



The Chinook

The Newsletter of the Calgary Section of the Alpine Club of Canada

Volume 41, Number 1

January 2006

The next Calgary Section Meeting is at 7:30 pm on Tuesday, 17 January
2006 at the Bow Waters Canoe Club, 1975—26th Street SE

This month:
Nancy Hansen, "Rock climbing and road tripping
in the US and Canada"



Living Traditions
Sandy Walker

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**100 Years of Vertical
By Sandy Walker**

It's not often that we get to be part of something momentous and be able to truly appreciate it at the time. This is your chance: 2006 marks the 100th anniversary of the Alpine Club of Canada, and all of us - all 1000+ Calgary Section members - get to take part in the celebration of all that has been accomplished by Alpine Club mountaineers past and present during the last century.

It's been a long time since the club was first formed in Winnipeg one frosty March in 1906 by AO Wheeler and Elizabeth Parker. Did you know that back then, in order to be an active member you had to have climbed a 10,000 foot peak? Chances are it was also a first ascent. Since that first year, the ACC has grown from a handful of members to more than 5000 members in 19 Sections across the country.

Times have changed since that first meeting and even mountaineering itself has changed. Have you ever wondered what kind of climber Austrian Mountain Guide Conrad Kain would be today with high-tech gear, 100-ft contour maps, GPS, sat phone, and super-light pack? Surely this has been debated the odd time over the years in mountain huts over a bottle of scotch. Would he have been a ropegun, putting up new Alpine V routes every weekend (which he would have graded no higher than a 5.6) or would he be an average climber – like

the rest of us who follow in his footsteps, guidebook in hand? Obviously there's no way of knowing. But I'm willing to bet that there are more than a few of us who would turn back from the infamous gendarme on Bugaboo Spire if we didn't know for sure that Kain's route really does "go".

Or imagine being a female mountaineer back then. Sure, women have been members of the Alpine Club since that first meeting in 1906, but contrary to all the old pictures you may have seen of Mountaineering Mamas, women at Alpine Club events were not allowed to wear long skirts when they climbed roped up - they had to wear knickerbockers or bloomers with puttees (go ahead, look it up in the dictionary). For women, courage back then wasn't necessarily doing the first ascent of a peak, it was facing your disapproving Great Aunt Ethel who greeted you upon your return with a shameful shake of the head and a disapproving glare as you strode back into the house wearing bloomers and puttees.

Whether you're a man or a woman, the next time you're hanging in a figure 4 from a heinous overhang on an Alpine VI 5.11c r M6 thinking that you are the greatest alpinist the world has ever seen - ask yourself if you ever would have gotten to this point if the rope tied to your harness were made of hemp, if your harness itself were made of rope, if your mixed-climbing-boots-with-abrasion-resistant-goretex-gaitors-and-integrated-crampons-with-heel-hook were replaced with homemade hobnailed boots and puttees, and if your ergonomically designed mixed climbing tools were replaced with a mountaineer's axe with a 3 foot long straight wooden shaft. On second thought, don't think about it - it'll probably freak you right out.

This is the ideal time to look back on the great ones of the past who started us on the path to all things vertical in this part of the world and continue to inspire us to do more. We no longer have to prove ourselves before being accepted as an active Alpine Club member (in fact, how many of us learned to climb on a Section trip?) but we should still be proud to be members as we look towards the next 100 years of the club. We're very lucky in Calgary - we have some of the best ice climbs, best rock climbs, best skiing, and best alpine routes only a day-trip away; and we have an active membership that explores them frequently. Over the next 12 months you'll be hearing about the ways the Calgary Section plans to help celebrate the Centennial. So get out there and enjoy. And Happy Birthday!

Karl Nagy Memorial Award

The Karl Nagy Memorial Award was established in 2001 to assist aspiring amateur leaders and guides in the development of their leadership and people skills. Until his death in 2000, Karl set an outstanding example as a mentor in the mountains and was well known for his leadership, safety and success. Karl was admired and loved for his exuberant attitude in the mountain environment that he played and worked in.

This award is intended to provide an opportunity to ACC aspiring amateur leaders and/or ACMG candidates to develop their leadership skills and abilities within the ACC General Mountaineering Camp (GMC) environment. All applicants must be current members of the Alpine Club of Canada.

The Karl Nagy Memorial Award Selection Committee will select one applicant to attend a week of the GMC to observe and assist current guides and amateur leaders. While there is no monetary value to the award, the recipient will gain valuable and unique leadership experience. ACC amateur leaders and ACMG candidates will be given priority in alternating years. The year 2006 is set for an aspiring amateur leader.

The **deadline for application** — **January 31, 2006.**

For more information, visit
www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/activities/leadership.html#nagy

**Ski Camp—Purcell Mountains
Rocky Mountain Section**

The Rocky Mountain Section is planning a self catered ski camp at Boulder Hut near Kimberly, BC. Boulder is part of the Ptarmigan Tours facilities in that area, and has a variety of ski terrain for all levels of skier. There are places for three people still open.

DATE: February 26 to March 5th, 2006

COST: \$780.00

CONTACT: Rod Plasman Email: rod.plasman@banff.ca
Phone: daytime (403)763-1231 or evenings (403)678-4313



**Marmot Women's Centennial
Ski Camp and Mountaineering Camp**

For several years, Marmot and the ACC have offered two leadership camps, one in winter and one in summer, for our female members. Designed and offered for women exclusively, the ski camp provides an opportunity for women work on winter leading skills and gain ski mountaineering experience in an "all female" setting.

Daily activities will be organized and supervised by an ACMG guide. These camps are not as intensely structured as The North Face – ACC Leadership courses; rather they provide a low pressure opportunity for women to gain more mountain leadership skills within their personal comfort zone.

Dates:

Winter course - February 6-11, 2006 (Rogers Pass, B.C.)

Summer course – July 9-14, 2006 (Bugaboo Provincial Park, B.C.)

Cost:

\$995+GST. If your Section offers subsidies for trip leaders taking leadership courses, you may be able to apply for financial assistance.

For more information, go to the Mountain Adventures page on www.alpineclubofcanada.ca

Annual photo contest - April 2006

If you're planning to enter this year's photo contest, please submit your photos or slides to Cam Roe (253-5463) as soon as possible (at the latest, by the March ACC meeting)

For Sale

Bergaus -Yeti gaitors for backcountry ski boots.

Never glued to boots. Two Pairs, Size medium and large. Asking \$30 each.

KM knee high covers for climbing boots.

Grippy waterproof soles, breathable nylon uppers, never used. Two Pairs, Size medium. Asking \$50 each.

Paul 249 4997

"After the Bivouac and Before the Next"
By Orvel Miskiw

The potential for having to spend a night out on any particular climb can often be foreseen, and the appropriate equipment taken along.

To save on space and weight, the barebones bivvy equipment commonly taken along by most climbers, including me, is really quite poor, in fact inadequate; if you have ever been stuck on a climb unexpectedly, you have almost certainly experienced an uncomfortable bivouac during which you had time to think over simple additions that would have made it more fun.

If you have never been forced to bivvy, the notion may still seem romantic and cause you little anxiety--you may dutifully put a poncho and an extra sweater in your pack for some climbs; your first bivouac will get your attention.

I have upgraded my bivvy gear, and advise you to review yours too. This article should be seen as a starting point; although longer than I hoped, it's far from exhaustive because of the endless possible combinations of specific items that you could put together with your own preferences, many of which are unknown until your next bivouac (and beyond--every bivvy is different). A reasonable bivvy kit for even the climbs most likely to produce a bivouac can be small and light enough to keep in the bottom of your pack for MOST trips, but may be trimmed a bit for climbs that are better known and some combination of moderate, short, in good weather, and so on.

The main problem we have to deal with in a bivouac is **how to keep warm**; other problems include dehydration, malnutrition, and becoming overdue, and those all have their own solutions, typically extra water, extra food, and a cell phone. But hypothermia, sometimes called exposure but usually known as misery, is the worst enemy of the benighted climber. So my main interest is in **a bivvy kit that provides shelter, insulation, and heat**; no self-respecting Bivvy Kit can ignore any of these requirements.

Shelter and insulation restrict heat loss : shelter keeps cold out, and insulation keeps heat in, while a heat source supplements inadequate or waning metabolic heat production.

"Shelter" should be windproof and waterproof: a bivvy bag is still the primary item; a bag is generally superior to a tarp in that it greatly improves wind protection. Most fabrics can serve as wind shelter, but in case of rain or snow, obviously at least the top should be waterproof. A totally waterproof bag, like a huge garbage bag, would do in a pinch, but perhaps ideally the bivvy bag should be waterproof on top, breathable below for versatility. Unfortunately, when you occupy a cramped shelter for a while in cool weather, exhaled and

transpired vapor condenses on the wall--on breathable sections it gets absorbed, making the fabric heavier and gradually less breathable (both effects arguably minor problems in a one-night bivvy); on waterproof sections it accumulates as water on the surface and wets you and your clothing. I've found that to be only slightly improved by a breathable bottom section; a better compromise can be achieved in dry conditions by turning the bag over to put the breathable section on top.

"Insulation" is of two types: contact insulation and envelope insulation. Contact insulation is a layer of material that isolates you from the cold surface that you sit or lie on, i.e., a ground pad; many packs incorporate an ensolite pad in the front wall; otherwise, very thin and light ensolite-type pads can be found. A short ensolite 1/8" thick, or substitutes easily found in shipping departments or at building supply outlets, can reside perpetually in the bottom of your pack without causing any encumbrance and hardly be noticed; yet it will make a big difference in the tolerability of a night out under the stars. Some people will opt for a small Thermarest, but I consider them both too bulky and too fragile for the rocks and sticks likely to serve as an impromptu bed in a bivouac. Envelope insulation is simply a warm body-wrap, and should be at least a duvet or (better) a light sleeping bag. Another alternative is a light ski-doo suit or one of the full-body coverall liners worn by construction workers in winter. Its purpose is to reduce heat loss to the air around you by radiation and convection. This may seem the bulkiest and heaviest item I recommend, and for those reasons is rarely taken on a climb, but it is a great comfort in the event of getting stuck out overnight. A variety of great low-cost synthetic sleeping bags are available which are very light and compressible, some little bigger when packed than the popular sil-tarps often carried by climbers around here.

In addition, though I didn't intend to discuss clothing, I should mention a few valuable items of bivouac clothing that might not be in your usual climbing pack contents, especially in summer, since even summer nights can be very chilly in the mountains. A comfortable toque or similar headwear should always be in your pack; because of the high rate of heat loss through the head and neck, insulating them is important in a bivouac. Another thing that I find oh so nice in a bivvy or when the weather turns gusty and chilly during a climb is some sort of light insulating jacket with a hood, particularly the modern light shelled fleece jackets, and especially if you can find one with a hood. Otherwise go with a hooded fleece jacket, or a turtleneck sweater, or even a separate bibbed false turtleneck (a dickey) or a neck tube, or a bib balaclava instead of a toque. A balaclava is less likely than a toque to fall off while you sleep. Any of these combinations will insulate both your neck and head.

"Heat": After my most recent forced bivouac this summer, I spent a lot

of time building tin-can bivvy heaters; the main thing I wanted to achieve, besides good heat output, was to have the flame enclosed so that it wouldn't blow out in a breeze or set fire to anything in a tight space like a bivvy bag. Most of my experimental heaters use tea-lites, which are the small disk-shaped candles in individual metal pans, which are used in chafing dishes. They don't fall over or spill easily, and candles have a long shelf life. One candle burns for over 4 hours and puts out a surprising amount of heat, also seems to burn quite clean with no odor. I built several versions to find a compromise between light weight and cool enough to handle, since the 'reactor core' can get quite hot.

My different models range from the "Beer Can", which is ultra light-weight and takes minimal construction (since it already has a lid as a flame deflector) but has to be handled carefully because it has sharp edges and gets hot, to the "Inferno" which can burn up to 4 candles at once and really belch out the heat but is heavier, with 2-wall construction for user-friendliness, each of which may be considered best for a particular situation. (The beer can is simply sliced open across, about 1" above the bottom except for a 'hinge' strip about 1" wide, the bottom bulge is flattened, and the burning candle is slipped inside.) As an alternative to candles, I've long contemplated Sterno and other such products which are small tins of jellied fuel with threaded caps. I imagine they pose some risk of spillage in the pack because of the rigors of normal climbing, but the containers and caps seem to be rugged enough that with a little care that should not be a problem. These are available for about 3\$ each or 2 for 5\$ and produce serious heat, in bivouac terms. So I've also experimented with them in the same type of tin-can heaters and recommend them along with candles, each with pros and cons.

Other available heat sources should be considered as well. For example, 4 climbers recently benighted on Mt. Brock spent some time discussing those little chemical pouch handwarmers that night: how nice it would have been to have some of them along! I ruefully recalled having a few of them among my climbing gear...at home. I later found that in fact I had 8 of them, of 5 different brands, but rarely carry them because they rely on mechanical agitation and air to be activated, both of which are fulfilled during a typical climb, so the heat packs would likely be activated in my pack, hence my reluctance to take them anywhere. But after the bivouac, I realized that they would have been better in my pack with a chance of working, than at home in perfect condition.

I also have a metal clamshell handwarmer which burns charcoal fuel sticks, and have used it several times. It works well and I believe these are still available. Its heat output depends on the number of stick-ends which are burning: if one end of a stick is burning, it produces so much heat. But if you then

light the other end as well, it will burn twice as hot and last half as long. The stick can also be broken in two or more pieces and some of the resulting new ends can be lit to burn correspondingly hotter. A belly-size version may still be available and is worth considering as an integral part of the bivvy kit. You would likely want to choose between the flame-type and the direct-contact types of heaters: the tin can also works as a rudimentary stove while generating ambient heat, and an occasional hot drink is most welcome in a bivouac; meanwhile the hot-pack and charcoal heaters need less attention: you can lie back and doze off with these on your belly, etc.

Space Blankets and Vapor Barriers: I've waited until now to mention space blankets and vapor barriers because I know that many people are skeptical about one and turned off by the other. But I can assure you that both work very well when they are needed: most recently, the space blanket we had on Mt. Brock felt almost like a heat source: when it was pulled over us, everyone immediately felt heat from it. In addition, it was a total wind-blocker (except around the edges of course) and completely waterproof if necessary. And I have used vapor barriers extensively in the past and come to an agreement with them. A vapor barrier is extremely effective for vapor and heat retention, but as a result it does make you feel clammy and so takes some getting used to. It is easier to tolerate in colder weather, but for an emergency bivouac, I'd rather be clammy and warm than freeze-dried. The importance of vapor retention is that it keeps transpired body moisture out of your envelope insulation--usually your sleeping bag. With a vapor barrier bag inside your sleeping bag (strip down to synthetic skivvies--a full suit if possible-- and socks, inside the vapor barrier) and a waterproof windshelter outside, you are in very good shape to wait out a chilly mountain night in minimal discomfort.

TO BE CONTINUED IN THE FEBRUARY CHINOOK

**Cascade Falls
By Scott Montgomery**

I picked up Mechthild at a crossroads on a chilly Calgary morning. My 'Moon Cruiser' vehicle sputtered and sputtered towards our meeting place - she always seemed to do so just on the edge of town. We met Andrew and Ian, piled into Ian's Cruiser and set off to meet 'David from Canmore'. Mechthild suddenly thought she had forgot her boots. As Ian reassured her that he had

transferred them to his vehicle, I realized I had left my warm, toasty boots, behind the passenger seat heater in my Cruiser! Mechthild suggested I could rent boots in Canmore and Ian spun tales of misadventure due to forgetfulness with parties having to turn back; at least we didn't have to do that!

With 'David from Canmore' and my rental boots, we hit the trail and gathered our senses and belongings. My word it was cold! "I can't believe it is supposed to warm up to minus five", Andrew stated. On the trail we met three wise Park Wardens in their lovely orange jackets – nice to know they were there if we needed them.... Up we went! Into the blue sky and warmth of the day, leaving behind a beautiful sunrise. The ice was nice – good hooks and steps. Ian led Mechthild and David up the left hand side and Andrew and I tackled the right. The left hand party looked good against the shining mountains.

Andrew and I were short roped and swapped the lead towards the third pitch of climbing, when one of my crampons kicked-off. I struggled to find a screw whilst loaded up with a pack and coiled rope. Ian rescued me with a placed screw and even put my crampon back on! Then he led the final pitch whilst Andrew and I waited for a descending party to arrive at our station. I was leading the final pitch, just about to step onto the top pillar, a mask of ice with running water just behind it, when my crampon kicked free again! The rental boots didn't seem to be a good fit for my twelve year old foot fangs after all, though I did try to coax a tight fit between them. I placed a screw and was contemplating refastening my flighty footy friends, when the other one kicked off too!

I bailed and Andrew took over and led the final pitch. We were well behind our speedy trio to the left. Another party arrived at our station from below and Andrew had to wait till they were clear before returning to me and my crappy crampon situation. Ian's team departed on the left and Andrew and I made haste to catch up. I rappelled to the lower mid-station to meet Andrew with one crampon on. We pulled and pulled and pulled on the yellow rope. Andrew went across to the left side and pulled and pulled and pulled the yellow rope. Our rope had become stuck! Thank God for solo climbers. Two were rapidly approaching from below and we thankfully appreciated their efforts to free our rope. Ian had patiently waited for us at the bottom of the last rappel and accompanied us on the down climb. Isn't he nice? Thank you Ian, for sharing your fine tradition in adventure.

Participants: Ian (leader), Mechilde, Andrew, David and Scott (scribe)

**Fortress Mountain
By Melanie Fricot**

The sky was already spectacularly blue when Katerina, Marilyn, Gerald, Marco, Daniel and I pulled into the Chester Lake parking lot on Saturday, September 17th. Katerina, the trip coordinator, offered some cautious words that we may not reach the summit due to the recent snowfalls, but with a generally optimistic, "we shall see" attitude, we set off.

Our plan was to approach the Chester-Fortress Col from the Headwall Lakes side; after navigating our way through the network of multi-coloured ski loops, we emerged from the trees to pick our way up the talus slope, and then contour above the waterfall and forest.

We ended up having a bit of a snack just around the corner from the lake. Great views were never lacking on our multi-lingual path (many languages were spoken amongst the group). When we reached the snow-covered slope directly below the col, we could already see the tracks of one group, and another was in the midst of ascending.

Grateful that we would not have to kick steps ourselves, Marilyn led a blistering pace up to the col, where we basked in the sunshine and great views, and examined the steep avalanche potential of the other side (Chester Lakes approach). We decided to carry on towards the summit, and met the first group coming down.

Amidst laughter and jokes from the rest of us about how exhilarating it could be, Katerina managed to dissuade them from trying the avalanche-slope descent. We then carried on up to the summit of Fortress, rounding the summit block on the left side. Kicking our way up through ever deepening snow, we clambered up to the wide and windy summit.

After a few minutes to enjoy the enormous view of the surrounding peaks and of the crows soaring and alighting on the towers of Fortress, we started our descent. This time we chose a lower path by the lakes and stream, and for once the "approach route" seemed *much* longer going home.

We reached the parking lot again at 7 pm (somehow this "5 – 8" hour hike had turned into a 10 hour hike for us!). We agreed however that Fortress had been one of the loveliest scrambles we had ever done.



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NO CALLS AFTER 10 PM IS THE POLICY OF THE SECTION, THANK YOU

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Chinook Submissions: Any article relating to the Club or the mountains is welcome. Please send submissions as an email attachment to **callanan@telusplanet.net** before the 26th for the next month's issue. Microsoft Word documents (Arial font) work the best. Submissions become the property of the Alpine Club of Canada and are subject to editing.