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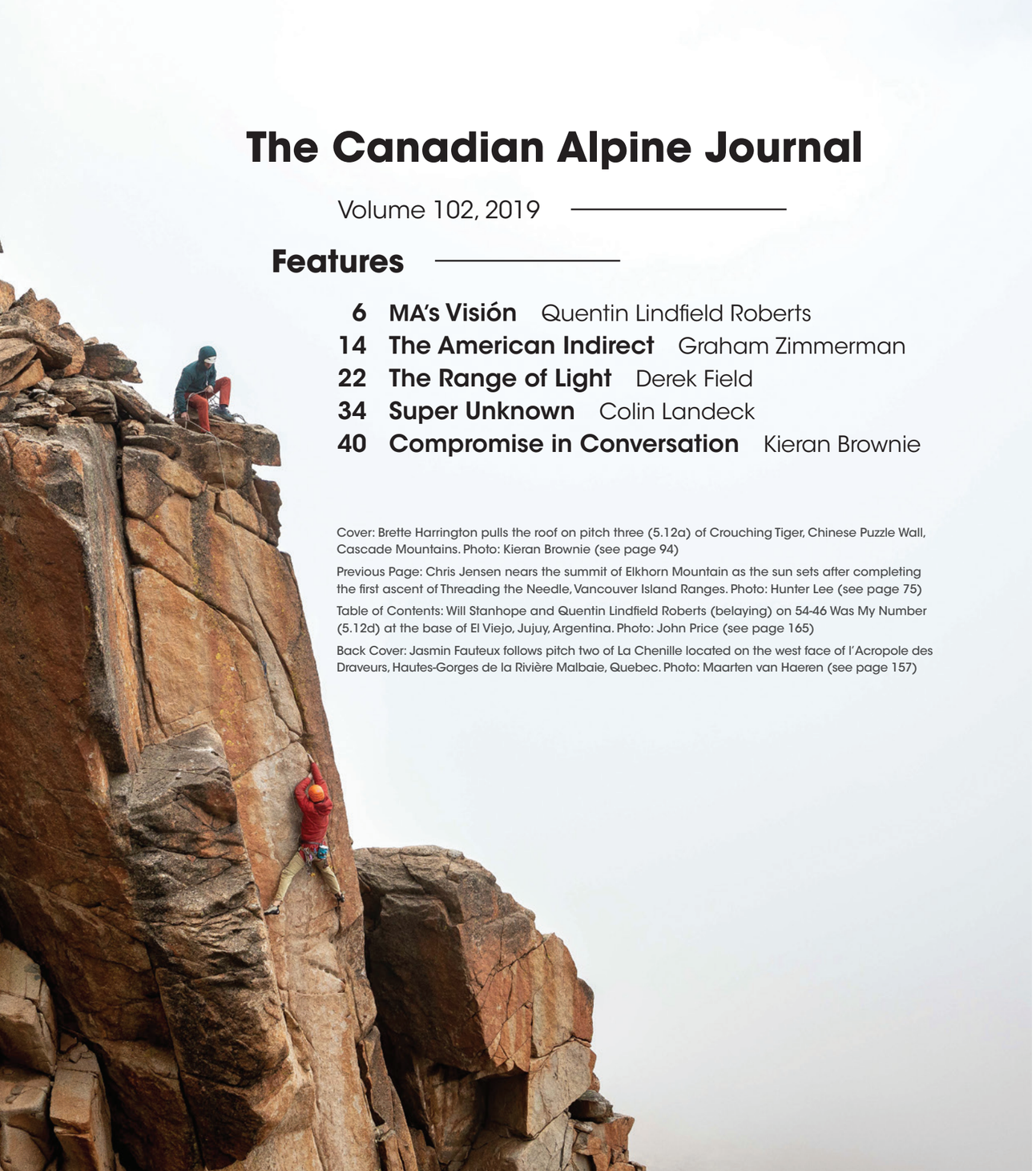
Features



Cover: Brette Harrington pulls the roof on pitch three (5.12a) of Crouching Tiger, Chinese Puzzle Wall, Cascade Mountains. Photo: Kieran Brownie (see page 94)

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EDITOR — Sean Isaac
CONTRIBUTING EDITOR — Helen Rolfe
COPY EDITOR — Lynn Martel
FRENCH EDITOR — Anne Ryall
LAYOUT & PRODUCTION — Zac Bolan

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Editorial

The Inner Ranges

CLIMBING IS 10 PER CENT physical and 90 per cent mental. Everyone has heard this seemingly tongue-in-cheek expression before, but it holds a certain truth. Of course, climbing is very physical. It requires strength in the form of endurance, power and flexibility; however, strong muscles are meaningless without a strong mind to provide direction and help to stay on point. I have witnessed 5.13 gym climbers crumble under the stress of a runout and cross-fit specimens turn to Jello in tedious deep post-holing. Both forms of athlete are obviously very fit, but the mind drives the body, not the other way around—it's mind over matter. In the realm of climbing, mental robustness is equally important to, if not more important than, bulging muscles, regardless of whether it is in the relatively safe world of bolt-protected sport climbing or dangerous high-altitude alpine climbing. The climber's brain requires conditioning.

My *CAJ* editorial predecessor, Geoff Powter, is a specialist in exploring the vast wilderness of the cerebral cortex, because, in addition to being a great climber and writer, he is also a clinical psychologist. When he took the helm of the editor's desk of this esteemed journal in 1993, the *CAJ* was primarily focused on documenting exploration and ascents. Powter brought a new perspective to these pages by introducing The Inner Ranges section, which was a safe place for more esoteric narratives.

Since passing the *CAJ* reigns to yours truly, Powter has gone on to write two excellent books. The first being *Strange and Dangerous Dreams: The Fine Line Between Adventure and Madness* (Mountaineers Books, 2006), which explores the darker psychological drama behind the exploits of 11 adventurers—both famous and lesser-known. Powter's most recent book is a collection of his previously published stories and is aptly titled *Inner Ranges* (Rocky Mountain Books, 2018). It is a collage of personal memoirs, investigative journalism and biographical profiles, some of which appeared in *CAJ* pages two decades ago. I will not go into detail on how captivating theses stories are since it is reviewed in this volume by David Smart [see page 184], but I will say that despite reading many of these articles before, I still could not put down the book.

When I took over editorial duties in 2007, I continued with The Inner Ranges section, but after two volumes I felt I couldn't serve it the same justice as Powter had. As such, I changed the section name to The Cultural Ranges to further encompass not only introspective pieces but also science, art, fiction and poetry. This year's Cultural Ranges offers a balance of these elements, thus adding to the overall mountain culture that Powter introduced 25 years ago. Indeed, the mind of the climber continues to be explored, as do the physical fundamentals that climbers bestow.

—Sean Isaac

MA's Visión

Quentin Lindfield Roberts

It's early evening at the Fresco Bar in El Chaltén, and the mountain hype is already starting to commandeer my better senses.

Brette Harrington pushes into new terrain on Torre Egger.
Photo: Quentin Lindfield Roberts

I'm surrounded by mutant crushers from around the globe, and words like first, gnarr, link-up, solo and new-route are bouncing off the walls and into my brain. The crescendo of ambition appears to be directly proportional to the quantity of beer the bartender Leandro has sold, but how can you blame us? Its been bad weather for ages, and we're excited about the splitter weather window that seems to be appearing at the end of the forecast ¶

Outside, a faint glimmer of evening sun caresses the clouds streaming off the summit of Fitz Roy. The Torres are invisible behind a black inferno of wind and water that is pouring in from the ice cap. I watch this wall of hate move east, soon to be slamming into the hulking Chaltén massif like a tidal wave of fury. This storm is forecasted to be the wildest one of the trip so far, with summit winds exceeding 180 kilometres per hour.

At its latitude of 49 degrees south, Patagonia is the only significant landmass in the entire circumference of the earth. The winds we're experiencing have surfed the oceans unobstructed, building both speed and moisture along the way. Now they're plowing headlong into the southern continent with brutal force. The Torres are a few kilometres west of the Chaltén massif and slightly closer to the ocean, so they take the brunt of the weather. It makes climbing in the Torres far more complex, but that's what I'm here to do.

Brette Harrington and I have nearly been here for a month. We want to free climb a new route on Torre Egger, the middle of the three Torres. We have already been into the mountains twice, during short windows of high pressure. Both times to reconnoiter the route in preparation for the moment when the weather might allow for an attempt. Brette has extended her ticket for the good weather on the horizon, but the end of January is fast approaching and this window might be our last and only chance. We have placed all of our eggs in a very fragile basket.

I first met Brette in El Chaltén during the 2015-16 climbing season. Brette was in Patagonia, climbing and working on an upcoming "Reel Rock" video for Sender Films. The year before, while on a trip with her partner Marc-Andre Leclerc, Brette had free soloed Chiaro di Luna on Aguja Saint-Exupery, and that is what they were here to film.

The same day that Brette soloed Chiaro di Luna, Marc-Andre soloed the Corkscrew on Cerro Torre. Marc went on to solo all three of the Torres over the following seasons, including Torre Egger. I loved spending time with the two of them, because their energy was contagious and their love palpable. Even when they climbed apart, they still provided each other with unwavering confidence. It was something truly special, and I hold on to the memory.

Marc passed away with Ryan Johnson in Alaska last year. This shook me and the entire climbing community to the core. I can't fathom how Brette's world would have collapsed. Over the ensuing months, she somehow managed to hold on, clinging to the love and inspiration that he gave her. When he died, Brette drove straight to the Rockies, seeking out cold-weather alpinism with despair-fuelled ferocity. She somehow found peace in the quiet chaos of the mountains.

It was eight months since Marc's passing and three months before our trip that Brette messaged me, asking whether or not I was interested in trying to climb the east pillar of Torre Egger with her. Marc had noticed the potential for a striking new route when he climbed Titanic in 2016. Brette and Marc had been making plans to go to Patagonia and try it together.

Marc envisioned that one could face climb on run-out flakes in order to connect to an obvious but discontinuous corner system splitting the prow of the lower buttress. The route would climb the steepest part of the wall. I knew that if it was

Quentin Lindfield Roberts seconds a 5.11+ corner on pitch six of MA's Visión. Photo: Brette Harrington

Brette Harrington watches the evening sun set behind Fitzroy and Poincenot. Photo: Quentin Lindfield Roberts

possible it would be an absolutely spectacular line, and I was instantly excited to try it. Brette and I started making concrete plans.

BACK IN EL CHALTÉN, THE FORECAST has managed to withstand the Fresco Bar hype and actually materialize into four days of high pressure accompanied by a huge spike in temperature. Brette and I are at base camp in Noruegos, sipping electrolyte tea and arranging our gear for the next morning. The rime-capped summits of the Torres tower a thousand metres above and Cerro Chaltén dominates the other side of the valley, fiery in the evening sun.

Over the past two days, we have watched the Torres transform from ice-plastered sentinels into kilometre-high waterfalls—their east faces streaked with running water like black tiger stripes on golden granite. There are several teams at base camp, and we've all waited an extra day in the hope that it would allow the faces to clean themselves of enough snow and ice to climb them. Although everything is wet, we've luckily chosen the driest objective of the crew, and we go to bed psyched.

Bob Marley heralds the morning, singing to us from my phone's speaker at 1:30 a.m. after a surprisingly good few hours of rest. I go through the automated motions of coffee brewing and breakfast prep while Brette takes down camp and secures our things.

We navigate the glacier by headlamp, following behind our friends on their way to attempt a different route. We veer right toward Egger and holler a final monkey cry to our *compañeros* as we approach the bergschrund. We've climbed the initial pitches before, so we aren't so affected by the running water and the dark.

Brette confidently frees the first four pitches of Titanic, her headlamp like a rocket in the dark. I take over at first light where our route veers left on new terrain. It's an incredible 60-metre pitch of run-out vision questing on flakes. I look around the corner and up at 100 metres of perfect hand cracks that take us into the crux corner system.

It is still morning when we arrive at the crux pitch. It looks hard—a shallow left-leaning corner with a laser-thin crack in the back. Perfect for Brette's little hands! The crack peters out higher up, and it looks like it might be hard to protect. We session it as though we're cragging in Squamish.

The unclimbed granite crumbles under Brette's fingers and toes as she contorts into the corner. She runs it out slightly, striking the perfect balance between pump and protection, and sends it on her third go. I only get to try it once, but still manage to climb it cleanly on second, pulling through with an assortment of small cams and wires piling up on the rope at my belay loop. We high five and continue up the wall.

The day is going well. A few pitches higher, I top out the mental crux, a long pitch that starts as an off-width and transitions into steep 5.11+ face climbing with large runouts between fiddly gear. The terrain above looks far easier, and we're only a few pitches from our bivy.

Suddenly panic in Brette's voice gets my attention while she's climbing up to me. She's saying something about her boots detaching from the haul bag. I curse under my breath and finish hauling the bags to see what's going on. There's definitely no boots, only a frayed nylon tab flapping in the wind.

A distinct gloom hangs over us when Brette gets to the belay. We pull out the camera and complain to it. The two of us struggle to concede our plans for the summit, but we realize that there's no way that Brette will be able to climb through the upper ice pitches in rock shoes. The pitches are traversing, so she won't be able to jug them either, never mind the likelihood of freezing her toes. Even the glacier at the base might present a huge challenge.

It seems absurd that something so stupid could sabotage our attempt, but at least we're not injured. I feel deflated. All of the energy and psyche I have poured into this route vanishes. I fully expect Brette to want to go down, so I let her know that it's OK, but she refuses. Instead she takes the rack and starts climbing, determined to make the most of the good weather. I chuckle to myself, impressed with her tenacity and excited to keep exploring the beautiful terrain above.

After a few more pitches, we reconnect with

Titanic. Because we've given up on the summit, there's suddenly less pressure on our timeline. We slow down and take the time to fully embrace the experience.

We choose a small pedestal of rock for our bivy ledge. It juts out of the wall and drops off on all sides. The ledge is still in the sun when we get there, the only part on the whole east face that is. I stomp out the ledge with my boots while Brette rappels to fetch water. By the time everything is ready, the sun is setting and the spires of the Chaltén massif lick the sky like flames in the evening sun.

We allow ourselves the luxury of sleep, and we wake up with the warmth of first light. Going up the snowfield proves to be both challenging and risky without boots, but Brette sticks with it. We start questing on the upper wall, climbing each new pitch out of the excitement of discovery, gathering crucial information for our next attempt.

Eventually we get turned around by a soaking off-width that we can't protect. The runout is above a ledge, and without a chance at the summit, we decide that it isn't worth it. Instead, we get an early start on the descent.

We choose to rappel Titanic for the sake of speed, but the mountains are still vertical rivers of meltwater, and we get soaked in the chimney system. Brette recognizes Marc-Andre's rappel cord on the way down—melted-out V-threads in puddles of water. His cord is still new, shiny compared to the weathered cord from years past. He is very present here.

This time when we get down, we hike all of our gear out of the valley.

RAIN THUMPS ON THE tin roof of our Patagonian home, Hostel Hem Herhu. The summer climbing season is coming to an end. The one functional coffee pot has been in perpetual motion for the past four hours, and there are at least half a dozen laptop screens open in the common area. There aren't many climbers left in town, and my own departure is fast approaching. Despite this, I'm still robotically checking every weather update.

Out of my three trips here, this was the first "normal" season I had spent in Patagonia. In the past, the weather was so good that I struggled to find enough time to rest. This one was very different. I watch the water lash at the windows and think about how wonderful my time here has been. Sometimes there are factors out of one's control that we must accept, but that doesn't mean that you have to give up. Let's see where this dogged tenacity takes us.

As it stands, MA's Visión climbs 500 metres of new terrain to the hanging snowfield on the east face of Torre Egger, where the route rejoins Titanic. It then branches off again and continues for several pitches on the upper east pillar. The name *MA's Visión* plays on words, also meaning "more vision" in Spanish (i.e., *mas visión*). Some would call this a new route, or at least a new variation to Titanic, but we consider our route incomplete without the summit. Stay tuned for part two of this story. We are going back, so *hasta la próxima,* Torre Egger!

Summary

MA's Visión (5.12c, 500m), east face, Torre Egger, Chaltén massif, Patagonia, Argentina. FA: Brette Harrington, Quentin Lindfield Roberts, February 4, 2019.

About the Author

Quentin has recently moved to Canmore from the Okanagan. Two of his favourite moments include Barry Blanchard once telling him he looked "solid", and keeping his toes after a scary two weeks in hospital due to frostbite. Quentin considers himself a jack of all trades and master of none, yet he aspires to be a master of all. He is sponsored by Arc'teryx, Petzl and La Sportiva.

Brette Harrington approaches MA's Visión on Torre Egger with Cerro Torre (left) and Cerro Standhart (right). Photo: Quentin Lindfield Roberts

The American Indirect

Graham Zimmerman

“You do this because you love it,” I told myself again as I shivered in the dark. Chris lightly snored next to me, close by in the tiny dark tent. Frost slowly formed on the ceiling fabric.¶

It was our second night on a new route on the north face of Mount Macdonald—an imposing 1000-metre face at Rogers Pass. We were bivouacked on a small ledge chopped into the snow 19 pitches up the wall.

Chris Wright leads one of the final mixed pitches on day three during the first ascent of The American Indirect on the north face of Mount Macdonald.
Photo: Graham Zimmerman

Graham Zimmerman follows one of the crux pitches on day two. Photo: Chris Wright

IN AN EFFORT TO MOVE FAST and avoid a forecasted storm, we had packed for one night out. Looking at an extra day on the mountain, we were going to get hungry, which was fine, but it was part of the reason I needed to remind myself that I really like doing this.

Chris Wright and I had been climbing together for about four years before he convinced me that the conditions looked good and it was a reasonable idea to go try and open the first winter route on Macdonald's north face. We had taken expeditions together to both Alaska and Pakistan but had rarely climbed routes larger than a couple of pitches when closer to our homes in Bend, Oregon. Being within driving distance of our home, it felt like it might be not that big of a deal, but, boy, was I mistaken.

While we had both been focused on the big peaks of Alaska and the Karakoram, Chris had done a better job of keeping an eye out for objectives closer to home. As a ski guide, he had spent a lot of time around the Rogers Pass area and had been watching Macdonald for nearly a decade. More specifically, he had been watching a slender sliver of ice running down the centre of the face.

The fact that no winter routes had been climbed had nothing to do with a lack of local climbers knowing about it. In fact, the route had been watched by many climbers over the years, but legally accessing the face in winter conditions was terribly difficult. Since the Trans-Canada Highway runs directly under the wall, access is very limited during the winter. To climb the route, we needed for the ice to form before the winter closures took place and for the avalanche conditions on the approach and descent to be minimal. Chris had been watching the face and talking to local officials for seven years, and I had been watching with him for three. It had never appeared worth considering the drive, until this fall.

I had just gotten home from a successful alpine-climbing trip in Glacier National Park in Montana, and Chris had just wrapped up a sport-climbing project close to home. Over coffee at my house, we made the obligatory check on conditions at Rogers Pass and saw conditions coming in just before the closely approaching closure. It didn't take much discussion for us to realize that we needed to go. The next day we packed up a car and started the 12-hour drive to the pass.

Sitting on the Trans-Canada Highway, the daunting face loomed over us. The runnel of ice certainly appeared to be present, but the mixed climbing above and below looked snowy and challenging. Snapping photos of the wall and the descent, we chatted about the potential cruxes and places to sleep. The unknown of the new route weighed heavily, but with safe snow conditions and a clear forecast, it was clear that we needed to try.

That evening, we packed our bags with an optimistic two days of food and fuel, thinking that we would be able to move fast. In the warmth of civilization our plan seemed to be feasible and reasonable. We set our alarms for 2 a.m.

I BRUSHED SNOW OFF of beautiful quartzite rock while making slow upward progress. Looking down at Chris hanging from the belay, I could see our approach straight up from the highway through the woods and up a snowy couloir. Our path upwards wound through corners and chimneys stuffed with powder. I reached up and scratched through the steep snow-covered rock with my tool, feeling for good edges on which to hook.

Above, a snow-choked chimney loomed. Tentatively, I climbed into its depths, clearing the fluff while searching for protection. I wondered to myself if we were ever going to encounter ice or dry rock—terrain that would allow us to move faster.

Graham Zimmerman leads steep snow-covered rock on the first pitch of The American Indirect. Photo: Chris Wright

Pulling out of the top of the chimney, I looked up towards where we knew the ice hose started, and it felt very far away.

As Chris took over for his block of leading, ice started to appear and we began to move faster. The sun went down as we continued up towards the ice. In the darkness, our tools squeaked in the soft alpine ice.

We reached the base of the ice hose a few hours after dark. It was late, and we needed to stop. Digging into a small snow ledge we were able to quickly make a tent platform. As we melted water, we looked up the weather forecast and could see that taking an extra day on the route would be a safe option. We didn't talk about the fact that we would run out of food, which was simply not a reason to turn around. But as we ate our small dinner, we both knew that we needed to enjoy it, because we very well might run out later.

In the morning, I started my second leading block of the route. A mixed pitch led to the base of the ice feature that had drawn us to the face. Swinging into the start of the runnel, my picks bit into dry well-bonded ice, and it was clear that we were in for some fun. I followed the line of steep, thin ice that led upwards, and laughed with joy.

To be on such a beautiful feature on a kilometre-high mountain face felt surreal. As a youth, I had tried to imagine what it would feel like to be on a huge face climbing through new terrain. Today, I know the feeling well, but oftentimes it takes place in far-off ranges above remote base camps. To be in such a wild space directly above a highway, a day's drive from my home, was dreamlike.

The American Indirect on the north face of Mount Macdonald above the Trans-Canada Highway at Rogers Pass. Photo: Graham Zimmerman

After 100 metres of beautiful ice climbing, I turned the block over to Chris, and our delightful ice line promptly and unexpectedly turned into a funnel of poorly consolidated snow in a water groove. It is a funny element of alpine climbing, watching your partner deal with challenging and potentially dangerous terrain while you quietly sit at the belay, particularly when you just handed them the reins.

Chris made slow but steady progress through the steep blank sections of mixed climbing, clearing delaminated ice and searching for reasonable hooks and gear in the steep rotten rock. For two pitches, we battled upward, but our pace ground to a crawl as we dealt with the complex and occasionally dangerous terrain.

Pulling out from the top of the groove, we could see what, from the road, had been the major question mark of the route—a blank section of rock through which we hoped to be able to find passage. In my experience, when you get closer to a feature it opens up and starts to reveal itself. During this process, potential solutions present themselves and the path forward becomes obvious. This is not always the case though, and as we approached the blank section, we could see that it was a severe cave with no continuous crack systems. The decision to find another way did not take long, and we took a hard left along a snow ledge.

On the arête, we found excellent blocky mixed climbing, and as the sun set for the second time of the climb, I led upwards. I guess I had known for hours that we were going to need to spend another night on the wall, but it did not sink in until this point as the wall spread above me in the light of my headlamp. It became clear that we needed to find a bivouac, but no good ledges presented themselves, so I continued upward into the darkness.

Eventually, we arrived at a ledge where we were able to chop into the snow and set up our tent. Our food was meager, but mercifully we had enough fuel to melt a full brew. It was at this point that the seriousness of the route set in. Despite the fact that we could see the highway below us, we were terribly far from civilization, exploring unknown terrain in winter conditions. We might

Graham Zimmerman leads the ice hose that initially attracted the team to the face; however, this feature only lasted for less than two pitches of the 23-pitch route. Photo: Chris Wright

as well have been on an Alaskan alpine wall. It felt amazing, and as I lay shivering in my sleeping bag reminding myself that I do this because I love it, I was overcome with a deep sense of gratitude for the fact that these experiences make me feel so fantastically alive.

Awaking on our third morning on route, we drank a small amount of coffee and quickly started moving upwards. We knew that the summit ridge was not far off and that a storm was on its way later in the day. A traverse, a short ice pitch, a mixed pitch and a battle with a cornice took us to the ridge from which we had a 100-metre jaunt to the summit.

Standing on top, we were hungry and tired, but more importantly we were overcome by the wide expanse of mountains that lay before us—from the closer peaks of Rogers Pass to the Rockies in the east and the Monashees in the west. They seemed to go on forever.

Before heading down the descent and back to the car, we hugged in a deep embrace, and I thanked Chris for inviting me on board with his plan.

Back in Bend, preparing for larger missions far away in the Karakoram this summer, I find myself looking more closely at the peaks closer to home. I now know that they can hold new routes and wild adventure. All we need to do is be curious enough to go take a look.

Summary

The Indirect American (WI4+ M7, 1000m), north face, Mt. Macdonald, Rogers Pass, Selkirk Mountains. FA: Chris Wright, Graham Zimmerman, November 11-13, 2018.

About the Author

Graham Zimmerman is an alpinist and filmmaker based in Bend, Oregon. He is deeply enthralled with opening new routes on beautiful mountains and using those experiences to inspire others.

Chris Wright leads mixed terrain on the third day on The American Indirect.
Photo: Graham Zimmerman

The Range of Light

Derek Field

Derek Field places a #6 Camalot on the crux third pitch of Derektissima on The Ivories. Photo: Steve Stosky

Giselle Field stands atop a gendarme on the East Ridge of Bedayan Minaret with Mount Ritter and Mount Banner behind. Photo: Derek Field

I'll never forget my first trip to the Sierra Nevada. The year was 2011, and I was preparing to migrate south for my second year at California Lutheran University, where I played on the golf team. I needed a road trip buddy, and my high-school friend Steve Stosky jumped forward to volunteer. His one request was that we stop in Yosemite so that we might visit the holy land of rock climbing. Steve was getting quite involved in the sport, but I had yet to dip more than a proverbial toe. The name Yosemite sounded exotic to me; I had no clue what it represented or even where in California it was located. After all, I had only recently been introduced to rock climbing on the brittle limestone escarpments of the Canadian Rockies and knew very little about the sport otherwise. I had no idea how much my life was about to change.

Steve and I spent the summer learning the craft of traditional climbing and working summer jobs in downtown Calgary to fund our purchase of a single rack of cams shared between the two of us. August came around, and we were off. Armed with MapQuest directions, we drove through the night to the eastern gate of Yosemite National Park, where we slept crunched up in the front seats of my overloaded sedan. After securing actual campsites in Tuolumne Meadows and Camp Four, we proceeded to spend two weeks in Yosemite as true gumbies, engaging in all things gumby. The big highlight was climbing the iconic Southeast Buttress (II 5.6) of Cathedral Peak in Tuolumne. It took us a whopping 13 hours, car to car. When we look back at that wonderful day, Steve and I can't help but chuckle at our inefficiency with multi-pitch systems. The humour only augments the nostalgia.

As life moved forward, the experience of sitting cross-legged on the dinner-table-sized summit of Cathedral Peak never left me. Something about it felt just right. In my mind, I had always held great respect for the peaks of the Canadian Rockies—thick layers of ancient sedimentary rock twisted and torqued into fantastic skyward shapes, buttressed by enormous piles of scree. But for some reason, the view from the granite antenna of Cathedral Peak left an irreparable impression on my soul. This, I concluded, was surely the hall of the mountain gods. Lakes and meadows dotted the vast landscape of glacier-sculpted, barren bedrock—crystallized magma that was once the plumbing system of a great chain of volcanoes, as I would later learn. Everything was somehow smooth and graceful overall, and yet angular and jagged in just the right places. The stately pine forests were open and

Above: Derek Field sets off on the seventh pitch (5.10a) of Professor Handsome on Tuttle Slab. Photo: Giselle Field

Opposite: Derek Field jams the clean hand crack on the opening pitch of The Streets of the Mountains on the south face of Lone Pine Peak. Photo: Vitaliy Musiyenko

illuminated, in contrast to the impenetrably dense spruce woods of the Canadian Rockies. My preternatural idea of a dream-like mountain range was at once manifested in the domes, spires, slabs and canyons of the High Sierra.

As cliché as it sounds, the famously melodramatic prose of legends like John Muir and Clarence would begin to resonate within my heart over the months that followed. My love affair with California's proudest mountain range grew far beyond what I could have predicted. Lucky for me, I also happened to fall in love with a beautiful California-born girl named Giselle, who would eventually become my wife. One way or another, I could feel the Golden State tugging at my sleeves.

I began to seek out every opportunity that brought me closer to the heart of the Sierra. By the time I graduated from CLU, in the spring of 2014, I had swapped out my golf clubs for a full set of climbing gear. One year later, I accepted a full-ride scholarship to pursue my master's degree in geology at Northern Arizona University. My thesis project entailed frequent pilgrimages to the eastern Sierra in order to collect data and rock samples. At the conclusion of my master's research in spring 2018, I had covered so much backcountry terrain that it was time to start seeking out new climbing routes and make my own unique ideas come to life. After all, countless generations before me had sufficiently proved that anything is possible in the Range of Light.

IN JUNE 2018, Vitaliy Musiyenko (U.S.) and I made the second ascent—also the first free ascent—of The Streets of the Mountains (Grade IV) on the broad south face of Lone Pine Peak. This route was established in 2005 by Miguel Carmona and Joe Lemay [see *AAJ*, 2005]. We found a free variation (5.10d) to the lone aid section.

While climbing this route, Vitaliy and I noticed an amenable-looking green slab on the opposite (south) side of the North Fork of Tuttle Creek. The slabs are also visible from Highway 395. Subsequent research revealed there to be one known route established on the main part of the formation, Jim's Buttress (III 5.10a, Carmona-Mathews-Smrz, 1996). I learned through personal communication that minor activity had occurred on satellite formations.

A couple of weeks later, I decided to check out the slabs with then-fiancée, Giselle. We identified a few potential lines that looked worthy of effort. Our ground-up explorations took place in late June and early July, resulting in a trio of complete grade III routes. Professor Handsome (III, 5.10c, 360m) ascends the far left side of the formation and includes variation pitches. Bioluminescence (III, 5.9, 450m) rides a prominent arête on the right side of the formation and is memorable for the wonderfully exposed position achieved on pitches seven through nine. Firecracker (III, 5.10a, 425m) weaves up the ledge-ridden swath of stone between Jim's Buttress and Bioluminescence, aiming for a set of jagged red roofs at the very top of the formation.

We were pleasantly surprised to find generally good rock quality, though the prevalence of ledge

systems does detract from the overall classic character of these routes. If these routes or sections within had been climbed previously, then the previous party left absolutely no evidence of their passage and elected not to report it.

IN JULY 2018, GISELLE AND I made the first known ascent of the east ridge of Bedayan Minaret. The feature is one of the largest in the Minarets, rising nearly 300 vertical metres out of the fleeting icefield. The twin east ridge of neighbouring Rice Minaret was climbed in 2004 (III 5.8, Harden-Young), but the east ridge of Bedayan Minaret was left unexplored. Several previously established routes exist on this seldom-visited 3,660-metre peak, the most difficult being the Northeast Face (5th class).

After hiking 11 kilometres from Agnew Meadows to Iceberg Lake, we spent the night and awoke at sunrise on July 10 to scramble up to the toe of the buttress. We intended to start at the very lowest point of the buttress, but impenetrable walls forced us to traverse 100 metres left (south) along the lip of the bergschrund until we found the only reasonable-looking weakness on the entire face. The first pitch was a steep, blackened stembox (5.10a) that presented the most difficult and sustained climbing on the route. Above this, a diagonal dihedral/ramp led to the true east ridge, which we followed for eight more pitches as it tapered gradually yet dramatically to the narrow summit crest. The difficulty along the ridge was mostly 4th class, yet almost every pitch had at least one section of 5.6 to 5.8 climbing. We spent 10 hours on the peak and placed zero bolts along the way.

By our rope, the total length climbed was just over 480 metres. Giselle and I graded the route III 5.10a. We anticipated a long battle with putrid choss, but instead found nice cracks and fantastic ridge climbing on mostly solid metavolcanic stone. We downclimbed the north ridge (4th class) to the east couloir, then made four 30-metre rappels down the couloir to get back to the snow and scree slopes above Iceberg Lake.

IN JULY 2018, GISELLE and I backpacked up to Upper Boy Scout Lake with our friend Steve Yamamoto (U.S.). It was to be Steve's first-ever true rock-climbing experience, and we had the intention of climbing standard routes on Mount Whitney and Mount Russell. However, the weather forecast was so rotten that we decided to forego those plans and instead stick to exploring the crags around our campsite. Earlier in the summer, my interest had been piqued by a spectacular granite spire rising above the inlet of Boy Scout Lake, whose 250-metre east face was seemingly unclimbed.

On July 23, 2018, the final day of our trip, we climbed a striking line on the highest (east) aspect of the spire, and were later shocked to learn that it likely hadn't been previously ascended. We started in the main gully/alcove at the base of the wall with a pitch of spicy face climbing (5.8) to gain a right-trending ramp—the most obvious weakness on the face. Five subsequent pitches of mostly 4th-class scrambling with isolated sections up to 5.8 brought us to the base of the crux pitch at the bottom of the final steep arête. The 30-metre pitch delivered a slightly overhung 1.5-inch splitter crack (5.10+) that culminated in a short but wild traverse into a chimney on the left. Near the end of my lead, the commencement of a violent electrical storm brought ferocious hail and terrifyingly proximal lightning strikes. It became apparent that this would be a prolonged storm.

Reversing the pitch was out of the question. Giselle and Steve courageously coped by employing a creative style of team-aiding to ascend the pitch despite the ongoing storm. Given that Steve had never really rock climbed before, Giselle's heroic efforts here cannot be understated—nor can Steve's tenacity. By and by, they reached my miniature belay stance. The three of us huddled close together, hanging helplessly from our anchor as lightning proceeded to strike repeatedly within one kilometre of us and hail continued to batter our bodies and souls. The option to retreat back down from whence we came was soon ruled out as we watched the low-angled 200-metre ramp transform into a perilous cascade of mud and loose stones. The best strategy, we agreed, was to

Darren Farley and Jacob Gibson make their way up the juggy second pitch of Revenge of the Chilaquiles on The Ivories. Photo: Derek Field

continue to the top of the tower, which appeared to be less than a rope length above and from which we were banking on the ability to swiftly walk off.

At this point, this story probably sounds more like the beginning of a report for *Accidents in North American Mountaineering*. Yet by some miracle, the powers that be guided us safely upward. Our final two pitches of discontinuous cracks (5.9) traced the uppermost part of the exposed arête. Hailstones surged into my jacket sleeves as I fought to maintain a free ascent. Upward progress proved extremely challenging with frozen hands and soaked granite. Just below the summit, I stepped into the security of a large room beneath the enormous mushroom-like summit cap and decided to belay my partners up. Here we were able to tend to our moderate hypothermia and frozen extremities, relying on sopping-wet chemical hand warmers and body heat to regain hope and strength. When we felt ready to leave the relative comfort of the dry room, a short jug haul (5.8) got us over the mushroom cap and onto the true summit. I cannot describe our mutual relief upon reaching the top and seeing how straightforward our descent would be.

We descended by walking due west off the drawbridge on top of the tower and across the scree plateau to join the main braided trail system near Iceberg Lake. Our return to the trailhead was not without hindrance though. The rainstorm continued beyond sunset, and the North Fork of Lone Pine Creek Trail was completely washed out at the lowermost river crossings, forcing us to ford across thigh-deep water. It was long past dark when we got back to the parking lot, and still the rain had not let up. Unfortunately, our phones (which we used to take photos) were totally destroyed by the storm (since Steve sent a handful of photos to his wife during the climb, those photos were the only ones that survived). Our name for the tower is Magic Mushroom, and our route up the east face is graded III 5.10+, 250m.

The day before this ascent (July 22), the three of us also climbed a potentially new route on a modest formation with no recorded climbing activity. We hiked up the scree slopes north of Upper Boy Scout Lake to the base of a south-facing 120-metre wall riddled with vertical crack systems. This wall bounds the southern edge of the plateau connecting Mount Russell and Mount Carillon. Initially, we climbed 30 metres up a weakness on the right side before realizing that our chosen route wasn't going to be challenging enough to merit the effort. So, we returned to the ground and sought a steeper line, eventually selecting a continuous crack system on the steeper left side. This yielded three pitches of good, burly 5.8 climbing through a variety of crack sizes. We were not anticipating the amazing summit ridge that followed. The final two pitches were unexpectedly spectacular in their position along the narrow ridge.

We named that route Maxillary Incisor (III 5.8) for a conspicuous fang-type feature encountered along the way. If this formation is indeed without name, we propose The Stallion, thus maintaining the equine theme employed by Fred Beckey when he christened The Impala and The Winged Horse [see *AAJ*, 1969, 1972] nearby. We enjoyed an easy walk-off down the short northern continuation of the ridge and a few hundred metres east across the slope to the braided trail system for the well-travelled east ridge of Mount Russell. During the descent we got pummelled by an electrical hailstorm.

Giselle Field on a slabby section of the East Ridge of Bedayan Minaret with the aptly named Iceberg Lake. Photo: Derek Field

ON JULY 28, 2018, STEVEN STOSKY, Dave Spies (U.S.) and I climbed what we believe to be a new route on the east face of Mount Humphreys (4,265 metres). Our route ascends the centre of the very prominent pillar on the far right (north) side of the highly dissected 350-metre wall. Galen Rowell originally described this aspect of the mountain as the southeast face, but since the wall faces only a few degrees south of east, we feel that a more accurate descriptor would be the east face. We are confident in our identification of the only other known route on the wall, called the South Pillar of the Southeast Face (III 5.8, 350m, Rowell-Jensen, *AAJ* 1976) on the far left side.

Steve Stosky follows the splitter hand crack on the sixth pitch of Humphrey Dumphrey on the east face of Mount Humphreys. Photo: Dave Spies

The East Ridge route on Bedayan Minaret, with Rice Minaret on the left and Dawson Minaret on the right.
Photo: Derek Field

Starting just before noon, we climbed directly up the centre of the north pillar, aiming for a string of highly conspicuous splitter cracks poised high on the face. The lower half's mixed bag of rock quality gradually gave way to increasingly solid stone until we found ourselves joyfully jamming those perfect hand cracks we had eyed from the ground. Our eighth and final pitch brought us to the top of the pillar where we danced delicately over decomposing hoodoos perched 350 metres above snowfields. Our route is named Humphrey Dumphrey (III 5.9, 350m). After topping out the pillar, we unroped and joined the classic East Arête. With the sunset almost upon us, the three of us decided to turn around just shy of the summit at Married Men's Point—a fitting conclusion, considering I got married six days later.

In the days leading up to the wedding, I held my bachelor party in the Deer Lakes Basin, a beautiful alpine zone accessed via the town of Mammoth Lakes, in which I had spearheaded the development of more than a dozen Grade I to III routes the previous summer (2017). This rather atypical bachelor party entailed a two-night stay in which we had way too much fun, took great care adhering to leave-no-trace ethics and added three new Grade III routes to the lineup. Darren Farley, a friend of mine since preschool, joined me and Steve on an aggressive line that we named Derektissima (III 5.10b, 170m). Darren, Steve and my college buddy Jacob Gibson then climbed a stellar route: Revenge of the Chilaquiles (III 5.10a, 150m). Meanwhile, Dave Spies, Tyler Shepard and I paralleled their route on a loose crack system that we dubbed Stampede (III 5.9, 150m), referring to a terrifying rockfall event that resulted in Dave's arm getting sliced straight to the bone. As tends to be the case with adversity and trauma in the backcountry, our bond grew ever stronger that day. Dave made a full recovery, but the bandaged arm sure added a unique visual touch to the bridal party photos.

On August 4, 2018, surrounded by family and friends from Canada, Mexico and the United States, Giselle and I got married in the town of Mammoth Lakes. Soon thereafter, the two of us departed for our grant-funded honeymoon in southeast Peru, where we made progress on our long-term explorations of the remote and seldom-visited Cordillera Carabaya [see page 170]. Upon return, I took a one-year full-time position as a visiting lecturer for the Geology Department at California Lutheran University. I admit that I do not know where exactly the future will take me, but I intend on continuing to spend as much time as possible enjoying the splendours of the Sierra Nevada in the company of my favourite people. Days spent in these glorious mountains with my wife and our good friends are the ones I cherish most. I have a feeling that there are far more lessons and experiences waiting for me in the Range of Light.

Summary

The Streets of the Mountains (IV 5.10d/5.11a 460m), Lone Pine Peak (3947m), Sierra Nevada, California. FFA: Derek Field, Vitaliy Musiyenko, June 14, 2018.

Professor Handsome (III 5.10c, 370m), Tuttle Slab (3075m), Sierra Nevada, California. FA: Derek Field, Giselle Field, June 20-21, 2018.

Bioluminescence (III 5.9, 460m), Tuttle Slab (3075m), Sierra Nevada, California. FA: Derek Field, Giselle Field, June 3, 2018.

Firecracker (III 5.10a, 430m), Tuttle Slab (3075m), Sierra Nevada, California. FA: Derek Field, Giselle Field, June 4, 2018.

East Ridge (III 5.10a, 11 pitches), Bedayan Minaret (3681m), Sierra Nevada, California. FA: Derek Field, Giselle Field, June 10, 2018.

Maxillary Incisor (III 5.8, 180m), The Stallion (3800m), Sierra Nevada, California. FA: Derek Field, Giselle Field, Steve Yamamoto, July 22, 2018.

East Face (III 5.10d, 260m), Magic Mushroom (3815m), Sierra Nevada, California. FA: Derek Field, Giselle Field, Steve Yamamoto, July 23, 2018.

Humphrey Dumphrey (III 5.8, 370m), East Face, Mount Humphreys (4265m), Sierra Nevada, California. FA: Derek Field, Dave Spies, Steve Stosky, July 28, 2018.

The East Face route on Magic Mushroom above Upper Boy Scout Lake.
Photo: Derek Field

Revenge of the Chilaquiles (III 5.10a, 140m), The Ivories (3536m), Sierra Nevada, California. FA: Darren Farley, Jacob Gibson, Steve Stosky, August 1, 2018.

Stampede (III 5.9, 140m), The Ivories (3536m), Sierra Nevada, California. FA: Derek Field, Tyler Shepard, Dave Spies, August 1, 2018.

Derektissima (III 5.10b, 150m), The Ivories (3536m), Sierra Nevada, California. FA: Darren Farley, Derek Field, Steve Stosky, August 2, 2018.

About the Author

Derek is a 26-year-old geologist and alpinist from Calgary, currently living and working in the United States. At the time of writing, he holds the position of visiting lecturer for the Geology Department at California Lutheran University. With a Master of Science degree in geology from Northern Arizona University, Derek continues to cultivate his concurrent passions for wild places, experiential learning and Earth science education.

Super Unknown

Colin Landeck

It was a very productive season this year in the Daniels River valley. The Stokemaster crew spent nearly a month going at the massive formations ground up, scrubbing lots of rock, bolting rappel routes, cutting trails and building camps across two expeditions.

The morning of July 9 dawned with blue skies on Powell Lake and saw Leif Solberg, Matt Burbach, Josh Schuh and me making our way up to the head of the lake in *Peaches*, the wee craft, loaded down with nearly 450 kilograms of gear. We built the largest rickshaw the Daniels has seen yet—over two metres wide—and loaded up the gear. Unfortunately, the logging roads in the area took a heavy hit that past winter and the going was slow. Many times we had to unload the whole cart, shuttle gear and rebuild on the other side of washouts. We finally made it to Stokemaster camp midday on July 11, a journey that has never before or since taken me more than a day from Powell River, but we set ourselves up to successfully build base camp for a month.

Upon arrival, we ran into Travis Foster, Drew Leiterman, Elliot Vercoe and John McMahon, who had just come down from their first attempt on the northeast face of Super Unknown [see page 88]. After swapping stories and stoke, they took off, and our crew started eyeing objectives. Leif and Matt were excited about climbing a formation in a day. As Leif put it, he'd grown up in the Pacific Northwest and felt that alpine routes in this area should just go in a day. Josh and I decided on an attempt of the north buttress of Super Unknown, between Sacred Stone [see *CAJ*, 2018, vol.101, p.109] and the northeast face's headwall. Leif and Matt settled on the unclimbed formation just east of Super Unknown, while Josh and I would repeat the bottom pitches of Sacred Stone before busting left to the summit, and hopefully we would all meet on the top to descend together.

After a day of trail maintenance and reconnaissance and then a day of rest, Josh and I took off for the Schoolyard Slabs. We filled our water bottles two pitches up and spent the whole day getting to A1 Ledge. What I had previously experienced as dreamy 5.9 free climbing on these pitches in the Gusher Gully turned into a seeping A1 seam, taking hours to ascend each pitch. We bivied the first night on A1 Ledge and decided the next morning to keep pushing, despite wet conditions and lack of a comfortable sleep. Two 80-metre pitches took us from the Lunch Ledges to the Palaces, where we established a cush bivy some 40 metres climber's left of the Palaces bivy on Sacred Stone. All around us loomed the incredibly steep walls of the Amphitheatre with massive roofs capping off our view several hundred metres up. While the Amphitheatre hosts an impressive number of beautiful multi-pitch splitter cracks just waiting to be opened, Josh and I were looking for terrain that would go a little closer to 5.10. Moving 80 metres horizontally left, we found a hopeful system to follow up the north buttress. We fixed our rope across the Palaces for the night and settled in to a night tortured by the endless swarms of mosquitos.

With a quick cup of coffee to ignite the stoke, we blasted off the bivy the next morning fast and light as the sun rose over the shoulder of Red Alert. Halfway along our fixed line, we encountered a very unfortunate crux: a rodent had chewed my brand new 80-metre line straight through to a 50-metre rope overnight. If we couldn't move in 80-metre pitches, there was no way we'd make it to the summit before the sun set. We knew that we had nearly 600 metres of technical terrain to still ascend, but figured the angle would ease up after a few pitches, so decided to continue up the line we had scoped. After several 50-metre pitches in a beautiful stembox, I was belaying Josh up twin splitter wide cracks directly underneath the highest of the Amphitheatre's roofs. We were smack dab in the middle of probably the only 5.13 terrain on the formation, and we realized we could not proceed. Josh proudly sent the cracks with no gear larger than a #4 Camalot and left a bolt at the high point. We hand drilled two-bolt rappel stations from

The Prow on the north buttress of Super Unknown. Photo: Josh Schuh

there, joining up with last year's anchors at Coastal Ledge, and found ourselves back at Stokemaster camp in time for an evening meal of just about every edible thing we could find in the bear hang.

Meanwhile, Leif and Matt spent several days cutting a new trail from across the Daniels River, contouring up to the base of their intended route. As Josh and I woke up on the morning of our summit attempt, they were arriving at the base of their route, turning off headlamps and racking up. They pushed all day, finding beautiful crack systems to ascend the Onion, the outermost layer of exfoliating rock on the formation. From a ledge atop, they rambled up the face to the base of a long right-trending gully that took them through a finishing roof and onto The Ledge—a massive forested area that splits the formation roughly two-thirds up. A final tremendous simul-climb led them through the Zed Blocks and to the summit as light was fading. A new formation, The Penguin, had been ascended, and Ego vs. Mosquito (IV 5.9+ C1, 900m) had been established as the first Grade IV in the valley. Ironically, all routes before that had been grade V and VI walls.

A small fire proved ineffective to keep the swarms of bugs away, and Leif and Matt hastily rappelled from the summit the following morning after taking in the sunrise light and alpine views that surrounded them. Three rappels brought them into the Mountaineer's Enclave, a small hanging valley between the Penguin and Super Unknown, where they slowed their pace. Unsure whether to descend the slabs or the gully, they meandered in the sub-alpine paradise for a while, traversing scree slopes and marvelling at the beauty. After deciding on the gully, they made several more rappels and joined us that evening back in Stokemaster camp. The bugs were down, the lines were up and the stoke was very high.

We took a rest day and built some benches and tables around camp, hoping to get a little more climbing in the next day before heading back to town for a resupply. Unfortunately, the next morning we woke to a valley full of mist and knew it was time to go. We got back to Powell River late that evening, just in time to grab a burger and beer in town. Leif took off, and we immediately began planning the next trip in. Max Merkin returned from his expedition with the Moondogs in Toba [see page 106] and joined the crew. Mike DeNicola pulled himself away from the clean granite of Squamish and its dirtbag hang to bring in some more stoke and the racks of micro cams that we had realized we desperately needed.

We headed back up the lake in *Peaches* on July 22, threw some light(ish) packs on our backs and pushed or rode to camp by that evening. Sitting on the new benches and staring at the imposing mass of sloping white, grey, black and gold granite before us, it felt like I had merely returned home. As with the first time I walked into this valley, I felt with utter certainty that this is where my wildest dreams of far-fetched objectives just might come true.

Ego vs. Mosquito on the northwest face of The Penguin.
Photo: Josh Schuh

When we left Yosemite earlier in the summer, Max had declared to me, "All I want to do is nail some fucked-up shit in the Daniels this summer." Matt had spent a lot of time on the previous expedition staring at the headwall of Super Unknown as he moved to and fro on his trail to The Penguin. The two teamed up to make an attempt on the headwall via an approach from the base of the north buttress. Josh and I were determined to summit Super Unknown this time and were inspired by the climbing we'd found just below our previous high point. We decided on a fully new route directly up the north buttress, eyeing a plethora of corner systems just another 80 to 100 metres climber's left of where we'd been thwarted by the roofs. Mike joined the team because, as I told Josh before we took off up the rock, "Walling is way more fun with three people." Two parties heading parallel up Super Unknown—the game was on.

We worked as a team of five and fixed the first four pitches together. The approach continues past the base of the Schoolyard Slabs and Sacred Stone, up very steep old-growth forest with several of the most magnificent cedars I've seen in my life. It took us two days to shuttle loads and fix ropes, and on the third day by noon, the five of us sat over 200 metres up on a wide ledge system. We shared one last lunch and took on our separate routes. I simul-climbed a little bush off to the right side of the ledge with Mike, and got up to what I had hoped to be a potential bivy but found only a steep roof and a small cleft filled with some miracle wall water. You take what you can get. We brought up Josh and the unbelievably heavy haul bag. Josh and I took off right with a bit more bush leading to some beautiful but quite dirty finger and hand cracks. I grabbed the rack and broke out my wire brush, but was soon yelling down to Josh, "I have no .5s, .75s, 1s, 2s, or 3s!" A lot of gear was spread between his anchor and the anchor where Mike remained. I had to back clean a few pieces and was able to put the rope up, bringing us to the Palaces Ledge. We brought up Mike and the still incredibly heavy haul bag, and situated in a small forest bivy for the night. Walling with three is indeed more fun but, indubitably, a good bit more work.

Waking up the next morning, we realized our bivy was a bit more sloped than it had appeared by headlamp the night before—the only thing stopping us from rolling off our platform was the wall of the tent! We packed up and moved camp up two pitches to Legendary Ledge—an amazing ledge populated with salmon berries and soft grass, and we didn't even have to break out the machete. Josh and I fixed three pitches higher through an exciting chimney system that finished with a ramble to the top of a massive pillar overlooking the prow of rock we had thus far ascended, and ominously looming beneath what we hadn't. We spent five hours the next day on that belay ledge as Mike worked through tricky aid in a dirty corner, ending in roofs yet again. This time our resolve was stronger than the last, and we were not going down because of some silly roofs. I blasted up the rope to Mike, made a near-horizontal tension traverse 30 metres right, and finally found a system that would weave us through the roofs and up onto the Golden Headwall. We were ecstatic, but unfortunately found ourselves still in the middle of said crack system as the sun went down. Josh and I put up two pitches by headlamp in a desperate attempt for a ledge, but decided that we could not onsight the route finding at night. We fixed our ropes and returned to Mike at the Bivy of Misery.

Sun once again graced the valley a few hours later, and we eagerly climbed into the vertical unknown above. Pitch after pitch flew as the haul started to lighten and our systems dialed in. Eating lunch high upon the Golden Headwall and looking through our dangling legs to the valley almost two kilometres below us, we realized we could actually summit that day. Only one more corner defied us, just two pitches below the summit, but a quick traverse to the right found a new system, a better system, which took Mike and me to the summit via some glory 5.9 hand cracks and improbable face traverses. We summited as the sun set, and dropped lines to Josh. We had a cozy alpine bivy since we had taken the effort to haul the bag to the summit. We decided on a full rest day atop Super Unknown. Diving in alpine tarns and collecting endless water from melting snow patches running over golden alpine granite must be why we do what we do. I don't know, but the next day we were heading down, tap-tap-tap-tap-turn, just some bright-eyed boys hand drilling into the bulletproof rock on their summer vacation. But we'd done it again, another route on Super Unknown with the potential for 26 continuous pitches of free climbing, clocking in at 5.10 when someone frees it. But, you must be a connoisseur of the type-two fun out here in the Daniels.

Matt and Max did succeed in reaching the headwall, and we were able to yell to them from the summit. They'd found some mungy water and were rationing food with the plan to continue to the summit, even though we were headed down. Unfortunately, as we returned to camp after our 20-rappel descent, the weather moved in from Toba with the threat of lightning illuminating the walls in eerie flashes. We saw the pair of headlamps descending late into the night. As it turned out, they had made it nearly two pitches up the dreamy vertical cracks of the headwall, but had noticed the impending doom and opted to follow the rappel line of Travis and Drew's party. They'd opened a new route to the headwall that they dubbed "The Mungineer's Approach to the Headwall".

We all rested and swapped stories under the tarps, then made our way back to the head of the lake and onto the boat, and returned to Powell River forever stoked on the seasons ahead. Somehow, you'll find yourself months later skiing off a powdery summit, crushing the turns of your life, and you get a flash vision of the summer season on the Coast, dirt flying from the crack in front of you, giants rising out of the clouds above and views of endless snowcapped peaks to the north. We will be back.

Summary

Ego vs. Mosquito (IV 5.9+ C1, 800m), northwest face, The Penguin, Daniels River valley, Coast Mountains. FA: Matt Burbach, Leif Solberg, July 14, 2018.

The Prow (VI 5.10 A1, 1200m), north buttress, Super Unknown, Daniels River valley, Coast Mountains. FA: Mike DeNicola, Colin Landeck, Josh Schuh, July 31, 2018.

About the Author

An outdoor adventure lover from the beginning, Colin Landeck grew up in Santa Cruz, California. His teens were spent backpacking in the Sierras until he discovered the joys of rock climbing, which brought him to B.C.'s Sunshine Coast for the first time in 2016. As much as he loves scrubbing miles of backcountry granite, he can't wait for years of development to pay off and see other climbers in the Daniels River valley.

Compromise in Conversation

Kieran Brownie

The lure of unfamiliar and enchanting worlds. The exhilaration of stepping into a new realm. The confrontation of what we know and what might lie ahead. There is honesty in our instincts, these moments where we cannot hide from ourselves, when the unknown factors force us to show up—for better or worse. I like that about climbing.

Blue Belle

Common Harebell (Campanula Rotundofilia) is a small flower that grows in high places. The Haida would tell their children that if they broke these flowers, then rain would surely come. Brette Harrington carefully manoeuvred past the purple flora, and the grey skies held back their showers.

New Life (5.11c), North Walls, Stawamus Chief, Squamish.

I like that climbing can be so many things to so many people, a conversation of physicality, a test of human connectivity, the pursuit of spirituality, but I wonder what comes of it when the goal is held higher than the process. Always moving forward for something just out of reach, rather than content with the steady presence of direction found in a life of meaning. What good is it if we learn and learn and learn, take and take and take, but never give back, never contribute to our community? What good is it if we do not believe in what we are doing? We all need to believe in something.

I have believed in the mountains for most of my life, the juxtaposition of their presence against my own is a grounding force. I've never met Barry Blanchard, but he refers to "that moment on every climb where the universe makes sense." His words strike at the heart of the thing.

There has been a lot of loss in the local and international climbing communities in the past few years, and it seems that we are losing the best moments where nothing makes sense. This sudden positioning of death in the pursuit of life, the space that is left empty by friends and loved ones, stumbling towards what was, reaching for something that is no longer, falling towards the edge in our own hearts, I find myself considering the conversation between spirit and the mountains. Because whether it be your body, your mind or your life, eventually, something will give. Conversation is about compromise—and for everyone, that will be different. But, in this world where honesty is so hard to come by, I hope we continue to seek out that electric edge and demand the truth from ourselves and the people we love, continue to shine the light on what it means to be human, and ultimately share it with others. We all need to believe in something. Believe in what makes you human.

About the Author/Photographer

From high-angle photography to on-the-ground journalism and everything in between, Kieran's approach is to find the essence, the simplest response, that which arises when we let go of expectation and give in to the conversation. He is based out of Squamish, B.C.

Fun Box

Jaime Finlayson is a busy guy. Between work and family and everything else, he still manages to squeeze in first ascents. On this day in particular, Jaime had about two hours of free time, so Tim Emmett and I joined him for the 30-minute drive up a logging road and the 15-minute hike to the crag, leaving only a half an hour to add a bolt and send it.

Fun Box (5.12-), Icebox Canyon, Squamish.

Chinese Puzzle

Brette Harrington fires into the otherworldly environment of the Chinese Puzzle Wall high above Nesakwatch Creek. This new route—along with her and Marc-Andre Leclerc's 2016 route, Hidden Dragon—provides athletic climbing through some of the most outrageous positions around [see page 94].

Crouching Tiger (5.12c), Chinese Puzzle Wall, Cascade Mountains.

Pool of Death

The temperate rainforest of British Columbia had a deep impact on my path as a youth and has painted many of my fantasies with moody greens and a curiosity of forgotten trails. Stu Smith has a similar perspective and is often discovering hidden treasures that have long hung under the noses of others.

Pool of Death (5.12+), Mamquam River, Squamish.

Ultimate Ice

Luka Lindic, Marc-Andre Leclerc and Tim Emmett simul-solo through my frame from sea to sky on a perfect smear of ice, a rarity in the southern-most fjord of B.C.'s West Coast. It was one of those moments that I'll never forget, when everything comes together and my mind stops asking, what's the point of all this?

The Ultimate Ultimate Everything (WI4), Stawamus Chief, Squamish.

The Cultural Ranges

The Greenland Ice Sheet

Will Gadd

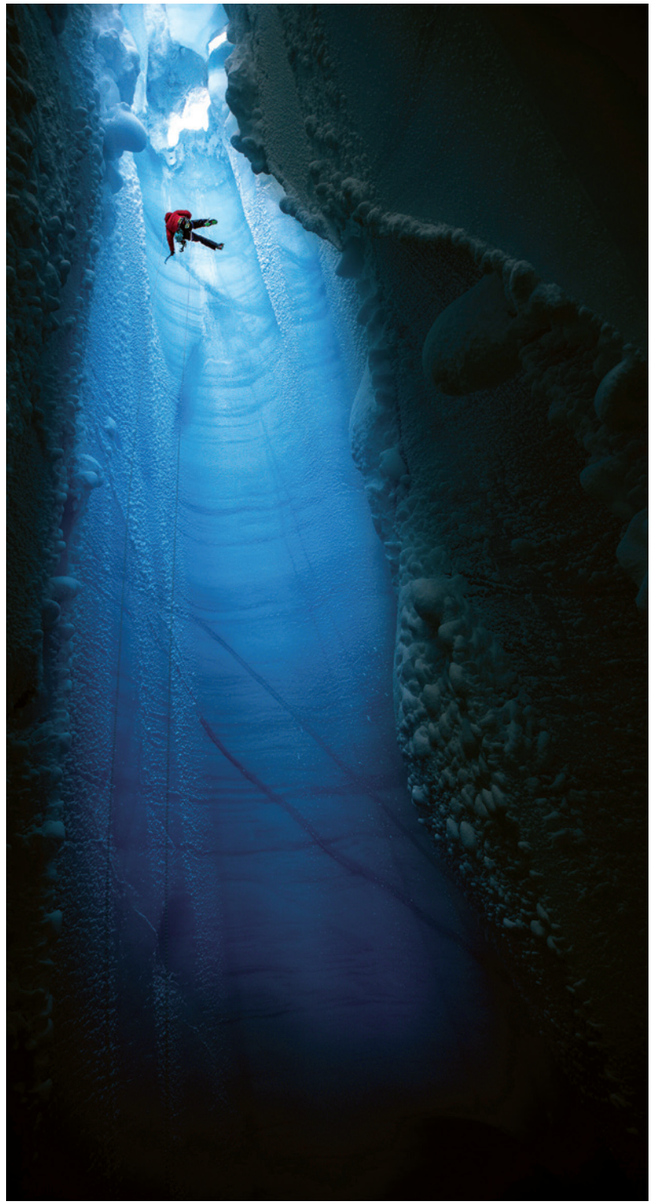
ICE SOMETIMES CRACKS when you swing an ice tool into it, but before climbing under the Greenland ice sheet, I'd never seen ice crack for 10 metres sideways from my ice tool, like a lightning bolt I had thrown. My enthusiasm for descending farther down the black moulin, a hundred kilometres from anything resembling civilization, faded faster than the sounds of the ice falling into the darkness below my feet. My biggest fear coming on this trip was how I would manage scuba diving the water table that we were supposed to find at about 200 metres below the surface. With the way the ice was cracking in the shaft, I had serious doubts about going deeper, never mind diving.

Like everything I've done in life, the Greenland ice sheet science expedition started with simple curiosity: What was down the moulins I'd been ice climbing in for years? I grew up caving, so not going to the bottom of a moulin just seemed wrong. But it looked dangerous down there, with all the scary roaring noises. In winter 2014, I made a recon trip down a moulin on the Athabasca Glacier and found a wild new underworld—one of the most most beautiful places I've ever been. It was a bounding slot canyon of ice that went down more than 130 metres below the surface in a series of short drops mixed with horizontal passages. With a surface temperature of –35 C, there were still pools of open water deep in the glacier. I ended up doing a short TV show for Discovery Channel with Sarah Hueniken, Raf Andronowski, Michael Klekamp, John Price and a few others. On that show, we recruited Professor Martin Sharp from the University of Alberta to help explain how the caves formed and when they might collapse. He was enthusiastic, but after I helped get him down into the cave he kept saying, "This is amazing! It's going to change how we look at these systems." Very little research has been done on how water moves under glaciers, and I was happy to help that research by climbing steep but friendly ice around the pools, rigging ropes and generally really enjoying the exploration.

On one of the trips, Martin noticed a yellow stain on the wall. I figured somebody had peed there, but Martin said, "No, I think that's a biofilm. I've never seen that before." So then I helped a researcher go in and sample the numerous biofilms for DNA sequencing. Some of the bacteria is apparently new to science. I've done a lot of ice climbing, but never helped advance science with that skill. Now I look at the Athabasca and know there are cave systems under the ice, plus a massive biological community. I'm still working on more research with Parks Canada and the University of Alberta under the glacier.

Professor Sharp suggested I contact Professor Jason Gulley, who is the world's leading researcher on glacial hydrology. Jason had a project going in Greenland where he was using very accurate GPS technology as well as flow measurement to see how meltwater affected the rate the ice sheet moved toward the ocean. Water goes to the bottom of the glacier and helps it slide. As the climate warms, there is more meltwater on the Greenland ice sheet, which means it moves faster

Will Gadd rappels into a moulin on the Greenland ice sheet in the name of science. Photo: Christian Pondella



towards the ocean, which has huge implications for how much sea-level rise we're going to get. He wanted to get into the moulins, and a partnership was born.

Jason is also one of the top cave divers in the world, and I've always been curious about cave diving. In short order I was massively upgrading my diving to potentially dive what all the scientific literature said was a water table that formed about roughly 200 metres below the surface of Greenland when the meltwater stopped. With no water to hold back the ice, the systems slowly to quickly collapse, just as they do in the Athabasca. The difference is that the ice in the Athabasca is relatively warm and pliable, while the ice in Greenland is explosive.

The entrance to the moulin wasn't that big, only about 20 metres across, but it ballooned into a massive room lit by rays of sunlight, a sort of icy Sistine Chapel. It was one of the most beautiful, otherworldly places I've ever been in my life. The first drop landed us in the bottom of the room. Then, 80 metres below the surface of Greenland, we ran into a horizontal canyon and then a pool of barely frozen slush—too dense to dive but not frozen enough to walk on. All the scientific research to date said the shaft would go straight to the bed surface, but this just proved how little physical research had been done.

I climbed around the water on the walls to see if the passage continued, but it seemed sketchy with huge shooting cracks radiating from my tool placements. Jason belayed while my friends shooting video and stills stayed well out of the impact zone. There were far too many hazards to safely manage, especially when the surface temperature went to –30 C with 100-kilometre-per-hour winds. When the cold air went down into the moulin, the temperature differential is extreme between the ice that had been warmed up all summer by the water and the internal temperature of the glacier, and the very cold winter air. Temperature swings are always the biggest problem affecting ice quality. The

Will Gadd explores caverns beneath the Greenland ice sheet. Photo: Christian Pondella

temperature difference between the surface ice and deeper ice creates a huge amount of tension in the ice, which is why free-hanging ice and pillars tend to snap when the temperature drops, not just when it warms. The ice in Greenland had a three-layer temperature differential, plus massive old crystals, and it was incredibly reactive.

We pulled out of the moulin for the day, and sat huddled in our tent at base camp, listening to the wind roar. After a day of this, I went looking for smaller moulins that might be safer, and found another system that connected back into the original moulin. It took some wild climbing, but I avoided the most hazardous parts of the large moulin, and the ice was better quality as the temperatures equalized at –30 C or so. Unfortunately, there was still a lot of hang fire above us. I could justify walking across the now-frozen water table once to the end of the cave, but I couldn't justify staying there to dive. For me, danger is danger. I won't do climbs under seracs because climbing is dangerous enough on its own, so I couldn't justify keeping the team in that moulin to dive.

We made some more passage measurements before beginning the climb out, but it felt like a failure until I saw the excitement in Jason's eyes. He explained, "What we just did will rewrite the book on how these systems form under the Greenland ice sheet! I'm going to write a paper about how the systems don't always go straight down, and how massive the rooms are!"

Science is more different than climbing.

With the ice temperatures equalized, I refreshed Jason's belaying tactics, then climbed some of the wildest ice I've ever seen. It was overhanging and wild, and bumped some other climbs out of the top-10 memory banks.

Jason and I are planning a return trip in 2020. I'll work more on my diving and get him ice climbing more. As always, a huge thanks to Christian Pondella on stills, Dave Pearson and Scott Simper on video, and especially Professor Jason Gulley.

Will Gadd climbs back out a moulin in the Greenland ice sheet. Photo: Christian Pondella

Tracings

Dani Inkpen

CHARLEY YOUNG HAS BEEN tracing mountains since she was a child. A self-professed tactile person, she grew up treading pine-scented paths and clutching handfuls of sun-warmed rock. Her mountaineer parents were members of the Calgary Section of The Alpine Club of Canada, a section known for the dedication of its weekend warriors. They introduced her to the nearby Canadian Rockies at an early age. Willing or not—for what pre-teen wants to spend her weekends walking vigorously with her parents—Charley spent her summers inhaling the chalky scent of hot limestone and the cool vapours of tumbling glacial creeks. Now, as an adult, the crags and ridges of Alberta's Shining Mountains—as early explorers referred to them— are the scaffolding upon which she hangs memories of childhood and upon which she makes her art.

Today, Charley is separated from the Rockies by the broad North American continent. In the years since she left, she has travelled widely and has come to call many places home. Yet, even as she builds a home for herself in the maritime town of Halifax, she continues to trace the rock and snow she met in her youth. I visited her at her North End studio on a chilly December day. The building frontage advertised storage space, and its only window looked onto the sun-faded wares of a thrift shop. Across the street a hardware store and a drug store gave the neighborhood a distinctly un-bohemian feel. Here, Charley makes her art in a brightly lit loft with a high, sloped ceiling, the centre of which is punctured by a long tunnel opening to the sky.

Projects in various stages of completion covered every surface of the studio. On a long work table, sheets of Mylar unfurled like layers of flaky pastry; on the back bench, empty shells of plaster rested on their backs with their insides exposed to the overhead light; at the centre table where we sat, a collection of pocket-sized wax blobs laid quietly in rows. I was there to talk to Charley about her "Signature of the Summit" project—a series of monochromatic mountain drawings on Mylar. She came to this project when she returned to the Rockies as a resident of the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. From the vantage point of the Banff Centre, familiar peaks seemed to float amidst the shredded clouds drifting east. The craggy and pocked summits, unmistakably the Rocky Mountains, hover on a white background like the inverse of novelist René Daumal's Mount Analogue; their fantastic, geometric peaks accessible while the secrets of their foundations lay hidden from our gaze. Though they appear to be levitating, there is nothing insubstantial about these summits whose weightiness pulls in the viewer like the gravitational tow of a black hole. Yet, this pull to the centre of the image is flecked with hints of artifice that linger at the drawings' edges—numbers, whorled smudges and slight pencil lines beckon the viewer to look closer, inviting her to imagine the missing pieces.

Charley trained as a printmaker. Although her practice has turned to other methods and mediums, there remains a robust link between her training and her contemporary work, rooted in what she calls "the expansive nature of mark making." This is evident in her "Signature" pieces, which explore mountains as the ultimate printmaking plate. They become monumental surfaces upon which lines are etched one by one over millions of years. The creases and divots chronicling their long, weathered lives create countenances as unique as any human face.

While it was the familiar faces of my jagged friends, the Rocky Mountains, that first drew me to Charley's work, I left her studio with my mind full of ice.

In 2014, Charley journeyed to Svalbard to trace the shapes of icebergs. Svalbard is a Norwegian archipelago high above the Arctic Circle. Sixty per cent of its land is covered in glaciers, making it a very prolific source of icebergs. Armed with

"Striations I" by Charley Young. Graphite and watercolour pencil on drafting film.

Mylar and a china marker, she made rubbings of the bergs much as a child might colour a page laid atop a leaf to reveal saw-toothed edges and raised veins. On the flat surface of the page, the cups and ridges of sea-lapped bergs transform into a subtle honeycombed landscape of grey on white. There is a beauty in the simplicity of this process. Yet Charley's tracings, made on a windswept beach at 75 degrees north upon slippery objects that retracted from the warmth in her hands, required considerably more skill to accomplish than the leaf and crayon trick.

"It was a bit of a time-sensitive situation I was working within," she said, "some of them would

"Striations II" by Charley Young. Graphite and watercolour pencil on drafting film.

just sort of disappear or dither away, or just become so massively transformed in the short amount of time that I was able to work on them." In the years since her visit they have dithered away, joining the waters of a warming Arctic Ocean.

Charley's experiments in ice rubbings led her to Prince William Sound, a large crook in the arch of the Alaskan coastline. There, at the feet of the Barry, Cascade and Harriman glaciers, she gathered bits of ice calved from the glaciers' snouts, tucking them into collapsible coolers from Walmart. Later, in less-exposed conditions, she laid strips of plaster bandage on the fragments of ice, as if she were setting a broken limb. But rather than stitch themselves back together, these shards of glacier bone melted away, leaving only the white chalky shells. I cannot help but see the result, lying inert and half-finished under a cold overhead light, as berg-y death masks in the making.

In her art, Charley traces the forms and lines of ephemeral objects and preserves their distinctive prints for a little while longer. Like a nomadic archivist, she travels in search of unique impermanence that she can capture and preserve. Mountains and ice are covered in the scars of history's maelstrom, and in tracing these marks, Charley's art bears witness to change and the passage of time. Even the seemingly solid buttresses of "Signature of the Summit" suggest disintegration and impermanence, at the core of which, perhaps, lies a recognition of our own fleetingness and fragmentation. Yet Charley's art circles around melancholy without wallowing in it. The subtle sorrow underlying the beauty of her work rises from a love of place and the desire felt by all of us to press pause and elongate the moment while the world slips ever through our fingers.

The final project that Charley shares with me does not trace mountains or ice. The inscrutable wax lumps arranged in a checkerboard next to us on the table turn out to be moulds of the spaces created by the clasped hands of Syrian refugees. The grey moulds, made of the same material dentists use, are dipped in wax to keep them from drying out. This softens their corners and rounds their edges, but beneath the wax lay sharply cut miniature valleys and ridges, laced with scribed lines as unique as the human palms that formed them. In these pieces, it becomes clear that by tracing the marks etched into the world around her, Charley traces something else: snippets of the space between things; the universally shared, ever-shifting inverse image that joins all of us to everything—the great negative image that envelops us all.

Full Circle

Laval St. Germain

KICKING MY BOOTS HARD into the wet crumbling slope, I glanced up terrified at the face that stretched above me at an angle of 60 to 65 degrees, steepening beyond vertical to a shadowy overhang replete with roots and branches. Fingers of my left hand clawed at the slope while my right hand pulled hard on my ice axe, and my legs started that sewing-machine-like hammering. I lost my nerve. As gravity pulled me downwards, I cried out, "Dad!"

Standing maybe two metres above our red canoe that was beached tight against the bank in a curve of the muddy river, my dad, Guy, easily caught my plunge off the face while calmly dodging my driftwood ice axe as it cartwheeled into the current.

Burying my face into the "mildew mixed with campfire scented" red cloth of my dad's life-jacket, I was saved. After brushing my muddy rubber boot prints off on the front of his jeans, and only after I caught the disapproving eye-rolling look of my older sister, he lowered me back into the canoe.

As we shoved off back into the cold brown water, I glanced back at the muddy slope. On that eroded riverbank, I was a mountaineer high in the Himalaya perched on my front points with nothing but air below my heels, not an eight-year-old canoeing down Alberta's Pembina River.

Later that day, we turned the corner where the Pembina flowed into the larger Athabasca River. With the Athabasca carrying the three of us north, I stared into the bush, the boreal forest that stretched unbroken to our left. Turning to my dad and gesturing with chin toward the forest—a low wall, more black than green—I asked, "How far could you walk in the bush without seeing another person or town?"

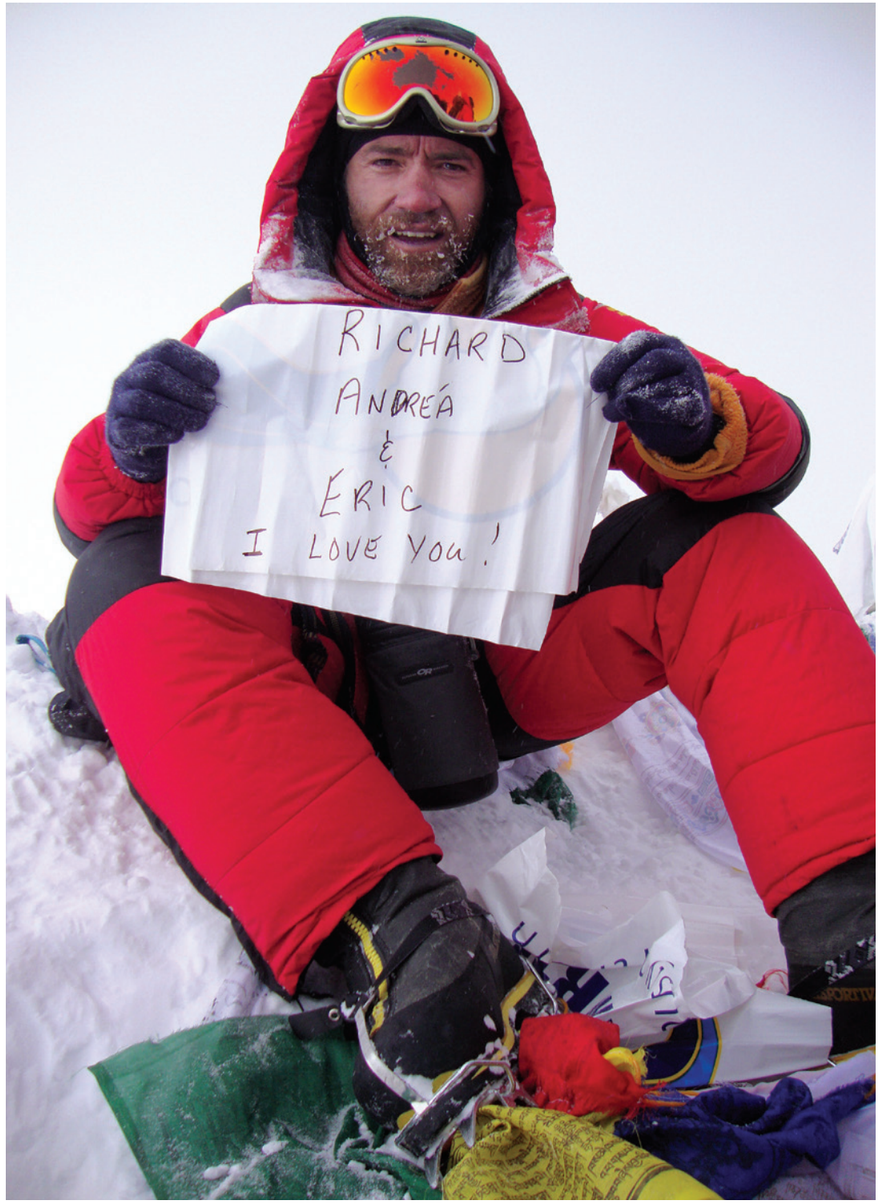
Casually he replied, "In that direction, a few hundred kilometres, probably."

I was stunned. What was back there? A few hundred kilometres! My eight-year-old brain had no real understanding of distance, but it did know that a few hundred miles of forest meant endless adventure and possibilities. A muddy Himalayan slope and seemingly endless forest—I was hooked. I would be those people I read about in the pages of *National Geographic* magazines, Farley Mowat books and Tarzan novels.

MORE THAN 30 YEARS LATER, I'm in my living room, eyes closed, arms crossed over my chest, a bandana covering my eyes. I'm trying to get a pre-dinner mini-nap. I can hear my wife, Janet, in the kitchen, and the sound of a pot lid gently clanking as it hisses steam on the stove. Nearby, I hear our eight-year-old son, Eric, playing Lego and toy cars. More distant, I can hear our two teens, Richard and Andréa bickering like typical siblings. All was perfect, safe and warm in my home amongst my family.

I wake with a start. Pulling the bandana from over my eyes, I blink in the dark and come to the sudden realization that I had indeed drifted off, but there was no Janet, no Eric, no Richard, no Andréa, no couch. Instead I had been dreaming of home. The stovetop sounds that were promising dinner was the hiss of my climbing partner Mark Delstanche's oxygen mask. The sound of Eric's Lego and cars? The teens bickering? Another team pulling on harnesses, clipping carabiners and talking in the dark just outside my tent. Now fully awake and focused, lying in my 8,000-metre suit at Camp III on Mount Everest's Northeast Ridge, I chuckled at the Samuel Johnson quote: "Depend upon it, sir, when a man knows he is to be hanged in a fortnight, it concentrates the mind wonderfully."

I was minutes away from unzipping the tent door, about to step out to climb Everest without the use of supplemental oxygen. I was a world away, a lifetime from the muddy Pembina, no dad to save me, but I was shockingly (in hindsight) confident and excited by the suffering I was about to endure, and, sir, my mind was wonderfully concentrated.



Laval St. Germain on the summit of Mount Everest. Photo: Laval St. Germain collection

The **Cultural Ranges**

I REALLY HAVE MIXED FEELINGS about the Seven Summits list.

I run a lot, although I try to avoid dog-walking parks since one can only take so many snouts to the crotch and bluff charges at said crotch. "Oh, don't worry, he loves people!" Every once in a long while, I will run through a dog park. From a distance these places are attractive spaces promising a bit of nature, a place to get some exercise, and maybe a place to meet other people and have your dog meet some crotches. At closer inspection, however, every blade of grass is trampled, and every tree, bush, fence post and park bench has had a leg lifted on it. Every garbage can, trash receptacle and round plastic thingy emblazoned with the "dog poo goes here" info-graphic is blooming with little bags of doggy doo. Sadly, these continental high points—the Seven Summits—are suffering the same indignities.

My Seven Summits bid was a bit accidental at first. I'll blame my dad and *National Geographic* magazine. I still have vivid memories of going to the post office in our small town, watching with excited anticipation as my mom or dad inserted the key into box 208, knowing that just maybe lying in the dark behind that small door, rolled and jammed unceremoniously amongst bills and hand-written letters (it was the 70s), would be that magazine wrapped in paper the colour of golden sugar. Under that wrapper was the promise of exploration, wonder and adventure, and the sweet dreams of mountain peaks, rivers and jungles.

My dad obviously noticed my cover-to-cover fascination with *National Geographic* and one day remarked, "Laval you really want to go to all those places, eh?"

Me, knowing that the chances were next to zero, replied, "Would I ever!"

To which he responded, "Well then, become an airline pilot and you'll have the ability to travel anywhere you want."

That was it, done deal, I was going to fly airplanes and travel and live those lives in the pages of *National Geographic*.

Well, 40 years later, thousands of hours of airline flying and more than 40 countries visited, I am grateful for my dad's rather off-handed suggestion to fly. Just like he promised, flying opened the door to the world for me. Not to resorts, cathedrals and beaches, but to jungles, the Arctic and the Altiplano. When I could fly off to Nairobi or Buenos Aires for the cost of a night at the pub, it was a simple decision. Soon I had graduated from ski mountaineering in the Rockies as a teen and skiing off volcanoes on telemark skis in the Cascades to summiting Andean, Alaskan and African giants.

I was aware of the Seven Summits, but only because one of my mentors and heroes, Patrick Morrow, completed them in 1986, the year I finished high school. Morrow was not just the first person to complete the Seven Summits, he is also Canadian, a telemark skier and we share October 18 as a birthday. Suddenly, the seven continental high points became a realistic goal—after all we were both tele skiers.

So, back to the dog park. Why do I think the bloom is off the Seven Summits' rose? I climb, or better yet, I travel through and over mountain ranges because I love wild, remote places, like that endless expanse of boreal forest along the Athabasca River. Wilderness and what it promises is why I climb. In that forest of my boyhood would surely lie wonder and wild adventure. Mountains promise the same. There is nothing like the planning, anticipation and approach to a mountain summit that you have been dreaming of. The logistics, the negotiations, the bureaucracy and then, finally, that first step, that first sliding forward on a climbing skin under a ski, under the spine-crushing weight of an expedition pack, that invective-producing load on the back that is a harbinger of adventure. Sadly, since Pat Morrow and Dick Bass (Bass completed the Seven Summits in 1985, but he climbed Australia's Kosciusko instead of the far more remote and challenging Carstensz Pyramid in Indonesia. I ran up Kosciusko this past August in the dead of the Australian winter in trail runners and snowshoes, and it was just a nice workout in the hills.), we've entered a post-modern era of mountaineering where one can pay their way to a mountaintop. I've seen this on the Tibet side of Everest, and I just witnessed it again this past December while climbing in Antarctica, and

Laval St. Germain arrives in France after rowing across the Atlantic Ocean.
Photo: Janet St. Germain

yes, I was paying to climb there. I summited my first continental high point in 1994 and my last on December 31, 2018. In those intervening 24 years were many summits and many outdoor adventures with the family, from the Yukon to Guyana, Nunavut to Namibia to Japan and everywhere in between. I've had my own solo adventures since that first summit, from adventure racing to ultra running, from rowing across the Atlantic Ocean to telemark skiing down Iraq's highest peak, from climbing Iran's highest peak to ski mountaineering in Nunavut and Greece. On every one of these trips, I've learned, spent a fortune and feel far richer for it. What I've seen now on these continental high points are climbers literally checking off a list, literally having their boots tied for them by a guide, literally being shown how to use crampons, literally avoiding the approach to the mountain's base by flying in via helicopter and being dragged to the summit and back down. For me, it's all about how you approach these summits, literally and figuratively. The literal approaches through deserts, swollen rivers, deep snow and muddy jungles are the requisite entrance fee. The struggle, the effort and encountering spectacular people, both climbers and the denizens of these great ranges, are what make these places so special. Figuratively, just using the well-trodden flanks, ridges and often-crowded summits as a way to impress your fellow well-heeled friends, colleagues and legions of social-media followers does, in my opinion, cheapen these wonderful, powerful places.

Just like the dog park, crotch sniffing happens on these Seven Summits. Base-camp conversations involve sniffing around to see who has climbed what and when, how long it took and how much the chopper flight cost. When you dig a bit, you find that these are often the only times some people have ever actually been on a mountain or even in the mountains. This saddens me.

I am not some ascetic sitting in judgment above the fray, and I have nothing against dog owners or their parks. I've climbed the Seven Summits and often by the normal routes, or at least using parts of the normal routes. I've climbed on fixed lines put up by Sherpas. I've never done a first ascent. I've walked in the boot prints of others ahead of me. I post photos on social media. I guess I have used each mountain. I've trampled the grass.

Imagine the Seven Summits on a shelf, and they become the Harry Potter or Dan Brown books that everyone knows—all very accessible. At least for me, the Seven Summits are the bookends in a life library of adventure with the real learning—best reads and page turners—propped up between these best sellers. And I am a slow reader. The recent fastest time for climbing all Seven Summits is 117 days, which is 8,643 days faster than my time.

I'll never own, nor have I ever conquered, a summit. I've been fortunate enough to have made the summit, and most importantly, only after having passed the very last objective hazards on the descent have I felt that feeling of satisfaction. I sadly understand better than most the risks of a life in the outdoors, and the shocking insignificance of my life when juxtaposed against the indifferent might of a mountain, blizzard or river.

In July, 2014, our then-21-year-old son Richard was canoeing on the Mackenzie River at Norman Wells, Northwest Territories. Richard had arrived in Norman Wells just 21 days earlier to start his first job as a young bush pilot—he was following in my footsteps. To make a short, horribly tragic story shorter, the canoe overturned. Fortunately, the young lady whom Richard was canoeing with was rescued, but our boy was gone. No skid marks. No wreckage. No bloody emergency-room floor. No avalanche debris. No sign that a life was ever there. Just a momentary ripple in a mighty northern river. The indifferent power of nature wiping away our son and the loss of a child threatening to wipe away our family.

Laval St. Germain on the summit of Carstensz Pyramid.
Photo: Per Sunnemark

With determination, hard work and a commitment to living life with intent, we've survived as a family. My wife, Janet, and our two remaining children, Andréa and Eric, get the credit for that. We suffer together. For me personally, it was suffering in the outdoors to exorcise the demons of loss, time in the wild to feel closer to my drowned son, pushing hard uphill trying to outpace my regrets. Richard comes to me as warm tears in my goggles on the Antarctic plateau, frozen tears cycling along a lonely Arctic ice road, and sobs carried off by the wind on a mountain summit. I now use the mountains, and adventure, as a prophylactic to grief, where before they were more of a stimulant.

My ramblings have come full circle. The outdoors has given me more than I can describe and caused me/us indescribable grief. Perhaps this is just a realization that we all have our own reasons to use the mountains; perhaps it's simply a plea for all of us who climb or adventure outdoors to understand that life can be shockingly short. To realize that for whatever you use mountains for, or perhaps even the Seven Summits, do not just check off summits as the most valuable part. The real treasures, the real learning for me, the real peace is found in the suffering and our individual approach to adventure.

The **Cultural Ranges**

Misadventure in Mexico

Don Morton

OCCASIONALLY ON A CLIMBING trip, something happens that is just too embarrassing to include in a report. However, now that The Alpine Club of Canada has generously given me a Silver Rope for Leaadership Award, perhaps I can admit to how careless one can be.

This story began with an ACC expedition to the Columbia Icefield in the summer of 1996. I shared a tent with Suave Lobodzinsky, a biomedical engineer at the California State University in Long Beach. When I learned he originally came from Poland, I immediately asked if he knew any of the Polish climbers who had climbed Noshaq, a 7,492-metre peak in the Hindu Kush on the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. I was aware of two Polish expeditions in the 1960s because I had climbed the mountain in 1969. Suave replied he had climbed Noshaq on a later expedition in 1972. Later he joined the 1989 Polish expedition to the west ridge of Everest in which five of his companions were killed in an avalanche while retreating over the south summit of Khumbutse. Our camp on the Athabasca Glacier was Suave's first climbing since that tragedy. At the end of our trip, he encouraged me to contact him if I was ever in Southern California, because there was an interesting mountain across the Mexican border in Baja, California, called Picacho del Diablo (3,095 metres). Soon we came to understand the appropriateness of the name.

The opportunity came in mid-November, 1996, when I had Friday to Monday for travel between astronomy meetings in Tucson, Arizona, and Hilo, Hawaii. On the Friday morning, Suave met me at the San Diego airport in his Nissan Pathfinder and stopped at a nearby hotel where I made a reservation for the Sunday night and left a suitcase with my going-to-meeting clothes. When we drove across the border to Tijuana, Mexico, I noticed a wall of corrugated steel on the United States side and Immigration Service vehicles patrolling the open space between the wall and the actual border.

We continued south on the main highway of Baja California to the city of Ensenada and a further 140 kilometres to a dirt road going east to Rancho Meling. Beyond was Parque Nacional Sierra de San Pedro Mártir and Observatorio Astronómico Nacional de San Pedro Mártir, which is Mexico's primary optical observatory. I had never visited this observatory, so I hoped I might have a chance to see it while in the area. A little more than 93 kilometres from the highway, we crossed a stream on a concrete ford and explored a track on our right where we found a camping area and a small building that appeared to be the pump house for the observatory's water. By 5 p.m. I was glad I had brought my down jacket.

Our information about the route to Picacho del Diablo lacked many essential details, so after dinner we drove a further five kilometres up switchbacks to the observatory. There, using our minimal abilities in Spanish, we confirmed that we should follow the track going southeast from the pump house.

Early on the Saturday morning, we drove along the track encouraged by the occasional cairn or piece of pink tape. After about 10 kilometres, we passed a ruined cabin, then a cairn on our left with white tape in a tree and soon reached the end of the road. We turned back, left the Pathfinder at the cabin about 8 a.m. and shouldered our packs in anticipation of a two-day trek. At the white tape, we headed east into the forest for want of any better indicator of the route. Two more white tapes brought us to a section of trail, an abandoned scrap of clothing, then a beer can. We climbed a rocky cliff to higher ground and through a pass to a cairn and an indistinct trail in a broad valley. We began to wonder whether this route was taking us toward our objective, so Suave proposed we climb up to the ridge on our right for a view.

This we did, leaving our packs part way up among the rocks. About 9:30 a.m. we reached a ridge from which we saw what must be Picacho del Diablo to the northeast. Our driving and hiking had brought us to the southwest side of the mountain. We were heading in the correct direction, but the peak was far away. We descended to collect the packs and try our best to reach it. Unfortunately, among all the boulders and bushes on the hillside, we could not find our packs.

As we searched for the packs, I commented to Suave that if we did not find them before the late-afternoon drop in temperature we would have to retreat to the vehicle and return to civilization. He replied that the Pathfinder key was in his pack and the only spare one was on his dresser at home in Long Beach. After nearly three hours up, down and across the rocky hillside with no packs, we had no choice but to descend to the road and hike 14 kilometres to the observatory up the hill before the night became too cold. The day was wonderfully sunny, so all of our protective clothes were in the packs.

We reached the observatory administration area at about 4:30 p.m., a little hungry and very thirsty. Multiple glasses of lime juice were most welcome, but with our limited abilities in Spanish we had difficulty explaining the problem. Then Suave discovered that one of the Mexican astronomers, Gagvic Toumasian, was originally from Armenia. Like Suave, who also grew up under Soviet domination, he had to learn Russian as a child. So, sentence by sentence, Suave related what had happened to Gagvic, who then repeated each part in Spanish to the Mexican staff, who responded with much laughter.

Alfredo Meling, the site supervisor, most generously offered to feed us, give us beds for the night and a ride in a vehicle going to Ensenada the next day. However, the retrieval of the Pathfinder still required the spare key from Long Beach. At that time, the observatory's external communications depended on a radio-telephone link with the Ensenada Institute from where a staff member could telephone Suave's wife in the United States. The message from a stranger in Mexico requesting Magdelena to bring a car key to Ensenada the next day did seem rather suspicious, but she checked by independently calling the Institute and then agreed to come. A visiting German astronomer, Heinz Tiersch, thoughtfully lent us 50 dollars in case we needed money before meeting Suave's wife.

Early Sunday morning, we left for Ensenada with four of us sharing the front seat in the observatory truck. In Ensenada, the 50 dollars was very helpful in buying some lunch and reserving a room for the night. Magdelena arrived late afternoon with the key and an accompanying friend, Nancy. Suave stayed the night and rode back in the observatory truck on the Monday. The driver very helpfully took him all the way to the parked Pathfinder.

I rode back towards San Diego that night with the ladies, taking my chances at the border, because my passport and driver's licence were in my lost pack. Fortunately, Nancy was from Newfoundland and was the wife of a hockey player in Los Angeles. So for the border we arranged for Nancy to be the driver with me beside her and Magdelena in the back seat. The American official asked each of us our citizenship. In the front seat we said "Canada" and "Canada" and from the rear window Magdelena said "Polish" as she waived her green resident card. With no further questioning, the official let us enter. Soon I was at the San Diego hotel for the night, collecting my suitcase with alternate clothes and a bank card left behind. I still lacked my plane tickets, which also were in my pack, but on Monday morning I contacted the Canadian travel agent who then authorized a replacement by telephone to the airline, permitting me to fly to my Hawaii meetings that day as planned. No further identification was needed at the gate in 1996.

Back home in Victoria, I made a claim on our household insurance policy and collected some compensation for the lost climbing gear after relating my story to a trusting adjuster. In October 1997, I received a message from a Mexican climber, Rudolfo Araujo, who had visited the area and happened to find the lost packs. He recovered some credit cards, which we had cancelled, and some cash, which we told him to keep. With his advice on an alternate route, Suave and I returned to Baja California the next month with priority for a second attempt on Picacho del Diablo rather than searching for the packs. This time when Suave met me in San Diego, he handed me a second key for his Pathfinder.

From the place where we had parked the 4X4 in 1996, we followed a trail to the northeast that took us over the summit of Cerro Botella Azul (2,950 metres). From there we descended northwards 1,100 metres in Cañon del Diablo to Campo Noche for the night. From the camp, a trail to the east ascends 1,200 metres to Picacho del Diablo, but we had time to explore only the lower part on Sunday, because Suave had to be back in Long Beach in time for a teaching commitment the next morning. We returned to the vehicle, confident that we could start it this time.

The North

Possessed by Mount Possession

Greg Horne

SOMETIMES YOU'RE DRAWN to a mountain project by its form or shape, its untried route or its reputation. What about its name? After two month-long ski-tour expeditions to Bylot Island [see *CAJ*, 2005, vol.88, pp.76-78; *CAJ*, 2007, vol.90, pp.114-117] in Nunavut Territory, my map-scanning eyes became focused on the northeast region of the island. The only officially named peak there is called Mount Possession, located 16 kilometres west of Possession Bay. What seldom- or never-visited landscapes might this place reveal? Initially, an approach by snowmobile from Pond Inlet on sea ice around the island's eastern end to Bathurst Bay seemed like the straightforward way to go. In some years, like 2018, currents and winds of Baffin Bay push up pressure ridges of ice against this coastline, making snow-machine travel slow, circuitous or near impossible. Discussions with Sirmilik National Park staff, who had reviewed satellite imagery, did not give us much hope for a ski start from Bathurst Bay. Further discussions with our hired outfitter, Sheatie Tagak, left us with a potential roll-of-the-dice successful outcome. If we tried the original sea ice approach at significant cost and were blocked by extreme rough ice once around Cape Graham Moore, we might be dropped off in prime polar bear territory with 50 to 60 kilometres of sea-ice skiing while looking over our shoulders and sleeping very lightly.

Instead, we opted for a much shorter two-to three-hour shuttle (25 kilometres) across Eclipse Sound from Pond Inlet to the shore of Bylot in front of the Kaparoqtalik Glacier. This start had the benefit of easy access to another one of my possessed mountain names, The Castle Gables.

Our team of four consisted of Louise Jarry from Canada, Marek Vokac of Norway, Grant Dixon of Australia, and me, with two tents and two ropes. The general plan would be a horse-shoe loop from the south coast, winding our way to Mount Possession and ascending some peaks along the way as weather, timing and difficulties permitted. Once Possession was out of my system, we would turn our route to the west, followed then by heading back south and exploring this glacial country to descend the Sermilik Glacier.

After Sheatie and Billy dropped us off, we moved away from the shoreline to put a bit of space between us and the bruins. Unexpectedly, the terminus of Kaparoqtalik Glacier presented us with ice features that instantly had camp set up early for the day. Twin arches of ice and an amazing glacial ice cave, all the result of summer meltwaters, kept us engrossed in photography that afternoon and the next morning. Hoar frost crystals, some hanging a metre or more from the cave ceiling, left us in awe. Our crampon steps echoed, and a hundred metres or so inward found temperatures just below freezing compared to the –20 C outside.

A couple of days skiing up glacier with loaded pulks put us in position for a day trip to The Castle Gables. On May 6, we made it by skis to 1,380 metres on the northeast ridge, then on crampons, then back to skis over a 1,486-metre lower summit, followed by crampons again to the main summit of the Gables (1,512 metres). The coming and going of lenticular clouds as Grant

Louise Jarry and Greg Horne explore Kaparoqtalik Glacier ice cave. Photo: Grant Dixon

Louise Jarry and Grant Dixon ski towards Baird's Peak. Photo: Greg Horne

and I climbed allowed us impressive views of Trinity Ridge, seven kilometres away.

The following day, with Marek still recovering from strep throat, the rest of us headed north across the glacier to a snowy rib of an unnamed 1,320-metre summit of a knobby, gendarmed ridge. Immediately, once skis were removed, it was obvious that this side of the valley had received little scouring wind action to the snow. Painfully slow wallowing up to our waists ensued. Views improved, and we told ourselves maybe the snow was getting firmer—then Grant touched off an avalanche by stepping onto the sunny side of the rib. Louise said that was the signal to stop. Grant and I continued up the shady side of the rib, but ugly down-sloping bedrock slabs covered by suspect snow soon had us chickening out. Next, I moved back to the sunny side and caused a slope settlement but no release. Retreat was imminent.

We discovered the next day that had we skied an hour up valley, the mountain's exposure to wind greatly increased and a scoured ridge would have more realistically taken us upward. Making camp early on May 9, we opted for an afternoon ascent with stormy weather. Snow was hard enough that an ice screw was needed to clip the skis to in case they blew away. The east ridge of "Garnet Peak" (1,672 metres) was so named for the garnets exposed in the gneiss blocks of the ridge climbed.

Crossing a 1,312-metre pass at the head of the Kaparoqtalik Glacier had us intersecting the route of our 2006 Bylot Island traverse near the head of an unnamed 35-kilometre-long glacier that flowed east (#E67, area 46201, Glacier Atlas of Canada). We climbed up to a 1,360-metre pass from which we made a long day trip to the expedition's most technical summit. Peak 1792 (Spot elevation) was an attractive summit five kilometres southwest of our seventh camp by way of a 1,510-metre pass. After nearly six hours, its very icy northeast ridge brought us to a classic rocky top too small for the three of us to be on it together. It was –22 C plus wind chill, but the views of Pond Inlet and the Baffin Island mountains were worth it.

A 10-kilometre gradual descent from our 1,312-metre pass took us down a glacier system (# E131) that flowed towards Bathurst Bay. This was followed by an uphill day to our next pass at 1,100 metres and our ninth camp. The next morning, we ascended a 1,573-metre peak (Spot elevation), then descended to 746 metres (glacier #E152) where we staged for a day ski to Mount Possession. Our approach was about eight days longer than it would have taken by snowmobile. May 16 was our only tent-bound storm day, and even that was short. We were able, in the afternoon, to ski over to a 783-metre nunatak three kilometres away.

May 17 was Mount Possession day, as well as Norway's Constitution Day, and presented us with near-perfect conditions on the way up. We made a glacial approach to the west of the peak thus avoiding its rubbly south slopes. Marek treated us to a Constitution Day paper-horn-blowing session from the 794-metre high top. Better described as a hill or bump between glaciers, Possession has far higher neighbours of 1,260 and 1,229 metres. Maybe mislocated on two different scales of maps, certainly not prominent from the ocean and on a ship, might it just be a past traveller's cruel joke? Rising fog chased us off and back to camp.

With nearly the halftime point of our expedition reached and Possession out of my system, we turned our route westward, skiing up glacier #E152 to its 1,050-metre pass and crossing into the large drainage of glacier #D78 system's

Louise Jarry and Greg Horne descend Moai Ridge. Photo: Grant Dixon

The **North**

Greg Horne on the east ridge of Nujaq with Angilaaq behind. Photo: Louise Jarry

45-kilometre-long extent. The 50,000-scale topo maps showed meltwater stream channels on top of the glacier. Would those channels really be there and visible in winter conditions? They were indeed real, and especially in flat light needed to be treated like crevasse canyons. We got off easy and found snow bridges without much effort. In summer the canyons would be white-water sluice troughs readily sweeping the unwary to their demise.

Flat-light travel caught up to us hours later. First Grant and then Louise had crevasse discoveries with skis and hauling pulks. Luckily, both incidents turned out alright. Grant dropped onto his knees and was able to extract himself. Louise went to her armpits in a crevasse parallel to her direction of travel and needed a tight rope from me and a hand from Grant. In both cases, the pulks stayed completely on the snow surface, thankfully.

Moving southward up the glacier, camp 13 was positioned for a day trip to Angilaaq and Nukaq Mountains, both first ascended in 1977 [see *CAJ*, 1978, vol.61, p.44]. Louise and I had climbed Angilaaq in 2006, so we opted for Nukaq via its unclimbed northeast ridge while Grant and Marek headed to Angilaaq, the island's highest (1,944 metres), repeating the north ridge. A late start due to being fogged in at camp made for a stunning afternoon excursion. Each party could watch the other as they skied and climbed.

Our next camp, the highest of the trip at 1,513 metres, was near the north-south divide of the island and gave us two more peaks to access. Mount Aktiniq (1,888 metres), between Obelisk and Mitima, was climbed by its elegant east snow arête, completing a different route than the first ascent via the south-west ridge. On the way back to camp, we checked our potential divide crossing on the south side of Oz. It looked reasonable. To cap a glorious day, I proposed one more evening ascent of a pyramidal peak right near camp. Leaving camp at 6:30 p.m., Marek and I skied half an hour to the base of its west ridge, then short-roped and climbed with crampons up to its 1,832-metre tiny summit, which we touched with our hands but did not stand on. A fine show of Brocken Spectre had us waving to ourselves. The aesthetics of "Brocken Spectre Peak" made this the best climb of the trip for me—the character of the ridge, the quality of light and the vistas.

A short day had us over the divide and at camp 15 in position for an evening ascent of Baird's Peak (1,834 metres). Again, the evening light from the top with summits protruding through cloud banks captivated us all. Baird's Peak, the north end of Kelly's 1977 Explorer's Ridge, gave a hint of their two-day ridge traverse to Mount Thule—non-technical, but what a setting.

Crossing over our last col (1,470 metres), which we called "Ragged Ears Pass" for the twin jagged spires nearby, brought us to our camp for Mount Thule (1,710 metres). First skiing to the ridge crest between "Mount Parry" and "Mount Turner," we cached our skis, then ridge walked over Turner (1,960 metres) along snowy arêtes to Thule and back the same way. Fog and flat light were our friends that day—sort of the shopping-bag-over-the-head good time.

Our last day-trip excursion was to "Moai Ridge", named for the blocky gneiss tower resembling carved statues of Rapa Nui (a.k.a. Easter Island). Rising fog banks played with the views, but the ridge was a great photography site.

From our last high camp at 1,165 metres, we coasted downhill on a tributary glacier to join the main Sermilik Glacier to set up our final camp at 164 metres and a couple of kilometres from the ocean. A spare day there allowed us to relax and prepare for re-entry into civilization. The terminus of Sermilik also had a glacial ice cave but not so nearly as impressive as our day-one crystal palace.

Summary

Ski tour (28-day, 264km) with 12 peaks ascended, Byam Martin Mountains, Sirmilik National Park, Bylot Island, Nunavut. Grant Dixon, Greg Horne, Louise Jarry, Marek Vokac, May 3–30, 2018.

The Castle Gables (1510m, 72.97175° N, 77.84447° W) via northeast ridge. FA: Grant Dixon, Greg Horne, May 6, 2018.

"Garnet Peak" (1660m, 73.047597° N, 77.832442° W) via east ridge. FA: Grant Dixon, Greg Horne, Marek Vokac, May 9, 2018.

Peak 1792 (1792m, 73.13369° N, 77.926413° W) via northeast ridge. FA: Grant Dixon, Greg Horne, Marek Vokac, May 12, 2018.

Peak 1573 (1573m, 73.336044° N, 77.856632° W) via northeast ridge. FA: Grant Dixon, Greg Horne, Louise Jarry, Marek Vokac, May 15, 2018.

Mt. Possession (794m, 73.425138° N, 77.697656° W) via northwest ridge, FA: Grant Dixon, Greg Horne, Louise Jarry, Marek Vokac, May 17, 2018.

Angilaaq Mountain (1944m, 73.23125° N, 78.622980° W) via north ridge. FA route: Grant Dixon, Marek Vokac, May 21, 2018.

Nukaq Mountain (1797m, 73.240836° N, 78.625763° W) via northeast ridge, FA route: Greg Horne, Louise Jarry, May 21, 2018.

"Mt. Aktiniq" (1888m, 73.140091° N, 78.438456° W) via east ridge. FA route: Grant Dixon, Greg Horne, Marek Vokac, May 23, 2018.

"Brocken Spectre Peak" (1832m, 73.166038° N, 78.338610° W) via west ridge. FA: Greg Horne, Marek Vokac, May 23, 2018.

"Baird's Peak" (1834m, 73.116301° N, 78.344372° W) via northeast ridge. 3rd ascent(unconfirmed): Grant Dixon, Greg Horne, Marek Vokac, May 24, 2018.

"Mt. Turner" (1690m, 73.031563° N, 78.348061° W) via northeast ridge, 2nd ascent(unconfirmed): Grant Dixon, Greg Horne, Marek Vokac, May 26, 2018.

Mt. Thule (1710m, 73.017834° N, 78.396806° W) via north ridge. 3rd ascent(unconfirmed): Grant Dixon, Greg Horne, Marek Vokac, May 26, 2018.

The **North**

Solo au mont Logan

Monique Richard

EN 2017, LORS DU 150ÈME ANNIVERSAIRE DU Canada, quoi de mieux que de planter le drapeau de son pays sur son plus haut sommet? Cette année, nous avons réussi à atteindre le plateau sommital du mont Logan par la King Trench, mais nous avons dû rebrousser chemin par mesure de sécurité car mon compagnon n'était plus en mesure de poursuivre l'ascension. Malgré ma déception de devoir abandonner ce projet, cette expérience m'a permis de me familiariser avec le massif et de garder le souvenir d'un endroit extraordinaire, d'une montagne sauvage et magnifique et d'un appel irrésistible vers une liberté sans contrainte.

Suite à mon expérience en 2017, un nouveau plan a pris forme dans mon esprit. Attisé par ce désir de liberté, le projet de grimper seule le mont Logan a grandi et a fini par s'imposer.

J'ai été déposée par avion au camp de base le 15 mai 2018. Une fois l'avion reparti, le silence régnait et j'ai constaté la situation unique et inattendue dans laquelle je me trouvais. J'étais complètement seule au camp de base (2 713 m) du mont Logan! C'était sans doute le contrecoup de l'année du 150ème anniversaire du Canada, où plusieurs expéditions avaient été organisées. Je me suis rendu compte à ce moment-là que mon désir de liberté allait être plus que comblé et que mon projet en solo allait devenir une expédition en solitaire.

Avant que je ne quitte le camp de base, une autre équipe — de deux grimpeurs — a été déposée.

Mon ascension du camp de base jusqu'au camp 1 puis au camp 2 (4 082 m) s'est déroulée sans trop d'embûches, bien que le poids de mon sac et de mon traîneau ralentissait ma progression. Toutefois, skier seule dans ces grands espaces d'une blancheur immaculée, en contact étroit avec la montagne, était un grand bonheur. Je goûtais enfin à ces sentiments de liberté et de simplicité que j'étais venue chercher. Il faisait un temps magnifique malgré le froid.

Au-dessus du camp 2, les choses ont commencé à se compliquer. Dans ce terrain plus accidenté, m'orienter et choisir l'itinéraire a présenté des défis constants, surtout parce que j'étais seule pour prendre toutes les décisions. Lors d'un portage de matériel au camp 3, j'ai connu une journée éprouvante. Pendant que je descendais la cascade de glace, j'ai été prise dans un voile blanc soudain qui a rendu la visibilité presque nulle, au point que je ne pouvais même pas voir les repères que j'avais plantés au cours de ma montée. J'ai dû me résigner à descendre avec une visibilité très réduite en zigzaguant entre les crevasses et les séracs.

Durant la descente, les peaux de mes skis ont cessé d'adhérer et se détachaient constamment. J'ai donc été obligée de les enlever, ce qui a rendu ma vitesse trop grande pour ce champ miné. Afin de négocier un passage délicat, j'ai dû enlever mes skis, malgré le risque que cela comportait. Je n'avais fait que quelques pas, quand j'ai senti avec horreur le sol se dérober sous mes pieds! Le malheur tant redouté s'est produit et j'ai défoncé le pont de neige qui recouvrait une crevasse. Mon réflexe a été de m'arc-bouter contre les parois de la fente, ce qui a permis d'arrêter ma chute. Ma tête était alors à moins d'un mètre du bord de la fissure. Je sentais le vide sous moi. Une peur viscérale m'a envahie ; j'étais seule dans une crevasse sur le mont Logan, loin de toute forme d'aide. Mais ce n'était pas le moment de céder à la panique ; je devais mobiliser mes forces afin de me tirer de cette situation grave.

J'étais retenue par mes pieds, le dos appuyé contre la paroi opposée, et j'ai entrepris de m'extirper à l'aide de mes bâtons-piolets. Mais les surfaces étaient friables et je n'arrivais pas à faire mordre mes piolets. Il fallait que je me sorte de là rapidement, car les murs qui me soutenaient pouvaient s'affaisser à tout instant. Du coin de l'œil, j'ai aperçu un de mes skis resté là-haut ; j'ai réussi à l'agripper et à l'utiliser comme prise pour me hisser tant bien que mal hors de ce cauchemar, mon cœur battant à tout rompre.

Je l'avais échappé belle… mais j'étais toujours dans la cascade de glace.

J'ai poursuivi ma descente dans le voile blanc. Il était difficile d'évaluer le relief ; tout était blanc (même moi, j'étais blanche!). Soudainement, au dernier instant, j'ai stoppé net ma descente avant de basculer dans le vide qui s'ouvrait devant mes skis. Impossible de continuer à descendre : ni vers l'avant, ni à gauche, ni à droite. Et pas question de remonter!

De nouveau, j'étais coincée. J'ai évalué les possibilités, tentant d'estimer la hauteur du dénivelé devant moi. J'ai finalement conclu que l'option la moins dommageable à ma situation serait de sauter, quitte à m'en tirer avec quelques bleus! C'était le seul choix que je pouvais contrôler, et le terrain en contrebas me semblait moins accidenté qu'à gauche et à droite. Prenant une bonne inspiration, j'ai écarté les bras vers le ciel et puis j'ai pris mon envol! Pendant un instant je me sens comme un aigle. Mais le choc est brutal et me voilà plutôt comme une dinde, le visage le premier dans la neige glacée! J'étais sonnée, le visage meurtri, mais soulagée de m'être sortie de cette impasse.

J'ai fini par regagner mon camp 2, me jetant sur le papier de toilette afin d'essuyer mes larmes. Après cette journée éprouvante, j'ai été accordée la grâce de méditer pendant six jours sur l'opportunité de poursuivre cette ascension, puisque j'étais immobilisée par une tempête.

Le beau temps revenu, j'ai enfin rassemblé ma motivation, et mon courage, et je suis sortie de ma tente. En raison de la fenêtre météo très restreinte, j'ai adopté une nouvelle stratégie *light and fast*, mais en emportant tout de même mes bottes de haute altitude, car il faisait de plus en plus froid. J'ai remonté mon calvaire avec encore plus de vigilance cette fois-ci, et pendant le trajet, j'ai évité de justesse d'être entraînée dans une avalanche. Finalement, j'ai réussi à établir ma tente bivouac au camp 3 à 4 838 m.

Monique Richard sur le sommet du mont Logan. Photo : Monique Richard

Le lendemain matin, sans m'arrêter au camp 4, j'ai franchi le col Prospector (5 500 m) et atteint directement le camp 5 (5 100 m). J'étais complètement seule sur le plateau sommital du Logan. Il faisait très froid. Je touchais à cette sensation de liberté totale, mais les conditions devenaient de plus en plus hostiles.

Le matin du 30 mai, j'ai décidé de lancer mon assaut final vers le sommet principal du mont Logan. La température était glaciale et j'avais très froid aux pieds. Après m'être presque cassé les dents sur mon déjeuner, je me suis rendu compte, stupéfaite, que mes bottes étaient maintenant trop petites pour mes pieds! Aurais-je grandi depuis mon départ? Pas d'autre choix : mes pieds devaient rentrer dans ces satanées bottes de ski! Une fois cette longue tâche accomplie, voilà qu'il m'a fallu les enlever aussitôt, tant la pression des bottes me sciait les orteils. J'ai dû répéter ce manège pendant deux longues heures avant de pouvoir enfin progresser vers le sommet.

Après beaucoup d'effort, je suis parvenue à la base de la dernière section, à environ 300 m de dénivelé de mon but. Déception! Le sommet de la montagne était ennuagé. Devrais-je y renoncer? J'ai alors évalué la situation attentivement, car une tempête ou un voile blanc pourrait être mortel lors de la descente. Mais après avoir constaté qu'il n'y avait aucun vent à ce moment-là, j'ai pris la décision de profiter des conditions stables pour tenter le sommet, toutefois en ajustant de nouveau ma stratégie : j'ai décidé de m'alléger au maximum et, afin de gagner du temps, de suivre l'itinéraire le plus direct, bien qu'il était également le plus abrupt. Je suis donc montée aussi rapidement qu'il m'était possible à cette altitude, en style alpin, avec crampons et piolets.

Cela a été une expérience épique : les 300 m les plus intenses de ma vie, où l'enthousiasme et la vigilance se fusionnaient sur la plus haute cime du Canada. À 14 h 38, je suis parvenue au sommet principal du mont Logan. Aucun signe de vie à des kilomètres de latitude et de longitude. Mon cœur a pris son envol, dans cette immensité, là-haut, au sommet de mon pays grandiose! Moment sublime : je venais d'atteindre le plus haut sommet du Canada en solitaire.

J'ai fait un point GPS puis pris quelques selfies, et bien sûr j'ai déployé l'unifolié couvert de signatures et de messages d'encouragement de mes amis et de ma famille. Puis j'ai entrepris la descente qui allait devenir une « descente aux enfers »….

Lors du retour, parce que je me concentrais à éviter les plaques de glace dangereuses en skiant, je suis descendue trop bas et dans la mauvaise direction. À mon grand découragement, je me suis rendu compte que j'allais devoir re-gravir un sous-sommet de 300 m pour retrouver ma trace : l'équivalent de la hauteur de la tour Eiffel, mais sans les fromages et le vin rouge au menu!

Mon stress a alors beaucoup augmenté ; une tempête s'approchait, les piles de mon téléphone satellite et de mon appareil GPS étaient très faibles (la localisation GPS étant essentielle, puisqu'il n'existe aucune carte précise du plateau du mont Logan) et je devais maintenant dépenser de l'énergie pour remonter cette pente après une journée déjà éprouvante, ce que je n'avais pas prévu. J'ai enfin réussi à retrouver mon chemin et le « sac de patates » qui me servait d'abri vers 1 h 30 du matin. Durant cette journée, j'avais parcouru un total de 18 km en 14 heures à haute altitude.

Exténuée, j'étais en prosternation devant un réchaud qui jouait au frigo. Après avoir cassé une multitude d'allumettes, j'ai dû consacrer des heures à faire fondre de la neige pour manger un souper de riz al dente et ensuite tenter de me reposer, vers 3 h 30. À cause de bourrasques violentes, je n'ai pas pu dormir beaucoup dans mon sac de patates (maintenant pilées).

Quelques heures plus tard, pendant que je pliais bagage sous un vent fort, voilà que mon matelas de sol a décidé de partir sans moi! Je me suis lancée à sa poursuite à 5 100 m d'altitude, essayant de récupérer ce précieux partenaire nocturne. Après plusieurs mètres et à bout de souffle, je me résignais à lui rendre sa liberté à travers les cimes enneigées, quand soudain, sous mon regard impuissant, il s'est enfin immobilisé. D'un pas furtif, j'ai tenté une nouvelle approche, et puis je l'ai vivement empoigné. Nous avons vécu ensemble encore nuits….

J'ai repris mon chemin vers le col Prospector, que j'ai atteint après une ascension de 400 m. Une fois rendue au col, voulant profiter du temps ensoleillé, j'ai tenté de recharger les piles de mes appareils, mais je me suis rendu compte que les câbles étaient brisés en raison du froid : impossible de les recharger.

À ce stade de l'expédition, mes propres batteries étaient également affaiblies jusqu'à un niveau critique. Après tous les efforts dépensés au cours des trois derniers jours, je me sentais très fatiguée et le repos s'imposait comme la seule option. J'ai décidé de passer la nuit à cet endroit. J'avais l'intention de repartir tôt le lendemain, mais durant la nuit le temps s'est détérioré plus rapidement que prévu et je me suis retrouvée coincée.

J'ai pris conscience à ce moment-là que la situation devenait grave et que poursuivre dans la tempête, très fatiguée, avec une visibilité nulle, sans mon appareil GPS, ne serait pas possible. Avant de franchir le point de non-retour, j'ai pris la décision d'appeler les secours. Je me suis gardé une marge de manœuvre et une réserve d'énergie. J'avais vu trop de gens dépasser le point de non-retour et y laisser leur vie. Je ne voulais pas non plus être un fardeau pour les secouristes.

Les autorités ont tout d'abord procédé au largage d'un sac de ravitaillement. Puis, les possibilités d'évacuation étant limitées en raison de ma position, elles ont demandé aux deux grimpeurs qui étaient au camp 3 de venir m'assister pour redescendre au camp 4, l'endroit d'où je serais évacuée. Quand je les ai entendu crier mon nom, j'ai ressenti un grand soulagement. À leur arrivée à mon bivouac, j'étais très fatiguée, mais consciente. Cela nous a pris environ 15 minutes pour regagner en ski le camp 4, où j'ai pu m'hydrater et manger. Puis, à peu près 45 minutes plus tard, un hélicoptère est venu m'évacuer, profitant d'une ouverture dans les nuages.

Je suis très reconnaissante envers toutes les personnes qui ont contribué à mon évacuation, en particulier messieurs Stéphane Gagnon et son fils Guillaume Gagnon, ainsi que les membres du personnel de Parcs Canada qui ont coordonné et effectué l'opération de sauvetage. J'aimerais également remercier l'alpiniste argentine Natalia Martinez pour l'inspiration qu'elle m'a apportée lors de son expédition sur la crête est du mont Logan en 2017. Elle a été l'initiatrice de l'idée qu'une femme peut tenter une ascension en solitaire de cette montagne, et je salue son audace.

Je garderai toujours le souvenir de cette expédition, qui a été très difficile et réalisée dans des conditions hostiles. Jamais auparavant je n'avais eu à tracer seule la piste sur une telle distance : du camp de base au sommet, en plus de redescendre de ce dernier, de traverser le plateau et de remonter vers le col.

L'orientation a présenté le défi majeur tout au long de cette épreuve. De plus, l'isolement exceptionnel, le froid extrême, le terrain miné de crevasses et de séracs, le risque d'avalanche et une météo redoutable ont été autant de conditions adverses qui m'ont permis de me mesurer à moi-même comme jamais auparavant, et cela pendant 19 jours.

Je sais très bien que je ne suis pas redescendue au camp de base (j'estime qu'il restait environ cinq heures de descente) et que pour certains ce n'est pas une réussite, mais tout dépend du point de vue. En mon for intérieur c'est une réussite, car jamais personne n'était allé aussi loin en solitaire sur le mont Logan par la King Trench, mais surtout car je n'ai pas franchi le point de non-retour : j'ai respecté mes limites et la montagne.

Au-delà de la réalisation du sommet, il y a la valeur du parcours et d'une histoire profondément humaine. J'espère que mon ascension sera une source d'inspiration, et je serai de tout cœur avec la personne qui décidera de relever le défi d'affronter le mont Logan en solo dans les mêmes conditions. Cela a été une expérience unique, démontrant qu'une femme peut avoir le courage de tenter une telle expédition, se faire confiance et avoir suffisamment de discernement et de stratégie pour poursuivre son aspiration profonde.

Je me permets modestement de profiter de cette ascension comme un moment mémorable de ma vie, moment duquel je ressors comblée et plus évoluée comme individu. Le mont Logan est une montagne magnifiquement sauvage, immense et hostile, et j'ai pu en prendre toute la mesure lors de cette expédition en solo qui aura été l'apothéose de mon parcours d'alpiniste.

The West Coast

Threading the Needle

Hunter Lee

NEW ROUTING IS A FUNNY ENDEAVOUR. There's a personal, and at times emotional, connection with an unclimbed line—a connection that's absent when you climb an established route. Within one's mind, a cord of mystery is attached that stirs the soul and ignites the imagination. After climbing some new routes in recent years, I've had to look at myself and the reasons why I climb. In reality, there is a mosaic of reasons: the solitude; detachment from the modern world; the mental clarity experienced while atop mountains; the companionship; the scenery; the vivid memories; the challenge; the never-ending excitement about the next trip; and the completion of personal goals. For each of us, it's slightly different, yet for those who climb for a lifetime, this list will probably not differ too much. One aspect that drives people to climb, yet is seldom talked about, is ego. While on a recent trip, a friend commented on this, wondering what people would climb if they couldn't post online or tell anyone. Would they climb the same routes? The reasons we climb are constantly evolving and changing, and our ego has its place within that matrix, whether we admit or not.

It's not often I've eyed up an unclimbed line and slotted it into the to-do list only to find out afterwards that others, usually friends, have successfully climbed it. For me, the north face of Elkhorn Mountain had one such route. Phillip Stone and I climbed King's Peak in fall 2014, in part just to catch up, but also so I could do a little reconnaissance on Elkhorn's north face. There was one summer route up a prominent buttress climbed by Joe Bajan and Peter Busch in 1977, yet two attractive couloirs to the right of this buttress remained unclimbed. Given the size of the snowpack above, it seemed reasonable that the larger left couloir would fill in nicely with ice come winter.

I climbed in the alpine for 13 years before tagging my first new route. The first handful of new routes were mostly trips that other more experienced mountaineers had eyed up. With the new-route door open and a good level of climbing experience and competence, I started eyeing up the unknown as well. Upon hearing later that winter that Ryan Van Horne, Mike Locke and Mike Shives had climbed Elkhorn's north face, I was a little bummed. I was happy friends got out and climbed a good-looking line, but, on the other hand, I had a psychological investment to it. For the first time, I had built something up and then had it disappear. Either way, I didn't fret too much, and I used the experience as a reminder to get out and do what you want to do, to make it happen, otherwise someone else will. I also became acutely aware that my intentions had shifted from purely going out to enjoy climbing in the alpine to searching for new routes. This shift was in part a function of experience and competence—but also ego.

Searching for a balanced and mature reaction to the news of their climb, I told myself I would still climb the route. One cannot simply cast off a fun day of climbing just because it's not a new line. However, upon reading a post-climb report, I was surprised to hear that it was an easy solo.

Hunter Lee on the first pitch of Threading the Needle.
Photo: Chris Jensen

The **West Coast**

Chris Jensen and Ryan Van Horne at the top of pitch five of Threading the Needle. Photo: Hunter Lee

Although their experience on the mountain was great, they didn't really talk up the route—so much for the build up on that one!

A few years had rolled by when Chris Jensen and I pulled Elkhorn out of a long list of mountains to climb. We called up Ryan Van Horne, who immediately said yes to joining, and started packing for a winter ascent of Elkhorn. Our climbing intentions on this trip, though general in nature, were aimed elsewhere on the mountain. An epic slog up Elkhorn's northwest ridge deposited us high on the mountain and quite fatigued. The early rattling of our alarms awoke our senses to a sunrise that looked as though it had been painted. After a quick brew and bite, in what felt like an arctic environment, we were off. As we traversed under Elkhorn's north face, the rising sun revealed two obvious climbing options, with the deep couloir I eyed up many years before looking great. As we passed the couloir, I was shocked to hear Ryan describe his climb with Mike Shives and Mike Locke. For three years I thought they had climbed the ice in front of our eyes. As Ryan described their path, left of the original north-face route, thoughts of climbing the line that ignited my imagination some years ago came back to life again. After scoping out the other climbing options on the mountain, it was an easy group decision to climb the couloir that had caught my eye (and others, I'm sure) some years before.

Ice grades are difficult to predict. Up close, ice is always a little steeper than first thought. The first pitch from afar looked like good thick, solid ice, and probably not too hard. Standing at the base of the route, however, it felt like we were humble strangers staring at a grand palace's entrance gate made of rock and ice. A steep rock wall on the right paralleled an equally steep ice pitch for several body lengths until the rock tapered away, leaving the attractive ice as our only passage to the top. Thoughts of an easy WI3 warm-up were quickly tossed out.

Squeezed between vertical rock on the right and cold ice on my left, I slowly started to stem up the pitch. With a few small seams and a couple of baseball-sized bulges, the daunting rock wall provided much-needed crampon placements. As the rock wall slowly faded away, stemming options became more gymnastic, eventually forcing us onto the ice that drew us there. With a solid pitch of WI4 looming above, I transitioned from the mixed start and cautiously began climbing up. The stemming had made the start easy, but my forearms knew a burn was coming. Several body lengths of near-vertical climbing ensued after the rock wall disappeared. Above this challenging start, the angle eased off, allowing for a much-needed rest. With the pump gone, the remainder of the pitch—now WI2—was quickly climbed.

Ryan racked up and set off on the second pitch, and a steep WI3 step got things rolling. With WI3 steps separated by patches of snow, the pitch didn't ease off for 50 metres. With these two memorable pitches below us, the upper mountain revealed itself. A long snow slope separated us from some technical climbing on the upper half of the mountain. Chris led the long third pitch and anchored off close to the crux of an existing winter route—The Winter Needle. The broken start of The Winter Needle was climbable, but with a constant flow of spindrift coming down, our eyes quickly started looking for alternatives. Hesitant about what else might come down while climbing through this terrain trap, I avoided it and set off to the east. After rounding a corner and climbing a step of WI3, there were no obvious anchor sites. Prior to my departure from Chris's anchor, we knew we might lose communication with each other. Ryan and Chris must have read my mind as the transition from pitched climbing to simul-climbing was seamless. I knew they had at least 30 metres of easy terrain before reaching the ice step, which in turn gave me 30 metres to find an anchor. With our intentions of rejoining the upper pitches of The Winter Needle in mind, I climbed up 20 metres and anchored below a short mixed step.

With time in the back of our minds, we quickly handed the rack to Ryan, who immediately welded a piton into the rock and promptly cruised through the M3 section, which granted us access to the northwest side of the mountain. With the cold north-face experience behind us, we soaked in the sun for the first time. With one more pitch to climb, Chris racked up and set sail upwards, quickly dealing with the difficulties. With the day getting on, Ryan and I climbed as quickly as we could up the moderate snow slope and joined Chris, who was perched atop a rock bluff overlooking our progress. Now high on the mountain, we gazed upon the great east face of Mount Colonel Foster as the sun inched its way towards the horizon. With easy terrain above, Ryan and I started breaking trail to the summit a short distance away.

With a cold wind blowing and minutes of daylight remaining, we reached the summit. As the sun set over the Pacific Ocean, Elkhorn's shadow slowly moved its dominant silhouette across the eastern vista. A few quick summit photos snapped with anxiety quickly led to thoughts of descending down the Island's second-highest mountain—a mountain with no easy descent line. After pondering options, we concluded that the northwest ridge was the wisest choice and immediately geared up for the cold, dark retreat down the mountain. After a couple of full-length rappels intertwined with selective downclimbing, we reached the top of the northwest ridge's crux. With everyone feeling

Threading the Needle on the north face of Elkhorn Mountain. Photo: Ryan Van Horne

good, our early descent anxieties disappeared with the setting sun. After fruitlessly searching for an acceptable rap station, Ryan and Chris dug up a horn closer to Elkhorn's ever-visible gendarme. Three more rappels down the northwest ridge followed, eventually landing us at the base of the popular route. Some 15 hours after leaving the previous morning, we returned to our tents and immediately crashed out.

I've always maintained that I'd rather climb an easy line for the fifth time with good company than climb a hard new line with someone who is strong enough to do it but doing it for the wrong reasons, or is someone you kind of don't like. My internal response after hearing the news that the north face had been climbed forced me to realize that a (bigger) part of my climbing ambition is now driven by ego. I've come to accept this while still striving to maintain a balanced and humble attitude. New routing will become a reality for those who have a genuine passion, are dedicated, and put in the prerequisite time to gain the skills and experience needed. Success along the way can lead to ego inflation. It happens to the best of us in all aspects of life. Certain experiences force us to look within and honestly identify the current drivers behind our climbing, sometimes revealing unwanted truths.

The climb on Elkhorn was great, and there are memories from it that will last a lifetime, yet from the experience, I've come to accept that I've drifted and my reasons for climbing may not be as pure as they once were. The days of climbing into the unknown are great—it's a high you just don't get going up a known line. I've come to believe there's a balance between searching out the highs of new routing and enjoying the alpine experience as you did when you first stood atop a summit. On Vancouver Island and elsewhere, there are plenty of classic routes waiting to be discovered, and not attempting to climb some of them in order to pin down your ego seems wrong. Yet going out to simply get your name in a book or to gain praise also seems wrong. Looking back in 20 years, it will hopefully be the companionship with friends, vivid memories and personal growth that I remember and value the most.

Summary

Threading the Needle (D+ WI4 M3, 310m, 6 pitches), north face, Elkhorn Mountain, Vancouver Island Ranges. FA: Chris Jensen, Hunter Lee, Ryan Van Horne, March 10, 2018.

Silky Smooth

Max Fisher

ROB WOOD, the British-born Canadian Rockies ice pioneer and Baffin Island and Coast Mountain explorer, has been known to say that Vancouver Island's winter alpine climbing is some of the best in the world.

Vancouver Island is where all things climbing started for me. In 2003, I enrolled in the Canadian Outdoor Leadership Training (COLT) program at Strathcona Park Lodge. For 100 days I was immersed in this new world of learning and growth that I didn't even know existed. The navigation, cooking, leadership, and mountain, river and ocean skills that I gained would fill the next 15 years of my life.

Island alpine talk is often dominated by the peaks found up the Elk River valley in Strathcona Provincial Park. Names like Kings Peak, Elkhorn and Rambler run off people's tongues as summits to stand on, and Colonel Foster's 1,000-metre east face is on most coastal alpine climber's tick list.

One valley to the east of the popular Elk River valley is Cervus Creek. With no trail network and having the reputation of serious Island bushwhacking, it sees few visitors. Despite its challenges, walking up the nine-kilometre valley is memorable with massive old growth, views of the huge unclimbed east ridge of Elkhorn, and, then, the partly vegetated 1,400-metre monster—the east face of Mount Elkhorn South (also unofficially known as Mount Colwell).

Colwell is a fairly easy steep walk up the west side via the Elk River valley, but a totally different game on the east side. In spring 2011 and 2012, Island legend and guidebook author Phil Stone and I ventured up Cervus Creek to climb the east face, and both times we were skunked by conditions. It wasn't until summer 2013 that the east face saw its first ascent by the strong team of Ryan Van Horne, Mike Shives, Mike Loch and Mike

Max Fisher climbs the first steep section of Uber Couloir. Photo: Mike Ford

Morris. In winter 2018, John Waters and company also made an attempt on the face and turned around due to warm temperatures.

Winter 2019 started off with minimal snow and warm temperatures on the Island, but as late January rolled around, an arctic outflow came through and venturing into the Island alpine just made sense.

After spending most of 2018 in New Brunswick, pushing my rock-climbing abilities on beautiful granite crags, it made sense to hit a warm-up before diving into Cowell.

On the evening of January 14, Mike Ford, a fellow alpine enthusiast who was raised on Vancouver Island, and I hiked in the dark up the wet coastal climber's trail to the snow line at about 900 metres. We ate dinner, chatted about how wonderful it was to get back into the mountains and went to sleep staring into the starry sky.

As the sun came over the hills in the east, we had already started our way up and around to the northeast side of the range. After rounding the Red Wall and getting a view of Mackenzie Peak, we saw numerous cool 250- to 350-metre winter lines, finally choosing a moderate line directly up the middle of the north face.

We soloed up the easy lower slope before roping up for four full pitches and finally simul-climbed up the last 150 metres to the summit. After enjoying our first climb together and marvelling over the views of the west coast and Barkley Sound, we made our way down the west side via easy snow downclimbing and one 60-metre rappel back to our camp. After snacking and packing, we made our way down the steep, moist trail to our vehicles.

Uber Couloir on Elkhorn Mountain South. Photo: Mike Ford

WITH THE FIRST WINTER ASCENT of the northeast face of Mackenzie Peak as an appetizer, we felt ready for the main course. On February 5, I met up with Mike again and we headed out on a light-and-fast mission up Cervus Creek to climb the east face of Colwell.

We left the car at 8:30 a.m., walked the nine kilometres through the bush over a beautiful freeze-thaw crust to the base of the couloir. At 12:45 p.m. we started climbing. Throughout the first 1,000 metres, we moved quickly over easy terrain, primarily AI2-3. The first crux was an 85-degree choke with constant spindrift. We roped up and Mike climbed through the alpine shower with ease, and soon after, I was up beside him and we were moving unroped again. As the sun was waning, we roped up one more time for a section that looked to be about AI4. The first 40 metres was nice 70- to 85-degree névé with enough ice for a few screws. As the rope came tight, and with no options to belay, Mike and I began moving together, and I started up what would become the crux of the route. Very thin vertical climbing for 20 to 25 metres with no pro brought me to where would become our bivy. I was able to anchor off on some small trees to belay Mike up the steep, heady climbing.

After 14 hours on the go, the food felt great and sleep in our snow cave came easily. As the sun rose, so did we, and it wasn't long before we were back at it. The upper third of the wall was mostly easy snow climbing with a few steeper sections that we simul-climbed to the col. After topping out, we had amazing views of Rambler, Colonel Foster, Elkhorn and numerous other Island mountains. We made our way to the summit, soaked in our excitement for a few minutes, then started to make our way down and back to the car.

The slog down to valley bottom took its toll, so we stopped after crossing the Elk River to eat some warm food and hydrate. Three hours later we were taking the last few strides to the road, arriving at the car by 6:30 p.m., 36 hours after leaving.

After being on this mountains a few times, I wasn't sure if we would be able to climb the route as fast as we did. In retrospect, we had almost perfect conditions on the approach, route and descent, which made for a smooth and magical mountain experience.

Northeast Face of Mackenzie Peak. Photo: Max Fisher

Summary

Northeast Face (AI3+, 350m), Mackenzie Peak (1422m), Vancouver Island Ranges. FA/FWA: Max Fisher, Mike Ford, January 15, 2019.

Uber Coulior (TD+ AI4+, 1400m), east face, Elkhorn Mountain South (1989m), Vancouver Island Ranges. FA/FWA: Max Fisher, Mike Ford, February 5–6, 2019.

Valleycliffe Climbing Club

Jason Green

2018 was a productive year for the Valleycliffe Climbing Club, with two new lines on New Delhi Cliff in Squamish. New Delhi Cliff is a consistently steep wall of pristine granite with long crack and corner systems housing routes four to seven pitches long. It hangs over the quiet neighbourhood of Valleycliffe, nestled away from the hustle and bustle of Highway 99 and popular climbing areas such as The Chief. The wall had three existing routes: Delhi Belly (5.12b, 5 pitches, Green-Winter, 2016); Ganges (5.11c, 4 pitches, Green-Young, 2015); and Road to Amritsar (5.11c, 6 pitches, Green-Moorhead-Young, 2015). It was a huge effort on Harry Young's part to build the trail to New Delhi Cliff.

La Princess follows the main left arête of the cliff, and was initially cleaned and partly bolted by Harry Young. Harry, a good friend and climbing partner, generously handed the route to me given the numerous projects he had on the go and the sheer difficulty of the route. I cleaned and bolted the rest, and, along with Chris Hecimovic, desperately worked the cruxes amidst the winter snow to try to finish it before my spring roadtrip, to no avail. On my roadtrip, I met Tristan, a French climber, in Indian Creek, and we spent some time together there and in Yosemite. Back in Squamish, I was itching to finish La Princess, but the cruxes were evading me. It was Tristan's last day in Squamish before returning to la Réunion. I invited him up, and amazingly, we sent the route that same day in one push.

The first two pitches of La Princess follow a 5.10 crack system to the base of the arête, first climbed by Harry Young. The arête is vertical on one side with technical face climbing, and overhanging and exposed on the other. The arête is angled so as to make it feel like you will barn-door off, and its razor-sharp edge at times makes you nervous about rope cutting. It's a committing line, and bailing becomes trickier on the upper pitches since it arches upwards. There are three 5.12 pitches stacked on top of one another on the arête: 5.12c, 5.12a and 5.12d. Miraculously, the 5.12c pitch came together for me that day, which had originally felt like 5.13. The crux pitch has multiple bumps between the arête and a seam on the face. Tristan, lacking the wing span for these moves, somehow levitated by toe hooking the arête and opposing with both hands on the seam.

The second route, Komagata Maru, was first cleaned by Jesse Redden, and generously handed to me and Colin Moorhead. We quickly finished cleaning and rigging anchors. One protection bolt sufficed for the entire route, most of it being razor-cut finger cracks. Komagata Maru shares the first pitch of the Road to Amritsar to the main ledge dubbed "Cliffside," named after the old neighbourhood pub in Valleycliffe. From there, it is a series of lightning-bolt finger cracks with a bolt-protected 5.12a crimp traverse in between. The route is consistently 5.11 on a steep wall and is one of the longer finger-crack systems in Squamish.

If you enjoy moderate-length steep crack climbing in a quiet forest setting, don't miss the pristine granite walls of New Delhi Cliff. Valleycliffe Climbing Club member Harry Young is working on the overhanging corner just left of La Princess, which will complete the main natural features on the wall. There is still plenty of potential for new free climbs around Valleycliffe, so here's to future lines and more Valleycliffe Climbing Club action.

Summary

La Princess (5.12d, 150m, 7 pitches), New Delhi Cliff, Squamish, Coast Mountains. FA: Tristan Baills, Jason Green, July 4, 2018.

Komagata Maru (5.12a, 100m, 4 pitches), New Delhi Cliff, Squamish, Coast Mountains. FA: Jason Green, Colin Moorhead, July 30, 2018.

Jason Green and Colin Moorhead (belaying) on pitch four of Komagata Maru. Photo: Chris Christie

Tiptoe Through the Tulips

Gary McQuaid

OVERLOOKING THE GOLF COURSE in Terrace, B.C., a prominent granite rock face on the shoulder of Copper Mountain holds a host of intermittent cracks and slabs, broken up by treed benches. Often simply called Copper, it has its share of climbing history dating back to the 1980s. However, old-style pitons traced back to the WWII era have been found on the wall and may be attributed to an army base occupying the area at that time.

If one looks for the highest and least-interrupted section of the face, they would see a wall at its centre, approximately 216 metres high, starting at an angle of 70 degrees and gradually steepening to 90 for the last 40 metres. This gradual incline has made this wall resemble a wave, and it is this similarity, along with its seemingly blank features, that the wall has been named by locals as Ocean Wall. To climber's left of the wall, the face continues into sections of granite outcrops, much of which is broken up by tree islands. The upper half of Ocean Wall's right side is overhung by a large corner, much of it consisting of detached and unsupported blocks of granite.

Approximately 15 years ago, I decided this wall needed a route. I wanted an adventure, so it was to be a ground-up affair (besides, hiking around to the top through the bush with a heavy pack of bolts and a drill would have sucked). Additionally, because of my love for adventure (and the 36-volt drill we had back then was ridiculously heavy), I wanted to bolt it with a hand drill. After repeated attempts on my own, or with climber Kurt Lille, progress was halted at the fourth pitch where the wall became steeper, making hand drilling even more intense.

Soon after this hand-drilling extravaganza, Phil Aslin and I decided to try an aid route up the large corner of the wall's right side. This ended up being mostly an exercise in hauling, interrupted by climbing a scary dirt- and choss-filled corner. At the end of day one, we anchored our portaledge halfway up the corner, only to awake the next morning with soaking-wet sleeping bags. It rained the night before, and in a mild drunken stupor, we neglected to properly put on the fly. Consequently, we were both a bit grumpy on our retreat. A couple of days later, a massive block fell from the upper sections of the corner, leaving glaring rock scars all over Ocean Wall, including a prominent one near our previous portaledge site.

After the rockfall, I thought it would be better to climb farther left of the exposed dihedral. Two tree bands broke the wall at this section. I spent an enjoyable day establishing the first two easy pitches, and a few days later, Scott Newton, Scott Garvin and I attempted to continue to the top. I lead another two pitches of 5.10 with some aid, which took us to the second tree band. Scott Newton started on the fifth pitch, while the other Scott and I belayed and chilled out on a large ledge. Scott Newton placed a bolt five metres off the deck, and soon after, I saw him standing in his aiders on a cam in a thin horizontal flake another five metres above the bolt. I remember thinking that the situation looked sketchy, but I continued chatting to Scott Garvin as I belayed. I don't remember what we were talking about when a sharp pop made me look up to see Scott Newton flying headfirst towards us with a ton of loose rope below him. I immediately started to pull slack through the Grigri with both hands as fast as I could. I might have gotten a couple of metres through the device before he stopped about a metre above the belay ledge, upside down with the power drill hanging below him. The flake that he had his cam in exploded, sending him for a 10-metre fall. If I didn't hear the rock break, I don't think I could have pulled up enough slack to keep him from hitting the belay ledge headfirst. We collected ourselves and descended.

After that close call, Scott Newton and I decided to let go of our ground-up ethics and give the whole rap bolting thing a go. We didn't make it far, however. Our rope got stuck on the first rappel, and Scott pulled himself up the vertical wall to free it, just to have it get stuck all over again. This time, however, we had enough rope to lead out on a low-angle corner to the left. Our rap-bolting mission turned out to be partially ground up after all.

Fifteen years and lots of climbing went by. The consensus was that one should stay off Ocean Wall due to the exposure to loose rock from high on the right dihedral. For that past 15 years, I had climbed a lot at Copper and never witnessed any rockfall, nor saw any evidence thereof.

One day after finishing the first ascent of Tortuga, a really fun four-pitch line, Daniel Helm, Andy Lecuyer and I were looking up at Ocean Wall. We were recounting the events years back when Dan said to me, "Why don't you finish it?"

The next day, after scrounging up as many bolts as possible, Dan and I set off. The first pitch was an interesting moderate adventure through a thick carpet of moss. The rock got cleaner and the climbing got harder on the second pitch. It was amusing to see my old and very rusty hand-drilled anchors with quarter-inch bolts and homemade hangers fabricated from wire and crimp. You might be able to hang a hat off these; however, if you value your hat, I wouldn't recommend it. Time constraints eventually pushed us off from halfway up the second pitch, but the obsession was reborn.

The next weekend I ventured out on my own to finish the second pitch. It was a long time since I had rope-soloed on lead, especially with a drill, but the climbing was easy and my system was working smoothly. I finished the pitch, cleared some choss and went home.

The following weekend, Tim Russel and I (Dan couldn't make it) set off with a bunch of bolts and batteries. Tim led off on the third pitch and produced a beauty. The bolt distances were just a little exiting and the climbing was engaging. I jumped on the fourth, steeper pitch, took a few whippers, but made it to the belay. Eventually, route finding and depleting drill power became such an issue that we were forced to turn around.

The next day we made it to our high point and quickly established a short fifth pitch. I then slung a double rack, a bag of bolts and a 12-volt drill around my shoulder and jumped on the sixth and last pitch of the climb. This pitch was completely different from the rest of the climb. It was far steeper, with face and crack climbing. The strong thermals made cleaning dirt and moss a miserable experience as endless amounts of sand and grit were blown into our eyes and up our nostrils. Soon enough, however, after much cursing, we stood at the top.

Gary McQuaid drills on lead on pitch four of Tiptoe Through the Tulips. Photo: Tim Russel

Since the ascent, we have come back and cleaned sections that required it. The route has had a few other ascents, making conditions even better. Overhead hazard still exists, however, and I suggest that climbers should approach this climb with the same considerations as one would approach an alpine wall.

Summary

Tiptoe Through the Tulips (5.10+, 200m, 6 pitches), west face, Ocean Wall, Copper Mountain, Kitimat Range, Coast Mountains. FA: Gary McQuaid, Tim Russel, May 5, 2018.

Going to California

Andy Lecuyer

I moved to Terrace in 2000, away from the land of amazing climbing and long-time friends in the Canadian Rockies only to find another jewel in north-western British Columbia. Filling my passion for pioneering and going into the unknown, this place is full of it. The best part about the North is there are fewer people out there doing it. The turning point for me to move to the Northwest from the Rockies was having to line up at the bottom of multi-pitch routes to see who goes first. I had a really hard time talking myself into climbing below other people, or worse, above people, worried about dropping something on them. Call me selfish and/or spoiled, but when you're used to having a place to yourself, it's hard to change.

From Terrace to Prince Rupert along the Skeena River lies some of the most amazing rock in the province rising up above the highway—well, maybe it's not quite that easy. Approaches can be as easy as belaying off your bumper to vegetation armed with thorns. And let's not forget the grizzly bears.

Anyway, enough about all that, let's talk about the route. It started by gazing at one of the more prominent avalanche slopes (that we dubbed "Polywog Mountain") along the highway from Prince Rupert to Terrace. It can be seen 40 kilometres to the west of the Terrace airport. The route makes its way from the bottom of the valley to the top of the ridge for 1,000 metres of what appeares to be clean rock. After 18 years of scrubbing moss in this region, I try to target routes that don't involve a lot of cleaning. For Gary McQuaid and I, our first attempt at the route was with a hand drill, a pair of running shoes and a few pins. That got us up about two-thirds of the route, only to turn around at the prospect of excessive drilling. Our second attempt was more or less a recon in 30 C heat, only to go up three pitches to make sure it really was worthy. Two weeks later, our third attempt began with waking up early in the morning, getting some coffee going, then food, then feeding the dog and finally out the door.

In the driveway were a few extra vehicles, which is normal since my teenage son and daughter have the odd get-together with friends who end up crashing over, but one van had a canoe on it. This seemed very strange, so I walked over and looked inside. To my surprise there were people sleeping inside it. It took a while to figure it out, but I realized it was Allan Derbyshire, who had showed up unexpectedly from Calgary. I couldn't believe that my climbing partner-slash-guru for the past 28 years of my life was still living the life of adventure and sleeping in a van. Feeling bad about leaving Allan, he just looked me in the eye and said, "Go climb that thing!" I felt relieved from my guilt, and gave him a big hug and said, "Fuck ya" and "love you" all at the same time.

Off Gary and I went driving down the highway to the route. After parking on the side of the road, we hiked up a creek bed for 30 minutes to a 1,000 metres of freedom. At the base we got our first glimpse of a mountain goat up and to the left of the route. Up we went, moving over easy ground while glancing at remarkable views of the Skeena River below. Waterslide granite features made climbing moves incredible; it was everything we could have hoped for. At two-thirds of the way up, we were just past our high point from a few years back and on a better line. At this point, we hit the goat highway, breaking across the feature offering a 3rd-class gully/ledge system that provided us with even more elevation gain.

For the final 250 metres, we followed the easiest line up easy 5th class with some more difficult moves in between. Worried about drill power, we opted to minimize bolts and charge for the top. The route I had been staring at for the past 18 years was done. We were high in the alpine with not a tree in sight—only amazing views of the river valley far below.

As most of us know, getting up something can be relatively easy; it's getting off where the tires hit the road. Thoughts of a parachute looked good right at that moment—float down to the Skeena River, landing on the huge gravel bar and go for a swim. The reality though was awesome hiking down an alpine ridge for the first 30 minutes into the inter-tangled mess of four-metre-high slide alder. Moving down through this was easier than up it, but it was still a real game of Twister at times. After battling with this for awhile, we targeted some old-growth trees to gain some relief. It was brief relief as the trees ended at a very vegetated steep cliff. The transition to rappelling felt good, especially for the second person. The first had to wrestle with ropes stuck in bush. Two hundred metres of rappelling landed us in a north-coast gully—steep and filled with large boulders. Luckily we had lots of drill power, and three or four more rappels led us to a spot where we could escape the gully and carry on through the steep old growth to our left. It's incredible to think where trees can grow around here. There are times you wished you had an axe to self-arrest since the forest is so steep. To make short of this, we eventually got down, exhausted and rewarded by the highway and flat ground.

Summary

Going to California (IV 5.8, 1000m), east face, Polywog Mountain, Coast Mountains. FA: Andy Lecuyer, Gary McQuaid, August 18, 2018.

Andy Lecuyer on the lower apron of Going to California. Photo: Gary McQuaid

Dude Wall

Travis Foster

FOUR DUDES HALFWAY UP a 700-metre wall poised on a skateboard-sized ledge, passing around two Lucky Lagers while belting at the top of their lungs The Beatles' "Hey Jude" feels like a fitting enough place to start this story. It was a precursory moment for what was to become a fairly rowdy summer. We were in the Eldred River valley, attempting to climb some new routes, although the gears were shifting. We were yet to know how we would get to the head of Powell Lake to try our hands at some of those really big walls in Daniels River valley, but we were stoked. "With a weatherproof attitude," we told ourselves, "nothing can stop us."

TWO DAYS BEFORE our expected departure, we—Drew Leiterman, Elliot Vercoe, John McMahon and I—were sitting at a pub in the frontier town of Powell River, preparing for our trip by carbo-loading on the Canadian classic, poutine. Our server overheard us talking about climbing and dove headfirst into the knotted vernacular. Kelsey Powell is a legend. She told us wild stories of climbing and road trips, and we all nearly fell off our chairs when we found out she made the first ascent of our favourite warm-up at our hometown crag Lakit Lake outside of Cranbrook, B.C. "Boys, I gotta work the night shift," Kelsey continued as we squared up the bill, "but I'll get you up there no matter what."

Two days later, we were at the other end of Powell Lake with an egregious amount of gear and two bikes, all thanks to Kelsey and her boat. We set to work building rickshaw version 1.0 and were off shortly after that. For some reason we hadn't anticipated that 225 kilograms of gear could bend the rims of the two random bikes we had found in a ditch, but it certainly did. We hobbled that sucker 19 kilometres up the logging road, and it wasn't until rickshaw version 7.0 that we found some peace with our contraption.

Once established at Stokemaster Camp in the Daniels River valley, we quickly got to work bashing an exhausting path through some of the Coast's finest bush. We were aiming for the base of the gigantic stone wall named Super Unknown. In 2017, our friends Evan Guilbault and Colin Landeck climbed this wall for the first time, taking a beautiful line up the west face with their route Sacred Stone [see *CAJ*, 2018, vol.101, p.109]. Though this year, our crosshairs were centred on the staggeringly steep northeast face.

So, a few days later we were six pitches up and moving quite well before the rain hit. For three days we laid like paralysis in our portaledges, wondering when the blitzkrieg of water pellets would end. To pass the time, we listened to audiobooks and daydreamed of our next meals while memorizing the nutritional values of our empty Clif Bar wrappers. On the second day of rain, half rations were declared. During minor breaks in the hydro cleansing, I attempted to put the ropes up a little higher, but it always ended in thunderous retreats while Drew belayed in an actual waterfall. Exciting stuff!

On our sixth day on the wall day, we woke early to angelic bluebird skies. We careened to action, climbing fast and feeling lucky with the multitudinous cracks and fun features. Five pitches higher, we made an airy bivy and felt happy for the change of scenery from our three days spent on the River of Despair ledge.

The following morning the heavens seemed to promise us another dime-piece day, so we rallied and enjoyed two full pitches before the fiasco began. As I threw my jumars on the rope to jug and haul the third pitch of that day, it seemed as if our world had begun a twisted inverse. Heaven's good grace was now some abstract far-away location, and Dante's sopping inferno was unleashed. In the tremendous rain, we jugged and hauled that pitch as fast as a cat in a bathtub and raced to set up camp while all of our things absorbed plentiful water.

The Vercoe-McMahon Memorial Route on the Dude Wall of Super Unknown. Photo: Travis Foster

We shivered and shrivelled, and the boys nearly mutinied as I held steadfast on our half-ration martial law. Finally, we fell asleep and woke the next day to life in a ping pong ball. We were at the base of the mighty headwall but couldn't see as far as we could pee. At that point, the decision for all of us was easy. It was time to bail.

Fast forward two days and we're back at the head of Powell Lake waiting for the loggers to finish work so we could catch the boat back to town. As I sat on the dock with my dudes—reading the last pages of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy—I simply had to laugh. I read aloud Gandalf's final

words: "Well, here at last, dear friends, on the shores of the sea comes the end of our fellowship in Middle Earth. Go in peace! I will not say: do not weep; for not all tears are an evil."

AND SO IT WAS that a month later, Elliot had returned to Australia, John was back in Cranbrook, and Drew and I were bouncing back to the Daniels River valley to give it another shot. This time we were able to climb fast with good weather, and we sent the route in a seven-day push. We named the steep northeast face Dude Wall, as that first go was a classic lads' trip for us four boys—you know, talking about cars and dreaming about women, that sort of thing. Drew and I named the line The Vercoe-McMahon Memorial Route to celebrate the blood, sweat and—I can't confirm this, but I'm pretty sure—tears spent by our two friends on the first attempt.

The Daniels River valley is a central figure in the newly coined B.C. Big Wall Belt. It's astounding how many unclimbed walls there are in Vancouver's backyard. I had no idea until I started pouring hours, like the rain that fell, over Google Earth and old *CAJ*s. It's all there though. True adventure for the dedicated lies closer to home than you would think. If we can do it, anyone can. A weatherproof attitude will take you far in these mountains.

Summary

The Vercoe-McMahon Memorial Route (VI 5.11 A2, 1020m, 23 pitches), Dude Wall, northeast face, Super Unknown, Daniels River valley, Coast Mountains. FA: Travis Foster, Drew Leiterman, August 6–13, 2018.

Travis Foster on pitch 20-something of The Vercoe-McMahon Memorial Route. Photo: Drew Leiterman

Keep Your Heid

Ethan Berman

WITH THANKSGIVING WEEKEND just around the corner, Antony Wood and I scraped together a plan to get out in the alpine. Our original objective in the Rockies looked too snowy, and we weren't keen to give in to a low-key weekend of rock climbing somewhere sunny.

The Salal Creek walls on the west side of Mount Athelstan had been in the back of my mind for some time, and paired together with low snow, a good forecast and freezing temperatures, I knew it would be worth checking out to see if we could scratch our way up something.

We approached the walls on Friday afternoon, intent on scoping a line to start up the next morning. The clouds nicely cleared in the evening, and we were quick to piece together a collection of snowy and icy ramps leading up the Fantastic Wall. We planned to climb the wall on Saturday, bivy, potentially go for the true summit on Sunday and then descend back to civilization. It was a spectacular evening with expansive views of the Coast Mountains stretching into the abyss.

The next morning, we woke to blue skies and found interesting mixed climbing with good rock protection and lots of icy smears. We followed a natural line low on the face for five long pitches before gaining the snowfield at about the middle point. By early afternoon, the sun was beginning to creep around the ridge. We decided the safest option would be to head for the ridgeline, where we found another five long pitches of runout climbing on generally good rock, interspersed with some giant loose blocks.

Upon reaching the summit icefield, it was clear that we weren't going for the summit the next morning. Clouds were starting to move in and a long journey through knee- to waist-deep sugar snow didn't appeal. After checking out the descent couloir, we decided to bivy and tackle the route down in the morning.

It was a peaceful, silent evening in a vast expanse of snow, ice and rock—soul soothing. It was lightly snowing through the night, but visibility was still good when we woke. We were worried about lightly bridged crevasses in the couloir but were able to stay on the side of the glacier, hugging the rock band on skier's right. We were back in Pemberton for lunch.

Ethan Berman leads mixed ground on Keep Your Heid. Photo: Antony Wood

Keep Your Heid is Scottish slang for stay calm, and may be considered a substantial mixed variation of the 2012 summer route on Fantastic Wall (des Roches-Matwyuk), which it fully joins on the upper ridge.

Summary

Keep Your Heid (V M5 5.9, 600m), Salal Creek Walls, Mt. Athelstan (2800m), Coast Mountains. FA: Ethan Berman, Antony Wood, October 6–7, 2018.

Bitcoin Billionaire

Hunter Lee

WITH AN OPEN AGENDA, Danny O'Farrell, Steve Janes and I took our time driving down Bridge River Road, eyeing up the climbing options that were forming the first weekend of 2018. Danny had been working in the area, studying the fish population within Bridge River, and had been keeping a close eye on the early season conditions. He was stoked beyond senses with the ice formations that were popping up all over the place and definitely led the thrust to test ourselves on one of the many new routes that looked in. Conversations between us varied, the usual climbing talk was intertwined with an entertaining dialogue about investing and crypto currencies. Danny informed us that a co-worker of his had a friend who knew someone and they were just killing it day trading crypto currencies and that he just got a hot tip and made a large—for him—$100 investment. His early retirement plan (a.k.a. freedom 35) was to make it big with this investment. We definitely played this up and formed plans to access remote ice climbs with now-affordable helicopters.

After cruising the road the previous day, we set our sights on an attractive pitch of ice high up the hillside just before the road turns, revealing two of the valley's seldom-climbed classics: The Gift and The Theft. With uncertainty in our minds as to how exactly we would get to this unclimbed ice, we put on our hip waders, crossed the Bridge River and climbed up in its general direction. As we slowly ascended the talus slope, we were surprised to see a hidden pitch of WI4 ice not visible from the road. Excited that there was ice this far below the initial objective, we mapped out what was above and discovered a corner system that appeared to connect the upper ice that originally drew us there with the ice in front of us. After a brief search for alternate starts, it was an easy decision to rack up and start the day's climbing right there. With the first lead being mine, I geared up and had a close look at the short curtain in front of us. The ice looked good, but upon inspection the curtain was thinner for the first few body lengths than one would like. With soft thoughts, I gently made my way up not wanting to hit too hard and break through the ice. After carefully climbing up the curtain, the terrain angle eased off and I worked my way up some easier WI2 and WI3 ice until a hefty tree presented itself as a belay option 55 metres out. Looking upwards, we were happy to see the corner that we were now committed to snaked its way up towards the upper pitch and appeared to be mostly filled with ice.

Steve set off on the second pitch, and even though we couldn't see him, we heard all the hooting and hollering and knew that we'd soon learn what all the excitement was about. With an anchor above us, Danny and I climbed in close proximity. After a body length of steep ice, easier terrain led us into a narrowing chimney. The ice weaved its way up the ever-tightening chimney, narrowing with each pick placement. With a featureless wall looming over us on our left, we stemmed out right and carefully swung our tools not wanting to chop the ropes above us. Feeling the squeeze of the rock now compressing us on both sides, movement became awkward. Eventually the rock walls constricted the ice flow to mere centimetres. After a few delicate pick placements on rock, some solid sticks in the now extremely narrow ice and a few grunts verifying it wasn't easy, we were above the constriction and breathing a little easier. With wide smiles beaming across our faces, we finished the pitch and met Steve at the anchor.

With this great pitch below us, I set off and quickly dealt with 45 metres of snow and easy WI2 ice before climbing through a short mixed section. I had been on the search for another anchor for some time when the rope went tight. Knowing that Steve and Danny had an easy snow slope above them tipped the scales of reasoning towards simul-climbing rather than downclimbing or exhausting daylight searching for an anchor site. Once the anchor below was broken down and they started to move, we had a short simul-climb before I anchored off at another tree.

With some snow and ice above us, Danny racked up and set off on pitch four. A short distance above the belay, he disappeared around a corner and dealt with an awkward ice bulge before anchoring off at the base of another imposing chimney.

With a spicy mixed section staring us down, Steve, the strongest climber among us, racked up and set off to discover what pitch five had in store. A fun M5 section above the belay set the tone and led us into the upper corner. Though this time the squeeze wasn't in full effect, there were some less-than-secure tool placements on rock and thin ice sections before a delicate balance traverse lead us to an anchor. Atop this pitch, we were finally within sight of the upper flow of ice that lured us there.

With the day getting on, I racked up and quickly climbed through some WI2 ice, eventually reaching the bottom of the upper pitch. After a quick break, I started climbing the wet WI4 pitch. Even though the temperature was well below zero, there was enough running water coming down the steep ice to penetrate the walls of a submarine—not the day to leave the Gore-Tex in the truck. After climbing through the steep start, my movement slowed, my core temperature was lowering and my hands were becoming an issue. Though the climbing above wasn't hard, I realized it wasn't wise for me to continue leading the pitch. With feeling in my fingers starting to go, I anchored off in a little cave, put all my clothes on and brought Steve up. Still feeling good, he led the last 10 metres and let out a huge cheer on top of the pitch. We were relieved to have topped out and excited to have discovered a hidden gem of a climb.

With the long return to the river in our minds, we quickly changed gears and began the descent as night fell upon us. Though cold, our retreat was uneventful. A few rappels off no-threads and some well-placed trees landed us safely back at our stash at the base of the route.

Upon reaching town, we were stoked to hear that Danny was well on his way to buying a helicopter, as he had already doubled his $100 investment, though upon waking the next morning we learned that most of the previous day's gains had vanished. The following day turned out to be a rest and travel day for Steve and me since our early season arms had climbed their quota of ice this trip. Danny let the climbing community know of the discovery, and within a month, the route had seen four more ascents, with a Seattle-based team calling the route an insta-classic.

Danny O'Farrell seconds pitch two of Bitcoin Billionaire. Photo: Hunter Lee

Summary

Bitcoin Billionaire (M5 WI4, 325m, 7 pitches), Bridge River Canyon, Coast Mountains. FA: Steve Janes, Hunter Lee, Danny O'Farrell, January 7, 2018.

Crouching Tiger

Brette Harrington

SOME PLACES ARE BEST kept secret, at least for awhile, like treasures unbeknownst to the world. That is how Marc-Andre Leclerc and I felt about Chinese Puzzle Wall after we made its first ascent in 2016 via Hidden Dragon. Tucked away high in the mountains of the Canadian North Cascades, Chinese Puzzle Wall is quietly perched on the south face of one of Mount Rexford's many batholith formations. The Nesakwatch Valley drops steeply below, the depth of its greenery constitutes enormous pines, cedars and alders, providing home to some of the greatest animals of North America—the bear, wolf and cougar to name a few. Across the valley, Mount Slesse and her neighbouring peaks dominate the skyline, forming an amphitheatre of granite. The booming claps of glaciers breaking up under the heat of the sun or thunder from a passing storm ricochet through the valley.

Caro North on the first pitch (5.11a) of Crouching Tiger. Photo: Kieran Brownie

The Chinese Puzzle Wall is a marvel in itself. I often wonder what geological phenomenon created such an exceptionally steep feature. My best guess is that it was an earthquake a few thousand years ago that sent half the face cascading off, leaving behind suspended blocks in stacked overhangs and splitter crack systems from vertical pressure.

Marc and I kept quiet about the wall, in hopes that the spirit for adventure would guide other climbers to its base rather than a written description of the approach. Our reason being, another line had caught our eye, the neighbouring line to Hidden Dragon where a prominent corner system dominates the lower wall of white granite. It then links into an immaculate-looking crack, trends through large roofs and is identified by a prominent orange stripe about a quarter of the way up the wall. This line we would call Crouching Tiger.

Marc and I had attempted the line back in 2016, but I turned back from a teetering and offensive block. This year I returned to Chinese Puzzle Wall with Caro North and Chris Kalman. My

Brette Harrington on pitch eight (5.12b) of Crouching Tiger. Photo: Kieran Brownie

mind was set on Crouching Tiger, to fulfill the vision that Marc and I had created together, but I was concerned about the blocks that had impeded our path before. This time, when I reached the section of dangerous blocks, I did not retreat. I held my balance, used my aiders to stand in the highest steps, carefully eased my weight onto questionable placements, and sure enough, overcame them. Once the pitch was established, our team of three set off and up. We finished establishing the line by aid over five days amidst the blazing summer heat wave. Fatigued from the hard work and heat, we returned home to recover for a few days.

Caro, Chris and I, accompanied by our friend and photographer Kieran Brownie, returned to Chinese Puzzle Wall. I managed to free each pitch of our new line, making the first free ascent. Involving many thoughtful movements and gear placements, my favourite sequence of the climb came at pitch three where a finger crack pinches down under a roof. By tossing my right foot around the roof and over my head, I fitted my heel upside-down into a crack system above. With excitement, I pulled around the roof and climbed up to the anchor. Other such difficulties arise on the climb, like the crux flare on pitch seven and the fierce layback on pitch eight. The sheer vertical and sustained difficulty of Chinese Puzzle Wall would appeal to anyone looking for adventurous and difficult traditional climbs away from the crowds and above a quiet Cascadian valley.

As we hiked down from the route, I stopped at the lookout to admire the hanging wall once more, knowing that I will be back again soon.

Summary

Crouching Tiger (5.12+, 500m), Chinese Puzzle Wall, Mt. Rexford, Nesakwatch Valley, Cascade Mountains. FA: Brette Harrington, Chris Kalman, Caro North, August 14, 2018.

Chinese Puzzle Wall:
(1) Hidden Dragon
(2) Crouching Tiger
Photo: Drew Brayshaw

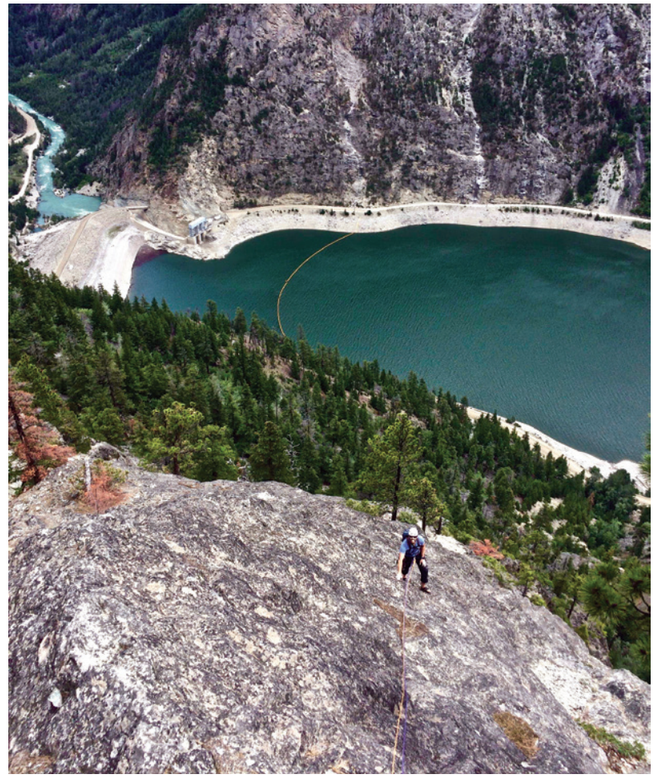
Lillooet Rocks

Danny O'Farrell

IN AUGUST 2015, having just returned home to Ucluelet, B.C., from working as a hiking/kayak guide in Isafjordur, Iceland, with Borea Adventures, I received a phone call from a friend who needed a fisheries biologist for a contract position on a project close to Lillooet, B.C. Needing the work and suffering from the adjustment of the guiding life to real life, I quickly packed up my life again, climbing gear included, kissed my girlfriend (who was already not impressed that I was leaving again for a few months) and headed to Lillooet. When I arrived in town, I was amazed by the arid desert-like landscape with grasslands and beautiful stands of ponderosa pine. What a contrast compared to Vancouver Island with its towering cedars and lush green landscapes, and the sub-arctic scene of Iceland with dwarf birch and blueberry bushes dominating the countryside.

I quickly readjusted to the job as a fisheries biologist and began work on the Lower Bridge River, assessing the juvenile abundance of Pacific salmon in the watershed, with members of the St'am'imc Nation. A couple of weeks into work, and finally adjusting to Canadian life again, I connected with a few friends who had done some climbing in the area—they all pointed me in the direction of Marble Canyon. I magically obtained an old guide book by Lyle Knight, *Central BC Rock: The Rockclimber's Guide to Central British Columbia*, to get me on my way. I managed to scrounge up an old friend, who I taught to climb years ago and now lives in town, to belay me on a few routes on the Apron of the iconic Marble Canyon headwall. After a few visits to the Apron and after numerous drives to the area, I was mesmerized by the giant limestone walls with endless potential for new routes. I took hundreds of photographs of the walls and compared new lines with old route information obtained through endless Google searches and Lyle Knight's guidebook, scheming up a plan for a new route on one of the countless walls in the area.

As work finished up in Lillooet in late fall 2015, I packed up my life again and headed back home to Ucluelet, which had been on hiatus since the spring. That winter I found myself constantly looking over pictures of the walls and wondering when I would return to Marble Canyon's magic. In spring 2016, I received another call from my friend who needed my help again, but this time it would be for almost six months in Lillooet. Working from contract to contract as a biologist, I accepted the six months



Danny O'Farrell on the lower slabs of Bridge River Buttress. Photo: Brandon Pullan

The Goat in Marble Canyon. Photo: Danny O'Farrell

of work with ease. Again I packed up my life and headed to Lillooet. On arrival, I connected with friends in Squamish and Vancouver, letting them know I would be back in Lillooet and that I was keen to have them up to explore the area with me. After multiple cragging days on the Apron with whoever was available, I managed to talk an old climbing friend—Jason Thorne, from university in Thunder Bay, and who now lives in Vancouver—to help me develop a line I had eyed up on the Mid Wall of Marble Canyon. It started lower down on the face and left of the classic 5.8 Dreamweaver—an eight-pitch route first climbed by Garry Brace and Brian Palmer in 1976. On the first day of development, Jason and I climbed and bolted a number of pitches midway up the wall, including the 5.11 Billy Goat Gruff variation on pitch seven. Following the initial development day with Jason, I later went back and established the remaining lower pitches in fall 2017 with two other climbers, Andrea Zemanek and Rob Cook. By 2018, having moved to Lillooet full time, I had bolted pitches 10 and 11 with David Leveille and completed the remaining eight pitches solo. In June 2018, Jake Allen and I completed the first free accent of the route, naming it The Goat. Sadly, in October, Jake passed away in a logging accident. He was an avid route developer, with climbs established in Thunder Bay, Revelstoke and Squamish. He will always be remembered for his efforts in the climbing and ski community.

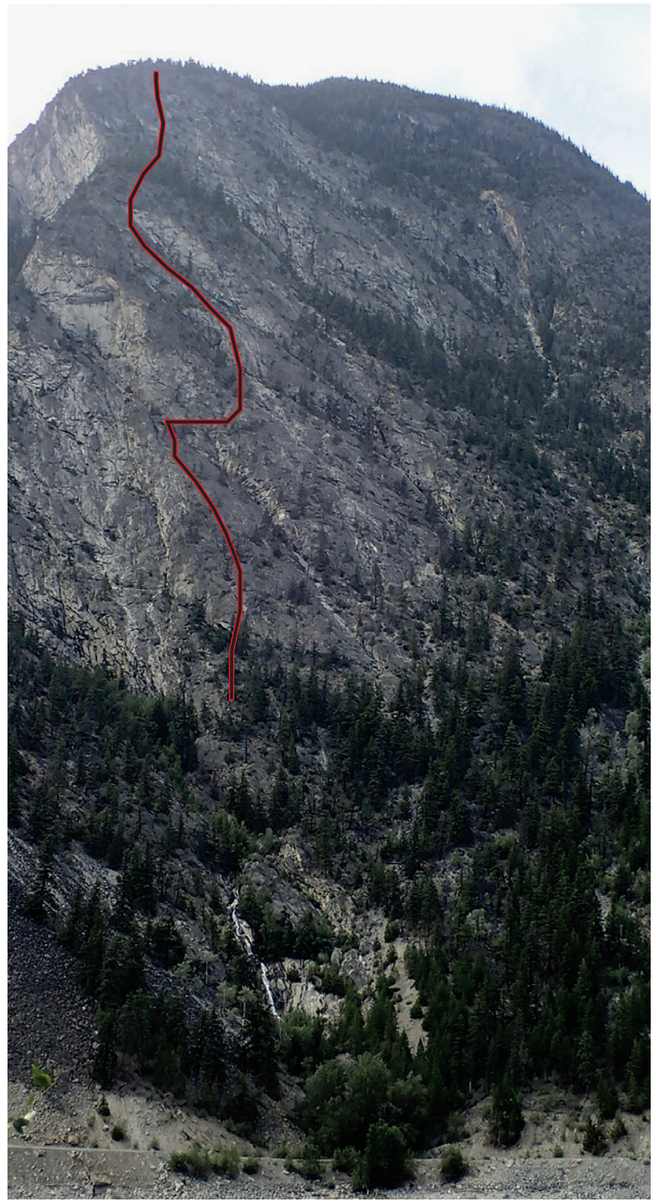
Following the completion of The Goat, I got a call from *Gripped* editor, long-time friend and climbing partner, Brandon Pullan. Brandon was eager to visit and check out my new home in Lillooet. Upon his arrival, a few beverages were shared till the early morning light, reminiscing and planning for the weekend festivities. We managed to plan for an alpine start at approximately 11 a.m. that morning. Still a little tired and hungover from the previous night's cocktails, we drove up the Bridge River Canyon through Xwisten First Nations Traditional Territory towards Tyax Heli Lodge. I had been working on the Bridge River for almost three full years and had eyed up a massive granite wall right off the road above Terzaghi Dam, about 50 kilometres from Lillooet. We packed our gear, rehydrated and headed up a small game trail to the base of a massive 1,000-plus-metre granite wall. At the base of the wall, we roped up and began climbing through moderate 5.7 slab terrain through various breaks and cracks for three pitches. We then reached a large cave-like feature on a treed ledge with a steep yellow-coloured arête. We traversed right along a narrow ledge with an undercling crack system, aiming for a large chimney feature. Once reaching the chimney, Brandon climbed through the broken rock to the start of another large slab section. We veered left past a large, loose scree gully and followed flakes and cracks left of a large roof. We placed one piton at a belay station on the upper slabs, which is the only fixed protection on the route. Once reaching the top of the upper slabs, we realized we still had a couple of hundred metres of climbing to the summit. We bushwacked through a large forested ledge to the steeper upper buttress. Losing light and running on empty, we decided to continue on, moving through face moves and cracks before reaching a fun right-facing corner (5.7) to the summit. Once through the corner, the upper buttress eases into low 5th class.

It should be noted that much of the route was simul-climbed, with the exception of the traverse and more technical pitches. The climbing itself took approximately four to five hours, with the descent being just as long. It is highly recommended to take the path of least resistance back to the road, which might include short rappels. This was the first full rock route established on the walls of the Bridge River Canyon, which are mostly known for ice and mixed climbing. The Bridge River Canyon holds similarities to the Black Canyon in Colorado, with the potential for long big-wall-style routes for the adventurous.

Summary

The Goat (5.9 (5.11 var.), 19 pitches, 620m), Marble Canyon, Pavilion Mountain Range. FA: Jake Allen, Danny O'Farrell, June 16, 2018.

Bridge River Buttress (5.7, 15 pitches, 1000m), Bridge River Canyon, Shulap Range, Chilcotin Ranges, Coast Mountains. FA: Danny O'Farrell, Brandon Pullan, June 29, 2018.



Bridge River Buttress. Photo: Danny O'Farrell

The Spectrum Range

David Williams

MY TRIP COHORT OF YEARS PAST, Betsy Waddington from Vancouver and good friends Denise Hart and Peter Celliers from Berkeley, California, and I were looking for a destination for a 2018 spring ski traverse. Hiking through Edziza Provincial Park, something that Betsy, Peter and I had undertaken in previous summers, is a memorable trek through a primordial volcanic landscape. We had, however, not read of any reports of people skiing through the park. With this in mind, we considered that a ski traverse north to south across the plateau from Buckley Lake with a descent into Raspberry Pass and on through the Spectrum Range to end at Arctic Lake would provide for a worthwhile destination. In addition, this would link up with a past trip from Arctic Lake to near the confluence of the Porcupine and Stikine Rivers that I and others had completed in spring 2000.

We flew in by helicopter with Lakelse Air from Dease Lake to Buckley Lake on April 29, 2018, and spent a pleasant evening contemplating the trip ahead, camped on one of the few patches of dry, unfrozen ground among the willow thickets near the eastern end of the lake. In the morning, we followed the summer trail for a few hours as we headed south to the Edziza plateau. We spent the next few days picking our way between snow patches while hauling our crazy-carpet sleds across bare tundra around to the western side of the volcano. With the hope of finding more continuous snow up higher, we skied east up a series of snow-filled creek beds and gullies on the western edge of Edziza to get us to the glacier directly to the west of the summit. We made camp at 2,180 metres. The following morning in deteriorating weather, we skied up to one of the bumps on the crater rim of Mount Edziza and spent the remainder of the morning skiing southwards down the glacier. In questionable weather just to the east of Coffee Crater, we decided that rather than stay up high and travel the complex terrain a little west of Armadillo Peak to get to Raspberry Pass, we would take a low route and descend off the plateau into the northerly fork of Raspberry Creek. At the end of a long day of bush with the constant anticipation of impossible canyon walls at the bottom, which turned out to have plenty of breaks, we made camp 6 on a bushy terrace next to the southerly fork of Raspberry Creek at 970 metres (57.551693° N, -130.776638° E). We were expecting a long and arduous day to get up to Raspberry Pass, but after only an hour or two of travel, we unexpectedly ran into the old Dawson City Telegraph Trail that was abandoned in 1936 along with telegraph wire still strung between trees. We followed the trail for several hours before it disappeared under snow. From near Raspberry Pass, we continued south through the Spectrum Range and onto Arctic Lake. Generally, from Raspberry Pass on, the snow cover became deeper and travel was made easier, and apart from two descents and one ascent into and out of tributaries of Mess Creek, we skied with our sleds in tow. During this portion of the traverse, we made three side trips to the east to climb Mount Kitsu (2,415 metres, 57.423103° N, -130.687761° E), peak 2,150 metres (57.353274° N, -130.696444° E), and peak 2,030 metres (57.313711° N, -130.692667° E). We were picked up early on the morning of May 12, and the spectacular flight covered the route we had traversed for the previous two weeks in what seemed like a matter of minutes. Although for the first six days we had travelled with only marginal snow levels, during the flight back it became clear that we had only just squeezed in the trip. The northern portions of the plateau were now almost clear of continuous snow cover.

This proved to be a worthwhile trip with spectacular local terrain separated from the rugged backdrop of the Boundary Range to the west by the ever-impressive bench lands and canyon of the forever-wild and remote Mess Creek valley. Snow cover would have most certainly have been better if we had started the trip a week or two earlier.

The west flank of Mount Edziza.
Photo: David Williams

Della Falls

Chris Jensen

WATERFALL ICE ON VANCOUVER ISLAND can be as elusive as a snow leopard. Ice tools can sit for several seasons waiting for conditions to line up. Island climbers often need both vigilance and luck to be rewarded with some beautiful blue ice. We buy our ice gear and hope that we will get to use it during a brief—if any—arctic cold snap.

The winter of 2019 started off mild on the West Coast, but then in February we hit the ice jackpot. It was the coldest February on record in Metro Vancouver since records began in 1937. The average temperature for February is usually 4.9 C. In 2019, the average was 0.4 C. We didn't just score with one arctic outflow, we had four in a row. This was the year to try anything.

For decades, climbers had wondered if Della Falls could possibly freeze. If Island ice climbing is like spotting a rare snow leopard, then a frozen Della Falls would be like finding the mythical Yeti. Maybe it existed, maybe it didn't. No one knew for sure.

At 440 metres, Della Falls is recognized by Natural Resources Canada as the highest waterfall in the country. It could be argued that other waterfalls are higher. For example, during heavy rain storms many mountain sides have waterfalls that are higher than Della Falls, but Della isn't a periodic waterfall—it flows year round.

The mystery of whether these tall falls could be climbed was eluded to in a section written by Joe Bajan in the go-to guidebook, *Island Alpine Select*. Speaking about one of two key winter challenges that remained for the Island, Joe riddled the following clue "…has national stature with the warm smile of really ticking off those Rockies climbers and their 'best of everything.'" While some people pulled at their chin whiskers wondering what he was referring to, many others had figured out that Joe's challenge was Della Falls.

I had only ever heard of one climbing party that trudged into the falls to inspect it during a cold winter. They were disappointed when they arrived at the base. The mist from the falls may have mixed with their tears when they found out it hadn't frozen. Their finding wasn't a surprise because the base of the falls is at 600 metres, which is generally too low for ice on the Island.

Over all the years and all the beers that people had pondered about climbing Della, why had only one party inspected the falls for ice? If its low elevation wasn't enough, then the addition of a 35-kilometre lake crossing combined with a 15-kilometre approach must have turned people off the idea. It's a long way to go to take a look. The falls are also located in Strathcona Park, so people can't take a shortcut with a helicopter or snowmobile. It has to be one foot in front of the other all the way up the valley.

Several years ago during a cold snap, I had tried to organize an attempt, but by the time we could mount up, the window had already closed. At about the same time, Peter Rothermel, a pioneering mountaineer on the Island, had contacted the ice ninja Will Gadd to see if he would be interested in giving it a go. Nothing happened that year, but the seed had been planted. It would remain dormant for several years while we each patiently waited for another arctic winter on the West Coast.

The record-setting cold conditions of February 2019 quickly sprung that seed to life. Sometimes, trips take months of planning, but our attempt on Della Falls came together in the blink of an eye. Fortunately, a cancellation in Will's schedule opened up a brief four-day window for him to fly to the Island, boat down the lake, snowshoe up the Drinkwater valley, climb the falls and reverse all of it. Peter put Will and me in touch. The chance of getting everything organized and finding ice felt like a long shot, but I knew it was time to try it. I didn't want to miss the opportunity again.

I immediately asked for time off work. Thankfully the boss nodded yes. I then quickly began sorting out logistics, like finding a float plane or boat to take us to the end of Great Central Lake. In winter, the regular water taxi service doesn't run, and there are only a few other boats on the lake. Finding a ride down the lake with such short notice seemed bleak. By a near fluke, I managed to find someone to run us down the lake exactly when we needed to go. Will managed to convince photographer Peter Hoang to join us, and with that, the trip was a go.

Right after Will and Peter's plane landed, we piled into my van and took off for Great Central Lake. During the drive, the skies opened up to heavy rain. We exchanged concerned glances and tried to laugh it off. I turned the windshield wipers to high and we continued on.

During the hour-long boat ride, we huddled inside the small enclosure to stay dry. It continued to drizzle as we broke trail up the Drinkwater Creek valley. It was too warm and we were soggy. As Will stated, "Never have my boots and head been so wet at the same time." I smirked and welcomed the Rockies guys to ice climbing on Vancouver Island. Climbing here often involves long, wet approaches. I was happy with what we managed to pull off to this point, but with these conditions, I wasn't feeling very optimistic that we'd find decent ice.

One unique feature of the approach is a cable car that is used to cross Drinkwater Creek. When we arrived, we found it was buried in snow on both sides and not working. Someone would have to sketch across the long cable and dig out the far side. With a boyish grin, Will took off along the line like he was in a playground while Drinkwater Creek bubbled and roared below him. With efficient technique, he

Will Gadd on pitch three of Della Falls Centre.
Photo: Peter Hoang

crossed the cable in almost no time and quickly dug out the far side. With the basket free, we then shuttled gear and ourselves across the icy river and continued up the narrowing valley.

After about 14 kilometres of sweating up the trail, we rounded a bend and saw the first real ice of the whole valley—Della Falls was formed. My face lit up. After all the years of wondering whether the highest recognized waterfall in Canada could freeze, there it was. The Yeti is real! Ice ran from the top right down to valley bottom. Shivers of joy trembled through my body at the sight.

Our excitement continued to build as the weather cleared and the temperature dropped to –10 C overnight. We climbed the falls in seven pitches with some hiking and WI2 steps between a couple of pitches. There would have been more ice to climb if it wasn't covered by the deep coastal snowpack. By taking the most direct line up the centre of the falls, the seven pitches went at WI4, WI3, WI4, WI4, WI6, WI5 and WI3. It was hard to believe that the rolling waves and fog of the Pacific Ocean were just 20 kilometres away.

The WI6 pitch had big overhanging mushroom funkiness and sparse gear. Will dispatched it easily. It was nothing short of impressive to watch the master, with his 35 years of ice-climbing experience, lead smoothly and calmly up through daggers and roofs. The WI5 pitch was some of the nicest Island ice I've swung into—vertical blue bliss.

We were euphoric and tired when we topped out in the sun greeted by views of Della Lake, Nine Peaks and Big Interior Mountain. I grinned so hard I think the corners of my mouth may have touched my ears. I felt like I had won the lottery of life and ice. It all seemed so unlikely, but we went for it and everything came together. Adventures like this one is exactly why I love to climb.

This area has by far the highest concentration of waterfall ice on the Island. There were plenty of other attractive lines to climb. Taking other options near the middle of the falls could likely keep the grade to WI4. Looking up at all the other blue ice around made me wish we had more time to climb.

After the descent, we packed up camp, kicked into our snowshoes, clicked our headlamps on and put in a few hours to get down on the trail. Ideally, we would have had time to sit around camp and relish in the afterglow, but we had a boat to catch in the morning. The next day, Captain Ron greeted us with a fitting drink—Lucky beer. Lucky is exactly how we felt after squeezing in this trip and finally finding out if Della Falls can be climbed.

After the trip, the cold conditions continued, and I wondered if there would be time to fit in another round at Della Falls. I didn't know when—or if—it would ever freeze up like that again. A rare opportunity was sitting there.

Less than two weeks later, I was again boating back down Great Central Lake. I was joined by two climbing buddies from the Island, Ryan Van Horne and Hunter Lee. On the upside, instead of starting out in rain, this time we began under blue skies. However, on the downside, I couldn't get extra time off work. We had even less time to do a total of 430 kilometres of driving, 70 kilometres of boating, 30 kilometres of snowshoeing and 440 metres of ice climbing.

With the broken trail, we arrived at the base of the falls in six hours instead of the original nine hours. The next morning, we decided to try the waterfall on the left (south) side, which was contained in a distinct separate gully that you can't really see into from valley bottom.

Temperatures were warmer than my first visit, and the ice was quite thin in places. We climbed unnervingly close to ice that was only an inch or two thick. Through the looking glass of ice, we could see the cascading water running behind. At the start of a couple of pitches, we had to skirt around open pools of water at the base. Being largely confined to the narrow gully with some marginal ice conditions gave the climb a far different character compared to wide-open ice of the centre falls.

The gully was tiered, which meant we could often only see one pitch at a time. Moderate pitch after moderate pitch went by. We kept expecting some spicy WI5 or WI6 pitches to eventually appear, especially near the top, but it never happened. After nine enjoyable pitches, we reached the top under sunny skies. Almost every pitch was near WI3 grade. A pitch lower down felt WI2+, and pitch eight was at the upper end of WI3+. For me, the spice for this route came from punching through the thin ice a total of five times, thankfully only once while on lead.

The descent back to camp was straightforward as we rapped the middle flow that I was familiar with. This time after the climb, we didn't need to rush out. We relaxed at camp and gazed up at all the ice that clung to the cliffs around us. Virtually every grade you would want to climb was above us.

Sometimes it's hard to know what to believe in, whether something is a myth or possibly real. The odds of finding a frozen Della Falls seemed about as likely as winning the lottery. But we decided to play. Our numbers came up, and we managed to have the good fortune of seeing something that up to that point only existed in our imaginations. For me, the first glance of those huge frozen falls was like seeing the Yeti. I won't ever forget it.

Summary

Della Falls Centre (WI6, 440m), Vancouver Island. FA: Will Gadd, Peter Hoang, Chris Jensen, February 23–24, 2019.

Della Falls Left (WI3+, 440m), Vancouver Island. FA: Chris Jensen, Hunter Lee, Ryan Van Horne, March 9, 2019.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to Peter Rothermel for being a catalyst for this experience, and to Arc'teryx and Red Bull Canada for supporting the trip.

Hunter Lee leads pitch eight of Della Falls Left, belayed by Chris Jensen. Photo: Ryan Van Horne

Rogue Tower

Zoe Manson

OUR FRIEND ROB RICHARDS was a legend. Although you probably have not heard of him, Rob silently climbed numerous impressive first ascents over the course of his life, never boasting a word to his surrounding community. On June 18, 2018, he passed away from a sudden heart attack. The shock reverberated on a seismic scale throughout our small climbing community, sending waves of grief to those who were lucky enough to have known him. No one saw it coming. Rob, who had sunk into a funk of TV, beer, Cheezies and cigarettes in his later years, had recently made a strong comeback into the climbing scene of Powell River. He had quit smoking and began a routine of long walks, top-rope soloing and gardening. Despite the years that he was absent from climbing, Rob was back at it with a fervent force and ready to tick off some lingering first-ascent projects that had percolated in his mind for years.

Rob was a constant mentor to us younglings, as he referred to my partner Evan and me. Not only was Rob encouraging, enthusiastically pointing us to untouched dream zones he had spied over the decades while working in the forestry industry, but he also cultivated a teacher-student relationship that seems to be a rare bond nowadays.

We met Rob while he was grieving over the loss of his wife, Virginia. He opened his door and his heart to us in a time of reciprocal need—Evan and I provided stoke and fresh energy while Rob provided wisdom, vision, unceasing generosity and the best base camp a climber could ever imagine. Rob unconditionally shared his knowledge, his home and his heart. The genuine care he showed for our little tribe meant everything to us. With the tip of his cap, Rob showed us the next steps to take—on the rock, in the forests and in our own young lives.

AFTER A WEEK WRESTLING with our new reality of a life without Rob, our climbing plans took an abrupt turn north towards Toba Inlet—a remote section of the Coast Mountains that is seldom explored by climbers. A zone that normally would have been deemed too remote, too unknown or too logistically complicated suddenly became the fixation of our psyche. We chose Toba because Rob always chuckled away about the rock's absurd prominence and beauty, but also because we were eagerly grasping for inspiration to lift us out of grief. The doubt that normally would have pushed the Toba trip aside for a time when we were more prepared did not enter our minds. Such a fracturing event is intangibly powerful. Fear and doubt collapse. They are infinitesimal compared to the loss of a loved one. This loss creates a sense of rootlessness that breaks down the barriers that constrict a person's perception of what is possible. Suddenly, a remote trip into a mountain range where few climbers have ever been seemed easy in comparison to the void of civilization.

We wanted to be with our friends who loved Rob. A few messages later, Max and Redbeard dropped everything in three days' time to make it up to Powell River for a memorial trip. After some speed packing, a few minor sailboat repairs and an engine part sent via expedited mail from the United States, we left the port of Lund and set sail for Toba.

Two days of sailing and some gusting afternoon thermals brought us to the isolated head of Toba Inlet. This is a magical place. The fjord's water is a rich turquois from the glacial rivers that feed into the ocean. Steep coastal forests crowned with rolling granite ridges shoot straight out of the sea. We saw a vast open estuary where the land meets the water. Nearby this seemingly wild landscape was a dock.

A "no public moorage" sign was blatantly disobeyed, and we began to unload our gear from the boat. At this moment, another boat rolled up to the dock. Suddenly, we were worried that we would get kicked out. This fear dissipated once we found out that the men in the boat were Rob's past

Zoe Manson on the first pitch of Rogue Tower. Photo: Evan Guilbault

foreman and co-worker from the shake-blocking crew that Rob had worked on several years ago. They were eager to help us along with our journey and offered us a bed to sleep in, a classic camp dinner (smokies and Orange Crush), and a ride 41 kilometres down the logging road to the base camp that we had been pointed to by Rob. The serendipity of this coincidence did not go unnoticed. I felt that Rob's spirit was with us.

The next day, we built the most absurd bear cache of our lives, using a 6:1 pulley system to haul a silly amount of extra food and gear up a tree high away from infamous Toba grizzlies. This took five hours and a lot of patience.

What separated us from beginning our approach to the alpine was the raging glacier-cold Toba River, which is no joke to cross. Luckily, Rob's shake-blocker crew built a wild contraption that consisted of a small leaking dingy attached to some ropes and pulleys that conveniently crossed the river where we wanted to begin our approach. The boat was taking on water fast because of a missing plug part, but our Captain Redbeard was able to patch the boat together with tree sap, moss and dirt—a combination that held surprisingly well.

After crossing the river, we were ready to quest through the bush and weave our way to the ridge above. Weighed down by heavy packs full of rock-climbing and camping gear, we went up and into a gully that rose 1,500 metres off the Toba River and terminated in an unexplored

Rogue Tower on the southeast face of Montrose Divide. Photo: Evan Guilbault

alpine cirque of towers that ranged from 300 to 500 metres. The gully was the natural water runnel of the earth, feeding snowmelt from the alpine to the Toba River below. The rock in the gully was questionable at times, consisting of a delicate assortment of stones pasted together with crumbly and muddy sand. The unassuming gully took one and a half days to reach the alpine and involved one very exposed bivouac.

At the end of our second day in the gully, we popped over the ridge and into an alpine wonderland of spires and glaciers. What looked like small, inviting crags on Google Earth were steep, towering peaks with wild, exposed summits. Evan and I immediately scanned the cirque for a climbing objective and went to bed overwhelmed by the possibilities but knowing that we would climb something the next day. To find that something, we planned to walk along the glacier until we were inspired, drop our packs and begin climbing.

Our alpine start began at the lazy hour of 6 a.m. Over a breakfast of oatmeal and maté, we found our objective. Morning light illuminated a stunning crack system that looked feasible to climb within a day. With a line in mind, we put on our crampons, roped up and navigated across the glacier to the base of the wall.

Once we were close to the wall, I stopped traversing the glacier when I saw an inviting finger crack that connected to obvious features above. We dropped our bags and racked up. I took the first lead up a beautiful white 5.7 alpine splitter for 50 metres. Evan ran up two more 50-metre slabby pitches, bringing us to the base of a gully. Two more pitches up the gully brought us to a funky wandering pitch that joined into the steep upper headwall. Evan lead out on overhanging alpine madness, only to realize he didn't have the gear wide enough to protect the crack system above. After reversing his steps, he chose an aesthetic steep thin corner to the left instead. The corner ended at the base of a gently overhanging headwall with two crack systems breaching from base to top. I was stoked that it was my lead. Vertical fingers to hands to slightly overhung fists ended with a glorious mantel to pop out on top of a spire with 360-degree views. Two more pitches of 4th-class knife-edge scrambling and we were standing on the true summit of the tower—unmarked by any cairn or sign of humans.

On one side we saw the alpine basin that we were camped in, but on the other we were treated to infinite views of rolling glaciers and seemingly endless mountains. This stunning moment was overshadowed by the obvious question: which way is down? Objective hazards and a steeper-than-anticipated walk off meant that we had to rappel our route. There was no time to linger; we slung a block and began our descent. Two hours later, we happily set foot on the glacier below.

WE NAMED THE ROUTE and the peak Rogue Tower, in honour of Rob. Rob was not only a climber but also an author. In his basement were stacks of his writing that contained a lifetime of knowledge and wisdom. He was old-fashioned and never used computers. In a sense, Rob lived in a different era than that of the mainstream culture. Through ink and paper he lives on. One particular story he authored was called *Rogue*. It is the story of a Sasquatch who is fed up with British Columbia's old-growth logging industry and went on a rogue rampage, sabotaging logging operations after years of pent-up anger and frustration over the destruction of his home. Rob developed his opinions on logging over 40 years of work in nearly every level of the forestry industry. He wasn't against all forms of logging, but the alarming rate at which the Powell River backcountry changed over his lifetime and the dwindling supply of old growth that continues to fall today left him jaded and ready for change.

Rob was a climber's climber, as our friend Andy Durie put it. He didn't care what people thought, what style of climbing was popular or who found out about his accomplishments. He simply loved to climb. In a sense, our trip objectively seems a little silly. We spent a grand total of three days sailing and three days in that precarious gully for only two days in the alpine, in order to climb one 300-metre route. In short, it took a lot of work and grit to get there for very little glamour. This adventure was made possible by the fire in our spirits, kindled by the help of Rob. While this trip was unconventional in almost every aspect, we were following our hearts. In a sense, for some form of closure I think we needed to see the mountains of Toba that Rob always talked about. We were retracing his steps, up the inlet, into the depths of the valleys and onto the rock that inspired him. Rob would be proud of our adventure.

THE SAIL HOME WENT SMOOTHLY. Our sleepy crew travelled all day out of Toba Inlet, back to Desolation Sound and towards Lund. As our pirate ship of a vessel neared town, the fact that we were not going back to Rob's house began to sink in. This time, we would not be greeted by a warm, loving big hug. There would be no one to say "Good job, younglings." There would be no one who genuinely cared about our trip in the way that Rob did. Although it appeared as though time froze with his passing, life goes on. In a sense, we must mature as climbers and also as people now without Rob in our lives. That is simply how the world is. And yet, when we go back to the mountains, the glaciers still move, the rocks still inspire and the rivers still flow.

Summary

Rogue Tower (III 5.10 C1, 300m), Montrose Divide, Coast Mountains. FA: Evan Guilbault, Zoe Manson, July 15, 2018.

West Coast Ice Update

Drew Brayshaw

CLIMBING ICE in Southwest B.C. has always seemed to be a little bit of a folly or affectation. I suppose that there are certainly worse places to be an ice climber—California, for instance—as well as a fair share of places with no ice at all. But ice climbers in the Vancouver area, or the southern interior for that matter, have always had their folly driven home by the relative proximity of the Rockies and the long, dependable ice season there. If you really want to ice climb, the remorseless logic is that by moving across the province, you could have a season that's reliably six months long, instead of what we normally seem to get, which is a couple of two-week windows right on the Coast, and two to three months further inland near Pemberton and Lillooet. To be a better ice climber, you need to climb lots of ice. Coastal ice climbers, the conclusion is, will never be that good, and so being a Coastal ice climber, it's been alleged, is ultimately a big-fish-small-pond mark of distinction, like being an aid climber in Saskatchewan.

There are, of course, compensating advantages. It's wet here. That wetness makes for a lot of ice when the polar outbreaks punch down from the Yukon and outflow winds start blowing down the fjords. And the relative paucity of ice climbers as well as the inaccessibility to much of the backcountry in winter has meant that, to date, there have been more routes to climb than climbers to climb them. Unlike in the Rockies, where lineups are common and popular climbs quickly turn into picked-out pegboards, here it's rare to have another party on your climb, the ice fills in faster than it gets picked out on all but the most trafficked routes, and there are still nice unclimbed lines within sight of major highways. Don't tell anyone though, OK?

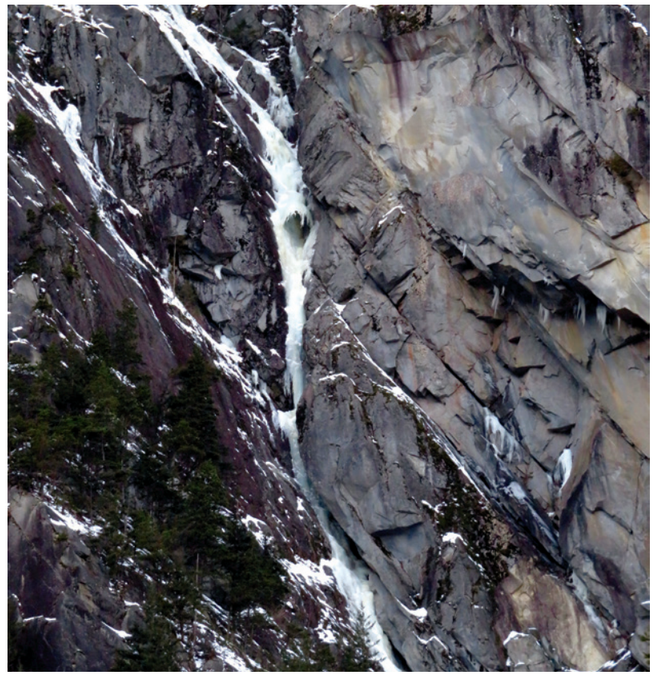
Ten years ago, the prediction was that global warming would ruin our fun sooner rather than later. When overnight lows are only a few degrees below freezing, and it thaws every day, it wouldn't take much of a rise in temperatures to push the freeze-thaw line into permanent thaw. And maybe we'll still get there if we keep driving giant pickup trucks. But as a scientist, I find that people sometimes overlook the important details when they talk about average trends. Certainly, we're warming the climate. But for ice climbers at the edge of the frozen zones, what matters is not so much the mean as the variation about that mean. Scientists prefer the term anthropogenic climate change rather than global warming, because it's not just the mean temperature creeping up—the variability is getting more variable, too. Together, these two things result in the fact that we have numerous more warm days, but the coldest days stay cold, even though we don't get as many of them as we used to. So we have to pack our climbing into shorter seasons, but the seasons aren't completely lost, at least not yet.

That seems to be a good thing, too. Because there's more of us now. More climbers, more hikers, more skiers, more backcountry enthusiasts of every type. I've seen Squamish go from a gritty mill town to Coquitlam-on-the-fjord while I've been climbing there, and my own hometown these days, Chilliwack, has had its population double while I've lived here. More climbers means more people on your route ahead of you and snaking your unclimbed lines, certainly, but it also means more reports on conditions, more developed routes, more partners and more stoke. And so it seems that we're doing more with less. The last two or the three seasons in particular have seen dozens of new routes climbed, including some spectacularly hard ones. 2016-17 had two big bursts of cold, and 2017-18 had a massive freeze that lasted almost three months, even in Squamish. 2018-19 started off pretty much more like a standard winter, maybe a bit drier and warmer than normal. People were rock climbing in shorts in the Smoke Bluffs in mid-January. But by early February, the cold blew in and hung around for six weeks. It was the coldest February in a hundred years, and we ended up having a pretty good ice season after all.

The full list of new routes is probably too exhaustive for this journal, and includes lots of generic 200-metre WI3s that are of no interest to anybody but locals. Nevertheless, they are of interest to me. It's been about 15 years since the last ice-climbing guidebook to Southwest B.C. came out, and I'm hoping to have finished writing a new one by December 2019, covering all the climbs within reasonable daytrip or weekend range of Vancouver. So, if there's an error, omission, or new climb you'd like to report, please do so by email (westcoasticereports@gmail.com) or on Facebook, or send a link to your Instagram, or whatever. The following is a synopsis of notable new routes and significant ascents from the past few years.

THE MOST NOTABLE CLIMB near Vancouver is hidden in a gully (The Winter War (WI4, 110m), Hinkkala-Markin, February 2018) on Eagle Ridge, just north of the Westwood Plateau in Coquitlam. If you live east of the Second Narrows, you can probably hike to this faster than you can drive to Squamish.

In Squamish, the gondola has been a real game changer, both for approaches and descents. Several climbs in the Olesen Creek valley, including A Scottish Tale (WI3-4, Barley-Wyvill, 1990s), Good Squamish Tail (WI 4+, Boyd, 2000s) and the new-this-year Wood-Hong (WI4+, 200m) are most easily approached by rapping in from the top station of the gondola. Older classics like The Dream got a new finishing pitch that connects to the area of the gondola station, too. The Hadrian's' Wall area right of upper A Scottish Tale got at least two new variants, including Build Gondolas Not Walls (WI5+, Kruk-de la Rosa-Ammerlaan-Condon, 2017) and Spider Pig (M8 C2 WI4, Bruns-Scsk, 2019). By far the biggest thing in the area was The Ultimate Ultimate Everything (Condon-McSorley-Kruk-Richardson, January 2017) [see *CAJ*, 2017, vol.100, p.102]. The late Marc-Andre Leclerc upped the interest a bit with this one by simul-soloing the second ascent with Luka Lindic, descending into Olesen Creek valley and continuing up The Dream to the gondola station. "Very Squamonix," said Marc-Andre afterwards, a play on words referring to its Chamonix-like accessibility. In 2018-19, by contrast, The Ultimate Ultimate Everything never formed, and the most impressive new line was Mother of the Wind (M5 WI6, 250m, (McSorley-Lavigne) on the lower Zodiac Wall near the rock climb Parallel Passages.



The 200-metre Spitting Cobra near Hope. Photo: Drew Brayshaw

One notable development of the past few years has been the increasing number of ice climbs in the Stawamus River area behind and north of the Chief. Access into this area has always been tricky due to snow-covered roads, but sleds, plowing and good old-fashioned skiing have all been used to ferret out ice approaches in this zone. A complete winter route on the Fluffy Kitten Wall drew most of the attention until it was climbed a decade ago, but since then, many shorter routes have been established. The prettiest-looking line climbed in this area may well be Seven Squamish Angels (WI4+, 140m, McSorley-Condon, 2018), down

Jia Condon on the second pitch of Seven Squamish Angels. Photo: Paul McSorley

valley of Fluffy Kitten Wall in the Xanadu area.

Meanwhile, up the Squamish River Valley northwest of Squamish, there has been a slow burn of unreported and uncredited activity over the past decade or so. But February 2018 saw what was apparently two big new lines. Artem Bylinskii and Nic Gobin climbed a 300-metre WI4 that they named AAAOOOOO!! (the specific number of letters and exclamation points in the name are mandatory) after wading across a wide spot on the semi-frozen Squamish River in chest waders. On the same day, they observed a party topping out on Madden Falls, a huge and rarely frozen line: 400-plus metres with six or seven WI3-4 pitches leading to a three-pitch WI6 headwall that had defeated several earlier attempts dating back to the late 1980s. Nobody has come forward to claim the route, though, and no one seems to know who the climbers were—a mystery.

Between Squamish and Pemberton, Tim Emmett and Jamie Finlayson added a three-pitch spray ice and bolted mixed route to Brandywine Falls (WI6 M10) in December 2016, with Emmett describing it as great training for the Helmcken Falls cave routes [see *CAJ*, 2017, vol.100, p.84].

Pemberton and Whistler and surrounding areas seem to have had few new routes reported in the past couple of years. A few notable exceptions are Purple Haze (WI5, 60m, FRA: McSorley-Brownie-Eastman, 2017) left of Whisper Falls in the D'arcy corridor, which was possibly climbed a couple of years earlier by Derek Flett, and a cluster of six two-pitch ice routes up to WI4+ behind the Wedgemount power project intake—a two-hour ski up the access roads, or 10 minutes on a sled—by Jason Kruk and friends over a period up to 2017.

The upper Pemberton River valley northwest of Pemberton seems to have lots of waterfalls, lots of avalanche hazard and little, if any, acknowledged ice climbing. Access is currently pretty good due to a power project at Meager Creek, including plowed roads in winter, but there seems to be either a deliberate code of silence or an attempt not to blow out the zone when it comes to documenting what's been climbed in the area.

In the Fraser Valley, many excellent long new routes have gone up near Hope, including lines like Spitting Cobra (WI4, 200m, Brayshaw-Neufeld-Rowbotham-Leclerc, 2017), Abandoned Vehicles (WI4, 160m, Delogne-Trudell, 2019) and Polar Vortex (WI5-, 300m, Watson-Langil, 2019). A two-pitch difficult mixed route, The Gizzardgulper (WI3 M8, 80m), was climbed by Marc-Andre Leclerc in December 2016.

Along the Trans-Canada Highway north of Hope in the Fraser Canyon, Marc-Andre Leclerc, climbing with Tim Nielsen, added a trilogy of short but very hard routes to the Superheroes Cirque in late 2016: Antifreeze (WI6-), Venom (WI6+) and Dr. Octopus (M7 WI7).

Further north in the Fraser Canyon near Lytton, climbers have secretly been developing routes in the Kwoiek Creek drainage for a number of years. Difficult to access and at low elevation, this drainage is frustratingly hard to get to when the ice is formed, but easier when it isn't. Fern Webb and Marsha Hamilton made a three-day trip out of it in 2018, skiing 20 kilometres in and out to climb a single-pitch WI5, and finally broke the code of silence to report their climb. Other established climbs are 200- to 300-metre-long WI3s by Dave Dunaway and Garry Brace as well as Webb and Brayshaw. There are probably at least a dozen more unclimbed lines on offer.

Around Lillooet, most of the new-route action in the past few years has been up the Bridge River, with very few new lines reported from the Duffey Lake Road and only a couple of short mixed lines added to Marble Canyon. The most notable event on the Duffey over the past few years occurred when Shreddie (WI5+/6R, 100m, Condon-Chilton, 1995), which doesn't normally form more than halfway down, came in huge and fat in late 2017. By the time it finally fell apart in spring 2018, it had seen a few dozen ascents and so much traffic that it seemed more like a WI4+ than its advertised grade.

Danny O'Farrell moved to Lillooet in 2017 to do fisheries work for the Xwisten (Bridge River) First Nation, and spent his time productively driving up and down the Bridge River Canyon, minutely examining the walls for new lines. Primarily calling on Steve Janes, with several other climbers, they established several long and prominent new routes from 2017 to 2019, including Stoner Falls (WI5, 95m), Bitcoin Billionaire (WI4 M6, 325m), Unleashed (WI5+/6-, 300m) and Demon Falls (WI5+, 150m), as well as a clutch of shorter and easier routes.

The Bridge also saw its two most prominent and fickle lines repeated in 2017-18. The Gift (WI5+, 290m, Knight-Serl, 1995) and The Theft (WI6+ M7, Luong-Normoyle, 1996) both formed up as fat as they'd ever been and were repeated multiple times, including, most fittingly, an in-a-day linkup by Eric Hughes and Brent Nixon. By contrast, despite the cold temperatures, neither climb made much pretension towards being fully formed.

IN SUMMARY, ICE CLIMBING is alive and well in Southwest B.C. Albeit, it's with what is likely a shorter and warmer season than the pioneers of the steep and cold had when beginning our local sport 35 years ago, armed with Terrordactyls, 10-point crampons and electrical conduit. In preparing to rewrite the guidebook, I started using Google Earth to pin the locations of climbs onto an easily searchable and shareable map. When you have all of the climbs displayed on your computer screen, it's hard to avoid noticing how blatantly they form a shape like a giant tentacled doughnut, following the course of the highways that run from Vancouver to Lillooet, with side branches up smaller roads. Not only is there a vast swathe of mountainous terrain with steep valleys and waterfalls in the inaccessible middle of the doughnut, but there are many other side drainages like the aforementioned Kwoiek and Upper Pemberton valleys with few, if any, recorded climbs in them. It's here that I expect we'll see the most future activity.

Fern Webb on the first ascent of Coast Mountain Spurt in Kwoiek Creek. Photo: Drew Brayshaw

2018 Vancouver Island Report

Lindsay Elms

EVERY YEAR WHEN IT COMES TIME to write the Vancouver Island climbing report, I feel as if it is a repeat of the previous one—but it's not. Sure, I am recording significant ascents: new routes, the occasional first ascent of some remote peak, and ascents of rarely climbed or obscure peaks. These are recorded in the hope that others will seek out the fun and joy that can be experienced on some of the more remote or complicated (due to logging roads) summits the Island has to offer. But the report is also to record noteworthy achievements by the Vancouver Island Section of the ACC—the only Canadian section on an island. The most outstanding accomplishment for the section this year was the long-awaited completion and official opening of the new hut on 5040 Peak. Picking up where construction left off last year, the wiring was completed and the solar panels were hooked up and began charging the batteries, the interior panelling was finished, the kitchen cupboards and counter tops were installed along with the propane stoves, the composting outhouse was constructed and ready for use, and numerous small but essential jobs were finalized. After two years of hard work by hundreds of volunteers, Lawrence White travelled out to officially open the ACC's newest hut on October 20 with about 60 people in attendance. As of December 15, 2018, the hut was open for bookings.

Now, the climbing news. After the previous winter's two new routes on the Beehive Wall on Mount Arrowsmith, Hunter Lee returned with Patrick David on February 5 and established another new line up the big corner just to the right of the Beehive Wall, which as Hunter stated "… it delivered a Scottish feel as the wind threw moist fog our way all day." They named their line Soggy Moss Prayers (M6 WI2, 2 pitches). A traverse of Mount Tom Taylor and Mariner Mountain from the Bedwell Trail to Bedwell Sound has only been undertaken a couple of times, and then only in summer. Stefan Gessinger and Evan Devault started skiing up the Bedwell Trail from Buttle Lake on February 8 and the next day summited Mount Tom Taylor. Two days later (February 11) they were standing atop Mariner Mountain. The next day, they skied down the old prospector's trail from Noble Col to the Bedwell River and continued out to Bedwell Sound where a float plane whisked them back to Tofino. Their ascent of Mariner Mountain was the first winter ascent, while their ascent of Mount Tom Taylor is the first recorded winter ascent. The same day that Gessinginer and Devault were on top of Mariner Mountain, Chris Jensen and Doris Long were making the first winter ascent of Nahmint Mountain, skiing from the unfinished hut on 5040 Peak.

On March 4, Ryan Van Horne and Hunter Lee repeated The Sceptre on Victoria Peak. After an approach that seemed to take forever and had foiled an earlier attempt, they found the route in great conditions They climbed eight pitches of ice up to WI3+. One rappel off a block just below the summit and then they were able to descend the rest of the route on V-threads. On March 10, Chris Jensen, Ryan Van Horne and Hunter Lee climbed a new route up the north face of Elkhorn Mountain directly to the summit. After a few quick photos on the summit, they descended the northwest ridge and arrived at their camp some 15 hours after setting off. They named the route Threading the Needle (D+ WI4 M3, 310m, 6 pitches) [see page 75]. On March 17, Steve Janes and James Rode established a new three-pitch route on Kings Peak, named Wish You Were Here (M5+R W14, 130m), to the left of Royal Highness [see *CAJ*, 2018, vol.101, p.116]. With thoughts of climbing Crystal Chandelier on Mount Arrowsmith, Steve Janes and Hunter Lee approached the Cokely Wall on March 28 and noticed an ice formation between Finnish Finale and Crystal Chandelier. Never ones to pass up steep ice, they thought they'd climb the first pitch of Crystal Chandelier and traverse over to it. They named the mixed route Shortbus Launch Pad (M4+ WI4, 120m, 3 pitches).

Mount Eden (left) and the Twin Spires (right). Photo: Sandy Briggs

Over several days in April and May, Laurence Philippsen and I, along with several others, climbed all the outlying peaks (probably first ascents) around the main summit of Maquilla Peak: north, northeast, south and southeast peaks. During those two months, several other remote peaks were climbed by various parties, including Canoe Peak (twice) and Ravenhorn in the Mackenzie Range, and Mount Peel and Mount Derby in the Tsitika watershed.

On June 16, James Rode returned to Kings Peak with Ahren Rankin and climbed a new route to the left of Wish You Were Here. They named it In the Court of the Crimson King (5.8+, 90m). In June, Darren Wilman climbed an unnamed summit (1,604 metres) between Mount Tom Taylor and Mariner Mountain directly up from the Bedwell River. Continuing their exploration of remote summits on northern Vancouver Island, Rod Szasz and I made the first ascents of Eden Spire South on June 20 and Eden Spire North on June 27, two unclimbed spires to the west of Mount Eden.

On July 11, Mike Boyd and Josh Overdijk climbed the southwest face of Elkhorn Mountain. A pitch of 5.7 and two of 5.8 on excellent rock brought them up past the big roofs and through a final chimney to the shoulder beside the dramatic south summit tower. From there they traversed pinnacles and notches to the main summit before downclimbing the west couloir. Six days later on July 17, Ryan Van Horne and Hunter Lee climbed the south face of Mount Grattan in the Mount Alava/Bate area. After the usual adventurous approach up the Perry Main, they camped at the scenic Peter Lake. The route consisted of 10 pitches up to 5.9. Darren Wilman and Philip Stone made the first ascent of Salmon Peak via Idsardi Creek on July 22. On July 31, Laurence Philippsen and I recorded the second ascent of Peak 1618, an isolated summit at the head of Kunnum Creek that was first climbed by Darren Wilman, Alana Theoret and Paul Rydeen on June 15, 2013.

Into August the weather remained good. On August 4, Ahren Rankin and James Rode completed a one-day traverse (car to car) of Mount Colonel Foster, travelling from south to north. This was followed by a traverse of Colonel Foster, but not in a day, by Neil Borecky, Rod Lane and Tyler Bellows. Clarke Gourlay, Roxanne Stedman and Robert Ramsey also climbed Mount Colonel Foster from the south col to the main summit, but descended via the snow-band route. Congratulations to Gourlay, Steadman and Ramsey for becoming the latest recipients of the Rick Eppler Island Qualifiers. Late in August, Malcolm Nicol and Hunter Lee climbed Malaspina Peak via the southwest ridge from the Canton Main logging road, and Evan Devault and Stefan Gessinger climbed Indian Summer on Mount Tom Taylor.

Between July 22 and August 19, the ACC summer camp had four successful one-week camps at the head of the Pemberton Valley between Dugong and Polychrome Peaks with a total of 65 participants.

Ryan Van Horne on pitch three of The Sceptre on Victoria Peak. Photo: Hunter Lee

September 1 saw Kris Mutafov, Cassandra Riedstra and Zander Grubac negotiating the heinous Perry Creek where they day-tripped the west ridge of Mount Grattan, and on September 6, Laurence Philippsen and I made the first recorded ascent of Peak 1450 on the west side of the Tsitika Main. Twelve days later, we were up the Claud Elliot Main and climbed Ponderosa Peak in the Bonanza Range.

On Quadra Island, five years of intensive development, spearheaded by Philip Stone, has resulted in one of the island's most popular and extensive sport-climbing areas. This year a new full-colour guidebook was published, detailing more than 200 climbs on Quadra's enjoyable andesite. However, in Strathcona Park on Vancouver Island, trail and route development at Crest Creek Crags are on hold due to a stalemate between the Heathens and BC Parks. Fortunately, Garner Bergeron has transferred his attention to Comox Lake Crags. This past summer he organized a party of mostly Heathens, but a few from the Vancouver Island Section, to upgrade a large section of the trail to the same standard as Crest Creek Crags while others were busy wire-brushing a number of new routes as well as some of the older.

Finally, the ever-popular ACC Vancouver Island Section Kids and Youth Program had a full year of trips. In winter, they had three ski trips, one of which turned into an overnighter due to an unforecasted 60 centimetres of snowfall over five hours. In the spring, a party of six climbed the South Arête on South Early Winters Spire in Washington State. Summer comprised of some day hikes and a work party on the new hut on 5040 Peak. The highlight of the year was the week-long Dugong Peak section camp near Pemberton in the Coast Range. Most of the 20 kids and parents climbed Dugong and Oluk Peaks, and numerous single-pitch routes and one multi-pitch were climbed. The Vancouver Island Section's future appears to be in good hands with this promising group of keen young climbers honing their alpine and leadership skills.

Patrick David on pitch two of Soggy Moss Prayers on the Beehive Wall, Mount Arrowsmith: Photo: Hunter Lee

The Interior

Hallam Peak GMC

David Dornian

THE MYSTERY OF THIS PLACE became evident the moment we began planning. More than a year before we set up the tents, Roger Laurilla had us aim one of our reconnaissance flights up the drainage northwest of Mica Dam under lowering skies. We landed at tree line and scattered around the outwash below the icefall from the Hallam Glacier and did our thing—Chucky running uphill to determine likely drop for his water systems, the rest of us poking at our GPS apps, toeing at the ground, rolling stones, taking photos and speculating about the distance from where we had left the helicopter to over there and back, and how long it would take to walk if you were leading a group, if there was more snow and if you could see something. We left.

The Province of British Columbia, in the midst of an ongoing renovation of its permitting process, wanted the ACC national office to tell them the distance our participants would sleep from the outhouses and where we would park the bulldozers and such. Roger Wallis, halfway across the country in Toronto, wanted us to know that all of the guidebooks and Internet maps for that part of the country were wrong. He suggested routes and peak names based on a trip that he and members of the Toronto Section had made to the area decades before, helpfully emailing us little sideway scans of his curled notebooks and old sketch maps. But his party hadn't seen much on their visit, either.

Larry Shui works up The Riddle with Serena Polt and Wendell Martin on week five of the Hallam Peak GMC. Photo: Gady Maayan

Come July 2018 when we began moving the first of six weeks of participants up to the camp, countless days had already been invested by assorted staff and managers. The tent site had been relocated and the requisite permits obtained, and we still didn't know how we were going to get past the icefall to approach Hallam Peak or up the cliff band that blocked the approach to the peaks across the creek to the south. Guides were messaging down from the camp, asking for bolts and a drill. It rained and snowed, but you can't stop fun.

By the second week, there was a route up the right-hand side of the icefall, aptly named The Riddle, allowing access to the Hallam Glacier. The sun was out and rocks were falling on the melting lines of steps across the ice-revealing snow. We drilled anchors for a couple of hand lines on what was developing into a morning commute up the cliffs to get to the Magic Glacier to the south, and began visiting the enjoyable peaks, the World Heritage-worthy Iceberg Lake and the 200-metre waterfalls accessed in that direction. Parties began to build cairns and leave registers, including a signature gin bottle at the apex of the Bombay Traverse. There is no doubt that some of the climbs made during our summer in the area were first ascents or new-route variations, but God only knows which might be which, what with winter heli-skiing traffic and the conflicting maps. By the end of the week, we had found another decaying route through The Riddle, and had seen, identified and begun sending parties up the true Hallam Peak, and were

regularly visiting the adjacent summits.

Then, of course, as the summer progressed and fire season began, everything kept changing: routes evolved as the snow retreated, smoke hazed the night skies, and we were happy to have a paved road beside a reservoir to maintain access to our parking in the valley. We never missed a flight on change days, but the back roads were plagued with closures. Above the camp, sun hats would come out, crampons would go on, and parties ranged further and faster, making loops and enchainments before reconvening at the roped lowers or icefall bottlenecks toward the end of the afternoons coming down to dinner.

The ACC's North Face leadership training course made use of the camp during the fifth week of the program, and a class from the University of Alberta was on site, along with a photographer and writer from *Canadian Geographic* magazine during week six. Keep an eye out in mid-2019 for the article and associated video. For the final week of the summer, the ACC Artists' Camp occupied the place, and our routes and nomenclature continued to evolve.

Climates change, cultures change, people change—nothing is forever. But wilderness mountaineering and amateur exploration in Western Canada is not yet over.

Ben Paradis works through the crevasse maze below False Hallam during the artists' week.
Photo: Sally Baydala

Nightrain

Jonny Simms

THE ROUTE NAME COMES AS A double meaning. Reason one is the double all-nighter I pulled to make this trip happen. Reason two comes from one of my favourite childhood bands—Guns n' Roses. The song *Nightrain* comes from the all-time classic album, "Appetite for Destruction". The song is a tribute to an infamous brand of cheap Californian fortified wine. Night Train Express was extremely popular with the band because of its low price and high alcohol content. And yes, the song is spelled Nightrain.

The first ascent of Nightrain was my second visit into East Creek in the Bugaboos that season. My first was guiding a good friend named Marley. We climbed the Beckey-Chouinard on South Howser Tower in style and then did some new routing on the Pigeon Feathers. The Feather with No Name is looker's right of Finger Berry Tower. It was such a pleasure to guide a first ascent, especially a 5.10 route with a strong client. Marley and I had logged a bunch of days in a row in East Creek, ending with establishing the first pitch of the Nightrain. The seed was planted.

Crosby Johnston seconds the first pitch of Nightrain.
Photo: Jonny Simms

Nightrain on the southwest face of Pigeon Feathers East Peak. Photo: Jonny Simms

THE INSTALLATION of industrial Remote Avalanche Control Systems (RACS) can really wear a brother down with 14-day stretches of 14-hour days on the hill. The latest Gazex install project involved power tools with thunder, lightning and hail storms, tripping around on rubble and boulders while trying to keep the cuts square. Comical, really. The rebar-cage jail you build around yourself before the concrete pour is a test of perseverance.

Finally, my time off found me flying into Vancouver, but I kind of wrote off going into the Bugs since my search for a partner was futile. With no luck, I hit Squamish thinking I would spend the week rock climbing before heading back to work. That's when I got a call around 2 p.m. from Crosby. He had just finished guiding out in my neck of the woods in the Rockies and was was looking for a Bugs partner, too. In no time, I was on the road back home to Golden and then onwards to the Bugs for a helicopter flight at first light. It took all night to get home with long-weekend traffic. I arrived at my place at 3 a.m., was packed by 3:30 a.m. and left for Bugaboo Lodge by 5 a.m. It was a tight schedule with not much time for sleep.

The weather was stable. After flying into the back side, I had a chance to nap before we went climbing. The weather was stable, so off we went. I linked the first two pitches that I previously did as one with Marley, which became the official pitch one. My initial intention was to create some new moderate climbs in East Creek, since there are already many hard routes in the area.

We had planned to do just a few pitches, then go down and start early the next day (given my state of insomnia) to finish the route. But, as any alpinist knows, when the weather is good, we climb—so we climbed, and didn't stop climbing until the route was topped out in the fading light. During the climb, Crosby dubbed me "Jonny drops it", because I dropped many things that day due to my fumbling state of sleep deprivation, including gloves and a wire brush, water bottle, chalk bag and carabiner.

All pitches were done as rope stretchers and onsight, except for pitch two, which was freed the following day after a bit of cleaning.

In closing, I urge Bugaboo climbers to donate to The Friends of Bugaboo Park, because those poo barrels don't come with wings.

Summary

Friday the 13th (5.10-, 175m, 5 pitches), Feather with No Name, Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains. FA: Marley Hodgson, Jonny Simms, July 13, 2018.

Nightrain (5.11, 350m, 7 pitches), southwest face, Pigeon Feathers East Peak, Bugaboos, Purcell Mountains. FA: Crosby Johnson, Jonny Simms, August 4–5, 2018.

P1: 5.10, 55m. Nightrain begins on the right side of the obvious buttress below the face. The first 20 metres stems and jams a left-leaning, left-facing corner. When the corner eases slightly, move left about two metres out of the main corner on flakes. Pull a small roof on finger jams and thin gear, then step back right into the main corner. Finger, hand and fist jam for another 10 metres to a horizontal break that heads left just before the main corner becomes an off-width. Follow the break left along a finger-jam traverse to a hidden two-bolt anchor located around the corner.

P2: 5.11, 50m. Climb a perfect hand crack in a corner for 10 metres to a good stance, then pull a small overlap to the left. A short layback section overcomes the roof. Continue up to the base of the left-leaning face crack. Hand and fist jam up the steep crack for 15 metres. The crack tapers (crux) to tight hands and a short powerful layback to better holds. Pull up to a ledge, then step right into a lower-angle corner for a short time. Pull a few thin moves, then continue up easier terrain to a two-bolt anchor.

P3: 5.10-, 55m. From the anchor, start on the left side and gain a short finger crack on the slab. Climb the crack, then slab climb a few moves right into the obvious dish, which gains access to the ridge crest for 15 metres of easy run-out climbing. Stay on the right side of the crest when the terrain steepens. Find a thin-hands corner on the right side of the crest. Climb the corner to a loose ledge and a two-bolt anchor three metres left on a rock slab.

P4: 5.9, 50m. Move the belay to the base of the buttress on the white wall past some boulders. Start up cracks on the buttress that lead to an easy, obvious left-facing corner. Climb the corner to easier ground (up and slightly right), finding a two-bolt belay on a terraced ledge.

P5: 5.10+, 59m. Move the belay up and right past some terraced boulders. The pitch you are looking for is the farthest right crack system of the four to choose from and is slightly hidden. This excellent pitch stems and jams up steep cracks for a full rope length to a two-bolt anchor on the right wall.

P6: 5.9, 57m. Climb varied terrain with short steep steps, trending up and right until almost on the far right side of the face near the upper south ridge. Belay on a good ledge on gear under a blocked corner. It appears possible to do a harder, more direct variation to the summit.

P7: 5.10+, 35m. Stem past the blocked corner, continuing up steep, broken finger cracks. Some awkward moves through lichen-covered jams tops out the ridge crest.

Batwing

Ramin Sherkat

IN JULY 2018, CONOR HURLY AND I climbed a new route on the west face of Batwing Peak to the right of David Lussier and Vince Hempsall's 2016 route, Blind as a Bat [see *CAJ*, 2017, vol.100, p.109]. Batwing is on the southeast side of the Mulvey group in Valhalla Provincial Park. The Valhallas are a West Kootenay alpine rock oasis. There has been a hive of new routing there in the past several years, including several moderate routes, which has helped divert traffic from the area's ultra-classic, the southeast ridge of Mount Gimli.

Conor and I met early in the Slocan Valley and drove to the Gimli trailhead at first light. The splitter bluebird weather was a harbinger of the forest fires yet to come to this region, but at the time it made for great climbing conditions. The approach to the base of the route took four hours. It was great to see people out enjoying routes on the Wolf Ears as we passed by its south face. From the Wolf Ears, access to Batwing travelled across Robertson basin on snow slopes, boulders and rock slabs to a gully that gained the ridge at Batwing's west col. A few low-5th-class moves guarded the entry to this gully. Easy grassy ramps led from the col to the base of the route.

As it is with new routes, it was with a fair bit of uncertainty that Conor launched up the first pitch. What would the rock quality be like on the black lichen-covered gneiss on this section of the face? Conor had explored the steeper white rock on the face's left side a few weeks earlier with Steve Senecal, only to be denied by steep, hard-to-protect exfoliating flakes. Our route climbed a prominent dark-stained weakness on the right side of the face on solid rock with good positions.

The first pitch required a little vertical gardening as we climbed up from the grassy ledge into the left-facing corner via face moves and jamming. Conor placed a bolt and banged in a pin at the belay (5.9, 40 metres). Pitch two climbed up and then left from the belay into broken but solid hand cracks. We then traversed back right into the left-facing corner and climbed the dihedral with positive jams and stemming. After exiting left to grassy terraces, we had to turn a small and somewhat hollow roof on its right side via tricky face moves (key beta: grab the arête) and then step right to a gear belay (5.10a, 50 metres).

The third pitch started with tricky moves left from the belay and then some thrutching through an arching wide corner above. We followed the corner straight up to another gear belay (5.9, 45 metres). Easy but fun climbing in the wide crack on the fourth and final pitch led to the grassy ledges below the summit (5.7, 20 metres). Low-angle walking led to the summit.

The descent traversed the grassy bench towards the northwest to a bolted rappel station. Two short and simple raps lead to the col. Going down the approach gully required one short rappel at its bottom. Our day was a 13-hour car-to-car outing. Batwing makes a good alpine travel day with some fine rock climbing along the way. And for the exploratory minded, other good new-route opportunities exist.

Summary

Batwing Crack (II 5.10a, 155m, 4 pitches), southwest face, Batwing, Valhalla Range. FA: Conor Hurley, Ramin Sherkat, July 22, 2018.

The southwest face of Batwing:
(1) Blind as a Bat
(2) Batwing Crack
Photo: David Lussier

The Rockies

The Bride of Frankenstein

Raphael Slawinski

JANUARY 2017. I knew it was a bad sign when, stopping to pee along the side of the Icefields Parkway, I couldn't wait to get back inside the warm car. But after getting up at four and driving for three hours, not climbing wasn't an option. Wearing nearly every layer we had, Juan Henriquez and I started crunching up Lady Wilson's Cleavage.

Less than two hours later, we rounded the corner into the amphitheatre that held the line of our desire. An ancient fixed rope swung forlornly from below the broken dagger at the top of the cliff—likely a relic from Kefira Allen and Dave Thomson, early M-climbing pioneers. A more immediate concern, however, was the frigid blue shade that still pervaded the amphitheatre. Unable to wrap our minds around climbing overhanging rock and ice in arctic temperatures, we walked a hundred metres downhill to sit in the sun and drink hot tea. Finally, sometime around noon, the sun swung around and lit up the base of the cliff, and we started climbing.

By late afternoon we managed to frig our way up two and a half pitches, where we connected with a line of bolts with that old fixed rope. Cutting off the bleached cord, we headed down, satisfied with a good day's work.

DECEMBER 2017. With the dots connected, we figured that all that was left was sending the route. And rather than hiking around the lower cliff band as we'd done the first time, we thought we might as well add more climbing to the day and start up the rarely formed pillar of Skinny Puppy.

The pillar went well enough, even if it left Juan soaked to the skin as he hung on to place screws in the midst of a lively shower. At least the day was pleasantly mild. It was as we walked up the snow gully to the base of our project that I grew worried. Whereas before we had skirted the hanging ice on the short first pitch via its right margin, now unsupported daggers and umbrellas overhung the climbing line. The few bolts on the pitch wouldn't do much good if the ice collapsed with the rope running under its lip. But the alternative was not climbing, and we'd gotten up so early and driven so far.

In the end, we got up the hanging ice on the first pitch and the overhanging choss on the second, but the stacked roofs on the third spelled an end to the redpoint attempt. We'd have to return for a third visit to the still-unnamed project.

FEBRUARY 2018. Juan had already made other plans, so I convinced Landon Thompson that it would be fun to wake up early and drive for hours to spend a day scratching up a few scruffy pitches. What I didn't count on was how much it had snowed since December. Halfway across the traverse from Lady Wilson's Cleavage, we found ourselves wading waist- and sometimes chest-deep through unconsolidated facets. Wet, frustrated and pulling ourselves up by pine branches, more than once we nearly aborted what increasingly seemed like an exercise in futility. But eventually we managed to plow our way to the base of the rock where the snow didn't lay as deep.

Raphael Slawinski on pitch two of The Bride of Frankenstein. Photo: Juan Henriquez

Raphael Slawinski on pitch three of The Bride of Frankenstein. Photo: Landon Thompson

On the plus side, the hanging ice on the first pitch that had so concerned me in December had collapsed and no longer threatened to pull the unlucky climber off before crushing him. I did have to hangdog my way up the crux third pitch to remember the sequences, but after that it went down, helped by a power scream or two.

With the approach having taken longer than expected, by the time we both stood atop the third pitch the sun was getting low over the peaks across the Icefields Parkway. Not wanting to selfishly force Landon to rappel in the dark, I suggested we head down. But he wouldn't have any of it: "You don't want to have to come back another time, do you?" And so I set off on the last pitch, clipping a couple of Dave's old bolts, twisting an upside-down screw into the underside of the broken dagger and then running it out on smooth ice above.

As we walked down through a starlit winter's night, we tried to think of a good name for the route. In the end, with it being a mirror image of Mix Monster across the Cleavage, The Bride of Frankenstein seemed appropriate.

Summary

The Bride of Frankenstein (M8+, 100m), Mt. Wilson, Canadian Rockies. FA: Raphael Slawinski, Landon Thompson, February 25, 2018.

P1:M5, 20m. Clip a few bolts on the right side of the hanging ice. A two-bolt belay is on the left side of the ice ledge above. Beware of collapsing daggers.

P2: M7, 30m. Step right and up from the belay into a short left-facing corner. Above, trend up and right to a final hard pull, getting onto a good ledge with a two-bolt belay. A small rack of micro cams is needed to supplement the bolts on this pitch.

P3: M8+, 20m. Increasingly powerful pulls past a bunch of bolts lead to a three-bolt belay below the final dagger.

P4: M6+, 30m. Some drytooling past a couple of bolts (a #.75 Camalot might be useful at the start) gains the snapped-off dagger. Turn the ice roof on the left and climb it to the top. If the dagger hasn't broken yet, it might be possible to step onto ice straight from the belay.

Descent: Rappel the fourth pitch back to the top of the third pitch where a double-rope 70-metre rappel reaches the ground (maybe even a double 60-metre rappel but not completely sure).

The Bride of Frankenstein on Mount Wilson. Photo: Raphael Slawinski

CTrain

Ian Welsted

"HAVE YOU LOOKED AROUND? The forecast is coming true." I hadn't looked around because I had the summit blinkers on. We were a pitch or two from the top, too easy. And now Jesse Bouliane was bursting my bubble. What? He actually wanted to bail?

I had to admit that the forecast was coming true. We had opted out of the A-Strain because of the forecast storm. Who wants to be in that gully when it starts snowing? So instead, we had gone for an easier alternative, not the A-Strain, more like a CTrain-type route. Just like Calgary's public transit, accessible to all. After all, we aren't on the A team, or even the B team, more like the C team.

Unfortunately, it was undeniable that Jesse was right. The storm had arrived. Interesting how I had been blinkered by summit eyes. This is an example of teamwork and the strength that multiple eyes bring to risk assessment. So we rapped down the gully and got super-duper lucky when the cornice collapsed just at the right moment when we were tucked in a cave with one rap to go.

That was April 2018. I returned the next winter in January with Alik Berg. Whilst the A team was swinging their way onto suspended cubes above the Uncompaghre Gorge at the Ouray Ice Festival, we shuffled across Bow Lake as part of the masses on their morning commute to a day of ski-touring work on the Wapta. Not being an A-lister (he snubs the thought), Alik Berg agreed that our effort to democratize drytooling was worthy. Who could say no to a half-hour flat approach? And being early winter, there were no signs of last spring's great white fright.

Ian Welsted leads pitch five of CTrain.
Photo: Alik Berg

Most urbanite weekend warriors would feel right at home on the pleasant drytool craft we found. Put in your eight hours and there will be occasional highlights, like the second pitch sustained M5 section, the sixth pitch potential squeeze gully/cave and the last 10 metres of steep crack pulling. But mostly you'll just find a very approachable mini-alpine workout for the masses, not just the elite.

Summary
CTrain (M6 WI3, 200m), northeast face, Crowfoot Mountain, Canadian Rockies. FA: Alik Berg, Ian Welsted, January 26, 2019.

Approach: Ski across Bow Lake from Num-Ti-Jah Lodge to the base of the largest gully on the north-most end of Crowfoot Mountain, just to the left of the normal Bow Hut approach (clearly visible from Num-Ti-Jah Lodge). Stash skis and continue up the fan through a narrowing of the snow gully until below the small ice daggers of the main amphitheatre gully.

Rack: Single set of cams to #3 plus pitons, including knifeblades, angles and Spectres. A few ice screws, including stubbies.

P1: WI3, 15m. Begin on an ice smear 10 metres right of the daggers of the main amphitheatre, and follow a corner system to an obvious gully up and right to the ridge. Climb to an obvious ledge and fixed anchor below a steepening in the wall.

P2: M5, 40m. Drytool steep twin cracks to start and then a second right-facing corner at 20 metres to a belay on easy ledges.

P3: M4, 40m. Start up an easy right-facing corner for five metres, then swim up snow in the gully to a huge cave with ice pouring down its right wall.

P4: WI3+, 60m. Climb out of the cave to the right, then up an eight-metre vertical pillar (present in 2019 but not in 2018). Exit to the far right to avoid a steep wall above. Traverse until below a short (five-metre) wall with twin cracks. A direct variation up the steep wall directly above the pillar looks feasible. If the ice pillar is not formed, then a traverse on easy ledges to the right is possible.

P5: M4, 30m. Climb easily on twin face cracks to the left of the belay, then up snow in the gully to another huge cave.

P6: M6, 40m. Small people could possibly tunnel up through a narrow channel at the back of the cave. Failing that, climb up to the right side of the large roof chockstone, then awkwardly turn the roof on the right onto a perfect ledge (upper end of possible tunnel). Above on the left wall is a wide steep crack (M6). At its top, traverse right on perfect edges to exit onto snow ledges. Traverse right to a fixed anchor.

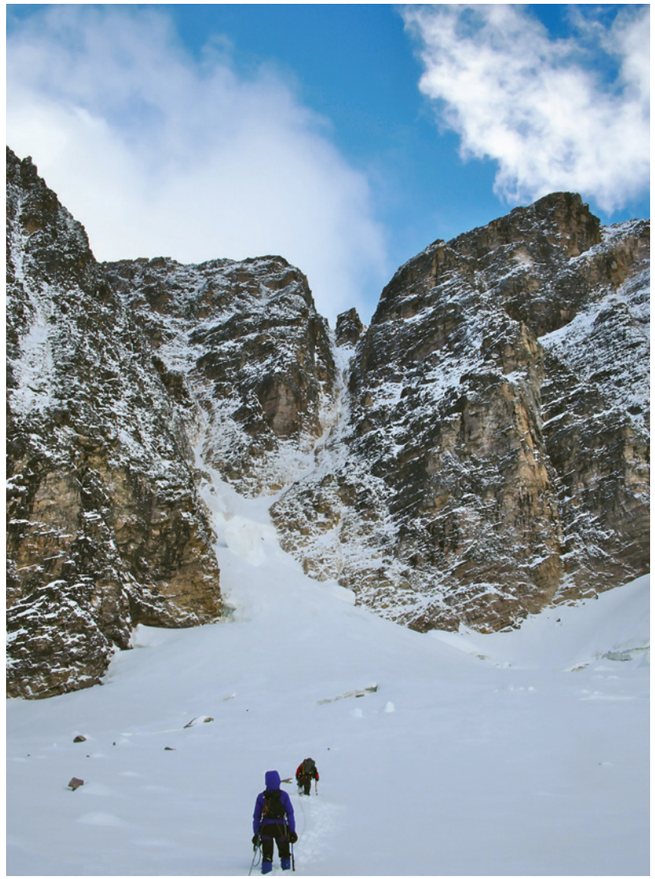
Descent: Rappel the route (70-metre ropes recommended).

CTrain on Crowfoot Mountain. The icicles to the left have been attempted.
Photo: Ian Welsted

Walk of Shame

Craig Hartmetz

Walk of Shame climbs the obvious mixed gully on the northeast face of Mount Xerxes. Photo: Crag Hartmetz



THIS WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A backcountry birthday party, but my friends Martin and Jordanne had mentioned that they were planning to bring their tools up to the hut. I couldn't resist the potential of fall climbing in the Fryatt Valley. North faces, quartzite rock and short approaches from the hut had all the ingredients of good climbing.

Having recently become self-employed, I managed to sneak away from work on Friday without my boss noticing and join the group for a canoe shuttle across the Athabasca River. Hopping the river here would save us about eight kilometres of trail. Within a few minutes, we were deposited across the river on a spacious gravel beach.

Up at the hut, the weather turned for the worse as soon as we arrived. Vague plans of going for a walk to check things out were quickly scuttled by wind, wispy clouds and the cozy cabin. We had all been struck by the same feature on Mount Xerxes though. An aesthetic couloir, visible from the dining table, went up the face and ended in a large gendarme at the top. We went to bed early, set an alarm and briefly wished for the snowfall to stop.

With better weather in the morning, we leisurely left the hut and wandered up valley to check out how much snow had fallen. Bottomless knee-deep snow had us slipping and sliding all over the place, but we eventually crested the moraines and stumbled onto the glacier below Xerxes. Our feet found a few lurking snow-covered holes, but luckily the monster crevasse below the couloir's apron wasn't hungry. A wild serac below the bergschrund provided a flat place to rack up, and Martin waltzed up the slightly overhanging ice to get us into the gully proper.

I soloed up the gully while Martin and Jordanne short-roped and pitched out some terrain. Conditions ranged from névé to hard ice with some spooky windslab in between. We finally hit the first chockstone and my lead block began. I was struck by the beautiful rock we were travelling through—quartz veins split pink, purple and even bright green Gog quartzite. Unfortunately for me, the rock in my block of leads became very compact and offered little in the way of protection, while the ice turned to onion skin over snow. Tenuous hooks and run-out climbing led to the branch at the top of the gully. Here, I handed the sharp end to Martin and tried to keep warm as the sun began casting increasingly horizontal light onto the east side of our gully.

Climbing the last pitch was truly a treat. Good drytooling with solid hooks interspersed by an exciting mantel move around a giant snow flute led us to the ridgetop—problem was, it was already dark.

We'd planned to traverse the east ridge of Mount Xerxes to the Three Blind Mice and then descend to the hut. By the beam of my headlamp, however, the terrain seemed extremely complicated. Doubly corniced, exposed and steep, the ridge looked like anything but a walk-off. Back down the gully we went, happy to have a ramshackle collection of dated European pitons, which had been gifted to Martin by his father in Germany. Down we went, rappelling on single pins, until I placed one that pulled under half body weight. Now using back-up nuts, our rack diminished quickly as we sped downward. At 1:30 a.m., we were finally back on the glacier and stumbling toward the hut.

It struck me that our appearance in this state must not be far from a troupe of over-partied urbanites trying to get home after a rowdy night of partying. We were stumbling and tripping our way home, clothing poorly attached to our bodies, hungover from continual effort and desperate to hit some sort of familiar bed. We were on a Walk of Shame, and that seemed as fitting a name for our route as any.

Summary

Walk of Shame (D 5.8 55°, 550 m), northeast face, Mt. Xerxes, Canadian Rockies. FA: Craig Hartmetz, Martin Schwangler, Jordanne Taylor, October 27, 2018.

Martin Schwangler ascends the lower portion of Walk of Shame. Photo: Craig Hartmetz

Free the Emperor

Niall Hamill

A SHARP AWAKENING BROUGHT my surroundings into perspective. We were nestled into a snowy nook—which we had dug out as the sun set the previous evening—at the top of the approach gully that splits the Emperor and Berg glaciers. Our objective, the looming shape above nearly invisible in the twilight, reflected the stars and sky in its labyrinth of ice and rock. We were about to sink our teeth into one of the grandest alpine faces in the Rockies. How a couple of young dirtbags such as ourselves had arrived there was largely due to my new friend Ryan Richardson from Boulder, Colorado, who had been up to Berg Lake a few days prior to scope the route and see if we might take a swing at it. We had leisurely hiked in the day before, and I saw the face for the first time in the evening light. For such a big face it didn't intimidate me too much, even though I knew it was going to mentally and physically test us. Perhaps it was the healthy shape it was in—silver tendrils of ice snaked their way down the face, terminating in rock steps here and there. Maybe it was the weather. We had lucked out and gone for it in a high-pressure system with conditions just warm enough to be comfortable, but not so warm that the patches of snow and ice on the face would disintegrate while we were on it.

Our enthusiasm for the line was only further magnified by the fact that the route we would attempt, climbed by Dave Cheesmond and Tony Dick some 35 years earlier, had been unrepeated despite a handful of attempts. In the past couple of decades, many of the proud north-facing lines in the Rockies had been repeated and freed, some of them almost becoming trade routes. It seemed remarkable to me that this one remained unrepeated, and certainly this fed our ambitions. We started up the couloir, simul-climbing for some rope lengths with a pitch in between. We arrived at the beginning of the real difficulties where the wall steepened into a snowed-up groove that Ryan had scoped and had asked specifically to lead. What appeared to be relatively easy from the belay turned out to be the crux of the route, where delicate moves around a snow mushroom were made above scantily placed iron. Our secret weapon, a #2 Bird Beak, was pounded above the crux with gusto. Ryan styled this pitch and others as if they were nothing, and his alpine prowess became apparent to me. As the day drew on, we climbed a total of six "hard" pitches with difficulties up to M6+R and AI4+. Where we could simul-climb, we did, making efficient work of moderate mixed ground amongst thin ice veins connected by good ice-screw belays.

As the sun set on our world Tuesday evening, we found ourselves at the top of a long, incredibly fun section of simul-climbing, just a hundred metres short of our intended brew-up spot. I fabricated the only anchor I could find, a five-piece rig backed up by my ice axes amongst a crumbling rib of rock that thrust outwards from the gully. Fatigued and needing a rest, we decided to take a seat on the most comfortable place we could find, a chopped-out butt ledge on the exposed fin of snow above the rib, separating us from the rest of the Emperor Face. We had intended to top out the next steep pitch before calling it a day, but both of us were happy to settle in to refuel and tackle it in the morning. It was here that Ryan mentioned his boots. His single boots were quite dank by this time, and he was worried that mild trench foot was developing. We brewed up, ate some freeze-dried food and settled into our bivy bag. The mountain was quiet for a moment, and Ryan and I were treated to a beautiful show of the northern lights as we shivered together, just warm enough to endure, myself more awake than asleep. I was reminded why I seek these experiences: it's not only the objective challenge, but the whole experience that alpine climbing provides, glimpses of raw beauty magnified by the intensity of the effort in that wild place.

The crack of icefall from above snapped me from the waking dream as the first rays of the sun hit the summit ridge above us, sending down meteor debris into the ice gully that we were about to traverse into the steep exit pitch. We waited and brewed up as the sun crept around westward, deciding that the traverse would be less of a shooting gallery once the sun was off the wall. Once adequately sustained on Soylent powder, a wonder substance that Ryan frequently fuels his alpine climbing with, we set off across the traverse, finding a relatively sheltered belay below the steep exit headwall above. It was my turn to lead, but I passed it off to Ryan. I was bagged from almost no sleep the night before and reasoned that it might take far too long for me to complete this pitch. Ryan obliged and crushed it like his other hard leads. Whether Cheesmond and Dick climbed this corner or not, we do not know. We do know that it was 65 metres long and one of the best alpine pitches we have climbed in the Rockies, an aesthetic ice goulotte, ever narrowing and steepening into a beautiful dihedral above. The only piece of gear that we left on the route was here. I was unable to evict a gold offset cam from a seam at the crux and left it in-situ to avoid weighting the rope and spoiling our onsight.

Once I arrived at the belay, we discussed our physical and mental state: spent and sleep-deprived; our fuel dwindling; our food nearly gone; and the continuing issue of Ryan's feet, which were now undoubtedly developing trench foot in his single boots. The terrain above looked simple enough, perhaps another five to six hours of simul-climbing to the ridge, practically a sheet of AI3/3+ with small rock steps here and there. Our concern for our well-being took precedence over sending this huge route, and the call was made to go down. Our next hurdle would be a rising traverse into the North Face route, where we would find 70-degree

Ryan Richardson on an M6 pitch on The Emperor Face.
Photo: Niall Hamill

The Cheesemond-Dick route (attempt) on The Emerpor Face of Mount Robson. Photo: Ryan Richardson

glacial ice to rappel down. For a few full rope lengths, our calves burned with strain as we dug deep into our suffer thresholds. Reaching the north face around noon, we settled into an afternoon of rappelling into the Emperor Glacier and towards our intended descent gully. It was here on the glacier where we rested, finding a stream from which we drank to excess, revitalizing ourselves in the afternoon sun. The summit ridge had clouded over—an innocent sight from our place of security on the glacier.

We felt good about our choice to go down. Although we didn't complete the line to the summit ridge, we were pleased with our effort and our ability to honour going down based on rationale when the upper face looked to be in such good condition. After fording a thigh-deep stream that had swelled since our approach, we embraced with gratitude at the summer trail and wolfed down the snacks we had cached with our approach shoes in the bear box. On the hike out, the final few kilometres of which felt like the crux of the whole adventure, I repeatedly experienced hallucinatory imagery in the forest around me, and when finally arriving at the trailhead and Ryan's van, I drank deep from the Malbec bottle and wrote these words on the drive back to Canmore. In the days that followed, we were afforded the time to reflect upon this experience and carry it forth into our lives with a greater sense of respect for each other, the mountain and its known history.

Summary

Cheesmond-Dick (VI M6+R AI4+), Emperor Face, Mt. Robson (free attempt). Niall Hamill, Ryan Richardson, May 22–24, 2018.

Homage

Brandon Pullan

LAST SUMMER I HAD the good fortune to climb some new routes in the Bow Valley with a number of amazing partners. Some routes are cleaned to repeat and others are more adventurous. But they all left a lasting impression on me.

Early in the year, I was joined by David Smart for the first ascent of Godzilla, a new four-pitch 5.9 bolted route on Kanga South above the Upper Grassi Lakes parking area. Smart has been developing routes in Canada for more than 30 years, started *Gripped* magazine with Sam Cohen in the late 1990s and is the editorial director of Gripped Publishing. We recently completed a book together about Canada's classic rock climbs called *Northern Stone,* published by Rocky Mountain Books. We've been climbing together for nearly a decade, and every time we rope up, we either climb something new or repeat a classic. Godzilla is the third line I've added to the wall, which includes the four-pitch Sharknado (5.8) with Gaby James and the two-pitch Hot Fuzz (5.8) with Darren Vonk. To find Godzilla, just walk along the crag 100 metres past Hot Fuzz.

Shortly after Godzilla, I teamed up with local then-17-year-old Cory Rogans for the first ascent of a new 100-metre 5.10b on Ship's Prow. Rogans is by far the keenest and most stoked of all the young adventure climbers I've met lately. We intended to climb Ship's Prow, the 450-metre 5.10c that rises on the left skyline of the Nakoda Range, but early thunderstorms forced a change of plans. We walked the base of the wall until we found an obvious line. I led the first solid 5.8 up twin cracks. Rogan's onsight lead of the second pitch—while pulling moss out of the crack—was strong and memorable. He had to tagline up the hammer and pitons to place crucial protection for the crux. I climbed the final long pitch up a steep corner. Rogans named it Scurvy, his first-ever new route.

I then teamed up with Savannah Manning, a Tennessee climber and owner of She Moves Mountains East, for the first ascent of Tennessee Bushwhackin', a seven-pitch wandering 5.9R on McGillivray Slabs. This one isn't recommended unless you like run-out slabs and tree climbing. We visited Yamnuska the following day and

David Smart on the first ascent of Godzilla on Kanga South on Mount Rundle. Photo: Brandon Pullan

The **Rockies**

Brandon Pullan on the first ascent of The Halfpipe on Mount Rundle. Photo: Adam Campbell

Manning nearly onsighted my 2007 six-pitch route called Hot Doggin' It, with the first pitch being burly 5.12. The pitch was later onsighted by Rogans and his partner from Calgary.

I then began a new project with legend and guidebook author Chris Perry. Once finished, it will be a six-pitch 5.10 next to Cascade Falls. Perry, a long-time local hero of mine in his 70s, is still bolting a number of big routes every summer. Ontario climber Matt Westlake moved to the Rockies a few years ago to climb full time and live in his van. Despite living with a degenerative condition in his leg, which almost resulted in amputation and causes pain while climbing, he continues to push himself on rock and ice. Last winter, he competed at the Ice Climbing World Cup with Team Canada. Our first-ever day of climbing together was in September, and we made the first ascent of Buffalohorn, a 250-metre 5.9R on Tunnel Mountain. We topped out in the dark with one headlamp.

In early September, I teamed up with pro-runner Adam Campbell for two first ascents on Mount Rundle. The approach to the first bowl behind EEOR takes less than an hour, but few climbers have visited the area. I first checked it out in 2007, alone and with a bag full of hardware, and began work ground up on a nice-looking line on the north face of EEOR. After placing eight bolts, I rappelled and could never find a partner willing to head up. My goal was a steep splitter crack in a corner. This year, Campbell and I had many a number of plans to climb, but the wildfire smoke kept shutting us down. I had seen a line on the second buttress of Rundle above the first bowl earlier this year and asked Campbell to check it out with me. On the approach, we were soaked by a big storm but continued to the base of the climb where the weather lifted.

In the end, we made the first ascent of Homage to the Warden, a 350-metre 5.6 with some of the nicer rock on Rundle I've climbed on. The route climbs a small wall to a ledge to a 140-metre ridge before a traverse to a headwall and another ridge. We hung out on the summit and talked about other projects that we could see in the distance. I would recommend it for those looking for a mini-alpine route, as it's good practice for longer climbs like those found on Castle Mountain or Mount Louis. We named it in honour of Tim Auger, the legendary search and rescue specialist and park warden who passed away last summer. I had climbed with Auger on Mount Louis and listened to many of his amazing stories over the years.

Campbell and I descended back into the first bowl to check out my 2007 project. Armed with a rack of gear, pitons and one rope, I headed up the bolted slab. The rock was solid and the movement was excellent at 5.10b. Above my last bolt, I placed a few cams before building a piton anchor at the base of the main crack. Campbell seconded the first pitch and joined me at a semi-hanging belay. The second pitch was slightly intimidating, because I was unsure of how difficult it would be, how dirty it was or how well I was going to be climbing.

The crack started narrow for my hands and I couldn't get a solid jam, but the gear was bomber and with Campbell's encouragement, I made it through the crux and into the hand crack where I jammed up to a ledge. After 35 metres, I pounded in another piton anchor. Campbell found my crux section easier because of his hand size, but found the upper section trickier. We graded it 5.10b. It's the best limestone crack I've climbed in the Rockies.

We named the three-pitch route The Halfpipe in memory of the late Marc-Andre Leclerc. A few years ago, Leclerc free soloed a 400-metre 5.8 on EEOR and then a 600-metre 5.10 on Ha Ling in a push and called it the Canmore Halfpipe. Campbell is a self-professed new climber, but he's one of the most well-rounded mountain athletes I know, and it was an amazing experience to team up with him. To me, climbing is as much about who you're climbing with as it is about what you're climbing. Good partners make the day fun, safe and memorable. I've been lucky over the years to climb with some amazing people, and the new routes I establish are only possible because of the stoke they bring.

The Good Bad

Tom Livingstone

Uisdean Hawthorn waits for cooler temperatures before bailing off The Wild Thing on Mount Chephren.
Photo: Tom Livingstone

2015: "WATCH ME!" Echoes mocked around the gorge. I met John McCune and Uisdean Hawthorn in the south of France, sharing a mutual appreciation for the end of winter. They'd just bailed from the Grandes Jorasses, and I from the United Kingdom. We shocked our arms after a winter of soft-gloved hands and cold pale snow, climbing under crystal skies. Each time John lowered from a 40-metre route in the Gorges du Tarn, he'd shrug his Irish shoulders. "You know, it's not that bad." I quickly found just how bad "not that bad" could be, and just how fit Strong McCune is.

I'd swallow my pride, tying in to our battered orange sport rope, then sweating and cursing my way skyward. The quickdraws teased, 20 of them hanging above my head. I'd desperately ask John for beta.

"Just keep goin' up, there's a good pocket somewhere!" he'd say.

Like an insect stuck to flypaper, I twitched on the yellowing limestone, starfished to the wall. I huffed and puffed some more, my arms filled with a thick lactic soup.

"Go arn, go arn," John's encouragement floated from the trees.

I wanted to give up, to let go and free fall into the rope's embrace—but something kept me fighting. To keep going was something I remember from my childhood. I distinctly remember one of those motivational posters at school that said " persistence prevails when all else fails."

Of course, sport climbing is the good life. It's (relatively) safe and (relatively) stress-free climbing. Our diet consisted of coffee and sunshine in the morning, while red wine and bright stars finished every evening. But despite this, we wanted more. Between routes, Uisdean and I hatched ambitious alpine-climbing plans in the Canadian Rockies that autumn. I guess you have to start somewhere, but in hindsight, the Rockies might not be the easiest place.

Upon our arrival in September, we discovered that youthful enthusiasm is a great spark to the fire of advice from local Canadian climbers. It stokes their optimism and welcoming attitudes.

"Oh yah, the conditions could be really good right now, but who knows!" they said. "No one's been back there in a year. Watch out, too—it's big country."

"Oh. But the rock gets better higher up?" we'd ask.

The hours of driving north up the Icefields Parkway, through dense spruce forests and sweeping limestone peaks, was nothing like my home and the Llanberis Pass.

There are many challenges to alpine climbing in the Rockies. Only a few people test the spooky, faceted snowpack, or gingerly weight their tools in rotten limestone cracks. The gear is often joke pro, the approaches are long and the avalanches are monstrous. And did someone mention bears?

You have to really want it, too. Uisdean and I tiptoed into the mountains numerous times, sometimes on an educated guess, sometimes only with hope. September's usually stable weather was lost beneath dark, drifting clouds that smothered the rugged peaks. We lived in our rented family-sized car, dossing in the valley. Life wasn't easy when it snowed a foot in town.

In various stages of attempt, we bailed from classic routes on the north faces of Mount Kitchener, Mount Andromeda and Mount Alberta—and by classic I mean the route might have been climbed once in the past year. We listened to the rumble of distant seracs, which collapsed in the middle of the night or swam against waves of spindrift. As a silver lining to our trip, we climbed the Greenwood-Jones on Mount Temple. It was just the bait we needed to return. "Maybe Canada is not all bad," we agreed on the return flight to Europe.

2016: UISDEAN AND I climbed together for six more months. Our partnership developed, and our understanding of a big alpine day had been tested, stretched and re-imagined. Where previously we might have found reasons to bail, we now found answers to keep going. We gained perspective, and our home mountains of Scotland and the Alps were more understandable. When we climbed on Scottish winter crags like Beinn Eighe, at least we weren't 30 rappels from the ground; when we surfed oceans of granite on Divine Providence (Mont Blanc), at least we'd find something to rap off if we needed to. And at least we could hand over the rack when one of us slowed during a single-push ascent of The American Direct (Le Dru).

When we returned to the north face of Mount Alberta in September, the crux headwall menacingly loomed, but we climbed with a desire—almost a revenge. There was a midnight alarm and the long snowfield and suddenly we were pressed up against the headwall again, but it felt more familiar. We slotted our picks into the cracked limestone, black as the heart of the mountain. Metal screeched against stone, and metal usually won. But this time we focused on the pitches above rather than the ground far below. M8 R/X became just that: an opaque grade. We followed the House-Anderson route over two days, finally reaching the glacier as a storm enveloped the mountain again. It felt like we'd been granted a brief safe passage. We shouted with relief at everything: the route, the mountain and returning safely. Alpine climbing in Canada is good bad, I thought afterwards.

Time flies. I realize each year slips through my fingers and all that remains are the memories of experiences. It's a cliché, but there's no second chance—time is a precious concept that makes me want to use every beautiful, fleeting minute. As Steve Swenson said in a recent article, in the end "only two things will really matter: the quality of

your relationships, and whether or not you put the effort into being the person you wanted to be."

I feel a quickening, an emphasis on the now, for each opportunity may not appear again. I ask myself if am I spending my time in the best possible way. Am I climbing (or trying) exactly what I'd like to achieve? But then I remember the mountains dictate the time. Perhaps I'm being impatient, forgetting that a satisfying goal can be achieved regardless of age or health. But, before I know it, another year has flown by.

2019: CANADA, AGAIN. Only this time, my memories are inextricably linked with Marc-Andre Leclerc. Uisdean and I sit in the same apartment as our last visit together in 2016. Nick and Ange's incredible generosity and hospitality stand the test of time. Outside, the spine of the Rockies stretches into the night, a world-class alpine range because of the difficulties, not necessarily because of its qualities. The limestone cliffs shatter and clatter with rocks, welcoming me back.

What draws me here? At a recent presentation by Geoff Powter, he spoke of his three attractions to alpinism. Risk adds value to the game we play; my heart thumps out of my chest at the end of a runout, and I'm left feeling completely alive. Romance paints a soft pastel glow as dawn spills down the mountains' faces; despite the cold, I stop and stare. And then there's the right way to climb, meeting the challenge of the mountains as we find them, alpine style. Because, after all, style matters.

Uisdean and I encourage each other on, entertaining our mad alpine ideas—OK, my mad ideas. As usual, local climbers are uncertain of the alpine conditions, and we debate our objectives, trying to decide if they're on the good or bad side of life. It would be easy to sport climb in the valley, enjoying the good-good aspect of climbing. It'd be simple to go back to those days in the Gorges du Tarn, getting pumped on bolts, but instead, we test ourselves against the sounding board of the mountains. Each time we return to the apartment, Nick's eyes light up in anticipation.

"Not this time, unfortunately!" we answer.

The loose rock, warm weather, terrible snow or, simply, "us" are reasons enough on Mount Chephren and Ha Ling, and Nick understands.

"Maybe Canada is bad-bad," I complain.

When the rock disintegrates, when the gear is crap, when you sink up to your chest in unconsolidated snow…but wait! Another window appears in the forecast.

When Uisdean and I returned over Woolley Shoulder in 2016, back to civilization, we took a final parting glance down the valley at North Twin. We both knew it was the darker, meaner bastard brother of Mount Alberta.

"That face is a proper beast," Marko Prezelj said succinctly.

With this in mind, and the possibility that a winter ascent of North Twin might be bad-bad, Uisdean and I were about to attempt it when we paused—the temperatures were shooting up from –30 C to 20 C. The warm weather would surely release multiple avalanches. Our backpacks stood upright by the door, two red unexploded bombs, waiting and tense like our nerves.

Barry Blanchard knows the Rockies better than most. With Dave Cheesmond, he made the first ascent of North Twin's North Pillar more than 30 years ago. Barry agreed to meet Uisdean and me for a coffee during our North Twin dilemma. He barely needed to use his walking stick after a recent hip operation, and his long silver hair shook as he laughed. I secretly hoped Barry would impart some wisdom on North Twin, and I listened intently. His stories came easily, alpine epics and adventures: "I was hit by an avalanche, it tore my pack off and I smashed my leg!"

I wanted time to pause, to ask Barry more. What was it like having "sex with death" on the Rupal Face? But, a couple of hours had already passed. Barry gave us exactly what we needed: he offered no secret beta about North Twin. His stories helped enough. "If you don't have lots of Knifeblades, you're gonna die!"

I watched Barry walk down Canmore's Main Street, then turned to Uisdean. "Let's get some more Knifeblades!"

Later that day, however, we realized the sensible decision. Our backpacks slumped, now forgotten. The sensible decision is always hard to choose. It takes skill to unpick your motivations for climbing and to correctly say when to continue. The climber who ignores rockfall is reckless, but if you always stay at home you'll never climb anything.

Alpine climbing is so much about the unknowns. Will it go? Will I find gear? Like a game of chess, I investigate possibilities. What happens if I do this? Most of the time, you don't climb anything. The chances of success on a big route surely drops below 50 per cent, particularly if you're trying ambitious projects or first ascents. But that's the way it goes.

I HADN'T CLIMBED anything significant, and not through lack of trying. After Uisdean returned home, Fabi Buhl joined me in Canada, partly persuaded by my constant messages. We tried an impressive-looking new route on Mount Fay, but our line blanked out after five long testing pitches. Returning to town, we learned of the tragic deaths of Jess Rosskelley, David Lama and Hansjorg Auer on Howse Peak. The Rockies now felt like a harsh, repelling arena, and everyone was shocked. There was a low energy in town. Grey cloud and drizzle rolled in from the west. Geoff Powter's attractions to the mountains felt briefly absent.

I feel fortunate to be able to climb in the mountains. We're all drawn to them, despite their inherent risks. There's rich pleasure when embracing the simple challenge of climbing up. We can't resist the poisoned appeal. But the recent tragic events in the Rockies encourage thought. Is it worth paying the ultimate price for something you truly enjoy?

Every trip must come to an end, and I must return to home. The airplane thunders down Calgary's runway, propelling me into the air. I fly east, crossing the Greenland ice sheet. This trip to Canada—my fourth—was great fun, despite its challenges and no summits. I remind myself that sometimes you win and sometimes you don't. That's just the way it goes in the mountains—and it's important to keep life in perspective.

Alpine climbing in Canada… I can't decide: is it good-bad?

Fabi Buhl attempts a new route on the east face of Mount Fay. Photo: Tom Livingstone

Prairie Gold

Niall Hamill

THE PEYTO TOWER IS A SHEER mid-sized wall of pastel-coloured quartzite near Saskatchewan River Crossing, amidst the satellite summits of the colossal Mount Wilson. Plodding through ancient forest into the huge drainage of river-worn quartzite boulders and limestone rubble, one finds one's self amongst aquifers that spring from its flanks, with a world of possibility in a sea of dihedrals and roofs—endless inspiration for a rock climber. A rotting snow patch provides water at the base of the wall late into summer. Wilson is known more commonly by winter climbers for its classic routes further north past the crossing. A number of summer routes have been done on Wilson, although overall there remains huge potential for development. The first route on Peyto (Marra-Richardson, 5.9 A2) weaves a clever line through dubious roofs and a slab feature. I had heard talk of this route from a close friend who had tried to free it on at least two attempts, and after some inquiry, showed enthusiasm in going there but wasn't around for a go at the wall with me, so plans were made with others to try an obvious line of weakness on the left side of the wall.

The prominent white band that splits the wall for one pitch near one-third of its height was the main question mark for me, besides the rumours of rockfall in the upper approach gully, which turned out to be not entirely unfounded. Finally plans were made, broken, made again, and at the last minute my intended teammate for the route bailed on me. Unable to convince my regular partners that this would be a more worthy use of their time than sport climbing at Acephale, I found resolution in going there alone, having grown tired of longing for an experience with the wall from a distance. I turned slightly to the dark side, temporarily ditching my ground-up ethic for an innocent rappel into the general vicinity of the line to get some documentation and proof of this fantasy wall we knew little about. I figured that if the project seemed reasonable, I could still employ ground-up tactics once I had a solid partner lined up.

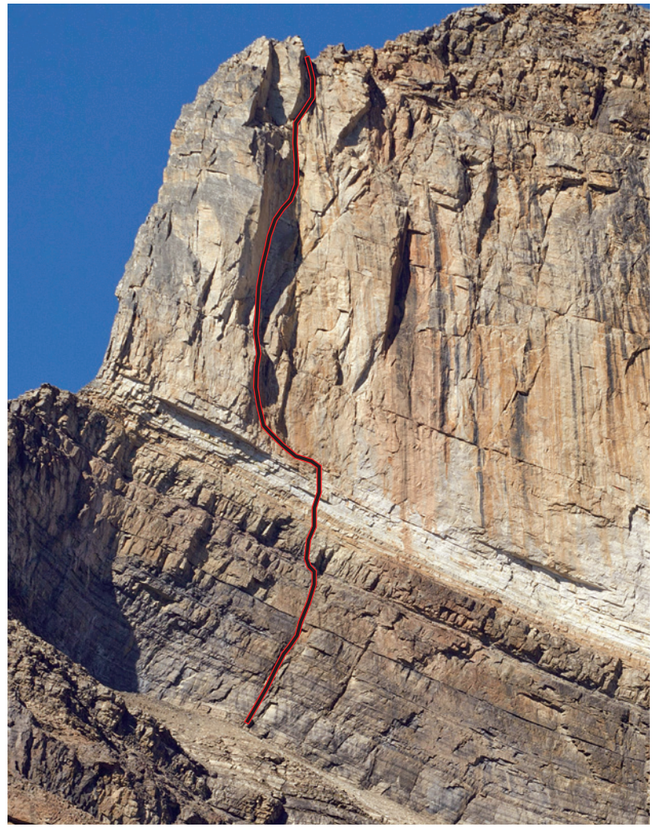
Sonic Youth blasting from my stereo, I found myself ripping up the highway towards Peyto supplied with most of what I would need to open a route on the wall. I powered up the loose gully that leads to the wall, stashed some gear at the would-be base camp, and made the requisite scramble to the summit of the wall armed with a 50-metre rope and tag line. I quietly amused myself by rappelling twice off of Czech-style rope stoppers. The features and quality I found were good for climbing—almost too good. I had no idea there were walls of this quality in Alberta so close to the road.

Arriving on top of the spacious ledge that sits atop the roofs of the white band, the biggest question mark of the line, I fixed the rope and spent two hours cleaning huge amounts of loose debris from the white band, a mix of creaking car-hood-sized flakes and microwave blocks of sandy, hollow rock. After deciding I had done enough cleaning, I rope soloed the pitch; finding good edges but little gear opportunity, I placed a total of four bolts on this 35-metre pitch, which can be supplemented by gear and ends up being a very nice face climb punctuated by a jug-haul roof. The terrain below there looked straightforward enough, following a 5.10-ish crack the whole way; I rapped quickly past it, finding my way to the base and back out to the highway with a newfound sense of what the wall had in store.

A week later, this time armed with Sam Tucker, the now-familiar hike was made to the base of the wall and the gear cache. It was there that a wiley wall rat chewed holes in Sam's approach shoes and merino base layer from under his face while he slept that night. The next morning, after a good dose of cowboy coffee, we approached the base of the 5.10 crack that splits the lower face. We racked up and I led two pitches that I would later link into one. Sam started up the next pitch, and getting near the belay stance mentioned that it was quite run out. A bolt was added later, as I thought it pretty unlikely that many others would have a head cool enough to deal with the crux 5.10+ run-out roof traverse above a couple of RPs and a dubious-looking black Alien. We wanted to establish a route for others too, after all. Starting up the next pitch, it became clear that the run-out face moves off the belay to the first gear were just too spicy and not worth the risk. I realized that in my haste to get off the wall on my solo mission, I had been too sparing with bolts, leaving a solid 10 metres off the belay with nothing more to protect it than a couple of micro cams behind a flake, which now, on the sharp end, appeared to be more dubious than I'd thought. Sam and I reluctantly bailed, and I returned once again the following week, solo, to finish the dark art of rap bolting that pitch. In the end, I added three more bolts, thus making it reasonable.

Some weeks later, as wildfires raged across the province, Grant Stewart and I found ourselves short of breath in the dense smoke, cracking jokes and whooping with enthusiasm as we made steady progress up Peyto Tower. Having climbed the white band at 5.11c, we agreed this might be the easiest breach of that section, as further along the wall it becomes steeper and more sheer with an even larger roof. We ended up climbing the upper wall differently than I had imagined when I rapped into it, a reminder that a rappelled line can be less intuitive and therefore less quality than a line climbed fully ground up. We were still able to retain some sense of integrity as the rest of the route went on good natural gear. We both agreed that a fully ground-up onsight ascent through the white band would be pretty bold, perhaps a project for those more in tune with hard aid climbing.

The variation on one of the upper pitches that we left for a future ascent might be solid 5.12+, and although I did take a good crack at it, the day drawing on and the pitches we still had to climb made us decide on an easier and more obvious face-crack option that went at 5.11- for the last three pitches. The climbing is adventurous and alpine in nature, yet never too hard or run out enough to be really that serious. For that reason I believe the route could be a moderate classic for the grade, one that I would highly recommend to those who have ticked routes of the grade on Yamnuska and are seeking something similar in flavour and more sustained on better rock in a spectacular setting. We hiked from the wall that evening feeling as though we had completed something worthy, probably the easiest free route on the face, a face which holds a ton of potential for future roadside wall climbing in the Canadian Rockies.



Praire Gold on Peyto Tower above Saskachewan River Crossing.
Photo: Grant Statham

Summary
Prairie Gold (V 5.11c, 280m), Peyto Tower, Canadian Rockies. FA: Niall Hamill, Grant Stewart, August 14, 2018.

Life Compass

Rose Pearson

I MET BRETTE HARRINGTON at *Gripped* magazine editor Brandon Pullan's house—a veritable couch-surfing operation for climbers hanging around Canmore—in mid-March, almost exactly five weeks after the death of her partner, Marc-André Leclerc. There was a rawness about her, but after a trip to the Stanley Headwall with Barry Blanchard and Ian Curran, she returned to Brandon's with a mountain glow. She regaled us with a few stories from earlier trips to the headwall with Marc before the veneer crumbled. She slipped out for a walk, and we sat helpless. That night was bad.

A few days later, Brette and I tied in for the first time together on the Slawinski-Takeda line on Mount Athabasca. The route was fun and engaging, with a few little steps separated by rambling alpine terrain. We climbed well together and returned to the car with plenty of light.

The next day Brette introduced me to Mount Blane. Her attention had become fixed on Blane, specifically its west face, after she and Brandon took the long way home following a day of cragging in Kananaskis Country. A well-known peak in the region, Mount Blane (2,993 metres) forms the heart of the Opal Range. Its west face is clearly visible from Highway 40, rising 1,000 metres above the trail into King Creek Canyon. It was first climbed in 1955 via its northwest buttress in an outing that ended in tragedy, with only three of the four ascensionists returning alive. Brette and I spent the evening studying photos of the west face scoured from the Internet, piecing together a possible route.

Life Compass on the west face of Mount Blane. Photo: Raphael Slawinski

We awoke at 4 a.m. the next morning. In predawn light, we crept up the well-trodden path through King Creek Canyon. Where the drainage splits, we took the left branch and then headed up the first gully toward the west face. We post-holed dispiritedly through spring slush until we reached a tongue of firmer avalanche debris that took us to the toe of the wall. I had to work hard to keep pace with Brette. She had a fire burning deep in her belly.

We traversed the base of the wall past a steep, broken corner to a narrow gully. By 10 a.m. Brette was leading up sun-affected ice before traversing rightward on rock above the belay. I heard a dismayed shout and looked up to see her axes clatter past—Brette's leashes were missing with Marc in Alaska. Fortunately, both axes were retrievable. Soon the rope was inching out again.

I followed as rapidly as I could, but I was slowed by steep terrain, shrinking holds and loose rock underfoot. I marvelled at Brette's delicate touch as I tucked my axes away, pulled off my right glove and crimped hard while swinging my body left. A short while later, I reached Brette's belay, warm from my exertions. We estimated the climbing on this pitch at 5.10a.

I led the next few rope lengths of 70- to 80-degree snow slopes that were simul-climbed to another rock band. Here, Brette made a short, steep traverse out of sight to the right and climbed a full rope length before making an anchor out of two beaks and a thread. I continued past her into the sun where I was greeted with good rock but sloughing spring snow. A steep layback corner brought us to the rightmost edge of the upper snow slope.

Brette took the lead again and several more rope lengths of simul-climbing took us leftward behind a false summit. Finally, we could see the true summit raising bluntly ahead. We quested upward on snow for several more rope lengths before an improbable traverse on ledges brought us to a final hidden snow slope and a clear path to the top. Brette took this last pitch, cresting the ridge only metres from the summit, which we reached at 8 p.m.

We had hoped to downclimb the northwest ridge, but after a hundred metres of roped downclimbing, unconsolidated snow and darkness stymied our progress. The wind picked up, and after some discussion we decided to try rappel the northwest face. An hour of digging provided only fractured rock, and Brette resorted to slinging a low-angled bump on the ridge. It was 11 p.m. before I heard a faint "off rappel" from below. I gingerly lowered myself over the edge, making sure to keep my weight low so as not to pull the sling over our sloped bollard. We were pleased to find more secure anchors for our remaining two abseils, which took us to the upper snow slopes that flanked Blane's northwestern aspect.

It was a relief to pack the ropes away and continue our descent on foot. We suffered through several more hours of variable snow, and after one more short rappel from a tree, we eventually staggered back onto the trail we had walked up some 20 hours before. It would be 4:30 a.m. before we reached the car and began the one-hour drive back to Canmore, each taking turns at the wheel.

We named our climb Life Compass in dedication to Marc and the dramatic change Brette's life has taken after his disappearance. I would like to further dedicate it to all those who are left behind, including Brette, when their loved one is lost in the mountains.

Summary

Life Compass (TD+ 5.10a M4+ 80°, 980m), west face, Mt. Blane, Opal Range, Canadian Rockies. FA: Brette Harrington, Rose Pearson, April 25, 2019.

Brette Harrington on the first pitch of Life Compass. Photo: Rose Pearson

The Milkwater

Alik Berg

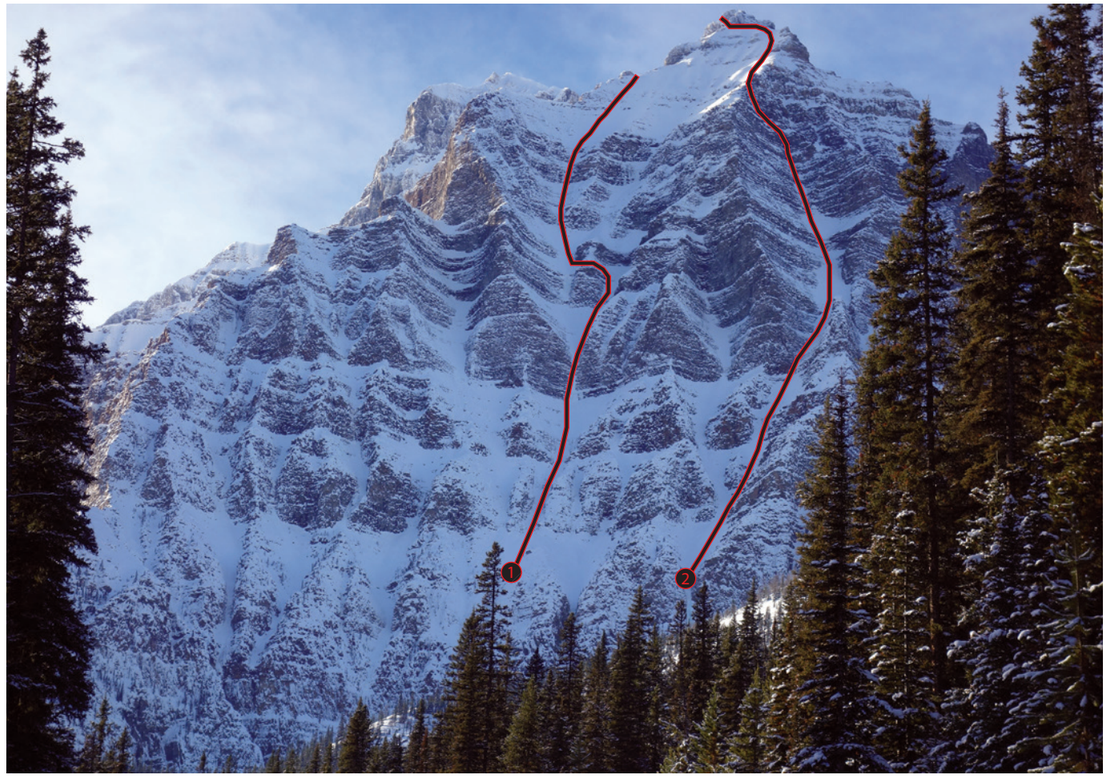
IN DECEMBER 2017, during an exceptional period of stable weather, I skied to the base of the east face of Mount Temple to put in a track to the base of Striving for the Moon, and I noticed a flow of ice a couple of hundred metres to the right. The gully that fed this ice flow looked straightforward for a few hundred metres until it petered out into a quartzite headwall below Temple's east ridge. It seemed a worthwhile line, although clearly a less striking line than its neighbour, Striving. I debated the merits of each and eventually decided I would probably only have the motivation to climb this face once in my life, so I might as well climb the better line. As it happened, I got distracted by another mountain that December, and after a big snowfall, the Temple idea got filed away in the "maybe one of these days" folder.

Fast forward 12 months and I was in Canmore fresh off a fall rock-climbing road trip, elbows aching from a few-too-many Indian Creek finger cracks. Alpine conditions had been good for the previous month and were still hanging in there. The rat was hungry. With my usual partners otherwise occupied and my elbows keeping me from hard climbing, it didn't take long to remember the east face of Temple. Having not been in the alpine yet that season, I was hesitant to push into such committing avalanche terrain alone. Studying the possible routes, I decided that the most concerning feature was the massive bowl at the top of the face draining into Striving for the Moon. Although a natural release was unlikely, it seemed impossible to avoid climbing through the gut of this beast. The line to the right looked less committing and potentially easier, and it gained the ridge on the right edge of the big bowl. With a bit of route finding, it looked possible to skirt the majority of the bowl and hopefully minimize the amount of wallowing as well.

With solid high pressure but unfortunate low temperatures in the forecast, I packed light with the optimistic plan to keep moving to stay warm. Anticipating a long day, I skied up the Moraine Lake Road after dinner and spent a comfortable night in a big sleeping bag. A few hours before dawn, I awoke with temperatures around –30 C, put on all my clothes, ditched my skis and sleeping bag beside the road, and started breaking trail through the forest. At dawn I began climbing the lower ice flow and a few minutes later resumed slogging up the main gully. Luckily the travel in the gully was excellent, and soon I was snacking below the headwall trying to decide on the best line. Plenty of moderate weaknesses presented themselves, and soon I was on my way. First up short snowy gullies, then up progressively steeper corners of forgivingly moderate and solid rock.

Ploughing through bottomless facets just below the last short rock band, I began to realize I was clearing as much rock as snow as the solid quartzite gave way to the familiar rotten band wedged between the Gog and the dolomite. I swam upwards to a likely slot with the promise of sunlight and flat ground peeking through. On closer inspection, the slot proved too narrow to squeeze through. Further trundling revealed enough solid rock to make an exposed and exciting traverse left to gain the ridge.

A few steps away from the top of the Aemmer Couloir, I stopped where the ridge juts out the farthest and milked the last 20 minutes of sunshine. Anticipating the long night to come, I treated myself to a dry pair of socks and as much water as I could melt before losing the sun. With fresh feet and two hours of daylight remaining, I set off again, naively ignoring the beckoning Aemmer, with its promise of a shorter day and reasonable return time. Instead, I carefully traced the edge of the huge basin that feeds Striving and managed to reach the exit gullies of the Black Towers with just enough light to pick the right one. Beautiful fat water-ice snaked through the narrow gully, and soon I'd tunnelled through the cornice and



The east face of Mount Temple:
(1) Striving for the Moon
(2) The Milkwater
Photo: Alik Berg

onto the windswept upper ridge. On the summit, between the darkness, frigid temperatures, solitude and the small pack, I felt more vulnerable than on previous winter visits. But the terrain was familiar, and all that remained now was a long, lonely walk.

A short time later, I found myself back at treeline and at the perimeter of the merciful crust that had carried me for so long. Progress diminished as I started post-holing my way down through the larches, unable to warm up, even with all my layers on. Fighting for each step in the small bubble of my headlamp's glow, things started to feel a bit serious—even though, ironically, I was walking on what in summer is one of the busiest hiking trails in the Rockies. I yearned for my skis that waited for me on the opposite side of the mountain. The night wore on, and reality began to blend with fantasy. I had gone beyond the wall and was fighting to get back. After a few hours of this nonsense, I stumbled onto an old ski track at the top of the switchbacks leading down to Moraine Lake. Optimism suddenly returned and faith was restored. It was still 15 kilometres to the car, but with no more trail-breaking. How bad could it be? It's just walking, after all.

Summary

The Milkwater (V WI4 M4, 1250m, 750m to ridge), east face, Mt. Temple, Lake Louise group, Canadian Rockies. FA: Alik Berg, December 6, 2018.

Striving Solo

Quentin Lindfield Roberts

ITS NOVEMBER 2015 and I'm sitting at university in Kelowna. I've been here for two years, and I'm quickly becoming the expert long-distance driver every aspiring Okanagan alpinist must be. My phone vibrates on the table in front of me, pulling me out of my lecture-induced slumber.

"Striving looks in, and the snowpack is bomber, dude! You've got to get out here!" Chris Willie immediately has my attention.

"Let's do it!" I reply, without a clue what this Striving route is.

A quick Google search fills me in on its history. Striving for the Moon was first climbed by Barry Blanchard and Ward Robinson in the 1992. It follows ribbons of ice that connect steep snow bowls in the southern-most gully on the east face of Mount Temple. After rising up the face a vertical kilometre, the route joins the east ridge for another 500 vertical metres to the summit. From there, you plunge west into Larch Valley and eventually Moraine Lake, only to have to stumble around the base of the entire mountain back to your skis. Needless to say, it's quite the loop. Its second ascent was done by Scott Semple, Greg Thaczuk and Eamonn Walsh. They climbed the route in an impressive 36-hour push in 2004.

I dash out of class early and hurriedly throw my things into the back of my battered Chevy Astro. Soon, I'm dodging semis and running out of windshield washer fluid on my way to Chris's place in Golden. Chris has recruited Frank Cox to join—since he doesn't yet have 100 per cent faith in my proficiency.

"It'll be a great way for you to learn how to ice climb!" he says with a cheeky grin.

"I know how to ice climb!" I respond defensively.

"Anyone can climb baby-blue water ice; you've got to figure out the real stuff. The cold-forged frozen spindrift!"

Chris thinks it's appropriate to attempt the line at night, under the luminescence of the full moon. The plan is to use the warmth of the morning sun to bivouac on the classic East Ridge and then continue on to the summit and down on the second night. I romantically imagine the full moon setting the mountains ablaze as Barry and Ward stride like Spartan warriors to the summit on their first ascent, and I dream of doing the same.

We meet Frank in the parking lot at 7 p.m. and start towards the route. I'm already not entirely comfortable. It's dark and the spindrift is heavy, but it's one boot in front of the other, and before long we're setting up a belay at the base of the crux. Chris gets his gear together and takes the lead.

I look through a hole in the ice curtain that forms our belay cave, sheltering us from the spindrift outside. Chris's face appears in the beam of my headlamp amidst the blinding snow. He is focused and brimming with determination. Beside me, Frank awakens to pay out more rope, and I turn my discomfort toward the flickering stove. The ice curtain shudders as Chris moves confidently upwards, and then quietness settles in. My bewildered eyes connect with Frank's. Both of us are in wonder at the madness above.

The rope finally comes tight. Frank and I stretch our numb limbs and prepare to climb. By now the sky has brightened, and we peer out of the cave to see arcing loops of rope anchored to the overhanging wall. Two stubby ice screws and a purple cam are all that connect the rope to the ice-spattered amphitheatre. We climb side by side, connecting steep blobs of ice as the warm morning sun reveals the east face above us. As Frank and I climb the last few metres to the belay, the sun hits us in full force, and we can't help but pause to take in the brilliance of our position.

We're far too low on the face for the sun to be rising. After climbing for a few hundred more metres, we decide to go down, quickly realizing that our plan to bivy in the sun on the East Ridge won't work. We know we'll be late getting there, and without gear to sit out the –20 C night, the choice is obvious. We go down, but I vow to return.

THREE YEARS LATER I FIND MYSELF approaching Temple's east face once again. This time I choose to go alone. The hoarfrost twinkles as I watch my skis slide back and forth underneath me. I resist the urge to stride faster, wanting to conserve energy for what I know will be a long day. Full of excitement, I leave my skis at the road and start towards the route. My legs don't stop moving as I paw through memories of this same place from three years before. So much has happened in that time. I climb up to the crux pitch. There is no ice cave, no curtain, no blobs, just steep alpine ice to the top of the amphitheatre. I remember that impressionable moment from before, and then let time freeze still as I navigate the complex ice onto the next snowfield. I don't stop moving.

Frank Cox nears the belay on the crux pitch during the 2015 attempt. Photo: Quentin Lindfield Roberts

Quentin Lindfield Roberts happy to have reached the ridge during his solo of Striving for the Moon. Photo: Quentin Lindfield Roberts

more easily than it looks. A few good torques, hand jams and gentle tool taps and I'm back to better ice, entering the giant bowl that drains the route.

It is here that my progress finally slows. Chest-deep wallowing makes for exhausting progress. Alik Berg had soloed a new route on the right side of the same face a few days earlier [see page 148], and I'm relieved to find his tracks after I gain the East Ridge. Alik is a great friend, and I feel as though he's helping me out from afar. It would have been a lonelier experience without those footprints.

I reach the summit ridge in fading light, and the weather turns for the worse. The glacial ice slopes are enshrouded in fog, and it starts to snow. I trample across as darkness sets in, navigating by memory in the blinding conditions. By now I'm feeling much less energetic than earlier in the day and my feet ache, but I know there's still so much ground to cover.

Alik's footprints appear again in Larch Valley, and they guide me through the forest. It's too cold to stop and brew water, so the balance between hydration, warmth and progress is tricky. I continue to put one foot in front of the other as eternity unfolds in front of me. My skis eventually appear, so I step into them and keep moving. Oh, the glory of sliding downward! I'm too tired to keep the skis straight on the tracked road, but I don't care, and I let them do their dance. Finally, back at the car 21 hours after leaving, I fire up the engine and brew a cup of java. The coffee and The Clash keep me company as I swerve my way home to Canmore, hell-bent on bed.

Staying left at the fork, I climb the next pillar and continue up the face. But I soon realize that the best system was actually the right-hand one, and that I have climbed myself into a much drier drainage. I spend an hour laboriously wallowing around a buttress, trying to join the better ice, but it cliffs out. I didn't bring a rope so I can't rappel, and I don't feel like downclimbing the steep pillars just to climb back up again, so I continue on the drier side. Fortunately, it ends up climbing

Summary

Striving for the Moon (V WI6, 1200m), east face, Mt. Temple, Lake Louise Group, Canadian Rockies. FSA: Quentin Lindfield Roberts, December 9, 2018.

2018 Rockies Report

Ian Welsted

IN THE CANADIAN ROCKIES in 2018 there was a variety of activity from new rock routes, alpine routes, some new cragging options and some moderate mountaineering added as well.

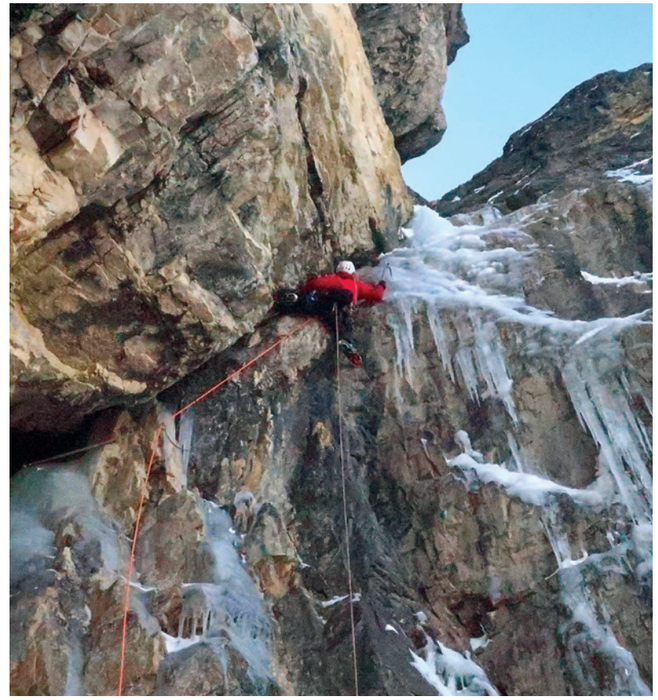
Solo climbing seems to be making a resurgence, led by a proud effort by Alik Berg in December on the east face of Mount Temple. The first ascent of The Milkwater (V M4 WI4, 1250m) was climbed in 20 hours return from a bivy on the Moraine Lake road [see page 148]. The route starts 200 metres right of Striving for the Moon up an obvious ice flow. A hundred metres of ice gains the gully above, then follows the right fork of the gully for several hundred metres until it steepens. Trending up and left, the ridge is gained just short of the Aemmer couloir. From there Berg continued up the east ridge to the summit and descended the regular tourist scramble.

Keeping to the theme of impressive solos, the next day Quentin Lindfield Roberts partially followed Berg's tracks to solo Striving for the Moon (WI6, 1250m,) in 21 hours, car to car [see page 152].

Also in the alpine, Brette Harrington and Rose Pearson climbed the west face of Mount Blane in April to establish Life Compass (IV 5.10a M4+, 950m) in a 26-hour round trip from Canmore [see page 146]. Fittingly, Herrington dedicated the route to her former partner Marc-Andre Leclerc, who is sorely missed in the Rockies community. Although the history of the face is somewhat unclear, it appears parts of the route followed the Kahl 1957 route.

In a more moderate vein in the alpine, a long approach brought Gen Kenny, Pedro Guerra-Zuniga and Robb Schnell to the north face of Beatrice Peak beyond the massive east face of Mount Ball. A moderate 300-metre ice slope brought the trio to the summit. In the Fryatt Valley, Craig Hartmetz, Martin Schwangler and Jordanne Taylor climbed Walk of Shame (AI3 5.7, 600m) on the prominent Y couloir on the north face of Mount Xerxes [see page 132]. Not nearly as remote, Alik Berg and I climbed Ctrain (M6 WI3, 200m) on the north-most buttress of Crowfoot Mountain, directly above Bow Lake and prominently visible from the heavily travelled Bow Hut approach [see page 130]. It had been attempted to two-thirds height the previous spring with Jesse Bouliane.

New rock climbs were also established. In the Crowsnest Pass area, Clay Geddert, Josh Schuh and Daniel Vanderpyle completed the previously attempted Northeast Arête of Chinook Peak (5.8X, 245m, 5 pitches) in June. On the



Quentin Lindfield Roberts on Mount MOG during the first free ascent. Photo: Jon Walsh

Stas Beskin on the fully formed first pitch of The Real Big Drip in the Ghost. Photo: Matt Westlake

imposing Peyto Tower above Saskatchewan River Crossing, Niall Hamill and Grant Stewart established Prairie Gold (V 5.11c, 280m). The route follows the left-most major dihedral system up a face, which is characterized by bullet-proof quartzite in its upper 200 metres, just to the right of the prominent steep ridge [see page 144]. Hamill states that there are many more free routes to be climbed.

In the Banff area, Grand Minnewanka (5.10d A1, 7 pitches), by Paul Taylor and Paul Gardner, is a 7.5-kilometre bike ride along the Lake Minnewanka shoreline trail. The east-facing cliff is visible up a drainage from the trail. A few aid moves are required to overcome the huge obvious roof system on the fourth pitch, with a combination of bolts and gear throughout. Nearer to Canmore, Brandon Pullan and Adam Campbell established Homage to the Warden (5.6, 350m) on the second buttress of Mount Rundle [see page 138]. On Mount McGillivray, Dave Peabody and Mark Taylor established the Northeast Buttress (5.9, 250m, 8 pitches). A mix of bolts and gear follows the prominent buttress visible from the Trans-Canada Highway. Climbed ground up with an additional day for some cleaning, the route can be rapped with a 70-metre rope.

In Jasper, the trend toward long, bolted face climbs on Ashlar Ridge continued with the addition of Canadian Compressor (5.11c, 11 pitches) by Konstantin Stoletov and a team of eight from Edmonton. Jasper has undergone a rapid growth of documented rock climbs in the past few years, spurred partially by a new guidebook, viewable at www.northernexposurejasper.com.

A visit by Adam Ondra resulted in the Bow Valley becoming home to two of North America's three 5.15b sport climbs. Ondra added a 5.15a at Echo Canyon named Sacrifice before dispatching Disbelief (5.15b) at Acephale. This visit is likely to add to the seasonal influx of climbers to Canmore and Banff.

Often referred to as the mecca of ice climbing, new ice and mixed first ascents were surprisingly rare. The prolific Raphael Slawinski added Bride of Frankenstein (M8, 100m), an unclimbed hanging dagger on Mount Wilson [see page 127]. Above the ice route Skinny Puppy, it was equipped over a few days with Juan Henriquez and redpointed with Landon Thompson. In Icefall Brook, Dave Rone and Scott Backes climbed Sun Pillar (WI 6+, 100m, 2 pitches), located 50 metres right of Fossen Falls on the Lyell Wall. Dave Rone also climbed three new pitches as Full Cup (WI6R, 170m) with Jon Jugenheimer. It is on the far left side of the Stutfield Glacier cirque, about 10 metres right of the Cerca Del Mar. Martin Schwangler and Sean Willis climbed a 180-metre flow to the left of Saddam's Insane on Mount Kidd with a crux WI4 section. This might be one of the ice smears in the bowl previously mentioned in Joe Josephson's guidebook.

In Jasper, Jonas Hoke and Max Darrah climbed Deagle Eye, a four-pitch WI3 below Ashler's Ridge. At the Storm Creek Headwall, Quentin Lindfield Roberts and Olivier Ouellette equipped The Bodhi Tree (M8+, WI5) just to the right of Buddha Nature, though the send fell to Slawinski—an onsight, no less. Earlier in the season, I had added a single mixed pitch above and right of the popular Buddha Nature.

In Field, Jonny Simms added a couple of cragging options. Trepination Tripel (M7) climbed with Mike Verwey adds a drytooling start to the frequently unformed Cascade Kronenbourg (WI6). To the left of Carlsberg, Simms and Brette Harrington climbed rock for 10 metres on American Blonde (M5) to join the ice.

In Lake Louise, the popular mixed climb Dark Nature had the much-considered mixed last pitch added by Fred Giroux to take it to the top of the cliff. This extension, Dark Matter (M6+, 15m), is a rightward traverse on quartzite with gear to a corner crack. The most audacious attempt of the season was by Stas Beskin, who climbed the first pitch of The Real Big Drip for the first time as a pure ice pillar, though he did not complete the route due to the startling nature of the third-pitch pillar, which was perhaps formed also for the first time.

A few significant repeats were done. Sasha Digiulian and Mike Doyle, both climbing together and with local partners, repeated Sonnie Trotter's alpine trilogy of 5.14 routes. Digiulian and Doyle climbed War Hammer (5.14a, 15 pitches) together, then moved on to work The Shining Uncut (5.14a,13 pitches). Digiulian managed it a few days before Doyle, and also sent Blue Jeans Direct (5.14a, 8 pitches) to complete the second ascent of the trilogy. Doyle completed the last climb and the trilogy a few days later.

By late winter, Rockies' local Jon Walsh scooped the second ascent (and first free ascent) with Quentin Lindfield Roberts of the 600-metre Owens-Walsh route on Mount MOG. Originally climbed at M6+ A1, the free repeat featured generally thicker ice conditions as well as ice at the previous aid section. On the same day, Michelle Kadatz and Peter Hoang made the much-attempted second ascent of Zeitgeist (IV+ M7 WI5R, 530m, Holeczi-Owens). A sign of modern times, once these routes were presented on the Internet, they received multiple ascents, in spite of going unrepeated for 11 years. By mid-January, it had come full circle on the note that began the report with Niall Hamill making a rope-solo attempt past the crux of Zeitgeist, skipping the last two moderate snow-covered top pitches.

In summary, a new spirit of contemporary audaciousness is in the air, though it doesn't always follow the old rules of onsight ground-up climbing ending at the summit.

The East

Le Retour aux Sources

Jasmin Fauteux

EN FÉVRIER 2019, Jean-Philippe Bélanger, Charles Roberge, Maarten van Haeren et moi avons passé quelques semaines à explorer la Côte-Nord et Charlevoix à la recherche de trésors cachés. Notre première réunion depuis notre séjour à Nipissis en 2016 s'est avérée très fructueuse, comme la précédente.

En attendant notre arrivée, le duo Bélanger–Roberge a ouvert Le Pilier des Maniaques (WI5+), superbe voie soutenue située à 50 km du barrage Manic-5. L'ambiance sauvage était au rendez-vous dans cette région rarement visitée.

Continuant sur leur lancée, ils se sont aventurés sur le lac Walker, dans la Réserve faunique de Port-Cartier–Sept-Îles, pour ouvrir une imposante ligne éphémère s'étant formée à droite de Capteur de Rêve. Le résultat, Le Somnambule (WI5, 250 m), est une voie qui deviendra sans doute une classique et qui a vu immédiatement plusieurs répétitions.

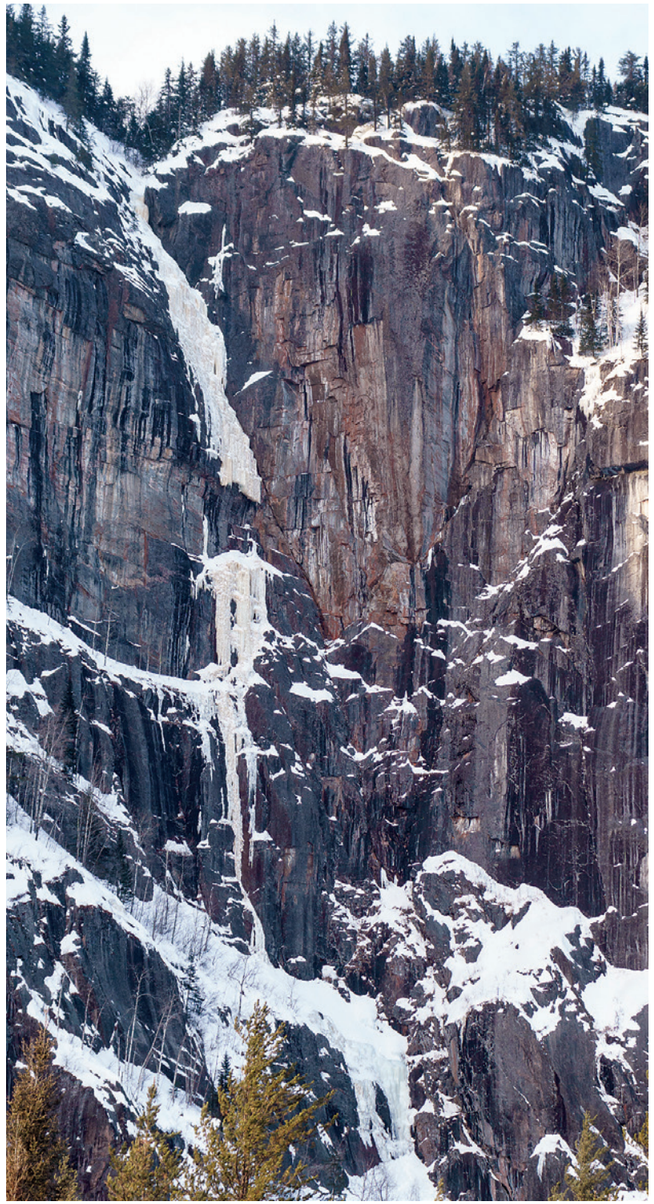
En route vers la Côte-Nord, van Haeren et moi avons grimpé une ligne en bord de route. À notre arrivée au sommet, une vieille corde nous a signalé une ascension antérieure. Il s'agissait d'une voie nommée Les Troubadours (WI4 M4, 70 m). En plus de répéter la voie originale, nous avons fait une nouvelle variante gauche en glace très mince pour la première longueur (WI4+ R).

Une fois que nous nous étions finalement réunis, Bélanger et van Haeren en ont profité pour faire la première ascension de la saison du Mulot (WI6+ R, 180 m). Le Mulot était en très bonne condition cette année et a vu plusieurs ascensions cet hiver depuis notre visite.

Dans les jours suivants, nous avons attaqué l'impressionnante ligne mixte sur la gauche du tableau du lac Walker, Le Funambule (WI5+ M7, 250 m). Les deux premières longueurs étaient bien plus minces que lors de la première ascension et nous ont forcés à négocier du mixte engagé (M6 R/X) pour nous rendre à la longueur clé. Malheureusement, un point d'artif dans ces longueurs nous a empêchés de libérer la voie, mais le crux (M7) a été libéré pour la première fois. Nous avons grimpé une longueur supplémentaire dans l'amphithéâtre du haut, qui s'est avérée être le crux en glace de la voie (WI5+) lors de notre répétition — la première — de cette grande ligne. Nous avons profité de la descente pour remplacer les vieilles bolts en acier oxydable. Quelques semaines plus tard, les longueurs de mixte initiales ont été libérées par Jean-François Girard et Simon Bossé ; malheureusement, le temps leur a manqué pour gravir les longueurs en amont.

Par la suite, nous sommes allés explorer une ligne mixte qui se trouve à une quarantaine de kilomètres dans l'arrière-pays de la vallée de la rivière Sault-aux-Cochons. Située en plein milieu d'un imposant mur de granite, la voie consiste en trois longueurs de glace techniques et verticales menant à un cul-de-sac rocheux. Une longueur mixte traditionnelle nous a permis de gagner la stalactite menant à la dernière longueur. Nous avons nommé cette voie très esthétique et complètement traditionnelle Le Retour aux Sources (WI5 M6, 195 m).

Jasmin Fauteux dans la deuxième longueur de The Cod Delusion, Rivière Sault-aux-Cochons, Côte-Nord. Photo : Maarten van Haeren



Le lendemain, nous sommes retournés pour examiner une ligne que nous avions remarquée un peu plus en aval. Cette fois-ci, il s'agissait d'une importante paroi remplie de stalactites située à une trentaine de kilomètres dans l'arrière-pays. Nous pensions pouvoir gravir une longueur mixte pour gagner la glace du haut, mais nous nous sommes retrouvés finalement à grimper trois belles longueurs mixtes rejoignant des langues de glace ou encore des stalactites, le tout sur du rocher parfait. L'escalade sur The Cod Delusion (WI6 M6+, 105 m) est majoritairement traditionnelle, une seule bolt protégeant le départ.

L'une des nouveautés importantes au Québec cette saison a été l'ouverture de la route menant au chalet dans le parc national des Hautes-Gorges-de-la-Rivière-Malbaie. C'est avec beaucoup de nostalgie que j'ai suivi la route déblayée jusqu'au refuge, me remémorant l'engagement que j'avais ressenti en 2009 au moment de traverser en ski le pont qui franchit la rivière, étant à une trentaine de kilomètres du moteur le plus près. Cette époque est belle et bien terminée.

En 2009, j'avais aussi remarqué une mince ligne de glace attrayante qui descendait dans un dièdre sur la face ouest de l'Acropole des Draveurs. Je tentais depuis des années d'y retourner pour la voir de plus près, mais les conditions n'étaient jamais propices. Avec l'accès maintenant grandement simplifié et un partenaire motivé, les astres semblaient enfin s'aligner. L'itinéraire consistait en deux longueurs suivant la ligne estivale du Monarque, formées de glace verticale, mince et délaminée. Une chute en tête dans la deuxième longueur aurait pu être très sérieuse étant donné l'espacement de la protection, mais par chance les quelques protections douteuses en place ont tenu le coup. De là, la voie suit un dièdre glacé qui avait déjà été parcouru par erreur en été et nommé Les Bruines. Nous avons nommé notre voie hivernale La Chenille (WI6+ R A0, 160 m) en l'honneur de la voie Le Monarque (avant d'être mis au courant de l'existence de la variante Les Bruines).

Le Retour aux Sources, rivière Sault-aux-Cochons, Côte-Nord. Photo : Maarten van Haeren

Pour ceux intéressés à libérer la voie ou encore à la répéter, je crois qu'une ascension tôt dans la saison rendrait la longueur clé beaucoup plus facile et sécuritaire, parce que le soleil affecte beaucoup la glace dû à l'aspect. Puisque La Chenille suit une voie de roche classique, ne pas y laisser de protection fixe.

Une tempête de vent s'étant abattue sur la région à la fin de notre séjour, nos dernières journées ont été limitées, mais nous avons ouvert une autre voie dans un secteur avec beaucoup de potentiel, que nous espérons partager l'an prochain.

Résumé

Le Pilier des Maniaques (WI5+, 140 m), Réservoir Manicouagan, Québec. PA : Jean-Philippe Bélanger, Charles Roberge, 9 février 2019.

Le Somnambule (WI5, 250 m), Lac Walker, Québec. PA : Jean-Philippe Bélanger, Charles Roberge, 11 février 2019.

Les Troubadours variation gauche (WI4+ R, 70 m), Les Bergeronnes, Québec. PA : Jasmin Fauteux, Maarten van Haeren, 11 février 2019.

Le Funambule (WI5+ M7, 250 m), Lac Walker, Québec. Jasmin Fauteux, Maarten van Haeren, 16 février 2019.

Le Retour aux Sources (WI5 M6, 195 m), Rivière Sault-aux-Cochons, Québec. PA : Jasmin Fauteux, Maarten van Haeren, 19 février 2019.

The Cod Delusion (WI6 M6+, 105 m), Rivière Sault-aux-Cochons, Québec. PA : Jasmin Fauteux, Maarten van Haeren, 20 février 2019.

La Chenille (WI6+ R A0, 160 m), Acropole des Draveurs, Rivière Malbaie, Québec. PA : Jasmin Fauteux, Maarten van Haeren, 23 février 2019.

La Chenille, Face Ouest de l'Acropole des Draveurs, Hautes-Gorges de la Rivière Malbaie, Charlevoix. Photo : Maarten van Haeren

The Wim Hof Method

Greg Hughes

IT IS SLIGHTLY UNUSUAL TO HAVE an alpine start due to ocean tides, but if you want to climb ice and mixed routes in Nova Scotia's Cape Chignecto Provincial Park, synchronicity with tides is a necessity. With low tide at 3:40 a.m., we needed a wake-up time of 2 a.m. The four-kilometre approach from our backcountry hut involved negotiating three pinch points where the sea meets the coastal cliffs that rise up as high as 220 metres. We were aiming to navigate those pinch points at or near low tide so that there would be beach to walk around on.

The first two approach cruxes passed easily, but then our headlamps illuminated the jostling water as it lapped up against the seaweed-covered rock. As we zeroed in on the third pinch point, we focused on an increasingly narrowing corridor of dry beach and soon realized the moon's position in its orbit would not pull on the water enough to allow space for us to walk through. Bay of Fundy tides are notorious for their height and speed. I looked at Craig and Mike as two choices became obvious: turn around or strip down. We chose the latter, removing pants, socks and boots and quickly stuffing them into our packs. Wading through thigh-deep ocean water, we were uncertain of just how long the painful immersion would last. One hundred bone-chilling metres later, it was over. We pulled our clothes and boots from our packs and tried to bring life back to our frozen extremities. Some sprinting along the beach aided in the rejuvenation prior to racking up.

Adventure like this seems to be the norm for Cape Chignecto. The draw is ice and mixed multi-pitch, which is a rarity in the Maritime provinces, but more than 20 kilometres of coastal cliffs provide a playground for winter climbers.

Our objective had been coveted several times on previous sojourns, but the route was either not in condition or there were other climbing objectives to be had. I stepped off the beach not long after 4 a.m. and began questing up the first pitch of steep, featured ice. After 30 metres, I reached a ramp and continued up another 20 metres to build a belay. Craig and Mike hastily followed while a chilly northeast wind blew. Two more pitches of tenuous mixed terrain put us within a rope length of the top.

Chignecto rock is notoriously shite, so I hoped I would be treated to ice for the last pitch. As I crested a small ice umbrella roof and peered over the lip, I realized I would not be so fortunate. I stared at the crumbling unprotectable rhyolite between me and a tree ledge. Moving gingerly up the rock, I focused on my breath and that seemed to help remove the anxiety of climbing on stacked dominoes. Thankfully the difficulties didn't exceed M5, and I was able to top out with a smile on my face.

Summary

The Wim Hof Method (WI4+ M5, 175m, 4 pitches), Cape Chignecto Provincial Park, Nova Scotia. FA: Mike Delaney, Greg Hughes, Craig Norris, January 19, 2019.

P1: WI4+, 50m. This route is located about 500 metres east of Shore Thing. A steep, broad curtain of ice leads to a lower angled ramp. Follow this to the next steeper part on the left.

P2: WI3, 45m. Climb the 70-degree column of ice to a loose section of rock. Move left to find screws for a belay.

P3: WI4+ M5, 45m. Depending on where you belayed, move to regain the line heading up to a good section of ice interspersed with decent-quality rock. Follow thin ice and rock to a short, vertical overhanging section of ice. There will be an opportunity for some screws but not many. Climb the steep part, then follow a good ice ramp to a solid screw-anchor belay.

P4: WI3+ M5 R, 35m. This pitch starts out with a steep section of ice but changes to a 20-metre section of chossy rock leading to the tree anchor.

Greg Hughes leads pitch four of The Wim Hof Method. Photo: Mike Delaney

La Sport 400

Patrick Brouillard

PENDANT L'ÉTÉ 2018, avec l'aide de différents bénévoles, j'ai participé à l'ouverture d'une voie d'escalade sportive d'à peu près 360 mètres. Nommée La Sport 400, cette voie se trouve aux Palissades de Charlevoix, à environ deux heures et demie de route vers l'est de la ville de Québec. Pour se rendre à la paroi, il faut faire une trentaine de minutes de marche agréable en forêt dans un sentier bien balisé. Dès que l'on arrive à destination, on aperçoit une gigantesque dalle de granite qui se dresse devant soi. Plusieurs itinéraires d'escalade traditionnelle y avaient déjà été tracés au fil des années. De toutes ces voies, la plus populaire est sans doute La Granuleuse, une voie *old-school* des années 70 qui est très jolie, mais peu fréquentée à cause de sa protection rare et son engagement.

Le granite de la dalle étant très compact, il offre peu de fissures, donc peu de possibilité de protection. C'est sur une de ces sections vierges que nous avons décidé de tracer l'itinéraire. Lors de la première ascension, mon acolyte Charles Lacroix et moi n'avons pu placer qu'une poignée de protections dans l'ensemble de la voie, relais inclus ! Après avoir constaté la qualité supérieure du rocher, nous y sommes retournés avec en tête l'intention d'ouvrir un itinéraire long accessible à tous. Munis d'une perceuse et de quelques centaines d'ancrages fournies par la Fédération québécoise de la montagne et de l'escalade (FQME), nous avons commencé à équiper la voie dès la semaine suivante. Charles et moi y avons d'abord installé quelques plaquettes par longueur, ainsi que tous les relais sur scellement, pour se donner une idée du tracé général de l'itinéraire. Puis, au cours de plusieurs ascensions ultérieures, nous avons rajouté des plaquettes entre celles déjà placées. Nous avons enfin terminé la voie un mois plus tard, après l'avoir grimpée 11 fois au complet, soit environ 120 heures de travail.

Avec ses sept longueurs, La Sport 400 est devenue la voie sportive la plus longue dans l'Est du Canada. Le niveau de difficulté maximal est de 5.7 selon le Yosemite Decimal System, mais la majorité des longueurs se situent dans le 5.5–5.6. Les trois premières longueurs sont peu raides, puis la dalle devient progressivement plus raide au fil des longueurs suivantes. L'escalade est très agréable et se pratique sur un beau granite texturé, avec des pas d'adhérence amusants à certains endroits.

Une fois au sommet, on peut admirer la beauté du paysage charlevoisien. En effet, on aperçoit les montagnes environnantes, ainsi que le fleuve Saint-Laurent, qui est situé à 11 kilometres vers le sud. Il y a des drapeaux de prières tibétains qui ont été accrochés à des cairns. Pour l'instant, il n'y a pas de sentier pour redescendre. La descente s'effectue par une ligne de rappel sur scellements indépendante de la voie. Cinq rappels sont nécessaires pour atteindre le sol. L'emploi de deux cordes est obligatoire pour ceux-ci.

Grâce à sa continuité sur sept longueurs, à son niveau de difficulté très accessible de 5.7 maximum, à sa situation dans un décor magnifique et à l'équipage sécuritaire de chaque longueur, la voie a suscité un engouement collectif généralisé. Il n'est pas rare de voir jusqu'à dix cordées par jour la gravir les beaux jours de fin de semaine pendant la saison estivale. Pour toutes ces raisons, La Sport 400 va sans aucun doute devenir l'une des grandes classiques du Québec.

Résumé

La Sport 400 (5.7, 360 m, 7 longueurs), Palissades de Charlevoix, Saint-Siméon, Québec. PA : Patrick Brouillard, Charles Lacroix, 1 juin 2018.

Élodie Vertefeuilles grimpe en second dans la cinquième longueur de La Sport 400.
Photo : Amélie Vertefeuilles

Foreign

Puna

Paul McSorley

CLIMBING AT ALTITUDE has never been my forte—splitting headaches, digestive malfunctions, freaky dreams, the list is long. So this fall I surprised myself by rallying a crew of friends to make a trip to the Nevado de Chañi, a high, dry mountain in an obscure corner of northern Argentina. I'd seen a few photos and was convinced that this zone would yield some quality climbing and abundant first ascents.

In late November, I joined Quentin Lindfield Roberts, Will Stanhope and John Price in Salta, Argentina, to begin the process of getting into the mountains. Lost baggage and logistical challenges were just a few of the obstacles that kept us grounded and gave us a chance to check out the town and meet some local climbers.

Carlitos Torrino is the de facto mayor of the local climbing scene. He has developed several new areas near Salta and runs a successful rope access company. In his spare time, Carlitos races motorcycles at a national level and is the frontman in a local metal band. After tipping back a few litres of Salta (the local beer) with Carlitos and his sidekick Ignacio "Nacho" Karlen, we had committed ourselves to climbing with them the next day.

After a pumpy day on some steep limestone, Carlitos and Nacho took us on a detour to meet some local *campesinos* who would help us get our gear to Chañi. Regrettably, Antonio Balderama informed us it would take a week to rally enough burros to mule-pack our gear up to base camp. Our North American sensibilities couldn't understand this delay, but this isn't the type of place where you can just snap your fingers and get results. Life in this part of the world rolls at a pace somewhere south of *tranquillo*.

In the meantime, we took a chance and rented a car, which we piloted across the dusty highlands to do some climbing in Tuzgle. This volcanic valley is situated at 4,000 metres above the sea, so we bumbled up a few pitches and boulders feeling like we had a massive hangover.

When we got word that the mules were ready to go, we hightailed it back to the Balderama ranch and started our trek before dawn. Getting to Chañi was a mission. The 3,000-metre approach, which surfs up hanging valleys to a base camp at 4,800 metres, unravelled over two days and gave us a chance to spend time with the Balderama family, whose daily routine moves at the decidedly mellow pace of the Puna area, a region of high alpine pastures above 3,500 metres. Puna, we came to understand, is more than just a place, but also the feeling of hardship your body experiences at those taxing elevation.

It took a few days to figure out our equilibrium in the Puna, but after shaking off the grogginess, we ponied up to some superb, untouched stone. The granite was burnt red and buffed to a fine polish by the burly elements. Splitter cracks and face holds graced the rock, which made for straightforward route finding and flowy climbing. Exertion at altitude can make you feel like you've been drugged, so even on easy ground it was critical to slow down, control the breath and be mindful of making good decisions.

Quentin Lindfield Roberts on pitch four (5.11a) of Escudo de la Puna. Photo: John Price

Quentin Lindfield Roberts on pitch three of the south face of El Viejo. Photo: John Price

We managed a few new routes—buttresses, towers and a long, classic multi-pitch up a giant shield that took us to the crest of the massif at 5,500 metres. First up was a cruisy 150-metre 5.9 on the buttress at the entrance to the cirque, which we named El Viejo after the headwall's personification. The granite on this climb was typical of what we encountered the rest of the trip—occasional rubble that connected quality granite.

Our altitude-addled second route climbed a spire just left of Aguja Iñaki. Established by Carlitos Torino, Ignacio Karlen and Negro Jerez, this tower honours the vibrant life of Iñaki Coussirat, who died on Fitz Roy in 2015. Aguja Marco Andrés remembers our beloved friend Marc-André Leclerc, whose kindred spirit places him in good company with his neighbour. The line followed elegant cracks, scrambly ridge work and a beautiful summit block for 200 metres up to 5.11a.

The main event took on the central pillar of Pico Nordenskiöld. Half a dozen pitches through an impressive shield led to easier ground where we unroped and scrambled 4th and 5th class to the peak of Aguja Inti Huasi (named by Torino, Karlen and Jerez who climbed the adjacent 1,000-metre buttress called Providencia at 5.11+) and then continued through a choss band that guards the upper slopes of Nordenskiöld. The summit vistas over the Salinas Grandes to the high volcanoes dotting the western horizon were literally breathtaking. Our line, Escudo de la Puna, was 500 metres long and goes at 5.11a.

The last frigid day of the mission was spent watching Will and Quentin exchange laps on a beautiful single-pitch crack line that Will eventually dispatched and christened 54-46 Was My Number. This 30-metre 5.12+ is likely the single hardest pitch in the zone.

Chañi may never become a destination climbing hub, but our crew felt privileged to have the chance to visit this remote area and spend time with the hard-living but gracious souls who inhabit this rugged land.

The east face of Pico Nordenskiöld:
(1) Aguja Marco Andrés
(2) Escudo de la Puna
Photo: John Price

Summary

South Face (5.9, 150m), El Viejo, Chañi Chico, Jujuy, Argentina. FA: Quentin Lindfield Roberts, Paul McSorley, John Price, Will Stanhope, November 24, 2018.

East Face (5.11a, 200m), Aguja Marco Andrés, Chañi Chico, Jujuy, Argentina. FA: Quentin Lindfield Roberts, Paul McSorley, John Price, Will Stanhope, November 26, 2018.

Escudo de la Puna (5.11a, 500m), east face, Pico Nordenskiöld, Chañi Chico, Jujuy, Argentina. FA: Quentin Lindfield Roberts, Paul McSorley, John Price, Will Stanhope, November 28, 2018.

54-46 Was My Number (5.12d, 30m), base of El Viejo, Chañi Chico, Jujuy, Argentina. FA: Will Stanhope, November 30, 2018.

Diplomacy and Dumplings

Will Gadd

WHAT IF YOU DROVE UP the Icefields Parkway today and none of the current classic ice routes had been climbed? Where would you start? That's basically what it felt like last winter when Sarah Hueniken and I visited and climbed the amazing Christmas Tree in China's Taihang Mountains with the route's first ascentionist, Huan Che [see *CAJ*, 2018, vol.101, p.77]. The Christmas Tree is likely the world's most beautiful ice route, but there are hundreds more tucked away in the range. Unfortunately, on our 2018 trip the weather turned warm after climbing the Tree and a few other routes, and we could only drool like little kids watching an entire freezer of beautiful treats melt before their eyes. In 2019, Sarah was injured, but I returned with Huan "River" Che and a film crew to make a TV pilot, along with Peter Hoang shooting stills. But before we even left Canada we had problems. Canada arrested the CFO of Huawei for extradition to the United States, and China started arresting Canadians in retaliation. Canada put out a travel advisory that China was arbitrarily arresting Canadians, and China put one out as well, notifying the Chinese population that Canada was arbitrarily arresting Chinese people. Half the film crew pulled out as the diplomatic spat grew and grew.

Will Gadd on the first pitch of Dragon's Bed. Photo: Peter Hoang

China is not a democracy, but overall I felt they would have little interest in arbitrarily messing with tourists. The people who were getting arrested were smuggling in meth or had complicated business and personal relationships in China. I didn't plan to smuggle meth or get involved politically, but nothing will test an airport situation like showing up with six people and 12 baggage carts of gear. I was worried, but we were through faster than we would have been in Canada, and then it was game on.

River and I called the first route we wanted to climb China Circus, because it looked like Polar Circus and required about the same amount of ice climbing. It was great and among the best first ascents I've ever done. River had taken a bad fall the year before and had broken his ankle, so I led. I asked him about the rescue, and he said, "No rescue. I crawl." He's tough.

We then scoped a route River had found by simply flying his drone up a nearby valley. It was easier to fly the drone around and look for routes than to drive since there were often mysterious locked gates on the public roads, but the drone just flew over those. The route was one of the more aesthetic climbs I've ever done, just a vertical bolt up a steep wall. But between us and it was a locked gate. River worked on the gate for an hour, but no go, so back to the hotel.

The next morning, we loaded the mini-van up for another go, but we couldn't get out of the parking lot due to some sort of dance-off event with hard beats and smooth moves. It turns out it was Red Envelope Day in China, which is when employers pay a bonus to their employees. The film crew was hesitant to film, but everyone was dancing and seemed psyched on the cameras. Before long, I was involved in the craziness, too, learning to line dance (poorly) with the locals.

Back at the gate, River's wife, Han Han, went to work. She's gorgeous, fierce and argues her points with a combination of smooth words and foot stamping. The gate went up, and so did we on the climb. I would get nowhere in China without the locals helping us. It's not like any other country I've ever climbed in—the rules are flexible and just don't make sense unless you understand them.

After two fantastic routes, the temperature spiked, but fortunately there was about 1,000 kilometres of excellent sandstone, quartzite and limestone walls to climb on. River and I stood at a popular tourist overlook, taking selfies with the locals (foreigners are still rare there), and above us was a good-looking line up a steep wall. The temperature was 15 C, so I headed up, drilling on lead. A crowd of hundreds assembled below us, and soon there were flashing police lights and fire trucks, and River let me know over the radio that a rescue had been mounted. I took a whipper shortly after that when a hold broke, but kept working upward. I wanted to get the route done before I was arrested, and River had told me there would be no resuce.

I was really surprised when a smiling face popped out of the bush near the top of the wall. Mr. Linzhiou Rescue was clearly a pro, and I mean that. There was rope neatly stacked, taking care not to knock rocks on us, and first-class gear rigged up to rescue me. It was clear that he was well trained and smooth. Han Han radioed that the police were just there for crowd control, and the rescue group decided to practice once they figured out that I didn't actually need rescuing. Mr. Rescue and I shared a fist bump and smile as I finished the last bolt, then we both headed back to the ground at the same speed to huge applause from below. Selfies were taken with the police, and we wound up eating dumplings with the whole rescue team that night. Sometime around the fourth beer, I gave their leader my Red Bull hat and he gave me his uniform patch. We named the route in their honour.

As we flew out, I couldn't stop smiling. Two rad new ice routes, the first rock route in what must surely become a world-class rock- and ice-climbing destination, and the special joy that comes from taking a risk and doing something beautiful when it doesn't seem likely. A huge thanks to Mr. River, Han Han and the entire crew for believing in a mission and making it happen. I'm already planning a return trip for 2020. There is endless ice behind those gates, and a culture to learn more from.

Will Gadd on the last pitch (four) of Dragon's Bed. Photo: Peter Hoang

Summary

China Circus (WI5, 250m), Taihang Mountains, China. FA: He Chuan, Will Gadd, February 2, 2019.

Dragon's Bed (WI6, 250m), Taihang Mountains, China. FA: He Chuan, Will Gadd, February 3, 2019.

Linzhou Rescue (5.11, 80m), Taihang Mountains, China. FA: He Chuan, Will Gadd, February 6, 2019.

Cordillera Carabaya

Derek Field

Derek Field leads a 5.8 pitch on the summit ridge of Trident. Photo: Steve Yamamoto

In 1967, the southwest face of Chilpariti (ca. 5,550 metres) was so highly coveted by two visiting expeditions that the British team, led by Roger Whewell, literally bargained for it with the New Zealand Alpine Club in exchange for Trident (ca. 5,490 metres), the only other major unclimbed summit in the Allinccapac massif. Unfortunately, the Brits were unsuccessful on Chilpariti, citing deep snow as their primary opponent. Meanwhile, the New Zealand team, who succeeded on Trident, wrote, "There was much grumbling at Camp IV when we saw what a fine climb the southwest face of Chilpariti would have been" *(New Zealand Alpine Journal, 1968).*

Whewell and his wife, Elspeth, returned to the Carabaya to attempt Chilpariti in 1968, making the first ascent from the glacier on the northeast side; they first climbed to the high col shared with Screwdriver (5,543 metres) and then finished on steep rock and ice (*AAJ*, 1969). They subsequently translated the name from Wedge to the name Chilpariti (Quechuan for "wedge of snow") on the mountain. To the best of our knowledge, no subsequent attempts have been made on Chilpariti.

On August 10, my wife, Giselle Field, and I arrived at the trailhead for Laguna Canocota at dusk. By the time we arrived at our camp by the lake, nestled in herder-made rock walls, a thick fog had turned to a steady rain. The season had been unusually wet, so Giselle and I kept our expectations low.

The next morning, our taxi driver from the night before and a new friend, Martin Surco, met us with a school backpack and old soccer cleats. He and his family have herded and fished in the Cordillera Carabaya for generations and know it well. He volunteered to show us part of the way, warning that it would be very difficult to navigate without prior experience. We realized how fortunate we were later that day when Martin split from us at Laguna Añilcocha (ca. 4,500 metres) to catch trout with his father, leaving us to our own devices. That evening, Giselle and I reached a camp at around 4,600 metres below the northern glacier of Chilpariti.

On August 12, we began our day at 5:30 a.m. with four and a half hours of traversing moraine and glacier. We reached the base of the southwest face at 10 a.m. Initially, we climbed knee-deep snow up a gradually steepening ramp. This gave way to more sustained climbing on excellent ice, providing a nearly direct shot to the summit ridge. Eventually, the fog thickened to the point that we couldn't even see each other on the rope.

We topped out the southwest face at 1:10 p.m., and chased by an impending storm, Giselle quickly led us northward along the final ridge to the summit, arriving at 1:30 p.m. We returned to our final anchor point at the top of the southwest face and began our rappels back down our ascent line in a blizzard.

We reached the toe of the glacier again at 5:45 p.m. and sought refuge from the never-ending snowfall under a house-sized rock before returning to camp. On the August 15, we hiked out to the town of Cochahuma under steady rainfall.

Southwest face of Chilparti. Photo: Derek Field

After Chilpariti, I led a 10-day traverse across the Cordillera Carabaya between the towns of Macusani (4,300 metres) and Ollachea (2,800 metres), including various side trips. We were an entirely self-supported group of four enthusiastic people: Giselle and I along with Steve Yamamoto and Matthew Scott (both of the U.S.). Weather was mostly poor, with nasty snowstorms occurring almost every day.

On August 22, from a high camp on a narrow, snow-covered shelf at 5,000 metres, Giselle and Steve joined me on an attempt on Trident, one of the most difficult of the major summits in the Allinccapac massif. Because all of our gear was caked in ice from a snowstorm the previous day, we were unable to set off until 6:00 a.m. when at last the rising sun melted our gear into a usable state. We started at the toe of the kilometre-long

Honeymoon Chute on Trident.
Photo: Derek Field

glacier on the north side of Trident, for which there seems to be no record of human exploration. Interestingly, we did encounter large paw prints at around 5,250 metres, which we took to be puma tracks. The tracks made a one-way path into a large crevasse.

By noon, we had successfully navigated through the convoluted glacier into the gorgeous amphitheatre at the base of the beautiful northwest-facing ice wall between the southwest and central summits of Trident. We proceeded to climb this wall via a narrow ice runnel on the far right side, which we called the Honeymoon Chute (AI3, 200m) on account of it being Giselle's and my actual honeymoon. We moved quickly due to ongoing rockfall from the cliffs above.

It was 1 p.m. when we gained the knife-edge summit ridge. We decided to move northeast along the ridge toward what we inferred to be the highest peak. Two pitches of steep mixed climbing (M4 and 5.8) got us to a ledge at 5,570 metres according to our GPS (note: this figure, which we obtained from Steve's GPS device, is substantially higher than the summit elevation reported by the first ascensionists in 1967), just below the top of this inferred summit. Unfortunately, it was here that we realized the true summit stood several hundred metres further along the ridge, on the other side of a deep notch. It appeared to be less than 30 metres higher than our inferred summit.

We proceeded along the wild ridgeline, climbing up and around terrifying gendarmes (5.9+ R). By 4:00 p.m., we had made it down to the notch and up the other side to an elevation of 5,568 metres (GPS) on the summit block. The peak stood less than 50 vertical metres above us, but was guarded by a plethora of obstacles. Having already pushed our luck to get to this point, we made the decision to retreat by rappelling straight down the west face of the main peak as the sun dipped into the horizon. Matt was beyond relieved to hear us stomping into camp two hours past dark.

The morning of August 24 saw all four of us preparing for an ascent of a peak that had caught my eye several times in recent years: a conspicuous mitten-shaped rock tower crowning the western edge of the range. It is located less than a kilometre northeast of Cerro Esjarane, which appears to have a similar elevation despite posing no apparent challenges to the mountaineer.

At 2:30 a.m., we left our camp on the west shore of Laguna Siurococha (4,530 metres) and scrambled up an improbably steep tributary canyon to the south shore of Laguna Esjarane (4,870 metres), the deep blue lake at the base of our objective. Exhausted, Matt decided to stay and rest at the nearby Laguna Esjarane while Steve, Giselle and I started our ascent with the rising sun.

We chose the east ridge for its aesthetic, direct line to the summit. Getting there proved tedious—our approach path was convoluted and involved a surplus of traverses, dead ends and mandatory descents. By 8:30 a.m., we had finally gained the base of the east ridge proper (5,080 metres). The weather couldn't have been more perfect for rock climbing. Our desire for fun moderate climbing on solid stone was more than fulfilled. Every pitch was a delight, with almost all of them described simply as "follow the ridge, 5.7, 50 metres." The fifth pitch offered the crux—a steep dihedral (5.8) leading into a good crack system. Beyond that, a short final pitch led to the top.

The three of us reached the summit at 12:30 p.m., finding no evidence of prior human visit. All sides appeared equally steep. Our GPS settled on an elevation of 5,221 metres. We decided to name the peak Mitón (Spanish for mitten) based on its appearance since there seems to be no Quechua word for mitten, nor for glove.

After soaking in the views, we descended the southwest buttress by three 60-metre rappels. During this descent, we were periodically visited by four different condors. While I have had many wonderful experiences with these majestic birds in the Andes, nothing compares to having four individual condors swooshing across the sky in such incredible proximity, for such a prolonged period of time and in such a spectacular location.

East ridge of Mitón.
Photo: Derek Field

We were making good time until our ropes got jammed on the final rappel, and I had to lead a rather heinous M5 mixed pitch to free them. Somehow we made it back to camp just before dark with patient Matt eagerly awaiting our return.

Summary

Southwest face (D 80°, 250m), Chilpariti (5550m), Allinccapac massif, Cordillera Carabaya, Peru. FA: Derek Field, Giselle Field, August 12-14, 2018.

Honeymoon Chute (5.9+ M4 AI3), northwest face, Trident (ca. 5600m), Allinccapac massif, Cordillera Carabaya, Peru. FA: Derek Field, Giselle Field, Steve Yamamoto, August 22, 2018 (to 50 metres below the true summit).

East Ridge (III, D 5.8 50°, 350m), Mitón, Allinccapac massif, Cordillera Carabaya, Peru. FA: Derek Field, Giselle Field, Steve Yamamoto, August 24, 2018.

Pineapple Express

Sonnie Trotter

Sonnie Trotter on pitch 12 (5.13b/c) of Pineapple Express. Photo: Austin Siadak

In 2004, I climbed the East Buttress of El Capitan for the very first time with my girlfriend at the time. We, of course, got to the top at sunset and tried to find our way down in the dark, rappelling on suspicious ropes, committing deeper into the drainage and then following the long descending river rocks back to the valley bottom. When we intersected the paved loop, which weaves throughout Yosemite, our shivering bodies knew we'd be back to the car in less than a couple of kilometres. It was almost a full moon; tired but alert, we walked in near silence under the stars.

Yosemite is big, sometimes scary and absolutely incredible. I didn't think I'd be back so many times, and I certainly didn't think I would ever be free climbing any of the big-kid routes. But in November 2018, exactly 14 years later, I was back, standing below 850 metres of sweet California granite with 100 metres of it still unclimbed.

In 1964, Yvon Chouinard, Tom Frost, Royal Robbins and Chuck Pratt made their way up the southeast face of the mountain for only its third ascent—after the Nose and Salathe Wall. It was considered the hardest climb in the world at the time, and for good reason. The team spent 10 days on the wall, climbing in a single push, using no fixed lines and committing upwards with rudimentary tools through a fractured wall of diorite. The legendary team had very little knowledge of what lay ahead, or, that it followed no major features or crack systems and involved some of the steepest, most gymnastic aid climbing every done. Bold doesn't even begin to describe it. After a snow day spent sleeping in hammocks in a cave, that they dubbed "The Cyclops Eye", they topped out in sun calling it the North America Wall, named for the continent's shape, which is imbedded into the rock and is obvious from miles away. It remains as one of the finest accomplishments in climbing history.

More than 30 years later, in 1998, the spectacular German team of Thomas and Alex Huber free climbed 99 per cent of the North America Wall by a route they called El Nino and rated it 5.13c A0. Right smack dab in the middle of El Cap was a mandatory rappel that they just couldn't get around, so they did the best they could, continued on and the climb sat in this state for 20 years. While repeated many times, it has never truly been free climbed. In other words, if you wanted to free solo the face, you couldn't, not without using at least one rope and a bolt. The questions lingered for two decades. Was there a way around it? And if so, which way?

After our success on The Prophet (5.13d R)—Leo Houlding's masterpiece on the far right side of the Captain—Will Stanhope and I aided our way up the North American Wall looking for inspiration. We got denied. I went back up with Sean Villanueva and again with Jorg Verhoeven, but made little progress. In 2017, I tried again with Alex Honnold. We went ground up, then top down, trying to find the elusive passage to connect the two free sections together. After a few heady trips up and down the treacherous face, about 100 metres of new climbing terrain revealed itself to us. We went to work, cleaning up the line and adding bolts by hand where we needed to, all the while dealing with sharp rock, nauseating exposure and massive days of free-hanging rappels.

Finally, after many trips, two kids and seven years since my first foray onto the wall with Will Stanhope, I was now ready to try the climb from the ground up. Unfortunately, Alex Honnold got swept away with the *Free Solo* tour and couldn't make it back to the Valley, so Tommy Caldwell offered up his final day in the ditch to support my project. That meant, instead of swapping leads, it was up to me to push the rope up. Surprisingly, Tommy had never climbed the North America Wall, and we decided he would jug every pitch. The forecast called for a heavy snowstorm within 48 hours, so it was now or never. On my last day in the Valley for the year, we met at 4:30 a.m. in El Cap Meadow by headlamp. It was November 19, 2018, only four days after I turned 39.

We started climbing around 5 a.m. I love the way the granite feels before dawn—cold, crispy and sticky. I linked the first 10 pitches into five rope-stretching lengths. Tommy cruised behind me with speed, joy and a level of competency only found in a handful of people. Suddenly, around 9:30 a.m., I found myself below the new terrain. I had done all the moves but had never linked the pitches together. I had already climbed three pitches of 5.13 and many more of 5.10 and 5.11 to get here—my fingers we wearing thin. Luckily, a tiny cloud shaded me from the intense morning sun, and I made it through the long, crimpy 5.13b/c crux on my first try of the day. Two more traversing pitches of 5.12 brought us back into El Nino proper, which included six more pitches of 5.12 and two more of 5.13. Somehow the higher I climbed, the more confident I became. I fought fatigue, cramps and swollen toes, climbing pitch after pitch. Especially exciting was the Black Cave—a monster roof with a nearly unrivalled level of exposure and hard finger locks at the lip. Everything went smoothly, and I was grateful to pull through it first go. I got worn down over the next five pitches, and fell twice on the very last 5.13b pitch. I was definitely nervous but managed it on my third try in the dark, and I followed a nice line of finger locks and run-out chicken heads to easier ground.

Pineapple Express on El Capitan. Photo: Austin Siadak

Only three more pitches of 5.10 and 5.11 separated us from the summit. It was just over 13 hours by the time I crawled on top, Tommy jugging quickly behind. My mom always told me I was a dreamer, and I'm glad I stuck this one out to the very end. It was one of the most enjoyable and rewarding climbing days of my life by far. I owe a debt of gratitude to my wife and kids and to all of the fine men mentioned in this story, including friend and photographer Austin Siadak, for joining the mission in one way or another. It really does take a team. I hope this climb inspires many more ascents for years to come.

Summary

Pineapple Express (VI 5.13b/c, 800m, 26 pitches), southeast face, El Capitan, Yosemite. FA: Sonnie Trotter, November 19, 2018.

Pumari Chhish East

Raphael Slawinski

In summer 2018, Alik Berg and I travelled to Pakistan to climb in the Karakoram. As often happens, neither the final team nor the final objective ended up being what was originally planned. To begin with, there were four of us intent on exploring the largely untouched peaks of the Kondus valley. Over the winter, however, Chris Brazeau and Ian Welsted pulled out. Then, just a couple of months before our departure, military authorities refused the permit application for our primary objective, the unclimbed K13 (6,666 metres). We scrambled to find another goal, and settled on the unclimbed Pumari Chhish East (ca. 6,900 metres). I was familiar with the peak, having attempted it unsuccessfully in 2009, and knew it to be a difficult and inspiring mountain.

Alik Berg makes the first ascent of Gus Zrakun Sar (5,980 metres).
Photo: Raphael Slawinski

We left Calgary on June 30, and after many flights, jeep drives, two days of negotiating and three days of trekking with porters, we arrived in the 4,500-metre base camp on July 14. We spent the ensuing three weeks systematically acclimatizing, starting with day trips and culminating with an ascent of Rasool Sar (5,980 metres). This minor peak lies on the north side of the East Yatmaru Glacier, at the end of the long ridge running west-southwest from Khani Basa Sar (6,441 metres). It was first climbed in 2009 by Eammon Walsh, Ian Welsted and me. Alik and I repeated the same route: a steep snow slope on the south flank to reach the east-northeast ridge, then up easy mixed ground and a corniced crest to the summit. We spent two nights on top to complete our acclimatization.

With acclimatization out of the way, we turned our attention to the south wall of Pumari Chhish East. The shattered glacier below the face looked impassable, but we were able to find an alternate approach by climbing over a rock spur. From the crest of the spur, we had our first close look at the face. The upper half still looked in good mixed-climbing shape; however, by what was now late summer, the snow and ice fields on the lower half had degenerated into wet rock slabs strafed by rockfall. It was difficult to let go of our ambitions, but in the end we discounted the south face as too dangerous in current conditions. We next examined the eastern aspect of the mountain for an alternative route but found it guarded by batteries of seracs. With just over a week remaining of our scheduled stay in base camp, we cast around for other options and settled on an unclimbed and unnamed peak of 5,980 metres across the Yutmaru Glacier from base camp and north-northwest of Emily Peak.

There was an obvious snow and ice rib on the northeast face leading directly to the summit, but this had severe serac hazard. Instead, we moved much further left to where a long snow gully rises to the upper south ridge of Emily Peak. We scrambled up rock to the left of the gully, turned right and continued up the ridge to the summit of Emily Peak, where we bivouacked at around 5,700 metres. The next day, we spent 16 hours negotiating the complex ridge to and from the 5,980-metre peak, arriving back at our bivouac at midnight. We slept in the following morning before descending south to the Hispar Glacier and walking back around the mountain to base camp. We decided to call the peak Gus Zrakun Sar, after the donkeys that did most of the hard work to get us to base camp (*gus zrakun* is donkey in local Burushashki dialect).

Two days later, in cold rain, we left the meadow where we had spent half the summer. We did not come back successful, but we came back safe and still friends.

Acknowledgements

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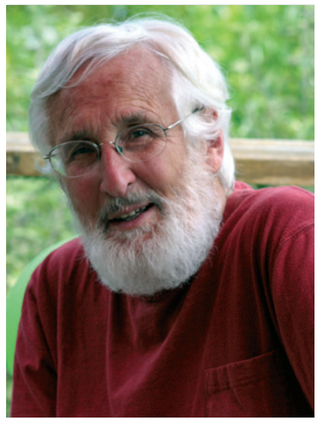
Porters approach base camp up the Jutmaru Glacier with the Pumari Chhish massif at the head of the valley:
(1) Pumari Chhish Main, 7,492 metres, climbed once.
(2) Pumari Chhish South, 7,350 metres, climbed once.
(3) Pumari Chhish East, 6,850 metres, unclimbed.
Photo: Raphael Slawinski

Remembrances

Dick Culbert
1940–2017



Bruce fairley, in his historic and informed tome, *The Canadian Mountaineering Anthology* (1994), rightly so, suggested that 1960-1975 was "The Culbert Era in the Coast Mountains." Most of the northern Coast Mountains had not been climbed, and there was no guidebook at the time that pointed out paths and routes to take to challenging rock and glaciated summits. The earlier book by Phil Dowling, *The Mountaineers: Famous Climbers in Canada* (1979), had a fine biographical article on Dick Culbert in it as one of the top 10 climbers at the time. The Culbert Era had ended by 1975, but the legend lived on to inspire a new generation of climbers, poets and guidebook aficionados.

Culbert cut his climbing teeth as a young man on the North Shore and Coast Mountains in the late 1950s to early1960s, and he was active with UBC's Varsity Outdoor Club, The Alpine Club of Canada and the British Columbia Mountaineering Club. The fact that he was funded by the government in 1962 to do grubstaking (prospecting) meant that he and three good friends (Glenn Woodsworth, Ashlyn Armour-Brown and Arnold Shives) had a mountain honeymoon of sorts—peak after peak was bagged in the Smithers area. The summer of 1962 inspired and reinforced the longing to take to yet more rock spires and snowfields. The pioneering trench work in the field meant that Dick carefully recorded all he was seeing and doing. The meticulous research was to birth the first climbing guidebook for the Coastal Mountains.

Phil Dowling had these poignant observations to offer about Culbert's first mountaineering book that was published in 1965 (I have a lovely blue-cover, hardbound edition autographed by Dick): "After three years of research and two-finger manuscript typing, *A Climber's Guide to the Coastal Ranges of British Columbia* was published. It described approximately two thirds of the Coast Mountains, from the International Boundary in the south to the Nass River in the north. Culbert, age twenty-five, became a notable figure in Canadian mountaineering almost overnight."

Arnold Shives did some of the art work in *A Climber's Guide*, and Glenn Woodsworth is singled out as Culbert's friend to whom "this guidebook owes its very existence." The blue-cover, hardbound edition was so popular that it went into a second edition in 1969. The book remained such a West Coast mountaineering classic that it was published yet again in an updated and more colourful edition as *Alpine Guide to Southwestern British Columbia* in 1974.

Dick Culbert had a distinctive literary bent to his soul with a philosophical and political edge to it, and many were the poems that flowed from his creative pen (some indebted to Robert Service's ballad-like genre). In fact, Dick mentioned in an email to me, "It is certainly nice to be compared with Service's style—he was the poet I read most often in my youth."

Glenn Woodsworth collected some of Culbert's best poetry a few years ago and published the missive as *The Coast Mountain Trilogy: Mountain Poems: 1957-1971* (2009). Arnold Shives did the illustrations for the compact and evocative poetry. The Culbert Era continues to live via the poetry and guidebooks of Dick Culbert. Mountaineering books about the West Coast mountains have proliferated since the 1960s, but it was Dick Culbert that pioneered the genre, and Glenn Woodworth and Arnold Shives have been his editorial and artistic left and right hand in the process.

The coastal mountaineering community bid adieu to one of its most prominent climbing and literary pioneers of the second generation of coastal mountain culture when Dick Culbert passed away in the spring of 2017.

—Ron Dart

Tim Auger
1946–2018

When tim auger died on August 10, 2018, our mountain community lost one of its finest members—a quiet man of integrity, a talented climber and a pioneer in the mountain rescue profession. Tim was modest, articulate and patient and had a great sense of humour. But above all, he was a passionate mountain lover and climber.

I first met Tim at the Varsity Outdoor Club clubhouse at the University of British Columbia in the autumn of 1966. I was a keen young climber from Calgary and Tim was the star climber on the Vancouver campus, having just completed the University Wall on the Stawamus Chief.

Over the next winter, Gerry Walsh, my climbing friend from Calgary who was also attending UBC, and I told Tim stories of our Canadian Rockies, and when school was out in May, Tim headed east where he had lined up a job on trail crew in Yoho National Park.

Tim fell in love with the steep walls and soaring summits of the Canadian Rockies, and the Bow Valley's gain was Vancouver's loss. Tim stayed and made a home in the Rockies, and for the next 50 years, he was part of the heart and soul of the mountain community.

Timothy Frank Auger was born in Toronto, Ontario, on March 6, 1946, and grew up in Vancouver where his father was the publisher of a leading newspaper. Tim was a 13-year-old student at Saint Georges Boys School when he read *The White Spide*r. The book plucked an immediate chord in his heart, and he was soon drawn to climbing.

During his career, Tim amassed a fine record of first ascents and difficult repeats. He made the second ascent of the Grand Wall (1964) and the first ascent of the University Wall (1966), both on the Stawamus Chief in Squamish. In Yosemite, Tim climbed the Triple Direct and West Face on El Capitan. In the Rockies, he established Kahl Wall on Yamnuska, climbed the north face of Mount Goodsir's South Tower and pioneered the waterfall ice climbs Borgeau Right and Borgeau Left. In 1977, Tim summited Pumori in the Nepalese Himalaya, the first major peak climbed by a Canadian expedition in that part of the world. In the 1990s, well into his 40s, Tim climbed the east face of Mount Babel, the northeast buttress of Howse Peak, the north face of Mount Temple and the north face of Mount Alberta. On his 50th birthday, he climbed the difficult waterfall ice climb Sea of Vapors on Mount Rundle and led his share of the pitches.

But the peak that Tim loved most was Mount Louis, the dramatic rock spire northwest of Banff. The last time I asked him, he said that he had climbed the mountain 44 times, often solo. Tim also greatly admired the Swiss mountain guide Walter Perren, who had created the modern mountain rescue team in the national parks, and he named a difficult new route that he pioneered on Mount Louis, Homage to the Spider, to honour Walter, who was nicknamed "The Spider of Zermatt."

But it was as a mountain rescue specialist that Tim really made his mark. With exceptional leadership skills, he carried out many difficult rescues and was greatly respected by his co-workers. One of them recently wrote: "No matter how intense the situation or tragic the outcome, Tim remained calm, professional and always listened to anyone's suggestions or ideas during the event."

Tim was a great storyteller, and his tale of crossing the Golden Gate Bridge on the girders of the understructure or the story of his close encounter with a grizzly bear in the early 1980s have entertained and amazed folks over the years. In 1996, while doing research for *Pushing the Limits*, I recorded an interview on videotape with Tim at his home in Canmore. For two hours, Tim told stories, and when the tape ran out we had only reached 1970. Unfortunately, I never went back with more tapes to capture Tim's entire story. But

the tape that I did record is now in the archives of the Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, and anyone who is interested can watch and listen to Tim tell stories on the television.

In 2006, Ivan Hughes and his company Fringe Filmworks Inc. released a terrific film called *University Wall*, which features Tim Auger telling the tale of the first ascent. And the old footage of Tim climbing the buildings on the UBC campus is priceless.

In 1996, Tim received the Summit of Excellence Award at the Banff Mountain Film Festival, and later, he was elected an honourary member of the Association of Canadian Mountain Guides. In 2002, Tim was honoured, along with all the members of the mountain park's public safety team, as the patron of the annual Mountain Guides Ball.

Tim's last years were difficult, but he faced them with courage and good humour. They were also very difficult for his wife, Sherry, who was his devoted caregiver and stood by him to the end. Tim and Sherry had met at Lake O'Hara in 1972 and spent 46 years together. Sherry and their son, Corey, were there with Tim at the end.

Tim was a class act, a kind and honourable man who made many friends. He left a wonderful legacy in the Canadian mountains and will be lovingly remembered.

—Chic Scott

Dick Howe
1937–2018

Dick was born in Burma in 1937. At four years of age, in response to the Japanese invasion, he was evacuated to Scotland where he spent the next few years either hiding in bomb shelters or collecting shrapnel off the streets. Soon after, Dick was sent to boarding school until he turned 15. He later moved to Glasgow to work on locomotives and apprentice as a millwright. It was during this period that he met Louise, who became his wife—a union that lasted until his death more than 60 years later. In 1963, Dick and Louise headed to Australia, but when they missed their boat, ended up in Vancouver instead. With jobs hard to come by, Louise returned to Scotland and Dick moved to Calgary. When Louise reached Scotland, she learned she was pregnant with their first child (Lesley). She remained there until she gave birth and then rejoined Dick in Calgary.

Dick's career always kept him close to "anything metal" and the specialized tools he needed for this craft. At night he used these same tools as he designed and fashioned his own devices.

In the 1960s and 70s, Dick was a member of a small cadre of Rockies climbers who were pushing up new routes on almost anything they thought would go. Along with Dick Lofthouse, the two of them put up many new routes in the Rockies. This included lots of work in CMC valley and as part of the first-ascent teams on many Yamnuska classics, including Bottleneck, Pangolin, Gollum's Grooves, Dickle and Dick's Route.

Some notable first ascents on ice include Nemesis and Jaws. He and Bugs McKeith worked on Nemesis together over several weekends, using the knuckle-destroying Terrordactyls. Bugs tended to use the tool by getting a good placement, then he would use an etrier attached to it to gain some height, then place the second tool and repeat the process. Some of Dick's stories of the climb were absolutely terrifying.

Another of Dick's passions was music. In 1973, he started the Rocky Mountain Folk Club by convincing a few musically inclined Calgary Mountain Club (CMC) members to play a few tunes together. This grew into the wildly successful "Rocky" that is still a major influence on the folk-club scene in Calgary. More recently, Dick was joined by the seniors' section of the Rocky as he played his guitar and sang to crowds in his care home until just days before he passed away. He was greatly loved by the folk-group audiences, as shown by the sell-out crowd that attended the four-hour Dick Howe and the Rocky musical tribute on May 10, 2019.

Dick was vice president and social convener for the CMC from 1985 to 1987, with Chic Scott as president. Dick then became president from 1987 to 1989. There is hardly a CMC member that doesn't have stories about Dick, and whose life wasn't in some way made better through their friendship with him. He touched so many in the mountaineering world, the music world and all his other great friends.

While Dick did many notable first ascents, it wasn't his technical climbing prowess or bold exploits that defined him. It was his impact on everyone he met. His gentleness, his support for new climbers, his smile that could fill any room—these are the things we will remember about him. Dick could recount every move on every climb he did in shocking detail. He climbed with many people and touched each of their lives in some great way.

When I was 18, and a new climber, I met Dick while working at a summer job. He took me under his wing, undid all the wrong things I had learned so far about climbing, and introduced me to the CMC. He often took me climbing, and taught me how to play safe in the mountains and still have fun. He tried (unsuccessfully) to teach me to drink Scotch. When I showed up for climbing one morning, obviously suffering from the ill effects of too much drinking the previous night, he took me out on polished slabs—unroped—where I seriously suffered. He explained that climbing hungover was an advanced technique that I wasn't ready for yet.

Dick was a great volunteer in the climbing world. In the 1980s, Dick, along with his constant climbing partner, Mal "Tabs" Talbot, and Mike Mortimer, became a major force in the ACC huts committee. With Dick an experienced millwright and Tabs a cabinet maker, they left their mark on almost every hut in the Rockies. Building new huts and upgrading existing ones, many ACC huts are only standing today thanks to the tireless efforts of these three.

Mal Talbot recounts: "In 1989, as part of the large CMC contingent, Dick worked for over two weeks straight on the construction of the new Bow Hut. Dick's favourite 'job' and his delight on all the work parties that he took part in was declaring the end of each working day with his announcement of 'Miller Time' and ensuring that everyone had at least one beer to enjoy before dinner. He was presented with a Distinguished Service Award by the ACC for many years of hard and skillful work in helping bring tired old buildings up to the standard they are today and helping design and construct many of the newer ones that we all now enjoy."

Dick gained a reputation in the mountaineering community for bringing his metal-working prowess together with his love of climbing. He would develop new climbing tools or improve the design of existing equipment. On the wall of the CMC room in the Ironwood Stage & Grill in Calgary, one can see a 7-up—a hammer-in ice anchor built by Dick. He was also a master at sharpening ice screws and axes. He could make any ice screw, regardless of age, cut through ice like the proverbial hot knife to butter.

Mike Mortimer recalls, "I think about the time Dick welded a Simond Chacal blade onto a Terrordactyl shaft and called it a Chacadactyl. Ludgar Simond, the owner of Simond, was horrified when I showed it to him!"

Days after Dick retired, a medical mishap resulted in his paralysis. Yet Dick's mood and spirit remained high. When cancer was supposed to take Dick from us, he fought back and carried on. In 2014, while climbing in Mexico, I was called and told that Dick was in his final days, if not hours. Four years later he was still going strong, mentoring high-school students, playing in his folk club, and stealing cookies away from the dispensary in his care home, hiding them under his shirt and then giving them to Louise. Dick and Louise were both residents of the same care home, and they spent great amounts of time together. On November 29, 2018, Dick was feeling tired and lay down for a nap. He peacefully passed away shortly thereafter.

On Friday, December 7, 2018, many of Dick's climbing and music friends, together with his family, celebrated his life with a traditional Scotch toast combined with lots of stories and music. Plenty of whiskey and tears were spilt. We will miss him greatly.

Dick is survived by his wife, Louise, his daughter, Lesley, and his son, Graham. His ashes will be taken to Scotland to be spread in the ocean in front of his mother's home.

—Ken Wiens

Geoff Creighton
1960–2018

It is with great sadness I report that Geoff Creighton died unexpectedly on July 6, 2018, at his home in North Vancouver.

Geoff was born in Montreal to Pat and Berney Creighton on March 18, 1960. He was the only boy in a family with three sisters, Susan, Catherine and Sara.

Geoff's adventurous spirit was evident early on. A childhood neighbour recounted how she looked out the window one day to witness a young Geoff climbing up the side of the family house. His sister Susan believes it was the 1975 movie *The Eiger Sanction* that spurred his interest in climbing, whereas his father, Berney, thinks it was a family hiking trip to Scotland. Either way, Geoff was off to the races at 15, getting his introduction to rock and ice climbing with the Montreal Section of The Alpine Club of Canada.

In 1978, at the age of 18, Geoff climbed peaks around Banff, Moraine Lake and the Columbia Icefield. He finished the summer off by climbing the North Face route on Mount Robson. This was quite a feat for a teenager from back east.By the time he entered McGill University, where he would obtain a bachelor of commerce, he was already a competent rock, ice and mountain climber.

In between school and local climbing, Geoff still made time for mountain trips with Dave Nettle. In 1980, they teamed up for a trip to Peru and climbed new routes on Huandoy and Kayesh among other peaks. In 1981, they headed up to Alaska and climbed the Cassin Ridge on Denali in cold and windy conditions.

In 1982, Geoff was back in Montreal and returning from a climbing trip when the car he was a passenger in crashed into the centre median. Unfortunately, Geoff suffered a serious back injury. After several operations, he had metal screws, three of his vertebra were fused and there was a nick in his spinal cord. Although he dealt with the effects of this injury for the rest of his life, he never let it stop him from continuing to reach his goals. To compensate, he kept himself in the best shape possible through fitness, diet and lifestyle.

By the mid-80s, Geoff was back in the game. During this time, he helped develop some of the limestone cliffs of the Niagara escarpment in Southern Ontario with climbers Sig Isaac and Dave and Reg Smart.

In 1986, he was out on the B.C. coast where he teamed up with Don Serl. They took advantage of the newly opened Coquihalla Highway to access a granite dome called Yak Peak and climb a new five-pitch route called Madness.

In 1987, Geoff and Dave were invited to join a team attempting Everest from the north side. Although they were unsuccessful in reaching the top, they were the workhorses of their team and probably would have had success with better weather conditions.

In 1991, Geoff and Dave did their biggest climb. They climbed a new variation that they called Thunderbird to access and climb the Hummingbird Ridge on Mount Logan. This was an outstanding achievement considering they had no water for the last two of the 12 days.

Back in Montreal, Geoff was also busy making first ascents of hard granite routes like Chalk Fight (5.11d) at Baldy, Weeping Butt Crack (5.12b) and the thin crack What About Bob (5.12b R) at Rigaud.

In the early 90s, he moved to the B.C. coast where I would eventually meet him. It was at Skaha where he was building new routes with Peter Arbic. They were in the midst of establishing what was to be the classic Prestidgator (5.12c) on the Morning Glory Wall. This is when I found out why his nickname was the Time Eraser. He could stay on a route without hanging for what seemed like an eternity, finding rests where none existed. It was impressive to watch.

Through the 1990s and 2000s, Geoff continued to climb and guide. His passion for climbing inspired him to start a company that designed and built climbing walls. He is responsible for countless climbing gyms installed in community centres and schools across Canada. These climbing walls are Geoff's legacy, enjoyed by thousands of students and children.

In 2000, Geoff married Josie Hetyei, another elite rock climber. They travelled and climbed all over the world and really pushed each other to climb harder. It is in this period that Geoff was in his top form in rock climbing, climbing many 5.13s.

In the past few years, Geoff was still very active but started to experience increased pain and other issues related to his back and hip. The chronic pain really impacted his quality of life. Regardless, he soldiered on and never complained about his health problems. Right to the day he left us, he seemed in good spirits and was always enjoyable to be around. He was an incredible person who had many friends all over the globe, and they will all miss him tremendously. Rest in peace, my friend.

—Harry Kettmann

Byron Caldwell
1953–2018

Although he was a native of Ontario, Byron visited the Canadian Rockies with his family one summer and knew that was where he belonged. Shortly after finishing university, Byron and his young wife moved to Calgary where he began hiking and climbing. By the time of his death he had climbed most of the 11,000-foot peaks in the Rockies, including Mount Robson and Mount Columbia. Having recently built a retirement home in Fairmont, B.C., he had his sights set on a couple of the higher peaks in the southern Rockies.

Byron also climbed internationally, tackling volcanoes in Mexico and Ecuador as well as Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya in east Africa and Mont Blanc and the Matterhorn in the Swiss Alps. He was scheduled to travel to Russia in the fall to climb Mount Elbrus.

Byron was a long-time member of The Alpine Club of Canada, and attended many GMCs, sometimes acting as an amateur leader. He served many years in volunteer capacities, first as an ACC representative on the board of the Canadian Mountain Centre (the hostel at Lake Louise) and more recently on the Finance Committee. In recognition of his long service, the ACC presented him with its Distinguished Service Award.

But Byron was much more than a climber. Having studied mathematics and statistics at the University of Western Ontario and discovering that statisticians were not in demand in Calgary, he became a chartered accountant and ended a long career as manager for tax planning for a major multi-national corporation. He retired in spring 2018.

He was a member of the Opimian Society and poured over their catalogues annually, ordering wine for consumption, not for bragging rights. He would happily break out a bottle of his best if you came to visit. Nor was he a wine snob. He savoured a good beer and would happily share a bottle or six with you. And with only a little bit of encouragement, he would re-enact *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* in its entirety.

Between trips to the mountains, Byron played a physical but fair brand of hockey. Annually in the spring, his team travelled somewhere in the United States to play in an old-timer tournament. Last spring, they brought the gold medal home from Nashville.

Cycling was not his first love, but Byron rode six MS Bike Rides from Calgary to Olds and back, and was consistently one of the top fundraisers. Byron and Mary also had matching motorcycles for those days when the open road beckoned.

So while his favourite place was on top of a mountain, Byron had many interests. He was an audiophile, a bibliophile, an oenophile—a true Renaissance man. Everything he did, he did with an unfailing sense of humour. After a long day on the trail or some unexpected difficulty, he could always look back and laugh about it. Byron was a very capable, sure-footed climber who occasionally did solo ascents, so it is difficult to accept that a slip on a relatively easy scramble in Kananaskis Country would lead to his death.

—Gordon Currie

Reviews

Inner Ranges: An Anthology of Mountain Thoughts and Mountain People

by Geoff Powter, Rocky Mountain Books (2018)

"I don't read climbing lit," a famous climber awaiting the publication of their autobiography told me at a recent Banff Mountain Film and Book Festival, "it's all the same."

But nowadays, it would take a truly tone-deaf reader to surmise that climbing literature is—if, indeed, it ever was—all the same. Talented authors—who are, mostly, not famous climbers—continue to bring skill as well as honesty and emotion to climbing writing. Among current writers, I think of Ed Douglas, David Stevenson, Jan Redford and, of course, Geoff Powter.

Powter, a Canmore resident and formerly the editor of this journal, is a lifetime climber in most vertical disciplines. The essays he has chosen (many of which were published in commercial magazines and two in *Gripped*, where I am the editorial director) follow a common but rarely mastered literary form. I read a lot of articles in the course of my work as an editor. So do the jury members of the National Magazine Awards, who have awarded Powter for his articles no less than 11 times. A book gives an author the leisure to be circumspect and digress. In shorter-form pieces, there is no time to dither and nowhere to hide a lack of clear thinking or skill. Powter is one of the few writers to master the genre, and this generous anthology proves it.

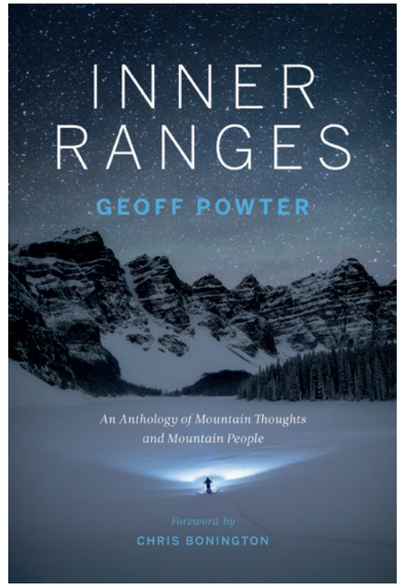
"I no longer remember my first kiss," he begins the essay "27 Funerals and a Wedding," an exploration of whether or not what we do in climbing is worth the mortal risk. By contrast his first climbing days have totally defeated middle-aged amnesia. He recalls "A close, humid, eastern summer morning…we geared up for the longest, hardest route we'd yet tried…. I was terrified and I should have been; we were really just kids…."

I first heard Powter's name in Val-David in the small world of eastern rock climbing in the late 70s, shortly after we both started climbing. We never shared a rope, but we may as well have, for how accurately he captures the mood of eastern cragging back then, a world at once enchanted and overshadowed by the unexplored terrors and promise of climbing.

"Short Change on the Shield" follows. It is a harrowing exposé of the mental processes the author went through to take on The Shield on El Capitan, then graded VI A4. Readers are given a seat on the see-saw of the will when Powter asks, "Do you do yourself in by keeping a topo in the bathroom?" The inevitable contrasts between the comforts of the ground and the climb ahead come to head during the climb itself. Neither the sang-froid of his partner, Brian "Blob" Wyvill, shit-filled cracks nor leader falls deliver on the glamour and heroism of Powter's pre-climb imaginings. I won't give away the ending, but "A note to the Shield," which concludes this article, is one of the most original and extraordinary paragraphs of climbing writing I have read.

Powter continued his journey in climbing into the worlds of alpinism and expeditions to the Himalayas. "A Lightening Sky" reflects on the cost a single, transcendent moment of spiritual and physical fulfilment on a Himalayan summit can have on a regular life. "I've watched so many of my friends get so complicated after these climbs," he writes while on Manaslu, "with sadness and emptiness suddenly a part of their lives because it seems nothing will ever match the summit." When a camp is stripped from the mountain without consultation, he reacts with "a reluctance [to descend] that was more show than truth."

The essays about Powter's own life and climbs would be more than worth the price of the book alone, but there is more. He takes a turn as a controversialist in three unique pieces about Everest. One is about the decay of climbing ethics on the mountain. Another piece explores the tragedy of a totally unprepared guided client who died on Everest. In an unpredictable turn, Powter also writes about an Everest commercial client who is not the stereotypical over-funded, under-skilled glory seeker, but an experienced climber with good reasons to be on a guided trip.



And, as if to save some of the best for the last, there are some superb profiles of climbers. The subject here is the metamorphosis of regular people into climbers and mountaineers. "The Happy, Tormented Life of a Mountain Legend" reveals the complexity of Barry Blanchard "years before he returned as the Warrior Blanchard, born-again Métis man… before all that, he was just the chubby kid in a milkman's uniform," into the legendary alpinist, author and sage. We learn that Sonnie Trotter eats donuts and smokes cigarettes as well as climbs ridiculously hard. His secret is that he's a natural. He muses on Raphael Slawinski's life as a physics professor and mixed climbing aficionado. Guide Ryan Tichener's recovery from an accident is a study in resilience.

Powter concludes with a piece based on his own important historical research on the quixotic attempts of Canadian Earl Denman to climb Everest in the late 1940s. It's an improbable tale of an Everest history that might have been, without sieges, no massive climbing teams, ropes, oxygen bottles or nationalism. It is a fitting last offering, since his discovery of Denman's adventures led him to create his exploration of the psychology of great adventurers in *Strange and Dangerous Dreams: The Fine Line Between Adventure and Madness* (Mountaineers, 2006).

And by the way, if that wasn't enough, there's also some great conservation writing on the plight of Alberta's wild horses and the political indifference to land management, and a scientific and heartfelt analysis of a deadly carbon monoxide accident in a snow cave and the uplifting story of some beginner climbers.

"Between the wolf in the tall grass and the wolf in the tall story there is a shimmering go-between. That go-between, that prism, is the art of literature," wrote Nabokov. Of course, as readers, we experience the shimmer less often than we would like, but these stories have it. Anyone with any interest in the craft of adventure essay writing, personal exposé or a broad range of climbing subjects will find much here to justify acquiring a copy of this unique collection.

—David Smart

Reviews

Surveying the Great Divide: The Alberta/BC Boundary Survey, 1913–1917

by Jay Sherwood, Caitlin Press (2017)

In January 1913, land surveyor and founding president of The Alpine Club of Canada (ACC), Arthur Oliver Wheeler, penned an urgent letter to mountain guide Conrad Kain, who was away exploring the Southern Alps in New Zealand. Wheeler urged Kain to return to Canada in May, offering him work guiding ACC camps at Lake O'Hara and Robson Pass—where Kain would successfully lead the first ascent of Mount Robson—and assisting Wheeler with the boundary survey of the Great Divide.

In 1912, economic development was making it imperative to map British Columbia's border with Alberta, and accordingly an agreement was struck between the two provinces and Canada to survey one of the country's longest interprovincial boundaries. The work would be done in two stages: the Great Divide along the Rocky Mountains from the United States border to its intersection with the 120th meridian and then north along that meridian to the border with the Northwest Territories (NWT). Key elements of the first part of the survey along the Divide were accomplished over five years from 1913 to 1917, one of the few domestic inter-governmental projects to receive continued funding during the First World War.

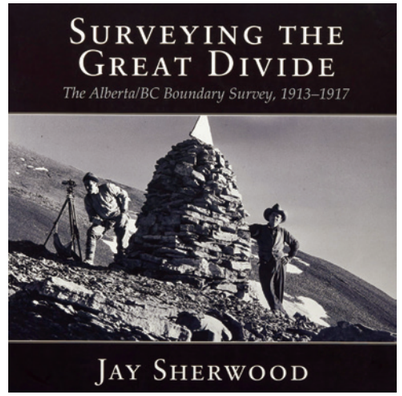
A.O. Wheeler had immigrated to Canada from Ireland at the age of 16, and had worked for the Canadian government in 1883 surveying in the NWT and western provinces. He was wounded in the North-West Rebellion while serving as a lieutenant with the Dominion Land Surveyors Intelligence Corps. In 1885, he joined the topographical surveys branch under Canada's new surveyor general, Édouard-Gaston Deville, where he trained in phototopographical surveying techniques that Deville was starting to use to map the Canadian Rockies. In 1891, Wheeler left government service to enter private practice in B.C., but four years later he rejoined the Dominion Survey in Alberta. In 1901, Deville assigned Wheeler to survey in the Selkirk Range in British Columbia, nurturing Wheeler's growing interest in mountaineering that led to his co-founding the ACC with Winnipeg journalist Elizabeth Parker in 1906.

In 1910, Wheeler was told by Deville that he could no longer attend ACC summer camps because they were interfering with his phototopographical field work, prompting Wheeler to again quit and enter private practice. However, within two years he was hired as B.C.'s commissioner in charge of topographic and phototopographical surveying for the boundary survey, being the first choice of both Deville and B.C.'s surveyor general, G.H. Dawson. Part of Wheeler's agreement in undertaking this work was that another surveyor, A.J. Campbell, would be hired as his assistant to be in charge while Wheeler was away organizing and attending ACC camps. Alberta's role was to survey and mark the economically important mountain passes, led by Richard William Cautley.

Deville, a former French naval surveyor, was one of the world's leading experts on phototopographical surveying, and is today recognized as the father of photogrammetry in Canada. Photography was to be a key part of the new boundary survey, a bi-product of which was a series of panoramic pictures from precisely known survey positions. This priceless photographic archive is now the basis of the University of Victoria's Mountain Legacy Project (MLP) that was described in the ACC's 2018 State of the Mountains Report. According to the ACC report, MLP teams have repeated more than 7,000 of these photographs as of 2017.

Jay Sherwood has previously written several excellent books on early 20th century surveying in British Columbia. Notable among these are the photo journals of legendary surveyor, Frank Swannell. *Surveying the Great Divide* follows this tradition with a large-format, lavishly illustrated soft-cover book about the first detailed mapping of the Canadian Rockies, including participants' journal excerpts along with the author's narrative. Among historic photographs showing the surveyors at work and spectacular mountain scenery, there is a selection of comparative side-by-side images taken by Wheeler and the MLP, 100 years apart. In one instance, at the intersection of the B.C., Alberta and United States borders, there is a series of four photographs spanning more than 150 years, beginning with one taken by the British Royal Engineers during the surveying of the 49th parallel west of the Rockies at the birth of Canada as a country.

Conrad Kain was employed by the boundary survey in the 1913-14 seasons to teach Wheeler's other assistants how to climb mountains, and to help with guiding, hunting, cooking and other field tasks. Kain's success in the first endeavour is evident in two 1917 photographs of one man standing on another's shoulders on the vertical rock of Mount Fitzwilliam in the Yellowhead Pass.



As with Sherwood's other photo-journal histories, the reader is left in awe of the hardships and dangers inherent in the primitive travel, and the meticulous work of these pioneering survey crews. 1916, for example, was a particularly hard season with a heavy snowpack persisting well into July. Both crews were working in the Kananaskis area that year, and Cautley had a tough start to the season with the drowning death of his head packer, Jacob Koller, in the swollen Kananaskis River while trying to retrieve a horse; and then Cautley's assistant, C.V. Hope, was stricken with acute appendicitis. The work was often hard and dangerous, sometimes requiring two or three climbs to complete the work at a single survey station. They would spend three or four hours, sometimes amidst storms and severe electrical activity, making measurements, taking photographs, and building a cairn or monument so that the survey station would be visible from and be able to tie to other sites. Many of these cairns and monuments survive today, although some are obscured by advancing vegetation and treelines.

1917 appears to have been a productive wrap-up year for the Cautley-Wheeler team, entailing a horse-packing trip along the route of the future Icefields Parkway, surveying mainly in the Howse and Yellowhead Pass areas, with many fine adventures and photographs taken along the way. In his government report, Wheeler speculates with foresight on the possibility of a tourist road connecting Lake Louise and Jasper.

The book ends with a chapter on the geographic naming of features along the Great Divide, which was largely the purview of Wheeler. Sherwood notes that this is "…generally considered to be a negative aspect of the project" in that most of the names do not reflect the natural and human history of the Canadian Rockies, and he goes on to quote naturalist/author R.M. Patterson: "The Rockies must sadly be the worst-named range in the world." In Wheeler's defense, he had to come up with a lot of names in short order and was likely following the mores of the time. He was also inevitably influenced in his choice of names by the Great War that coincided with the survey.

From 1918 to 1924, Wheeler continued with his survey of the Great Divide while Cautley worked on the 120th meridian through Peace River country, which was undergoing considerable agricultural settlement on both sides of the border.

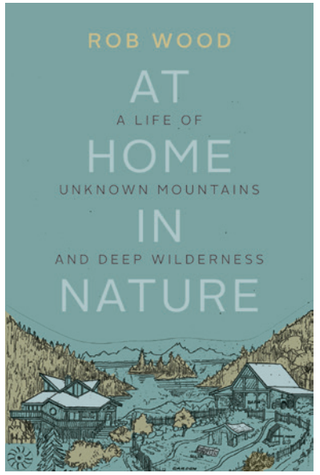
Surveying the Great Divide puts a spotlight on the mapping of Canada's Rocky Mountains, adding unique insight into the ACC's founding president, A.O. Wheeler. Published in 2017, it was a timely tribute to Canada's 150th birthday, and is a worthy and inexpensive addition to any mountain library.

—Mike Nash

At Home in Nature: A Life of Unknown Mountains and Deep Wilderness

by Rob Wood, Rocky Mountain Books (2017)

For many ACC members, climber Rob Wood will conjure up memories of first ascents in the Rockies in the early 1970s. A contemporary with the likes of John Lauchlan, Tim Auger, Bugs McKeith and other pioneering ice climbers of that era, Wood made first ascents of some of what are now considered Rockies classics. The list is exhaustive, but Cascade Falls, Bourgeau Left, Weeping Wall and Takakkaw Falls come immediately to mind. Originally from the United Kingdom, Wood also joined Doug Scott on several expeditions, including one to Baffin Island and also Mount Waddington in 1978. When Wood first immigrated to Canada, he spent his first year in Montreal, eventually migrating to the Rockies and moving to Calgary where his real launch of Canadian exploration and climbing began.



At Home in Nature is not a memoir of Wood's time as a climber, however. Although he touches on important climbs that transformed his life throughout this latest memoir, his first book *Towards the Unknown Mountains* is a mountaineer's account of his time spent in the B.C. Coast Mountains and a winter ascent of Mount Colonel Foster in Strathcona Park. *At Home in Nature* recounts Wood's journey that eventually landed him and his wife on Maurelle Island where he still lives off the grid today.

Throughout the book, Wood describes in great detail his preoccupation with wilderness, the role of humans in greater ecosystems, and how he became mesmerized by the ruggedness of the Canadian landscape. Wood's commitment to living a low-impact life, taking only what was needed to live off the land as much as possible, is the real focus of the book. Wood's views on sustainability and rejection of corporate culture were way ahead of their time, and now 30 years later, they hold more poignancy than ever before.

The book reveals much about the challenges of living an alternate lifestyle, like raising children on a remote island and what to do when you have a heart attack miles away from a hospital. But the real low-hanging fruit for those interested in living an alternate lifestyle can be found in the simple day-to-day stories of what it means to be at one with your environment. Wood describes years of fine-tuning his water systems and gardens, which allowed him in the end to lead an entirely sustainable and philosophically satisfying life far removed from cities.

I was surprised at how much I enjoyed reading about Wood's connection to the B.C. coast. This is not your typical "back to the land" story. There is a real richness to the storytelling. When I read about how Wood describes his relationship to the land, there is an intersection between the same love and respect that climbers feel for the mountains they ascend. That glorious feeling of scaling a peak on a warm summer's day, knowing that you have achieved something exceptional is exactly the sentiment I get from Wood's book. He manages to walk the walk when it comes to sustainable living where most of us fall short. *At Home in Nature* is a nice alternative to conventional mountain literature made all the more enjoyable by Wood's easy-going and honest writing style.

—Joanna Croston

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No.6

Done in an R1

One of our ambassadors once said that the R1 has probably been along on more first ascents than any single piece of clothing ever. That's a hard fact to check, but when we started asking around, we received a pretty long list. Here's a selection of 20, one for every year the R1 has been in action.

20 years. 20 stories. See them all at patagonia.com/r1

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Ultralight at 6 oz. and heavy on features. The Bantamweight is the lightest fully featured rain jacket we've ever made.

Men's
Bantamweight jacket

Women's
Bantamweight jacket

Squamish, British Columbia

"This was a sunny October trip with European climbers Jorg Verhoeven and Katha Saurwein on their North American tour. Jorg is taping and preparing for an attempt on Tainted Love (5.13d). No details are left behind in the preparation of a climb."

~ Photos and words: Jon Glassberg

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