



The Chinook

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

Volume 42, Number 06

July 2007

The next Calgary Section Meeting is a potluck/barbecue at 6 pm on Tuesday, August 21st 2007 at picnic site #5, Edworthy Park. See p. 2 inside for details.



Climber's Shadows
Allan Main

Inside this issue:

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Minutes			2-3
Notices			3-4
Short Roping	Greg McDougall		4-6
Section Camp Gear Work Party	Orvel Miskiw		6
Walk the Wapta, Again	Jesse Invik		7-8
Skyladder, or	Masiar, Greco & Walker		8-11

REMEMBER

There is NO meeting in July.

There is NO Chinook in August.

The AUGUST MEETING will be a potluck/barbecue on Tuesday August 21 at 6 p.m., at Edworthy Park picnic site No. 5 (the same place as in previous years). Bring your favorite dish to share.

The section will provide hot dogs, tofu dogs, buns, condiments and beverages (juice, pop).

If people want to be environmentally friendly and bring their own cutlery/plates, that would be great. (The section will supply disposable cutlery, plates, cups, etc.)

**ACC CALGARY SECTION
SECTION MEETING MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday June 19, 2007
 Location: Bow Water Canoe Club
 Commenced: 20:00 Adjourned: 20:10

Section Business

- Leslie encouraged members who are present to pick up a Chinook and a schedule. Members can sign up for collating by talking to Chuck and Leslie.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Climbing Committee

The summer trip schedule has been published.

Training and Leadership Committee

- July 14-15, 2007 - Intro to Rock Leadership Weekend.
 - August 11-12, 2007 – Advanced Alpine Leadership Weekend rescheduled. A few spots are still available.
 - Courses available from Yamnuska (5% discount), Rocky Mountain Adventure Medicine (10%) and Shiva Mountain Lodge at COE in Nordegg (20%).
 - Ideas for Fall Evening Sessions: Meteorology Evening, Short Roping Debate, Advanced Ice, Ski Leadership & Avalanche course.
- Submit your ideas for training courses at the T&L committee.

Social

- July: No section meeting. Go climbing!
- August: All members are invited to the annual BBQ held at Edworthy Park at Site #5.

NEW BUSINESS

- Rick Collier encouraged members to pick up the latest issue of Explore magazine and to read the article on the use of stoves inside tents.
- Be sure to check out the article on river crossings in the June Chinook. Members are encouraged to submit their responses to the article in the next Chinook.
- *****

**Summer Schedule
Corrections, Clarifications & Additions**

June 30-July 1:
Mt. Willingdon-Alpine Scramble, 2 days, Long,
Moderate, need strong participants for fast travel.
Greg McDougall, climbingbum@shaw.ca

July 27,28,29:
Mt. King George-Alpine Climb, 3 days, Long, Advanced;
mainly rock; river crossings.
Greg McDougall, climbingbum@shaw.ca

Aug 18th-19th:
Mts. Woolley & Diadem: Alpine, 2 days, Long, Advanced;
mainly snow & ice; river crossings.

Greg McDougall, climbingbum@shaw.ca

For Sale

A very good pair of Asolo plastic mountaineering boots, Sz 8.5 to 9. Rarely used, excellent for walking on glaciers. Asking price \$130.00

For the photographer:

Plastic slide boxes that can hold 100 slides. Asking \$6. per box.

Boxes that hold 80 slides. Asking \$5. per box.

Plastic mounts with very thick glass protection both sides and mounts without any glass protection. Hundreds of them , all in good condition. Offers ??

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**Short Roping
by Greg McDougall**

Short roping is a very important technique for travel in the mountains. Its applications can range from scrambling (3rd/4th class) and alpine rock, to ice climbing and skiing, and can be the difference between unprotected soloing and safe, fast, efficient group travel. Short roping, however, must be applied to the proper terrain and with proper technique, or there is the risk of endangering the whole rope team.

Short Roping is simply defined as climbing with reduced spacing between team members and or simply reducing the length of rope that is out between leaders and followers. So why would we want to do this?

1: We climb in the Rockies, and often our alpine climbs are pure choss with lots of scree and ledges. This means that at times it is beneficial to use more short pitches rather than fewer longer pitches, in order to eliminate rope drag, and decrease the hazard of a snagged rope and knocked-down rocks.(Safety)

2: Communication becomes much easier, for example across 10m versus a windy 50-60m pitch. (Group Management)

3: On scrappy sub-technical terrain which parties may be tempted to solo, a slip may be hazardous. Short-roping with a body belay is much faster than setting up and organizing a 2-3 piece anchor. And at times, good anchors just don't exist. I know it has been said before, but there is a definite safety in speed. (Speed).

On certain ice climbs such as Rogan's gully and This House of Sky, short roping is a compromise between soloing and pitching out the whole route, and when combined with appropriate belay and pitched-climbing techniques, can turn a long day of tedious excessive pitching into a safe, efficient 1-1.5 hr ascent (even with novices). Applying correct techniques to the rambling steppy terrain is a great way to avoid group soloing and to avoid unnecessary technical climbing procedures.

Short roping uses the concept of putting your body in position with natural features to hold a slip or minor fall. In order to achieve safe short-roping techniques, the rope must always be kept snug to eliminate excess slack and the potential for the buildup of energy which results in shock-loading (a bad thing) to the belay(er). To achieve this there are basically four different belay techniques. They will be listed in order of security and belay strength, from weakest to strongest.

1: The hand- or carried-coils belay: This belay is essentially designed for moving together where the likelihood of a fall is low and the consequences are limited. It is commonly misused, and the belayer must always be paying close attention for the potential of holding a slip. But it is a fast technique.

2: Shoulder/Standing belay: The typical guide's pose, and the most commonly misused belay technique. The belayer must pay close attention to keeping the rope low and his body in a braced position, as he relies on a combination of body weight and leg brace to keep a potential fall from upsetting his stance. This technique is great for sub-technical/scrappy terrain, particularly when you can really brace yourself with a feature. But use caution for the times when the fall could generate enough force or momentum to pull the belayer out of a stable position.

3: The Body/Hip Belay: The most efficient and strongest of the body belays, especially when combined with being behind a feature and done in a sitting position. Seated belays/ braced belays are stronger than just standing hip belays. While it can take slightly longer to do, it is the most secure and a great technique for terrain where anchors are lacking. Caution must be exercised when there is a large weight difference between the belayer and the climber.

4: Feature/Anchor Belay: This is a very strong and efficient technique, where you use a terrain feature, such as a rock horn, tree, or even a good piece of gear and put the feature between you and the second climber. If you need a stronger belay, you can use a Munter hitch to increase friction, or use a dynamic belay by just threading the rope around or through the feature and controlling the end of the rope.

In the case of a dynamic/short-roping belay you can also protect the anchor/feature, as in the case of a questionable block of rock, a marginal tree, or a snow belay.

The technique of a dynamic belay often works well to protect the belay by allowing a little rope slippage; the peak force on the belay is reduced by spreading out the shock of a slip or fall over a slightly longer time period.

These are just a few of the techniques, the most important thing though is not to "F*ck it up" : practice these techniques to improve your safety and efficiency.

Some good routes to practice these techniques on in order of difficulty from easiest to

more advanced:

- 1: Mt. Baldy.
- 2: SE Ridge of Lady Mac from Cougar Creek
- 3: South Ridge of Wasootch Tower.
- 4: A2: Summit Block
- 4: Edith Cavell NE Ridge.
- 5: Pigeon Spire West Ridge
- 6. The lower part of the Kain Route on Bugaboo Spire
- 7: Mount Assiniboine.

Section Camp Gear Workparty: A Success!
By Orvel Miskiw

On Sunday May 27 quite a few people showed up at my place in response to an invitation I sent out for help with sorting and repairing all the various items of equipment that we've accumulated for the various Section 'camp' events including the Rock and Ice Reviews.

After all the recent unsettled weather, snow and so on, we were lucky to have a couple days of good weather in advance to dry out the lawn, and the weather was still nice for this job.

The participants quickly took charge of different tasks, inspecting, repairing, and making notes, so things progressed efficiently. Camp chairs were set up and checked over, outfitter-tent frames were set up for final inspection after recent repairs, propane stoves and lanterns were tested and checked for missing or broken parts, high-camp tents were set up, the chainsaw was tested and refueled, shower and toilet enclosure frames were erected, repaired, and re-organized after the traumatic treatment they got at the Vowells camp last summer, propane bottles were re-filled, and so on. Finally we enjoyed pizza and beer before the final cleanup in mid-afternoon.

As usual, a few outstanding deficiencies still remained to be taken care of, but the emphasis in that regard was in relation to equipment needed for the first upcoming event, which was the Rock Review.

A few days before the work party, Peter Lloyd and I minutely inspected the canvas for the big tents, which were mangled by a strong wind during the Ice Review in January; then he took them away for sewing; the smaller, new tent sustained the least damage and was ready in time for the Rock Review.

Fully one-third of the 58 frame pieces for the two outfitter tents were bent or broken--I straightened, re-shaped, and welded them as needed.

Tom Fransham has taken away the "Scorcher" propane outfitter stove to replace its gate valves with a less-sensitive type in order to make the stove less dangerous.

Most of these kinds of work are best done, or at least overseen, by the people who use the equipment, since deficiencies in the equipment are best identified by those people. And so like most Clubs, we rely heavily on volunteers. My thanks to Karen and Mike Dodge, Dana Engler, Michael Gendreau, Dave Hanson, Rebecca Haspel, Peter and Logan Lloyd, Marg Rees (who drove all the way in from Canmore just for the work party), and my wife Deb, who helped keep everyone in a good mood and invited us into the house for lunch. Personally, I didn't have to do much work myself, being mainly occupied with going for tools and materials needed by the real workers.

Winner of the 2007 Calgary Section Literary Contest

**Walk the Wapta, again
By Jesse Invik**

Stepping onto the glacier that first day of my fourth Wapta, full of undeserved confidence in my role as co-leader of the trip, I made my first error. I was too close to the gaping mouth of the glacier, water flowing voraciously out from under it. I walked out a ways on the bare ice and started laying out the ropes, the knots indicating positions for tying in. The glacier made an odd hissing noise, something I hadn't heard before, a noise like it was settling. I figured I was probably standing over an air space and I retreated, forgetting my axe. Holding my breath, I walked back out to retrieve it. Confidence shifting. Later in the day, perched on a small island of ice in the middle of a crevasse, trying to get up my courage to jump over the gaping maw. Much better to jump than stand on a one foot square island of rotten ice and think about it.

A hut full of tired happy people. Baking in the sunshine and nursing sore feet and knees. The next day brings rain, snow and suddenly blistering sun. We climb up Mt. Thompson, and there is the raven, cocking his head, not quite eyeing us up, as though we aren't worth the effort. He takes off and soars, not moving his wings in the least. Mocking us and laughing.

The summit offers great views of the Vulture col. I think of the next days' efforts. Back at the hut, standing surrounded by these snow-capped giants, Nienke says "we are the luckiest people in the world." Allison, who was not quite given full information about the nature of the trip is not so sure about this statement. I think it over and silently agree with Nienke. We are reduced for a few days to the very basics. Food, of which any and all kinds taste great, cleanish water, shelter and great companionship. And one foot in front of the other. Much less difficult to take things for granted than at home.

Next day I'm out front of the whole group. I pick a perfect line up, set a perfect pace. Try to race the sun which is busy warming the snow. In a short time it will be mush and we'll be sinking in to our knees. But right now we are moving fast and efficiently. My head is swelling. Gee I'm pretty good at this, this is working very well. Pride before a fall runs through my mind. Okay, what stupid thing will I do, or have done already and not noticed? We take a break, Ivan comes up and congratulates me on my line. I swell more. "Where are we going now?", he asks. Is he testing me, or just inquiring? "Up there I say smugly", pointing at the Vulture Col. I've looked at the Murray Toft map, just last night, studied the pictures on the back, looked at the route lines on the front. I can't really remember the route along this section from when I last did it, 2 years ago. But the pictures, the map. "Vulture Col" I say, "Right side of the nub".

I get there first, of course, and I look down the other side. I get a little nauseous. No way are we going to handle this. Where did I go wrong? Ivan, when he gets up to me says "I've never gone this way, I was curious as to what it looked like". A quick glance at the map reveals I was taking us up a genuine route - a ski route for winter travelers. Ivan just chuckles. I say "Ivan, next time you think I'm wrong, tell me!". I'm forgiven quickly and kindly by all my team mates, and the rest of the day goes fine. But my pride has indeed fallen.

The Balfour Hut is in such a beautiful place, very different from the Peyto Hut. There is lots of space to wander around. Still feeling a bit foolish, I wander alone and find a very Jamiaca- Ocean blue cave in the ice at the foot of the glacier. I'm a little scared to venture in and settle for a few pictures from the outside. Mt. Balfour cavs hunks of ice as I continue to walk on. They resemble what I think mortar-fire would sound like.

In the morning the trudge through rock and scree up to the glacier seems to take forever. In contrast, we go up the ice very steadily and quickly. Until we get to the giant crevasses. Once these were easily passable, to the left away from the falling debris. When I get past the first couple and up to the third, I find it stretches all the way to the end on the left and very far to the right, past the line where the debris from falling seracs is thick. There is a tiny snow bridge in the middle. I poke it, and prod it and poke it again. It's not ice, it's snow, its very narrow and the crevasse very deep. I'm not keen on this, but there is no other way. Gingerly I walk across. It holds. I keep moving and the team comes up behind. I wait for a sharp pull on the rope but it never comes.

One more test. The entrance to the Scott Duncan Hut. I'd forgotten about it until I saw it in the distance. Sloping snow leading to a cliff of dirty blue ice. A slip on this snow slope would require very quick action to prevent a nasty fall. Everyone makes it in. I breath a huge sigh of relief. Why do I do this to myself? I could be home teaching the neighborhood kids the parts of my car engine. They love it and nobody gets hurt. But no one is hurt and everyone is happy, crammed like sardines into the Scott Duncan hut, pulling duct-tape off their feet and melting snow for snacks. It was a pretty spectacular day. All of a sudden it seems very sad that this is the last night up here. A lighting bolt breaks my train of thought and distracts me from my melancholy. I start to think about rain and whiteout in the morning.

We rope up inside the hut, it's a first to my knowledge, and very practical. Poor visibility dogs us on the way out, but the rain isn't too bad. Everyone is wet, but nobody is really suffering. Abruptly the glacier ends and we happily ditch the toolbelts from our waists and continue on down rock. This time Ivan makes the navigational mistake, and I'm still smarting from my mistake so I don't argue much. We turn up on top of a very daunting cliff face. Again, everyone is very forgiving and we only lose about 1/2 hour. It makes it more interesting anyway. The drudge of walking in the trees follows and seems to take longer than the whole rest of the trip. The highway noise starts to waft up to us and suddenly its over. Gear is all over the ground, car lids opening up to accept piles of stinky clothes and muddy boots. And everyone is gone. The road to Saskatchewan opens up and I feel exhausted and depressed watching the mountains fade in the rear-view mirror. That drive home is always so anti-climatic. But I'll be back, I still have to have a chat with a raven.

Thanks so much to my most excellent co-leader, Ivan Hitchings, and my wonderfully forgiving participants: Suzanne Mills, Allison Mills, Joycelyn Kelly, Joe Hitchings, Nienke Lindeboom, Markel Chernenkoff, Malcolm Lesser.

Skyladder or Scorched by Andromeda

Saturday May 26, 2007

A trip report submitted by ACC members Paul Masiar, John Greco, and Bill Walker

It was clear but warm outside, even though there was a light frost on the car. There was no wind. We drove from Rampart Creek Hostel to the climbers' parking lot just below the glacier tour bus depot and started hiking at 4 am. We wore headlamps but it was quickly getting lighter and I wondered whether I should have bothered with the extra weight as I turned if off after less than 5 minutes. We travelled quickly over the moraines and easily mounted to the Andromeda glacier where we donned our crampons and roped up. There was a track from a party of

two which we followed up between the crevasses and soon found ourselves at the bottom of Skyladder.

By now it was quite light and a breeze arose which chilled us as we halted to prepare for the ascent. The snow was neither too light nor too wet but soft but holding. The weather seemed to be perfect.

We made 2 teams: ACC members John, Bill, and Paul, and a couple of Swiss climbers, Stefan and Anselmo. Stefan kicked steps and we all followed simul-climbing the first half or more without stopping. The snow was firm, the kick steps deep, and Stefan was ploughing through like a locomotive.

We made short work of the steep part but, as the angle decreased somewhat, we began to hit steel-hard ice so Stefan began to use screws. Our lines separated for a while, the two teams climbing in parallel, both leaders digging for protection and using screws at long intervals. Meantime the wind picked up and snow swirled above and about us.

The scene was very Himalayan: blue sky, bright sun, spindrift everywhere, snow quickly filling the kick steps. Looking up the snow slope was like looking down over a grand but miniaturized scene over which a 1 centimeter snow-fog seemed to sway and eddy. John was just 30m above me but each of his kick-steps was filled and reduced to just a thin crescent at the top and by the time the last climber took out the screws, they were already invisible, just a rope pointing to a place where they used to be. Paul took out all the screws and with each one he got a little heavier and the going got a little slower.

Our calves were burning by the time we reached the shoulder.... We walked up to the plateau and stopped for lunch. It was sunny with a few gathering clouds and breezy but not nasty... We should have put on sun screen as well but the sun's rays did not seem that intense. We were to pay for this crucial omission later.

Our plan was to traverse the mountain to the AA col from where we would descend. We trooped a surprisingly long way and achieved the summit around noon. We took photos but, because of the increasing wind, didn't linger.

Stefan and Anselmo preceded John, myself, and Paul and by their stance at the edge overlooking the AA col I could tell before arriving that there was An Obstacle. Indeed. Paul's pamphlet read "proceed on the south side of the ridge to bypass steep difficulties on the ridge proper" but we were standing on a rocky precipice at least 150 - 200m high stretching away to the south gnarly and steep. We hiked up and down along the edge stepping out onto each promontory (losing precious time in the process), made more frustrating by the constant snagging of our ropes on the litter of rock strewn about and, looking down, forward, and back, carefully inspected each gulley and chute. It would have helped to find a cairn or something to indicate the right descent gully.

Looking across at Athabasca we saw a trio descending to the col. I secretly wished we had it so easy. John and Paul finally settled on one gulley which seemed to offer a reasonable rap to another small tower below. There was nothing to sling. Paul tried hammering in a few pitons but the rock just fractured and the pins popped easily. Clambering down to a ledge John was

able to set 1 small nut and a pink tricam. Stefan and I anchored ourselves in the snow and belayed John as he tested the anchor for a descent on our doubled half ropes. We held our breath...safe! Paul then descended and by the time I arrived they had an anchor consisting of a good pin and a tricam. The pin was remarkably good, and the tricam was solid; how we arrived at this patch of solid rock, when all other rock was just compressed mud is a mystery.

By now it was grey, windy, and snowing lightly. The five of us huddled at the station, I marvelling at the how little Faith is mentioned in climbing literature as Paul next descended to the snow slope below us; from there we each down-climbed another 60+m to the bottom of the slope. Looking back and up it didn't seem quite so bad but that's always so with a change in perspective, isn't it?

We ascended to the AA col and looked about for a "feature that could be slung; a station below has a piton..." Although we noted that the aforementioned trio had disappeared over the edge above and to the right we surmised that the col would be steeper and longer there. I had made the ascent 2 years earlier but as a member of a guided party and so didn't make the same mental notes that I make in earnest now. Suddenly Paul found a desk-sized block with a piton at its base and we decided that this must be the feature. Slinging a cordelette and a quick link Paul rapped down to a squat obelisk below and immediately called John to join him with some more rock gear.

I went next. Upon descending, anxiously trying to not knock off some medical text-sized rocks precariously stacked along the route, Paul announced to me, "This is not the right way". Pointing to climber's right he indicated what was apparently a long, uninterrupted slope from top to bottom which, perhaps, could have been down-climbed. "That must be the slope that the guides take their clients up." I looked at the anchor he had found: a manky pin and large nut with a 6 mm cordelette which he had re-inforced with a second medium-sized nut. Paul, John, and I were clipped in separately; Stefan was linked to me and Anselmo to him, each of us wanting a slightly better perch but acutely aware not to jostle. Paul offered a sacrificial locking biner and started to descend as we watched the anchor intently. No sooner had I said, "The pin seems to be holding" - ping! - and out popped the pin. We all froze. A few meters below Paul muttered: "What popped?" John anxiously tried to jam

the pin in a crack but in vain. The well-equalized nuts held solidly. The rock held solidly. We let out our collective breaths and Paul continued to the end of the rope. We'd have to down climb the last 80 m or so.

We gathered together and roped up as we were just above the bergschrund. The new snow was deep and spooky. To the far right and left big holes in the schrund were visible with some snow bridges. Paul set off to skier's right and descended. Playing out his rope, John said to me, "Let's put a turn around my ice axe." and he had just done so when we heard Anselmo shout. Looking up I saw that Paul was gone and in his place a large crevasse had appeared, the bergschrund, 4m wide, 50m long, blue descending to black within, a puff of snow dust rising. Paul's rope lead straight to the edge and disappeared.

For a moment we were stunned and just stood there trying to comprehend. We called but heard no response. The rope was taut but obviously not under full body weight; I estimated he had fallen no more than 5 meters but we didn't know if he was injured or buried within.

John and I secured Paul's rope and Stefan and Anselmo made a T-slot anchor and prepared to descend with prussics ready should the schrund be impassable at this point. Just as Stefan began to descend Paul's rope slackened and then we saw his head appear. He called for slack and then clambered out onto the far bank.

"I fell in", he recalled later, "but the rope and my pack kept me from sinking too deeply into the snow below. I was buried up to my shoulders with just my right arm free. I found it difficult to breathe but I managed to dig out a small space in front of my chest and the breathing difficulties eased off. I called out but

could hear nothing. As I kept digging with my hand the snow was falling back into the hole. So I took off my helmet and excavated right down to my boots to free the rest of my body. Luckily I wasn't injured."

Paul from his new view point below the schrund warned us to not descend from where we were. By now it was around 6 pm; sun beams poked through low cloud to the north but in the valley the light was flat making assessment from above even more difficult. We decided to move to skier's left and John built a T-slot anchor. Stefan rappelled down but broke through only a meter or two and climbed out. The rest of us descended likewise with John, last and off anchor, simply able to jump the divide. From below, looking over further right, the schrund yawned again: we had chosen well. None of us wanted to contemplate the alternative if we had been unable to pass.

We re-roped and crossed the glacier making for the track left by the trio high up on the Athabasca side of the valley. Looking back, there was the guides' route, after all, on climber's far left: no schrund, an easy slope to descend. The track along the high wall of the valley however was intermittently swiped clean by a half dozen avalanches which must have occurred worrisomely soon after it was made: no route in the mountains is without risk.

We arrived back at the cars at 8 pm. Sixteen hours. Sharing a cold beer in the bitter wind we congratulated ourselves on having succeeded, terribly sunburnt but without injury.

Lessons learned (or at least reinforced) as e-mail exchange between participants:

-Anchor building in the alpine is rarely textbook. But, with patience, persistence, and imagination there's bound to be some way to build a reasonable anchor.

-Two or more teams lend flexibility to potential rescue operations: John and I were tied to Paul and couldn't easily escape; luckily Stefan and Anselmo were independent.

-Don't trust pitons with an unknown history. I've heard this many times. I have to admit that (in the past) I always felt confident after clipping a found piton...much more confident than after clipping a piece gear I placed. That view has changed now.

-You can relax in the alpine but always have some buffer time in your schedule; you can't set out too early...don't be complacent, don't waste time: you might need it.

-You rope up on glaciers for a reason. When the glaciers are fully snow covered with no hints of holes, it's so tempting to take short cuts like moving to a more comfortable spot on the glacier to wait for the others to descend or to have lots of slack in the rope when the first person leaves from a rest area. Thankfully, we were doing things right when it mattered.

-Even when you are pressed, take the two minutes needed to apply sunscreen or get out your hat/visor, etc. It's silly to get seriously burned when prevention is so trivial.

That's all, Folks

**ENJOY THE REST OF THE SUMMER
AND
WRITE ABOUT IT FOR THE CHINOOK**

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

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