

Editor's Note

Seems like forever since we've spoken—the distance between newsletters is great these days. Seems to reflect how busy life is and how much energy goes into just getting by sometimes.

Chris and I have discussed things and agree that once a year seems to be workable for all now. Your submissions are always welcome (send them any time, and I'll gather them up till there's enough to put an issue together) and it's great to hear from you. I feel a little removed here in my mainland home sometimes.

We have had a busy year at Casa Hackett—those of you who have been here won't recognize it, others won't really appreciate how far it's come! We have renovated. We are still all speaking to each other and there was never any mention of divorce (although we did run through a fair bit of tissue on occasion.)

The children—now adults (how did that happen so fast?) have moved (mostly) to Victoria for school—it was a serious convoy of stuff this past September. If you are down that way, I'm sure Jesse and Peta (our newest addition—Australian, very lovely) and Megan and Travis (another transplanted Squamolian and just as wonderful) would love to see you. Doug and I reside in the newly updated splendour and enjoy the comings and goings. You are always welcome.

Muff



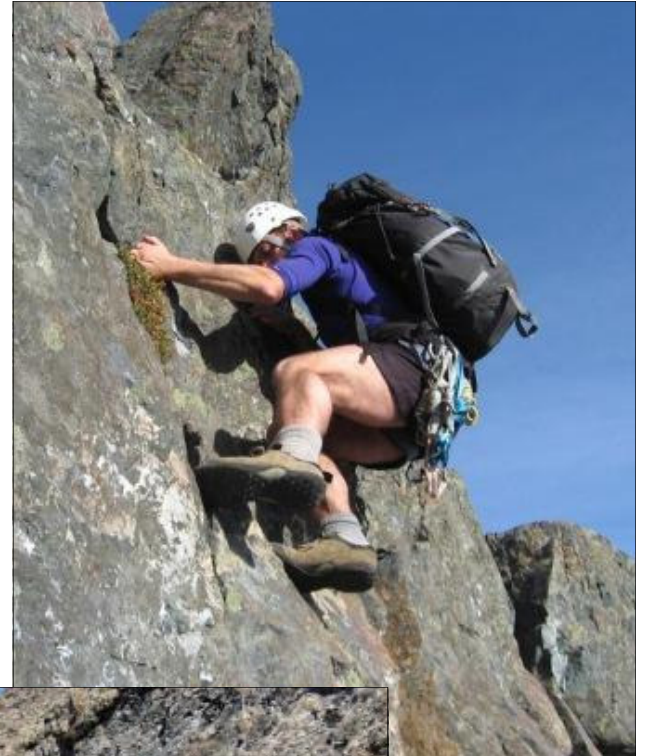
Cover Photos:
Top: Paul Rydeen climbing Mt. Cain

Bottom: Karen Hutton approaching Kings Peak summit

Mike Ellis

H E A T H E R I S S E

2006



The Strong

Did you read a newspaper today? Society can be ugly. I wish everybody could experience what society sounds and smells like after a month of fresh air and glorious silence in the mountains. But morally, how do you buy into a system of living so tarnished by greed and corruption, violence, theocracy, racism and poverty? The idealistic among us will likely be driven towards alternative lifestyles.

A tension often exists between the need to live according to one's principles and the reality of having to provide a living for oneself and a need to socialize with others. Nobody can 'drop out' altogether. Still, some limit their participation, choosing principles over company and acceptance, and often forfeiting their access to resources and belongings in the process. But lives simply have to be lived, and people begin to occupy whatever niches are available and comfortable to them. Alternative lifestyles, or 'counter-culturalism' begin this way.

It takes a tough person to decide to do this. To accept less, and endure more; to stay true to an idea, takes conviction. Whether or not the idea in question is worth the sacrifice is anyone's debate, but can you sleep in the bush, handle the stigma and get through the winter if you think it is? I prefer them to the weak, who lie and snivel and cheat their way into whatever comforts society will provide. Everyone tramples on the helpless, who drift away in the prevailing wind. There is always something for the weak, but little left for the helpless or the strong.

Many climbers are blessed with 'strength', especially the old-timers, who came to climbing before it was socially normalized. They see climbing as so much more than an activity – it is a way to live your life with others who understand the world as you do. Not just a generation of climbing enthusiasts but a family, an open armed cadre of social rejects, decorated like soldiers with poverty and the disapproval of the normal. When I entered the climbing community as a teenager in the seventies a certain reliability was expected of me in return for their acceptance.

As time went by I settled into my climbing life, but I always considered the eighties to be a bit of a low point. Me and Mul-Reaganism – yikes! Climbing had a low water mark too – the peacock generation preening about in pink and lime green. Everybody who ever took a step outside became an experienced mountaineer overnight as soon as climbing became more mainstream. There was parsimonious squabbling going on everywhere; 'sport' vs 'trad', rock jocks vs wall rats, alpine vs expedition. Bitch, bitch, bitch. The weak definitely began climbing in the '80's.

The nineties had their own unique embarrassments – the 'grungy' nineties. That was classic, faux climbing bums everywhere. Nirvana-lovers wheeling about the climbing nation in dreads and old vans (but most with a platinum card crash pad of parental support) pretending to be dirt-bags! True believers! Being a climbing bum became so fashionable in the nineties that I actually considered getting a steady job.

There are always a few of the old guard who get ruffled feathers over watching the lifestyle that confirmed their place in the universe get treated so disingenuously. They, like me, wonder if

about these other species we so rarely see. I love goats – I love to see them. It makes my day – my trip, even, to have seen them."

On our last climbing day, the 5th, the same windy morning conditions resulted in another 'crack of noon' start. We climbed the southwest ridge of Silver Swan Mountain. It was our second time on the peak, and it was interesting to look down into the Reliance valley and see old friends instead of unknown ground. Reliance itself is an immense bulk, the surrounding fine peaks all but dwarfed by it. We lingered 'till 5:00pm and then headed down.

The descent was a blast – long glissades down snow slopes and couloirs. We were back in camp in a couple of hours. We packed most of our stuff and moved it to the pick-up site at dusk. Early the next morning, I'm sitting on a pile of gear writing a few last notes . . .

"I watched the moon rise last night. It's about 2/3 full and extremely bright. Steel blue sky, pastel clouds, whipped-cream glaciers draped over purple, brooding peaks. Under that sky I hustled about in the land of ice to get all my bags packed for the trip home. Now the morning sun kindles Waddington and it's a beautiful day. Thanks for all the love, Babe. Being here, in the 'high lonesome' has helped me to appreciate you even more. I wish there was a way I could get the feeling into you – the feeling I get when I'm leading a pitch high in the mountains and I come across a feature like the 'gingerbread house' on 'UnKlatassine', or poke my head over the ridge to look 2500' down at a massive glacier. You and all the other friends and family that I love could understand how I can do without you for a whole month."

It's a pity about the film, but that's the only regret. 'Oasis' camp was my favourite place in the mountains so far, and the Mantle area offers so much of what makes the Coast Range special. We both missed home, and the drive was full of expectation, but I could never get tired of visiting these ranges every summer. This is the best place in the world to be a mountaineer. Enjoy.

Peasant

Notes on the climbs . . .

'Oasis' camp

July 16	'Mt. UnKlatassine' (Pk 2365)
July 18	Pk 2290 – Klatassine wanderings
July 20	'Mt. UnKlatassine' (subpeak) (Pk 2350?) w. ridge – 7 pitches to 5.8
July 22	Pk 2468 – n. ridge – 10 pitches to 5.8 (and some 3 rd)
July 24	Pk 2360 – s. face – 300 m. to low 5 th

'Sunnyside' camp

July 28	Mantle Peak travers – s. ridge – 500m. to 5.7 – to the e. ridge
August 3	Attempt on e. ridge of Oriana Mtn
August 4	Pk 8400 – ridge ramble
August 5	Silver Swan Mountain – sw. ridge – 500m. to low 5 th

"I'm wearing all my clothes and my booties, sipping hot drinks, but I'm still cold. Still, the pancakes make everything OK. The stove is humming and reflecting heat off the kitchen rocks into the living space. We have one week left."

The next several days offered only iffy weather with only a few chances to hike along the benches to the west or explore the meadow.

"I lay on a boulder not far from the domicile on the brink of the drop down into Doran, and a perfect vantage point for viewing the glacier tongues and the Waddington range. They play peek-a-boo with me through the mist as I enjoy a moment of sun. I close my eyes and let it warm my face, let the wind blow my hair about my eyes. I sniffed, looking for a hint of rain. I realized how much more my behaviour was that of a mountain denizen than a human – not like a few weeks ago when we arrived. I smiled to myself and scurried inside as it started to fall."

For a time I watched a waterfall, born in an icefall above Doran Creek. It spews out from under the ice over an immediate precipice of some height into a turquoise lake. A stream featuring a series of attractive cataracts then wanders through a weathered grove of stunted pines and flowered heather slopes to an emerald lake below, before tumbling crazily into the dark depths of the valley.

"In all the world where I have been I haven't seen a place like this coast, where forest and ice-cap marry, spawning the cool, blue-green peace that permeates these mountains, and my soul when I'm among them."

Of course, like all the peaks, the glaciers have acquired 'Piss and Crawl' names like the 'Howard' glacier (on Mt. Howard), the 'Barely' glacier (very small, on Mt. Burghley), the 'Sundial' glacier (on sundial Peak), the 'Alligator' glacier (you guessed it), the 'Wide Ass' glacier (looks like a big ass, two big tongues, each resembling a buttock), the 'Skinny Ass' glacier (occupies a very narrow valley east of 'Wide Ass'). If they named a glacier after us it would be the 'Dumb Ass' glacier.

On the 3rd we dragged some sacks of gear up onto the Mantle glacier to attempt the east ridge of Oriana Mountain. We completed 3 pitches, the last finishing on horrendous loose blocks, before threatening weather returned and we decided to bail. Disappointed, we trudge back across the yawning crevasses of the upper glacier and down to camp in now misty conditions.

The 4th started windy and gray, but it cleared miraculously at about 11:00am. We decided to ramble the ridge above, eastwards towards Queen Bess. We arrived on one peaklet at 2:45 and another at 3:30, but just under 8500'. Great views of the Mantle basin, Mt. Essex and "Bessie". A choice of a different ridge for the descent yields convenient passage to the cirque below, where idyllic streams and tarns provide refreshment. When we resume there are goat tracks nearby – very fresh. Our gaze follows them to a col above. Sure enough, there is a family of goats standing along the skyline, long coats backlit brilliantly by the afternoon sun.

"We stood for several minutes, we mammals all watching one-another, curious in a mutual way

climbing can really be reduced to something so measured, numerical and ego stroking - turning gold to tin. I don't think so. I think climbing has its own future no matter what we do.

I don't take climbing seriously in that way. It will always have the same value for me regardless of how others participate. I just like to see people involved. I guess some climbers differ though; I see more disagreements between different generations of climbers than between climbers and non-climbers.

No matter what else happens, there are always a few strong ones sprinkled through each and every generation. Eventually they find one-another. They continue to hammer up and down slopes long after their peers have gone away to get more serious about life, or, more sadly, are lost in the endless pursuit of things. They never stop. They are Fred Beckey, Ruth Masters and Syd Watts. They are Warren Harding, Steve Sutton and a million nameless others. They are Anders Ourum and Dave Knudson and John Clarke; and they are my partner and I.

The body of those who live to climb gets a little larger every year. Groups like the Heathens and the Access Society expand with it. Why is it that groups like the Alpine Club or the Ramblers or Mountain Equipment Co-op, though well 'propped up' and full of energetic individuals, find it difficult to maintain momentum? At some point you have to ask yourself if your organization has become too mainstream. I've come to believe that what is valuable in climbing is what is most alternative about it. Counterculture. Is it that a person is free to go and bet their life on their strength and competence, and be completely responsible for the consequences that may result? Does climbing have value because there is a price to pay?

I hope to die old, fit and homeless. I hope to have dedicated my entire life to anything other than the pursuit of trinkets. How could anyone ever really 'own' land? What home could do after living at the foot of glaciers, sleeping in mountain meadows or sitting on the high crag watching the moonrise. No, a home would never do, but this is a good place to winter.

Generations come and go, and have their squabbles – maybe embarrass themselves, but the mountains and cliffs are still speckled with the homeless heroes of each era, enjoying true love, wandering the ice fields, perhaps even plucking the odd helpless one back from the prevailing wind.

It takes the strong to do this. The exchange a life of luxury for sleeping alone on the rocks of the moraine; to leave behind the ones you love; to work harder to pay for all this time you take. More importantly, to take responsibility for the consequences of your actions, and to develop a custodial relationship with the places you go to test yourself. To live humbled by the awesome greatness of the world around you.

Anyone can jump on and ride for a while, but who will pull the cart? Only the strong.

Peasant

A Notice from Leadership Development

To celebrate the club's 20th anniversary, there will be a camp in the Reliance Glacier area of the Coast Range in the summer of 2008. We are now compiling a list of guides and participants. Specific dates and other arrangements will be finalized once a group is assembled. This will be a fly-in trip. Transportation to the camping location will be by helicopter (Whitesaddle Air Service) from Bluff Lake on the eastern side of the range. Transportation to Bluff Lake will be by vehicle and ferry.

The club envisions a camp of nine people – three guides and six participants. A second 'shift' may be considered if there is sufficient interest, but will require the availability of another group of guides/leaders. By the date of departure participants will need to fully understand the principles of glacier travel and crevasse rescue, vertical rescue, snow, ice and rock climbing techniques, helicopter safety and be comfortable with camping in the backcountry for up to two weeks.

The actual cost of the trip will depend on numbers, fuel costs, food preferences, your personal equipment requirements, etc. . . but expect the total to be somewhere around \$2000.00 Cdn. For food, flights and transportation to and from Bluff Lake. This is a conservative estimate, and Whitesaddle always does everything possible to reduce the cost of flights – you may even come home with change. Factor in the expense of whatever gear or technical training you need to purchase. An equipment list will be provided for those unfamiliar with Coast Range climbing. Remember, you have 18 months to acquire the necessary knowledge, gear or fitness.

The Reliance area is the most 'user-friendly' location for a camp we have visited in the Coast Range, and has been chosen from several possible areas based on convenience and ease of access, suitable camping locations, choice of multiple objectives of varying difficulties and remarkable beauty. There are 8800' walk ups, 10,450' giant Reliance, several peaks of 9000' to 9600' with scrambles and moderate rock climbs, and access to ropeless meadow tours and hikes. New routes are possible, and there is definitely something there for everyone.

Tak Ogasawara has generously volunteered to help organize the camp, and his skills and experience in this type of project are highly valued at Leadership Development. We hope to have our first meeting sometime in February 2007. Please let us know by February 1st if you are interested. Priority will be given to club members in good standing, youth members, and obviously those with the skills to guide.

We hope to hear from you soon.

Leadership Development

Contact:
Chris Barner 287-4611

Apologies from Canada Post and your editor—this article (though sent in December) didn't get to my desk until well into February—check with Chris about meeting dates.

We did a quick ascent of mantle Peak's south ridge on the 28th; about 1500' of climbing on nice rock to about 5.7, the crux being a clean corner about 100' long with a bulge about half way. As we gained elevation the holds and cracks improved until a series of unusually shaped layers of rock, the colour of different types of ice-cream all melted and mixed together, provided perfect holds for turning the bulge and we were up. They might be difficult moves to reverse, but we thought we could do them if we had to.

After some easy ground, a couple of intimidating notches appeared in the ridge. One involved lowering my puckering ass off a sharp drop searching for footholds below, then traversing teetering blocks across the notch. The other feature proved more benign, offering delightful holds to climb down and around on, turning the worst of the difficulties.

"At each apparent impasse it seemed there was a hidden or unique solution, and one improbable passage followed another more easily than expected until our south ridge intersected the west one."

Here a series of towers presented a problem, as did the clouds that had been gathering on the ice-cap all day. Unlikely ground ahead, difficult moves behind, no rope. We decided to continue. We turned towers to the left and right, finding one hard move that led to the top of the ridge again. It looked like easy going from there so we stopped and celebrated. Of course there was a 'sting in the tail' – a classic notch where you stand on one side, lean over, grab on and swing across. Awesome!

No register . . . so we made one . . .

'Peasant and Loopgut'

A couple of Heathens, July 28 '06

'The SW ridge was difficult ropeless, but that's OK 'cause we weren't dopeless'

Storm clouds began to engulf all the icy giants as I sat on the summit and watched their shadows migrating across the ice like herds of animals on the plain. I was psyched. The act of climbing for hours on rocks to 5.7 or 5.8, just eluding the rain, solving route-finding problems as we went, considering thousands of options and possibilities, all while exposed to real pressure . . . playing for keeps. I just let my mind and body get into their groove, move fluidly like a dancer might, let me innate balance take over. Decision making without conscious deciding. Vertical meditation. Sky yoga. I became a mountain animal sensing the way – a human rock creature, feeling, instead of finding, the route.

We round a simple descent down the east ridge and capped the day by chatting as we crossed the dormant snowfields – a far cry from the tense glacier approaches of the 'UnKlatassine.' Then we ran down the sand slopes and moraines above camp.

". . . hard to explain, but it really felt 'right' to be climbing that ridge today."

A few days of winter follow-winds and snowy skies. It's a cold camp; exposed to the weather. We had to retreat to our bags to really get warm on the afternoon of the 30th. That evening . . .

packs of heavy gear . . . physical and mental well-being through intense, disciplined movement. Then a short stretch of glacier travel . . .

“Axe and points piercing the skin of the huge, geological beast. It moves and speaks - and is alive. What communion, dancing on the frozen sweat of the earth.”

The climb has ten pitches of really nice rock, and once the spine of the ridge was gained the drop into the dramatic cirque to the northeast provided a profound sense of exposure. The crux was a forty foot section of ‘spicy’ 5.8, highlighted by a section of perfect finger cracks, a swing around a block to a steep lunge – the target being a wedged chockstone – and some steep lie backing to the easy ground.

Every pitch was cool. We humbly added our names to those of John Clarke and Peter Croft in the tiny register, and thought about these two great coast mountaineers. Eventually we set off on ten rappels, a pitch of belayed down-climbing and some scrambling. We took a few minutes to watch the sunset paint the classic cornices we were traversing. What a day!

Two days later we were off to Pk2360. It looks hard from most angles – especially the north face, which I’d love to try – but we decided to try it ropeless via a weakness on the Klatassine side. We sleuthed out a line that went at lot to mid 5th.

The summit ridge was exceptional . . . a quarter-mile long catwalk above the glaciers and ice-falls. Here and there we’d hang from the spine of the ridge itself, on to whatever side offered the best footholds, sometimes climbing between steep rocks and remnant patches of cornice. A notch in the ridge forced us down onto the north face, where a haggard pile of blocks had to be negotiated to reach the summit rocks. Again, wild views in every direction . . .

“. . . and every time we resolved to descent we wound up just lounging about and taking it all in, planning future projects and generally getting nowhere at all.”

‘Sunnyside’

The next day we packed to move over to the sunny meadow benches below Mantle Peak and Mt. Silver Swan; the ‘Sunnyside’ of Doron Creek. It was hard to leave. ‘Oasis’ was our favourite destination yet in the ‘Go Strange’, and we’ve been a few places now. We wound up flying right past ‘The Twins’ on the way over. Stunning. We chose to plunk ourselves down at the obvious tarn south of Mantle Peak, and build ourselves a magnificent little hovel there. It’s a cool spot.

“ We’re eating cheese omelet’s for dinner and talking about the flight over, which gave us a birds eye view of the ‘Twins’ and the ‘Tower’, exciting future objectives. The view right from camp is enchanting. The edge of the ice cap, with all its eye-blue glacier tongues, is just across the valley, and the Waddington group soars down valley to the west. These meadows get the sun almost all day. Large granite peaks form the ridge above us, and the Mantle glacier occupies the huge expanse on the other side.”

Rec and Con Report

As always, lots has been happening at Rec and Con, and with no Spring and Summer edition, that makes for quite a report. Here goes . . .

Kings Peak

Last fall volunteers spent several days upgrading and occasionally rerouting the trail just before the bluffs. There will be several days out there this fall. I hope we say you there.

We are still looking for a sucker to manage a fundraising project to help deal with the trail’s upper sections. The funds would be used to purchase helicopter time to fly logs up King’s Peak. Initial liaison with BC Parks about what’s possible would be the first step. Call Chris (287-4611) if you are interested.

Call Paul (286-0098) to put your name on the contact list for trail work days.

Crest Creek

New Routes

The finishing touches went into a couple of aid lines on the West Wall last March. Other than that, new aiding activity has focused on the ‘Top of the World’ area, at the Space Wall. Last December, Sean, Ahren and Christ put two new lines there and snipped an access trail. Sean and Ahren’s “Out of Uranaus” (A2) follows the obvious right leaning crack. Chris’ “Plutonian Nyborg” (A2) starts on bolts directly over the roof that shelters the staging area and attains a steep corner. Both outings are excellent. Ahren continues work on “One Armed Bandit” at the West Wall and “Diddler on the Roof” at Down Under.

Five new free climbs were done at Skid Row this summer. They are located on the main wall of the crag, which had eluded any new routing when “Come On Jam” was done nearby in the summer of 1994. It’s hard to believe it has already been twelve years since the first climbs were done there.

Left to right, as you face the crag: “Welfare Line” (5.8+) and “Soup Kitchen” (5.7) are excellent climbs, steep and fun, but not yet prepared for leading. “Pins and Needles”, protected with pins for the first ascent by Sean and Karen but scheduled to receive a couple of bolts, starts in the obvious corner and then ventures onto a face at 5.8. On the right, “Gypsy Eyes” (5.8) starts near the corner on bolts and leads to intermittent cracks above. A fifth route combining the obvious corner of “Pins and Needles” with the upper cracks of “Soup Kitchen” in one long natural crack system is “Cross Eyed Mary” (5.8). These are quality new routes, all about 30m long, on interesting features.

Mike is working on a route to the right of “Gypsy Eyes” that looks like a fine, think crack. There are other possibilities there. Another Mike is waiting for bolts to finish “Scrub-a-dub-Duck” (5.10b) at the Hiddens. A pretty good year for new free climbs.

Trailwork

This year started like all other years – as soon as the snow clears from the slash, a bunch of Heathens blast out there and salvage pick-up loads of cedar logs to use in the season’s trail-building projects. This spring six loads were delivered to the Hidden Walls trailhead, and later in summer, another two loads were taken to the trail near the pipeline bridge.



John has been working on the Gateway area, building a beautiful new set of stairs at the base of “Equinox” and rerouting the approach trail with a group of workers. This, along with the rescrubbing efforts at the Joint Wall, recent work above the Sluice Wall, and other projects, are the initial efforts in a general refurbishing of the area begun last year. There is much planned for this, one of the most loved of Crest’s cliffs, and home to the crag’s longest routes.



At the Hidden Walls work started in late winter/early spring when a direct route from the 2nd tier of the Hiddens was cut through the power line to Lower Sunrise, significantly reducing impact on some sensitive slopes and minimizing traffic through busy staging areas. Weeks later, a new staging area was built for “Free Ride”; “Wake and Bake Flake” got the same treatment; improvements were made to staging areas at “Vonless” and “The Odd Couple”; and the approach to “Fading Pussy” was resnipped. A continuation of the reroute diverts traffic from the top of “Loon Song” before connecting with the original trail.

With a direct route to Sunrise in place, the “other end” of the problem – the slippery slope and tree roots at the west end of the 2nd tier – could be dealt with. A hug log (14” in diameter and 14 feet long) was dragged up the hill by panting volunteers to carry a set of steps built to bypass the entire problem. Cleverly built cribs filled with rock provide an easy and aesthetic alternative to the ugly ground scuffle we used to endure traveling through that passage. Hopefully this improved access will rekindle interest in the two fine climbs above at the 3rd tier, and encourage climbers to do more routes there. We’ll see what snow-creep has to say about those stairs.

In addition, many bucket loads of small rocks were carried to the new staging areas, two new sets of stairs, and other locations. Resnipping was done along the trail at the base of the 3rd tier and the base of “Faulty Towers”. Finally, rounding out the impressive list of accomplishments at

The eyes glow with . . . it is humour? Curiosity? Sympathy? Then they’re off, dashing all over, and under, everything. Mice rampaging alone or in pairs – they can get anywhere. They are lightning fast.”

I really enjoyed the mice at ‘Oasis’. By the end, they would curl up on top of my booties as I wrote, to get warm. Sometimes I would turn off my light for a while and put my feet up. They’d emerge and begin to forage. Suddenly, I’d turn my light on again and stomp my feet in mock anger. They’d scatter then return to tease me. It is entertaining for all of us.

“I catch one in the light of my lamp. Furry, impossibly cute, alert, recently very well-fed mice. Their eyes are bigger than they are.”

The next ten days or so were mostly fine. We climbed roughly every second day. On the 18th we found a col that leads to the upper reaches of the Klatassine glacier and climbed a small peak up thee. There were views of the Jawawkwa Glacier, which is a real show-stopper; the Homathko Icefield, and the south faces of the peaks above camp. We scrambled one ridge to a little summit overlooking the bend in the Jawawkwa.

“We were right above the great bend, just where a large tributary hits it and shifts all the seracs of blue ice into a drunken, chaotic jumble. Wow!”

On the 20th we climbed the west ridge of ‘UnKlatassine’s’ subpeak (Pk2325). We left late and approached on snow. Paul found an amazing crystal at the belay. The climbing was some of the finest I’ve done. It was seven magical pitches to 5.8, rarely as easy as 5.6, including the most aesthetic I’ve ever lead. Unlikely but comfortable climbing just below the arête. We just beat the darkness to camp by descending some of the glacier in approach shoes. What a line to climb for Paul’s birthday.

The 21st is incredibly hot, probably 35 °C, so we melt in the moraine. This valley is filled with heat-trapping rocks. Paul and I drink 18 litres of water between us that day, the goal being to be re-fed and well hydrated by tomorrow morning. It was a stellar day, but we were to discover later that the heatwave we were enjoying was damaging most of Paul’s film, and would ruin 80% of the photos we took.

The ambience of the camp imprinted itself in my memory anyway . . .

“Valleybound turquoise and aquamarine cascades tumble over granite blocks whose crystals take turns reflecting bright sunlight into my eyes. The moraine sparkles. There are many chirping birds about, like the colourful and elegant hummingbird that just ‘thumped’ buy, investigating the festival of blooms. We saw goat tracks today, and I assume there are colonies of marmots in the valley proper. Our little oasis contrasts sharply with the rugged mountains around us. I just sat in the middle of it all on a boulder and let the power of the place do what it will to me.”

On the 22nd, we tried the north ridge of the beast above our camp, Pk 2468, the main objective for this part of our trip. We started with the climbing form of martial arts; a steep approach with

hind the clouds. We are in a climber's wet dream, first veiled, then illuminated.

"What a beautiful evening, but it's raining again now. That's OK. We're all set up – all the stuff is inside and we can begin the process of drying out. There is room inside for two guys in two chairs, two haulbags, seven Rubbermaid food boxes, two duffelbags, two packs, a small deck in front of the tent door, a kitchen made from a couple of large rock slabs. The snow and ice gear is waiting eagerly by the door. The various shelves poked here and there into the walls contain extra pots, spices, the coffee filter, binoculars, water bottles, sunglasses, candles, utensils, knives and tape. Small sticks form hangars for a flipper, the cheese grater, a watch, a lantern and bowls and spoons. One large shelf is built on the floor out of rock slabs laid on 10" stone legs. It supports most of our gear and you could recline on it like a couch. Boots, crampons and helmets are stashed underneath. The food boxes are stacked on either side of the tent to fill the space between it and the rock walls. Head space is provided by jamming trekking poles up under the tarp at strategic points to aid drainage."

On Saturday the 15th my journal reads . . .

"Tunes are blasting – The Watchmen, 'Silent Radar'. The stove is humming as it heats up the evening's warm drinks. I'm munching 'face pullers' that Heather gave me for my birthday. Delicious blueberry pancakes for brunch! Outside, the last rays paint the jagged summits gold, all the features defined by the lines between light and shadow."

We figured that we could tough it out under these circumstances for a while. It was finally clearing so we ripped up the moraine late in the day to catch a glimpse of the peaks to the south. The moraine provided fair footing and led right to where we wanted it to. We talked excitedly of the unlimited possibilities here.

The next day we climbed 'Mt. UnKlatassine' (Pk 2365), leaving in the early sun to the chorus of chirping pikas on the wind. Conditions were 'fat' this summer; glaciers not broken up and the slopes gentle. We stumbled along gazing up at handsome peaks; the leaned over us like stern schoolmasters. The broad and endless valley below disappeared into the great Homathko below huge spires draped with ice. We lingered there a long time.

In fact, we couldn't really get ourselves moving all day. At the bottom of a rappel we discussed how this had been one of our most beautiful mountain days, and how this was a spectacular location. The views were dramatic, each corner providing another surprise, tempting lines everywhere. The natural power was intoxicating. We drank deeply before pulling the ropes and heading home.

"We're thinking about our friends tonight, so far below and far away. Especially about Heather, Karen and Robin on King's Peak. We waved to them."

'The camp concludes this weekend,' I muttered to Paul. He toasted with scotch. Just darkness and stars, and real silence. No advertising, politics or war. Just the breeze making the shadow cast by candle lantern dance. Absolute peace.

"In the near dark many pairs of eyes peer out from between the rocks. There is much afoot!"

Sunrise/Hiddens this season, several logs were lugged up to next spring's worksites.

We hope to mostly finish this stage of work at the area next year. Our goals are to; build staging areas for "Scrub-a-dub-Duck" and "Pigpen"; improve the trail between "Hairy Pothead" and the top of "Hidden Treasure"; improve the approach and build a staging area for "Fading Pussy"; build a staging area at "Undercling Thing"; finish snipping the route between the Small Walls and the powerline trail to Gateway. We also hope to have at least started on the set of stairs at the rock step below Ahren's Rock. Dream on.

Elsewhere, the staging areas at the Crowsnest were snipped back, particularly at "Saxifrage", and there was some initial work done to the new staging area at Skid Row. Maintenance was done to the aid trails this year. Sean had the weed-eater out and cleared to Sunset Roof, up the ledges, and across as far as the ledge traverse. Chris and Mike finished to the staging area at Emerald early this fall by hand. This is good! I hate aid climbing all day soaking wet from a dewy bush bash approach. An access was snipped to the aid climbs at the Space Wall.

Mike Rankin did some beautiful work on the Main Wall this summer, prying up builders at the cliff base and replacing them with an even, clean, fire-preventing river rock surface. Paul helped him one day. I was really impressed with how nice it looks, and it wouldn't hurt to do more there. Nice work Mike!

Lastly, this fall, a bunch of game volunteers went out on some not very nice days to the base of "Above All Splendour" at the Joint Wall. A huge amount of rock was carried and placed in such a way along the stream bank as to mitigate erosion during peak flows (the river laughs at the puny humans) and protect the new staging area that we built there.

The staging area consists of steps created by combining existing boulder formations with constructed cedar log cribs. The steps are filled and surrounded with river rock to provide the optimum surface and allow drainage (this is a very wet area, little creeks run down the slope into the main drainage in several places.) Rock retaining walls were constructed to stabilize portions of the slope above excavated areas. A set of steps were installed to tackle the steep section above, and a small boardwalk constructed to cross the little creek and join up with the existing trail. Channels were created to control and direct water flows. We'll head up the hill doing improvements until we meet John working his way down from Gateway.

Wow, lots of work! Well done everyone!

Outhouse Project

What has happened . . .

- John and Andy consulted on a location and selected and flagged a site
- Parks donated some outhouse walls and fixtures
- Sean 'prepped' the walls
- Chris finalized funding from the Access Society to complete the project

- Paul and helpers cleared the site of trees and disposed of the debris
- John H. refurbished the donated toilet
- Parks delivered the tank to the site from Coombs
- A small area was cleared of brush and grass to expand parking
- Sean acquired much donated equipment and materials from local businesses and by salvaging
- Sean and helpers/swampers spent two days digging the hold, and the tank was lowered into it
- Several truckloads of sand were transplanted to fill the hole and surround the tank. Several volunteers and their trucks were involved
- The sand was compacted, and the slab was formed and poured by several folk
- John and Dave erected a tarp, erected the walls, and leveled and beautified the site
- Sean and helpers built the roof and mounted it on the walls
- John and volunteers painted the walls and trim.
- Landscaping was continued and signs were erected
- 'Chicken' refurbished another toilet
- John put the roofing metal on in October – just in time for rainy season.

That's where we're at. Some fascia boards and corner trim are left to go on. Our volunteers will be looking for an opportunity to install them sometime this fall. As we can acquire it, we will add gravel for the path to the outhouse, the new parking and to touch up the existing parking. Toilet paper will be there in spring, but if you B.Y.O.P. it is a functional facility now.

So, despite a few 'storm in a teacup' type incidents (sometimes things just get way too serious) the outhouse is essentially installed and completed. It's been a slow go. I'm no virgin when it comes to fundraising and projects, but I was still surprised at how much more difficult this endeavour was due to factionalism and bureaucracy. Fortunately, there was enough energy among the various volunteers to deal with it. One member would take some initiative just as another was running out of steam. The word 'club' means "group of individuals organized to achieve common goals", so I guess that is just the way it's supposed to work. The bottom line is that the "Hidden Walls Trailhead Project" is almost completed. Everybody should be proud of all the volunteers that made all that work happen, regardless of the importance of their contribution.

The club would like to take this opportunity to thank the various financial supports including (but I'm sure, not limited to) . . .

BC Parks - Materials, transportation, consultations, permission

Mountain Equipment Co-op - Major funding

The Access Society - Major funding, consultation

The Heathens Club - Major funding, volunteer labour, materials, equipment, fundraising

Individuals – Fundraising, expenses out-of-pocket, transportation

Donors – some individual donations were received

Our gratitude.

Notes to Sonia – 'Un Klatassine' and Doran Creek

Oasis

This trip started out wet. Mike dropped us off late in torrential rain. Eventually, at 11:15 pm we crawled into a soggy tent, hastily erected in the dark moraine. My clothes were wet, my sleeping bag and pads, personal gear; everything. Only the 'bag roll' and the 'goodies' escape. Priorities. The gear is outside under a tarp. The downpour continues.

On Friday morning the rain relents enough for us to walk around for ten minutes. How do you survive a 1,000km drive followed by thirty hours stormbound in a tent? By partying and eating all our goodies.

The problem was we'd gone to MEC to get something to read, but it's not about climbing there anymore. All you could get was last year's American Alpine Journal. Paul couldn't find anything that resembled a haulbag and none of the clothing seemed climbing functional. I noticed that if you rode a bike, paddled an ocean kayak or wanted to take your children into the outdoors you could find anything you might need but maps of the mountains out of daytrip range of Vancouver are special order at "Ma and Pa's Paddle and Pedal".

We escaped through Stanley Park and speculated on how difficult it must now be for murderers to crawl after girls in the dark with all those used needles lying about.

The dry land of the Interior appears, and I am reminded of a drawing Sonia gave me for my birthday – a lovely stylism of a pair of old trees standing below a partly clouded sun. It captures what you might describe as 'earth spirit', and illustrates how deeply rooted all things are in the world. I could see the theme everywhere in the canyons and dry pine forests. I decided that my journal on this trip would be a letter to her . . .

Friday afternoon it lets up enough for us to set up our tarp, and unfold a couple of chairs. What a relief just to sit! . . . a warm drink and a meal. We throw a few rocks around between rain drops. By 9:30pm the domicile is mostly finished, a kitchen built and all the stuff inside. That evening it breaks a little more . . . "Suddenly, it begins to clear. There are blue patches and the odd shaft of light. We begin to see what a wild little place this is."

A small pond, fed by a few small snow patches, nestles where to lateral moraines converge and create a flat area behind. On the slopes above is an attractive meadow and grove of stunted trees. There is an absolute contrast to the grey, bouldered valley bottom. We begin to call it 'Oasis Camp'. The moraine on the left provides perfect access to the glacial cirque between several of our objectives. The moraine directly above our camp is easily crossed, yielding a route to several spires between here and Mt. Klatassine.

As it cleared, the views became unreal. Evening light illuminated the ice cliffs at the head of the valley and large granite faces began to emerge through hither to impenetrable mist. The 'Witches Hats' and 'Twins' groups seem alive as they sneak from clear patch to clear patch be-

A “Crest” Winter’s Day

The air was cold and crisp, the sun shone brilliantly, the sky was a bright clear blue, and on the ground was a white carpet of snow. The branches of the trees were cloaked in white, a thin sheet of ice and snow covered the lake, King’s Peak towered majestically in the distance. It was a picture perfect winter’s day.

There were no fresh tire tracks on the gravel road, the ones we’d left last weekend were almost filled with new snow, no-one else had been out. We put on our packs and filed up the trail to Crow’s Nest, there were large paw prints in the snow – a cougar had recently traveled our path.

As we continued on the trail a strange sound filled the air. It was hard to describe, it seemed so unusual and different, but at the same time it seemed vaguely familiar. I couldn’t place what it was or where it was coming from. It happened again. It began slowly and then gained momentum and got louder and stronger. It gradually faded away and it was once more quiet. The only sounds were the ones we made, our breath and the crunch of our boots in the snow.

We were there now, at the base of Saxifrage, a favourite winter climbing spot. It’s sheltered there from the wind and the rain and it has a great view of the lake and the crags. It happened again. That strange sound, rumbling and groaning, it seemed to be moving. It lasted longer this time, and then it was gone.

I caught up with Chris who’d walked over to the base of Azen Wave, and I asked him if he knew what the strange sound was. We sat there in the sunshine and waited; and then we heard it again. “Singing Ice” - perhaps the aurora borealis of sound. Music that few are privileged to hear; strange and hauntingly beautiful, otherworldly, ethereal. Chris explained that the changing water levels caused the thin sheet of ice to ripple. The ripple set off waves of sound that moved over the lake and bounced off the rock walls behind, echoing and traveling on. He asked if I’d ever seen anyone “play” a handsaw, and told me to imagine that same movement in the horizontal plane of the ice.

The ice sang again, and as I sat in the sun I closed my eyes and let the sound wash over and through me. It brought back a memory of the early days of stereo music – that first experience where I felt the music begin on one side and then move through my head and mind to the other side and back again, the music filling me with vibration and sensation. We were in nature’s sound studio – and the concert was truly amazing!

Some ask why we go out to climb in the winter – we have our reasons. We were honoured to experience the singing ice that day – and the next, and I’m hoping that perhaps this winter we will be fortunate enough to experience it again.

Karen Hutton

A New Drill

We received a huge gift last year from Jerry Mundy and Valhalla Pure in Courtenay, who donated a brand new Hilti TE6A cordless drill for our climbing, trailwork, and maintenance projects. Sean liaised with Hilti representatives and was able to get an attractive discount. The representatives could not believe our old TE10 was still functioning. The Club wishes to express special thanks for this timely support. As if this is not enough, Jerry has pledged to help us find a source for hardware as well. Corporate support like that is rare.

The Access Society

The Society provided the final \$500.00 required to finish the outhouse. Several years ago, it was the Society again, helping prepare our grant application to M.E.C. Their support has made most of what we’ve done at Crest Creek possible. Are you an Access Society member yet? Climbing needs you to exercise your voice. Who better to represent you than the Access Society?

Some things we need . . .

Lots of volunteers. We have huge refurbishment projects underway at the Joint Wall/Sluice Wall/Gateway Rock complex at Crest; Kings Peak needs its annual care and attention. Projects like the “Hidden Walls Trailhead” take a lot of energy to make reality. Scrubbing, fundraising, hauling lots, trailwork, clean up, liaison, etc, etc. Your offer to volunteer will never be turned down at Rec and Con.

A chainsaw. This is our next big ticket item. Anyone got a thousand bucks? Let us know if you’re aware of any fundraising opportunities.

Conclusion

The tide is really rippin’ at Rec and Con right now, and our efforts represent most of the club’s energy output. It’s all good; Rec and Con is a good priority. Huge thanks to all the hard working volunteers, the tireless organizers, and the groups and organizations that make our projects possible.

Tread softly

Rec and Con are . . .

Chris Barner	287-4611	Chair, Crest Creek, Bolting, Access Society
John Put	923-8798	Co-Chair, Crest Creek, Bolting, BC Parks
Paul Rydeen	286-0098	Co-Chair, Kings Peak
John Herron	287-2919	Tool Maintenance
Sean Sears	286-1615	Power Tools
Ahren Rankin	286-4611	Bolt Fund

The 2006 Summer Camp at a Glance

The '06 camp was a special one as the Alpine Club of Canada was celebrating their centenary. We had the pleasure of hosting several of our friends from the Island Section this summer, and the honour of organizing a rock rescue course with them. Many of the usual faces were at the camp, as well as a few new ones. Another group of young Heathens is coming along; while the previous one teaches, and chronicles the new generation in photos and memories. Time passes.

Climbs were made on Mt. Colonel Foster, Big Den Mtn., Isdardi Peak, Crest Mtn., Elkhorn, Kings Peak, Matchlee Mtn. and Victoria Peak. Kings Peak, Elkhorn and Matchlee Mtn. were attempted unsuccessfully. The Elk River trail and Crest were day-hiked, and several smaller outings were undertaken around the crags and at other locations in the Highway 28 corridor. Aid climbing was popular – especially during the rainy second week of the camp. There was much cragging on every dry day. Many fine leads were done, but no new routes added.

Several courses were completed. In addition to the vertical rescue course noted above, which was energetic, productive and entertaining, there were two anchor building workshops, a leading workshop, a learning to lead course, and an introduction to aid climbing. As always, many hours were filled with less formal instruction.

Sean had his new weed-eater out and about, and several days of miscellaneous trailwork took place in a variety of locations around the crags. Some new sections of trail were laid out, and gravel was carried to fill staging areas. Logs were carried to future work sites. Mike and Paul spent a day working hard on Kings Peak removing wind falls and touching up the trail. John built a new campsite at the Alder Flats.

Much work was done on the outhouse project including a modest expansion of the parking area, site preparation, excavation, placing the tank and surrounding it with compacted sand, forming and pouring the slab, and transportation of outhouse walls to the work site. Many people were involved in these several days of toil. Special thanks to BC Parks, who delivered the tank to the site just before the camp, and to all the volunteers.

Occasionally a guitar was heard. Many hours were spent relaxing and socializing in the magical green light beneath the canopy of alders, on the beach in the sun, or gathered around candle lanterns at night. Heather, Robin and Karen could be seen plotting trips in the shadows. Large groups gathered at Paul and Heather's campsite mooching delicious treats. Everybody had a hell of a time telling the twins apart!

There was one evening . . . a bunch of us soloed up onto the Joint Wall ledge to enjoy the last of the sun and listen to the creek below. Others climbed nearby. Some gathered to socialize on the beach, conversations intermingled with each-other, and laughter. The light was perfect as Alex juggled up a fixed rope photographing the scenes.

Thanks again to all the awesome volunteers, and congratulations to all those involved – either learning or teaching – in the courses. A hearty 'well done' to the Alpine Club of Canada . . . doubly so to our friends in the Island Section.

See you next year.

The Tent Police

rywhere. This sight left Paul and Alanna staring wide-eyed. Their concern was obvious. Alanna set to work cleaning me up while Paul made sure I was okay to travel. The damage was more psychological than physical. Half an hour passed before we moved again. Now came the crux of the trip. Exhausted, hurt and leaking all over I had to regain the ridge. Two thousand feet of scorching rock and blistering snow lay in between. Paul and Alanna were patient but I fell behind time and time again.

LESSON # 7: ONE

MORE STEP

That's how I got to the summit of the last peak on our tour, one step at a time, one after another, by the thousands. Descending to camp presented one last test: traversing a long snow slope. Halfway across a step blew out and down I went. Arresting immediately, I was getting up before anyone noticed. Camp was a leisurely affair that night with several hours to soak up the surroundings.

DAY 4: BALLAD OF THE GREEN BELAY

Dawn arrived warm and clear. We stood together talking quietly. BOOM! The report of a cornice busting loose reverberated across the valley. "The hills are alive" Paul said "Keep your eyes on your fries." We started down the snowfield lying before us. Wide-open spaces gave way to mixed snow and timber. The snow turned to a sea of huckleberry and salal. Half swimming, half weaving we threaded a path through the brush. The angle increased until we were forced into blindly lowering for hundreds of feet at a time with naught but a mitt full of greenery for comfort. Paul wove an ingenious route back and forth through the bluffs barring our way. Reaching the bigger timber of the valley bottom, we smiled in the sure knowledge that the hard work was all but done. We savored the pleasures of cruising elk trails surrounded by the patriarchs of the woods. We crossed Pamela creek and after a brief but intense bushwhack we arrived at the road not far from the truck. What a joy! We could now walk "On flat ground with your head up your ass" as Alanna so aptly put it.

What a trip! I was not the same person who started out four days earlier. Older and bolder, leaner and meaner, oh yeah, one camera lighter. I was now primed for a summer of climbing. Bring 'em on!

Many thanks to Alanna and Paul for endless advice, encouragement and dragging my ass along.

All photos—Paul Rydeen



ODDUCK

Standing at the turn of yet another switchback, memories of high school football practice flooded over me. My body had wanted to quit then too. I mopped my face, lowered my salt stained glasses and took another step. This was my universe, the universe of “just another step”. Steeper and steeper the snow rose ‘till finally it blocked the sun. I climbed in shade for the first time that day and took full advantage until I walked out onto the col and into the sun again. Paul and Alanna sat bootless on the rock nearby. “How ya feelin’?” piped Paul. “Not bad” I replied, pulling off my inner boots. Twelve hours of hiking had left them a bit dank. “We were thinking of leaving the packs here and scampering up to the summit of Popsicle before dinner tonight. You feeling up to that?” My heart sank. That last ascent had me knackered and I’d figured we were just about done for the day. “Yea sure,” I sighed unconvincingly. Forty minutes later I stood on the summit with Paul and Alanna, our third that day.

LESSON # 5: WILLPOWER can do amazing things.



We found a bivvy site around 9:30. Set up was quick and dinner quiet. Everyone was tired. I was happy I’d gone up Popsicle peak; I dug deep on that one. I was wondering if I’d dug too deep when BANG! It was time to get up.

DAY 3: CRUNCH TIME

Gazing down from the ridge top I was dismayed to see the divide separating us from the last mountain on our tour. We began our descent from alpine rock and snow to thick timber over 2000’ below. The patches of

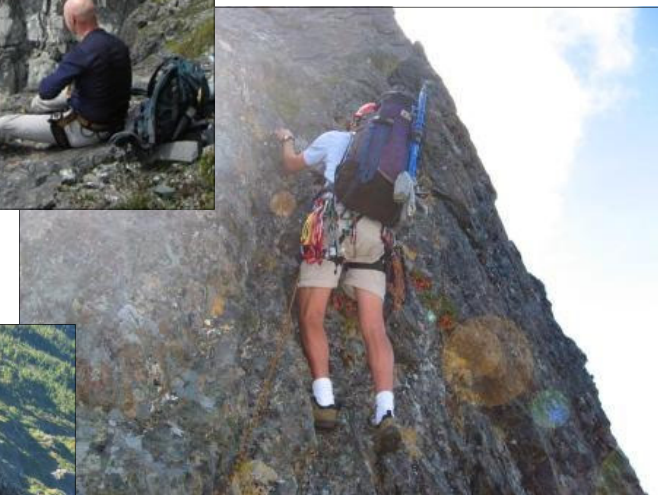
snow grew smaller as the trees grew bigger. I stood at the top of a small step watching Paul cross a snow patch. He scampered across the obviously thin crust like an overgrown snow-spider. Next came Alanna. Halfway she punched through with one leg but managed to stay upright. Now it was my turn. JUST GREAT! Setting my axe on top of the step, I began lowering myself down. Suddenly I couldn’t lower any further. My axe had caught somewhere. Try as I might I couldn’t free my axe nor could I pull myself back up. I thrashed about stupidly wasting valuable energy until I summoned up one massive effort to raise myself up and free my axe. I slumped to the ground panting.

LESSON # 6: STOW YER AXE!

Somewhat recovered, I got up and moved to the snow. I swallowed hard, took a deep breath and stepped out. Thinking the lightest of thoughts, I eased my way across. Then it happened! The whole works collapsed, pitching me over backwards. Down I slid, head first, struggling to keep away from the rock wall bordering the snow until I came to rest against some trees. Blood dripped from my left hand and both knees were a real mess, chunks hangin’ off and blood eve-



Miro on Victoria Peak



Jim Tanski leading on the east summit of Matchlee



Paul Rydeen on the east summit of Matchlee

Paul and Jim and the col



Pamela Creek Ridge Tour or Hikeneering 101

"Alanna and I are going camping for a few days next week, how'd you like to come along?" Paul asked with a sly grin breaking across his face. Eager for a chance at my first multi-day trip, I jumped at the idea without a second thought. "Sure thing! Where are we going?" "A little ridge tour around Pamela creek, three days or so." Came the reply. "NICE!" I said, or so I thought.

Thursday June 15th found the three of us packed into Alanna's truck, heading for Pamela Creek. That morning Alanna had driven to Victoria in her car, bought the truck, drove back to Campbell River and was now getting her first taste of 4x4 bush bashing. NICE WORK ALANNAMAL! Bed-time came quick, but morning came quicker.....

DAY 1: INNOCENCE LOST

We headed out at 6:00 A.M. with full packs and more than a little apprehension on my part. Paul's laughter riddled comments the night before about the 4,000- foot bushwhack to gain the ridge hadn't helped. "Thank god for Elk" I mused as we turned off the road and headed up. Our first rest came on a small bluff where I pulled out my new camera only to discover the LCD screen was now cracked. I'd worn the camera on my belt and something had hit it. I took a few pictures using the viewfinder as I fought off the taste of bile rising in my throat. What a start! Up again through the shrubbery to our next stop. What a place! A babbling stream tumbling down through a pristine forest glade. The boles of the trees shining bright against the emerald moss. A Kodak moment if ever there was one. I reached for my camera. WHAT THE FUCK! Now it's GONE! Case and all! I couldn't believe it. I really felt like puking. We'd gone through some particularly thick bush just down the hill so I made a cursory sweep through the area but to no avail. The camera could be replaced, but now I wouldn't have any pictures of the trip.

LESSON #1: Cameras go INSIDE the pack...or at least a sealed pocket.

Up through the bush and onto the ridge and alpine. Now we started three days of unmatched views, accompanied by endless camera jokes. Lunch was served on the summit of Donner Mt. NICE! Things were looking up!

Off to Kent-Urquhart! We stepped off the rock onto a moderate snow slope. Sweeping a broad arc along the ridge between Donner and Kent, it rose in a steep arête to the rock on the other side. "Go ahead." Paul said. "I want to take some pictures of you and Alanna crossing the snow." Partway across the slope I heard a swishing sound. Looking back I could see a little crimson toboggan rocketing down the snow...MY BIVVY SAC! It had popped out of the side pocket. Panic turned to hope as the projectile angled toward the rocks along the near side. "It's in the moat!" Alanna shouted across the snow. What Dumb luck! I tromped 200 or so feet down to the corner where it stopped and rammed it back in the pocket, this time running a tie-down through a loop in the sac.

LESSON #2: EVERYTHING goes INSIDE the pack...or at least gets tied down securely.

I was VERY LUCKY. It could have been worse. I still had a bivvy sac, but it was time to pay for my stupidity. I was now below and behind the others. I tried hard to catch up but the afternoon sun was now beating down mercilessly and my head was soon buzzing from the heat. Sweat gushed from every pore in my body as I huffed to the top of the arête.

The afternoon passed swiftly as we cruised the twin peaks of Kent- (with an "E" Alanna) Urquhart coming to rest atop a broad shoulder facing the sunset. Life is SWEET! And dinner never tasted so good. "I can do this no problem" I sighed, drifting into oblivion.



DAY 2: THE LONGEST DAY

Matchlee shimmered in the early morning light as we breakfasted and broke camp. I frantically struggled to pack my gear under the watchful gaze of Alanna and Paul who seemed to be able to eat, dress, crap and pack all at the same time. Everything done, we headed down slope toward a small lake in the divide below. The rock soon gave way to patches of trees separated by snow. I blithely stepped onto the first sizeable snow-patch, took a couple of steps and promptly fell forward sliding about ten feet to the end of the snow. "What happened?" Paul shouted as I rose up, brushing the snow off my clothes. "I dunno! My foot just slipped out." I replied sheepishly. "What's the matter? Don't you like the nice steps we kicked for you?"

LESSON #3: ALWAYS use the steps provided

Lesson learned, I stepped into the first of step of the next patch and promptly punched through to my knee. The weight of my pack pulled me over and I plunged down slope on my back while Paul and Alanna yelled at me to arrest. This time it was snow and blood that I wiped off. "I stepped right where you guys did!" I cried to Paul. "Well that one was obviously no good." Paul replied. "What the hell?" I puzzled.

LESSON #4: ALWAYS use the steps provided...unless they're no good.

The snow was now my NEMISIS. I pressed on feeling uncomfortable each time we ventured onto the white stuff.

We passed bump after bump of an unnamed 5500' peak stopping only briefly. We could find no shade. Hyperion blazed down from a sapphire throne tuning our skin red and the snow bowls into solar furnaces. Up, down, rock, snow, on we hiked. By mid afternoon we were cowering in a moat near the summit of MS Mountain, glad to have a few minutes out of the sun.

Looking around, I stood amazed by how close Mariner now appeared. Two days ago it seemed a distant ghost on the horizon. Now it loomed so close I could almost reach out and touch it. We were at the col between MS Mountain and Popsicle Peak, the halfway mark of our trip and the very headwaters of Pamela Creek. Before us loomed Popsicle on the left, a large knob of rock on the right, and splitting the two, a wall of snow close to 1000' feet tall, our way to the col above. The angle of the snow and the angle of the sun were almost the same. We were walking uphill, straight into the sun.