, Toby, and a backpack weighted with large water-filled jugs. He began investing in quality mountaineering gear, and he joined the ACC's Prince George and Jasper Sections in 2011. He attended an ACC Ice Camp in 2013 and three General Mountaineering Camps in 2012, 2013 and 2014, all of which he revelled in.

According to Prince George Section member Ken Cox: "It was with ice climbing that Bruce discovered a hidden passion. He genuinely enjoyed the esoteric nature of the sport and worked hard to improve his skills." Bruce took advantage of his location in Prince George to climb with ACC members and guides in the Jasper area, and later took an ice-climbing course with Will Gadd. In January 2015, he returned from one of these trips and commented to his wife that at the age of 65, he was in the best physical shape of his life. Tragically, two weeks later, he received an incidental diagnosis of Stage 4 prostate cancer.

Bruce began the most difficult period of his life, lasting nearly three years with many ups and downs, and was progressively unable to climb. Instead, he took a strong hand in managing his illness, and after genetic testing revealed a hereditary mutation, he received experimental drug treatment through the BC Cancer Agency. In a newspaper article in the *Prince George Citizen* on June 2, 2017, commemorating National Cancer Survivors Day, Bruce credited the treatment with giving him more days to look forward to than he had thought possible before, ending with the words, "I'm fortunate. I've been given a gift."

On the surface, Bruce was a humble, easygoing and generous man; underneath, he was a tough, smart, intensely-focussed individual who could easily be underestimated if you weren't paying attention. These attributes undoubtedly helped make him a first-rate investigator, interviewer and leader during his policing career, and certainly drove his determined approach to mountaineering. It is fitting, in light of the things that became central to Bruce in his final years, that the accompanying July 2008 photograph was taken on the summit of Mount Terry Fox. It was a beautiful day in the mountains, one that seemed to us that it might never end, except, of course, that all things must end. Bruce was a member of the ACC for only six years, but he will be missed by those who were privileged to know him. He leaves an inspirational legacy that it is never too late to embrace the outdoors and mountaineering, even in retirement.

—Mike Nash

Waldemar "Fips" Paul Broda
1923–2017

I remember thinking to myself, "Why can't I go! I feel fine!" It was September 2004, the week before school started again. On this day, I was sick with the flu on my parents' couch. My mom had just informed me that I wasn't going to be joining my sister, my dad and my 81-year-old *opi* to Garibaldi Provincial Park. Their plan was to camp overnight and hopefully reach one of the most recognizable peaks in the Coast Mountains, the Black Tusk. I would have to wait until next year for the opportunity to stand on its summit alongside Opi, whom I'd heard so many climbing stories from.

Waldemar Paul Broda, my *opi*, was born on June 23, 1923, in what was then Bielitz, Austria, but is now a part of Poland. From an early age, he was known primarily by his nickname Fips, the name of a climbing monkey in one of his storybooks. As a young teenager, he cut his teeth with his older brother in the Tatra Mountains of Czechoslovakia and Poland, exploring, climbing and skiing. When World War II arrived, he volunteered to do surveillance for the mountain troops of Austria.

A family-favourite story of Fips was when, in the middle of war and winter, he cross-country skied alone through the Black Forest of Germany, evading opposition military forces, in order to find and court his high-school love, Sissi. They were married in 1950 and a year later, emigrated to Canada's Halifax, Nova Scotia, where they quickly set off from for Vancouver.

Promptly upon arriving in downtown Vancouver, Fips joined the local ACC section. Here he met some of his lifelong climbing partners, including Paddy Sherman, Scipio Merler, Ralph Hutchinson and Bernie Segger. No time was wasted joining expeditions and leading trips into the rarely explored regions of British Columbia, Yukon and Alaska. Fips was always an active member within the ACC and a most-welcomed face. He served as vice-president of the Vancouver Section and was chief architect behind the Tantalus Hut at Lake Lovely Water. In 2011, Fips received the ACC Silver Rope for Leadership Award.

Early in their new Canadian life, Fips and Sissi made a move to the tall trees of West Vancouver. With the North Shore at his doorstep, he helped create Grouse Mountain's first ski school and became a founding member of the North Shore Mountain Rescue Group (now North Shore Rescue). After Elfrida Pigou's discovery, he and Sherman were some of the first on the scene of the tragic crash of flight 810 into Slesse Mountain.

Fips knew the mountain better than most, due to a convincing climb of his that had taken place on Slesse a couple of years earlier. With John Dudra, he completed the first winter ascent of the fanged peak via the southwest route [see *CAJ*, vol. XXXIX, 1956, p. 101]. Some of the highest summits of North America, including Denali, soon attracted his attention. Mount Fairweather [see *CAJ*, vol. XLII, 1959, p. 10-28] and Monarch Mountain [see *CAJ*, vol. XXXVII, 1954, p. 15–25] both gave way to a second ascent for him and his companions. Following Fairweather, his team made the first ascent up the north ridge of a 3,171-metre mountain to the south, which was named after my aunt, Sabine [see *CAJ,* vol. XLII, 1959, p. 70].

With the success of these two climbs, the expedition party of eight returned to base camp at the foot of Lituya Bay on July 9, 1958, to prepare for their flight back to civilization. With fog inbound, their pilot came a day earlier than expected to pick up the now-scrambling climbers. Little did they realize that a gigantic earthquake would trigger a tsunami that surged into the bay mere hours after their departure, stripping the forest below 520 metres down to bedrock.

Sherman referred to Fips as being an extraordinary character, one who "had been born without an off switch." In 1967, Fips showcased just that, leading the first ascent party up and down Centennial Peak [see *CAJ,* vol. LI, 1968, p. 55–62] in a single push of 23 hours, during the Yukon Alpine Centennial Expedition. His appetite for adventuring, suffering and discovering the beauty in these unknown areas provided him with numerous other mountains to his name in the Coast Mountains. He was not limited to the mountains in North America, however; he completed notable climbs in South America as well,

such as Huascaran [see *CAJ*, vol. LIII, 1970, p. 11–15], Alpamayo, Cotopaxi and Chimborazo, while sprinkling in a few more international summits like Mount Kenya and Mera Peak.

In his later years, I would regularly visit his home and help out with chores. Fips was an architect by profession and this lifelong passion is reflected in his *alpen*-style home. With the help of friends, it was built on the rugged bedrock granite above the Pacific Ocean in Caulfeild.

While Fips and Sissi would tend to their fairytale garden, I would climb up a precariously balanced ladder to the roof in order to clear the gutters of twigs and needles. This was an important task to be completed. If it wasn't, 90-year-old Fips, who was strictly forbidden to do so, would disobey orders by climbing over the second story railing with the ladder and ascend its rungs with nothing but slippery cedar shingles and air beneath him.

"Bah! I can do it!" he would say as we shook our heads.

Although he disliked his children's rules, Fips had a deep love for his family and friends. Every gathering, without fail, he would stand in front of his loved ones and announce the best wishes from relatives and friends back home in Europe, always accompanied by his joyous smile and deep laughter.

The more lunches we ate together, underneath his busy hummingbird feeder and beside Omi's blossoming rhododendrons, the more I learned about his character and the more inspired I became. I cherished our time spent together, whether it was skiing on Whistler Mountain or sipping some of his special *slivovitz*.

Perhaps most dear to me, though, was my first summit during our trip into Garibaldi Provincial Park in 2005. We approached the Black Tusk in the morning sun from Taylor Meadows. After traversing toward the summit chimney, Opi tied one end of the rope around my waist and methodically scrambled with the other end up the loose rock. When he was ready with his hip belay, I fought back some initial nerves and followed his same path up, confident that I would be all right with him on the other end of the rope. The nerves were soon replaced by elation once fluidity was found. The short stroll to the top beside my *opi*, one of the biggest influences in my life, was one that will be long remembered. It may have only been one mountain of countless many for him, but with that smile, it seemed like there was no place he would rather be.

—Jesse Saunders

Marc-Andre Leclerc
1992–2018

I first met marc-andre leclerc at Starbucks in Squamish, B.C., when he was about 15 years old. Wild-eyed with curly dark hair, he seemed to have an electrical current of stoke running through his gangly body. He peppered me with question after question and practically reverberated with psyche and curiosity. I'd never met anyone with such bubbling levels of excitement about climbing. In the words of his longtime friend and Fraser Valley local Drew Brayshaw, "Marc-Andre was the only climber, and maybe the only person, I've ever met who made those impossible dreams manifest and actually lived up to his own teenage fantasies of climbing by doing all the things he'd said years earlier that he wanted to do."

Leclerc, originally from Pitt Meadows, B.C., first started climbing in a gym in Maple Ridge at age nine. At age 11, his family relocated to Agassiz, B.C., where Leclerc soon took to the local cliffs and the mountains above his home, honing his skills and already thinking of bigger things.

When he relocated to Squamish, not long after our first meeting, he blew me away with unprecedented levels of dirtbagging. Lacking a vehicle and driver's license, he either occupied a cramped stairwell for $180 per month or lived in the boulders beneath the Chief. Before long, he had ticked 5.14 and done some impressive rock solos, such as the first free solo of High Plains Drifter, a 5.11c at the top of the Chief. At age 20, he soloed three routes—Grand Wall, Uncle Ben's and University Wall—on the Squamish Chief in a 17-hour push. Later that same summer, he soloed the Grand Wall in just 57 minutes.

"Young Marc," as we called him, was obviously a prodigy. But it was in the mountains where his true ambitions lay. Over the following years, all we could do was scratch our heads and watch in awe as he applied his prodigious talent to the peaks of British Columbia and beyond.

Mount Slesse, whose name means "The Fang" in the Halq'eméylem First Nation's language, sits above the town of Chilliwack, close to Agassiz. The peak occupied a special place in Marc's heart between its proximity to home and its beautiful quietness, and he frequently returned to it, raising standards with nearly every visit. In 2014, he soloed three full-length routes—East Pillar, Navigator Wall and Northeast Buttress—on Slesse in just over 12 hours. In March of 2015, he did the first winter solo of the Northeast Buttress. Though this ascent was largely ignored by the media, Marc considered it his most difficult solo in the mountains.

Venturing beyond his home hills, Marc found a personal playground in Patagonia. In 2015, he did the first solo of the 1,200-metre Corkscrew Link-up (5.10d A1) on Cerro Torre, the hardest solo ever done on the mountain. Patagonia climbing legend Rolo Garibotti called it "an ascent of earth-shifting proportions." That same season, with Colin Haley, Marc did the first ascent of the Reverse Traverse of the Torre group, which they dubbed La Travesía Del Oso Buda (5.10 A1 M5 WI 5/6, 1200m). The next year, in September 2016, Marc did a solo winter ascent of Torre Egger. "In the past few years, no single other alpine climber's exploits caught my attention as much," says Haley.

In early 2016 in the Canadian Rockies, Marc had soloed three routes—French Reality (M5 WI 6+), Nightmare on Wolf Street (M7+ WI 6+) into The Day After les Vacances de Monsieur Hulot (M5 WI6) and Nemesis (WI 6)—on the Stanley Headwall in one day, a feat that blew the locals away. "I've been climbing for 25 years and never seen anything like it," said Canadian alpine-climbing legend Jon Walsh. "A lot of people's jaws really dropped when he climbed those three routes without a rope."

A couple of months later, Marc soloed the Emperor Face on Mount Robson. This ascent in particular seemed to have a profound effect on him. In his revelatory, must-read *CAJ* story about the climb, he wrote, "Through time spent in the mountains, away from the crowds, away from the stopwatch, away from the grades, and all the lists of records, I have slowly become able to pick apart what is important to me and discard the things that are not. Of course the journey of learning never ends, and I've 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." [*CAJ*, 2017, vol. 100, p. 132]

For the past six years, Marc-Andre's most frequent partner was his girlfriend, Brette Harrington. The love between them was palpable. On a long, sweat-soaked, gear-ferrying hike in northern Patagonia on our way to Cerro Mariposa in 2014, Marc explained to me how Brette's love and companionship rekindled his psyche for climbing and pulled him out of a brief aimless stage in life.

Marc's family—father, Serge Leclerc, mother, Michelle Kuipers, sister, Bridgid-Anne Dunning, and brother, Elijah Leclerc—was incredibly important to him. He prioritized spending time with them. A couple of summers ago, eager to introduce his mom to the mountains he adored so much, he guided her up to within two pitches of the top of Nesakwatch Spire, across the valley from Mount Slesse.

"I still remember him peering down at me while belaying, watching me claw at the granite, saying it must be harder than he remembered," recounts Michelle.

As his friends can attest, climbing with Marc was always full of hijinks, antics and laughs. Once, when we were asked to pose for some soloing photos that would appear in a local newspaper, Marc grimaced on a trivial 12-metre 5.8 as if he were nearing the top of the Cerro Torre headwall. Unsurprisingly, he made the front page of the paper. Ever the unselfconscious jokester, he was famous for frequently breaking out into "air beta," pantomiming sequences with his hands and feet when he could no longer contain his excitement.

Beyond the accolades and mind-bending feats, Marc was a truly kind and gentle soul. I've never met anyone so unfazed by recognition. Despite being one of the world's best climbers, he treated everyone the same and had time for everyone. Pure souls like Marc are rare in this world. Rest easy, Marc-Andre.

—Will Stanhope

Reviews

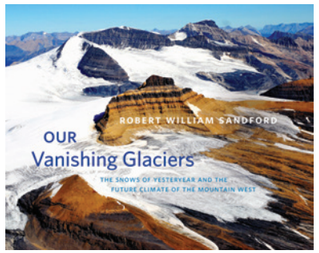
Our Vanishing Glaciers

by Robert William Sandford, Rocky Mountain Books (2017)

I have had for many a decade an interest in the slowly vanishing Illecillewaet Glacier in Rogers Pass (as recorded by the Vaux family) and the history of Great Glacier Lodge (as the first centre of alpinism in North America). My treks to the Wheeler and Asulkan huts (and beyond) and Nakimu Caves have revealed much about the disappearing glaciers of which Illecillewaet was a reigning elder at once auspicious moment. So, I was more than delighted to be sent *Our Vanishing Glaciers* to review—so much packed into this clarion call of a well-crafted book.

Glaciers are, in many significant ways, the proverbial canary in the mineshaft. The state of the receding glaciers in our world tells us much about substantive shifts in the climate and augers much warning for the future. The sheer momentum of *Our Vanishing Glaciers* is the succinct and compact manner that Robert William Sandford highlights how the slow-moving glaciers of the past (and the contributions they make via fresh water) are in jeopardy (as are we if we do not awaken to our perilous plight).

In an incisive, textual and visual way, *Our Vanishing Glaciers* unfolds the tale we must all be attentive to in a most convincing manner. It begins with a general overview of the issues of the wonder of water, the impact of winter on water, ecology and winter water, and how icefields and glaciers form. Needless to say, the shifting state of the warming earth is one of the main actors in such a drama. But the beauty and genius of the book is the way the main themes are applied to the glaciers and icefields of the Canadian Rockies. The specificity of such a turning to the Rockies illustrates in ample detail the reality and dire implications of the future climate on the Canadian mountain west.



It is this concentration, again and again, on the Canadian Rockies' glaciers and icefields that make *Our Vanishing Glaciers* a canary test textbook. There are those who are convinced by arguments of a logical and empirical manner, science being very much the guide and tutor. There are others who need photographs or actual encounters with the issue being pondered and discussed. The scientific approach, appropriately so, does outweigh the visual in *Our Vanishing Glaciers*, but, wisely, the visual affirms and confirms the larger thesis. There is a fine glossary at book's end, and there is there an excellent bibliography of sorts (for those, hopefully, wishing to be more informed on the topic).

I have, since the mid-1970s—after spending a couple of years in Norway with the mountain Sami and in the high alpine in Switzerland in the early 1970s—done many a trip to the glaciers and icefields of the Rockies. One of my first trips was on Peyto Glacier in 1975 and now it is so tragic to witness its slow death. I have certainly seen the impact of climate change and the tensions, as Sandford notes in his final chapter, between water, climate and the national park's ideals.

There can be no doubt on this the 150th anniversary of Canada that we face challenges not faced in 1867. One of the most obvious and not to be ignored challenges is both climate change and the impact on icefields; and, in time, the consequences for us. *Our Vanishing Glaciers* is an informed and compelling siren, framed in an aesthetic yet judicious manner, and should be standard reading for Canadians concerned with the future of the mountain climate and the place of humanity in such a delicate yet real changing world.

—Ron Dart

Honouring High Places: The Mountain Life of Junko Tabei

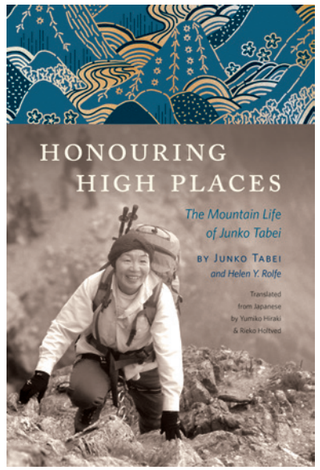
by Junko Tabei and Helen Y. Rolfe, Rocky Mountain Books (2017)

Early morning on may 16, 1975, Junko Tabei and Sherpa Ang Tsering set off for the summit of Mount Everest from a high camp above the South Col. Neither wind nor a wisp of cloud is evident. Having warmed themselves on milk tea, they move with deliberation towards the Hillary Step, dizzying heights below them. The combined efforts of a large, well-organized team have gotten them there along with a country that enthusiastically supports them. This being but 20 years since the first ascent by Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, Tabei and Ang Tsering find themselves quite alone on the ridge that leads to the summit, as they are the sole expedition on the route. All goes well as their mountaineering skill and no small amount of bravery get them to the summit shortly after noon. The radio is pulled from her pack and Tabei calls down to confirm their ascent. She is the first woman to summit the world's highest peak, and will become a national hero in her native Japan as a result.

Honouring High Places is Tabei's autobiography based on translations from Japanese and co-written by Canmore's Helen Rolfe. Tabei describes her middle-class upbringing in post-war Japan, the strictness of the school setting and the impact of her father's death, and how these elements influenced her passion for climbing. It's a world that will feel unfamiliar to Canadian readers—one where the values of life in the mountains is carefully taught by mentors at schools and climbing clubs. Climbing in Japan in the late 1960s is as far removed from the North American counterculture as one can imagine. It's in this strongly affirmative environment that Tabei gains confidence in the alpine, and it's the club structure that takes her to the summit of Annapurna III. She becomes both the first woman and the first Japanese to climb the peak. This sets her up to climb Everest five years later, three years after she gives birth to her first child.

Following the fame of her ascent, Tabei goes on to become the first woman to climb the Seven Summits. These climbs are described in the book alongside her strong commitment to maintain the cultural and environmental integrity of the world's high mountains—hence the title. The book's charm lies in Tabei's unassuming but obviously driven nature, and its insights into how Japanese society approaches mountaineering provides the reader with a personal view of the climbing world beyond the Anglosphere.

—Tom Valis



A Century of Antics, Epics and Escapades: The Varsity Outdoor Club, 1917-2017

edited by Elliot Skierszkan, University of British Columbia Varsity Outdoor Club (2017)

Spanning the past 100 years, *A Century of Antics, Epics and Escapades* tells the story of UBC's Varsity Outdoor Club (VOC). Stories from a hundred authors have been woven together with historic photos into this beautifully produced book. Although the book does not attempt to be an exhaustive history of the Club, it is still a great reference and a fun read as well.

This student-led organization has played a major role in pioneering the trails, climbs and ski tours of the Coast Mountains and the Club's alumni reads like a who's who of Coast mountaineering—Dick Culbert, Glenn Woodsworth, John Baldwin, Sev Heiberg, Karl Ricker, Don Lyon, Alice Purdey, Vance Culbert and Lena Rowat—just to name just a few.

Club members have written guidebooks to climbing in the Coast Mountains (Culbert), ski mountaineering in the Coast Mountains (Baldwin) and climbing at Squamish (Woodsworth). An enthusiastic group of VOCers were the energy and brains behind the creation of the Mountain Equipment Co-op almost 50 years ago. And over the years, the VOC has built a dozen mountain huts for members and others to enjoy.

But most importantly, the VOC has introduced young people to the joys of mountain adventure for a century. For many people, joining the VOC has been a life-changing experience and has led to lifelong friendships. Members like to say, "Once you're a member of the VOC, you're a member for life." For many VOCers, the beauty of the mountains, the adventure, the thrills, the friendships and the camaraderie around the campfire have not changed over the years. People still fall in love with the mountains for the same reasons they did many decades ago.

In this book, Elliot Skierszkan and his team of dedicated volunteers have done a terrific job of tracking down the old stories and making earlier generations of Club members come to life. The book is hard cover with a beautiful dust jacket and is filled with many marvelous photographs, well reproduced in both black and white as well as colour. Most of the images are of a large enough size that you can make out the features of the individuals. The layout of the book is simple and easy to follow, and the size of the font is large enough for us senior citizens to read. The book is printed on quality, heavier-weight paper that gives a real heft to the publication. Unfortunately, the book does not seem to merit the FSC logo, certifying that the paper has been harvested from socially and environmentally responsible sources. And I was sorry to see that the book does not have an index, which makes it very hard to track down a specific individual or story.

Going into the next 100 years, the VOC is strong and thriving. Today there are more than 1,000 members, and it looks like it is a club that knows how to have fun. My congratulations to those who put so much hard work into this book. You have done the VOC proud.

—Chic Scott

Cinema Vertigo

by David Smart, Imaginary Mountain Surveyors (2017)

David smart's second book of mountain fiction, *Cinema Vertigo*, draws on the same World War II era as his first book, *Above the Reich*, but with a decidedly different spin. As the title implies, the focus is on filmmaking. It's an homage to *bergfilme* and the art of climbing films made in situ in the mountains rather than on a constructed studio set. The novel takes us on the journey of a French filmmaker looking for his next big break in the industry as he arrives in Chamonix with his entourage and a host of famous actors in tow as they prepare to make *First on the Rope*, the production company's attempted foray of turning climbing movies into popular cinema.

The book cannot have been an easy one to write. The author's commitment to research of both the films and the film directors of the age is immediately obvious. There's an astuteness and authority to the writing that suggests the author knows much about the subject matter and that this novel had been brewing in his mind for some time before he decided to put it to paper. The cinematic glossary at the onset is helpful as most of the filming terms used are French and are referred to frequently as one moves through the book.

Smart draws on real-life climbing and cinema industry characters as he expertly weaves them into the story. For example, Gaston Rebuffat and Lionel Terray have roles in the production of the drama (and not just smoking Gitanes). Their expertise takes the film crew on the peaks and glaciers of the Chamonix valley. Charles Pathé, a real-life pioneer of the French film industry, runs the company that the main protagonist works for, and there are enough other subtle references to other historical characters that it might be hard to keep track if you aren't an avid follower of either French cinema and alpinism. I think a cast of characters at the onset or an author's note would have been helpful for those not so well-versed in the history of climbing and film in the Alps. The story carries itself, however, despite the reader's previous knowledge of the era; in fact, there are several layers of story that all play out with equal success.

In the often underrepresented genre of mountain fiction, Smart has done well here to bring an interesting twist to historic characters and a new story angle to readers of mountain literature. The difficulties of creating art during the German occupation are well-described by Smart, his knowledge of the topic is exceptional. Smart's book is rich with history and there's much to learn about alpinism and adventure filmmaking within its pages. *Cinema Vertigo* inspires you to continue on with your own research and keep the spirit of the era alive.

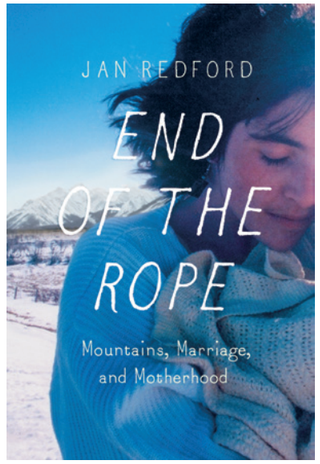
—Joanna Croston

End of the Rope: Mountains, Marriage and Motherhood

by Jan Redford, Random House Canada (2018)

There is a welcome trend of women adventurers coming forward with tales from the mountains these days. An encouraging, inclusionary vibe and energy surrounds the mountain world as of late, and young women in the hills and on social media seem to lack the fear of putting themselves out there that has often plagued previous generations of strong mountain women. Perhaps that's why it took Jan Redford 10 years to write and publish her memoir, *End of the Rope: Mountains, Marriage and Motherhood*. The time for her story is, indeed, now.

When you start to dive into *End of the Rope*, you can't help but admire the courage of Redford as a young, determined climber as she tries to fit into the tight and established climbing community of the Canadian Rockies during the 1980s. Chewing tobacco and "swearing like a truck driver" helped Redford cover up her insecurity and disguise her petit physique so she could proceed as planned with her goal of living a vertical life on mountains. Redford makes no qualms about revealing her vulnerability throughout the book, a refreshing break from the masculinity of traditional expedition and exploration writing, but sometimes as the reader, you're left with a slightly horrifying, unsettling feeling when she bares all about relationships and love. No other part of the book tears at your heartstrings more than the death of her boyfriend, Dan Guthrie. Her honest and raw account of this episode in her life is difficult to read and at the same time completely necessary so you as an observer can understand the subsequent path she chose to take.



At times while reading, I found myself frustrated at the author; her inability to see the mistakes in life she was making was almost enraging. But obviously, she didn't have the same resources and options that are available to women today and this is what makes her story all the more remarkable. Battling

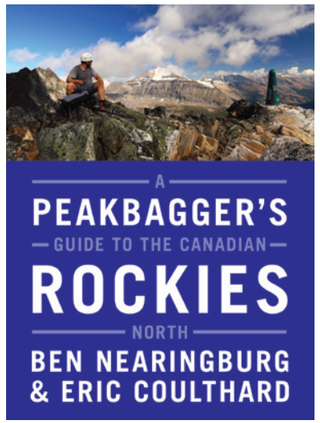
gender differences and stereotypes throughout her life mark much of the first half of the book, but when Redford finally leaves her husband and takes a new tack of independence by going back to school, the author finally becomes a shining example of what is actually possible, even to those with limited means.

End of the Rope breaks many conventions of traditional mountain literature, all of which I think, are favourable. Failure, weakness and vulnerability are all front and centre. These are not stories of huge, heroic, nationalist expeditions to the Greater Ranges, but rather stories of real life as a dirtbag climber, one who is trying to make ends meet, both emotionally and financially. There is a sincere authenticity of voice in Redford's writing that would be impossible for anyone else to replicate without the twists and turns in life than have specifically befallen her. Similar to her climbing contemporaries Sharon Wood and Margo Talbot, the book offers new insight into an era of Canadian climbing that has been so rarely tackled by women of the time.

—Joanna Croston

A Peakbagger's Guide to the Canadian Rockies North

by Ben Nearingburg & Eric Coulthard, Rocky Mountain Books (2017)



There has been a regrettable tendency when books are published on walking, hiking, scrambling and climbing in the Rockies to excessively focus on the central and southern Rockies and minimize or limit guiding information to the northern Rockies. The fact that *A Peakbagger's Guide to the Canadian Rockies North* corrects this obvious and historic glitch must be duly noted and, in itself, makes this a must-read beauty of a guidebook.

The initial paragraph in the Preface, legitimately so, sums up the dilemma: "The idea for this guidebook came together when the authors were planning a weekend peakbagging trip with friends. The conversation went kind of like the following: 'Why not head to Jasper?' 'Jasper? There's nothing to climb in Jasper. Let's go to Banff instead.'" Such is often the way Jasper and environs are viewed. The real climbers avoid the Jasper area since there is not really any good peakbagging to be done there. This misplaced attitude has desperately needed a challenge and *A Peakbagger's Guide* has more than risen to the occasion.

This compact tome covers 10 areas in the Jasper region that offer fine possibilities for summittering: Yellowhead Highway East, Snaring and Celestine Lake roads, Yellowhead Highway West, Maligne Lake, Tonquin Valley, Icefields Parkway, Le Grand Brazeau, South Boundary Trail and Whitehorse Wildland Provincial Park, Mount Robson Provincial Park and Valemont. Each of the covered areas are replete with fine maps and ample photographs. Each trip discussed touches on the potential facts needed for a successful peak to be bagged.

The bibliography, websites, useful contacts, index and table of winter peaks are fine primers for those keen to take to summits in the area. The introduction covers the essentials of mountain safety and planning for climbing trips. I must admit, by way of closing, that I have found the Jasper area top-notch to ramble and scramble. *A Peakbagger's Guide to the Canadian Rockies North* has further enriched my understanding of such terrain and opened up new possibilities for treks and summits. There can be no doubt that this is the definitive guidebook for those committed to explore the northern Rockies in a fuller and more enjoyable manner and, of course, to bag many more peaks.

—Ron Dart

Index

Anne Gilbert Chase weaves past a 200-metre wall to unlock the upper mountain on the third day of a first ascent of the southwest face of Nilkantha. She and her partners Jason Thompson and Chantel Astorga named the route Obscured Perception. "Obscured because the mountain is often shrouded in clouds and hard to see. Perception because when you are on an expedition, nothing else matters."

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