



The Chinook

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

Volume 42, Number 9

November 2007

The next Calgary Section meeting will be 7:30 pm Tuesday November 20 at 7:30 p.m. at the Bow Waters Canoe Club, 1975—26 St SE

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Followed by: Raphael Slawinski

“If you can fail here, you can fail anywhere:
Alpine Climbing in the Rockies and Abroad”



Another beautiful day on Cascade
By Mathieu Bourgeois

- Trip leaders are requested to submit their completed waivers to the Climbing Committee. The ACC is required by law to keep trip waivers on file for seven years.

Ski Committee

- The ski committee is also helping with the compilation of the winter schedule. Target completion date is November 1, 2007. Ski trip leaders are requested to submit their trips to Tom Fransham.
- The BITS (Backcountry Introduction to Skiing) Program will run again this year. Events will include an Intro Night (November 14 at 7 pm), a trip to Chester Lake (December 1) and other trips such as Rummel Lake, Observation Peak, and Bow Summit.
- Ski Camps are planned for 2008 include Campbell Icefields (February) and Icefall Brooks (April).

Training and Leadership Committee

- Meteorology Workshop by Andy Strangeman will be held on November 5, 2007 at CAOC.
- Introduction to Mixed Climbing December 16, 2007 by Sean Isaac. This event is open to all members at a cost of \$100.00.
- Advanced Ice (Jeremy McKenzie). This event is open to trip leaders.
- Members' Handbook has been revised and is available online.
- The winter course schedule will be included with the winter schedule

Library

Library material is available tonight for check out for section members.

National

The ACC GMC (General Mountaineering Camp) will be held in the Vowells in July-August 2008. Sign up quickly to reserve your spot!

NEW BUSINESS

A party for all GMC participants and volunteers will be held on Saturday October 27.

December Meeting & Potluck Dinner

The annual Christmas pot luck dinner will begin at **6:15 pm** Tuesday 18 December 2007, to be followed at 7:30 by a short meeting and then a presentation by Murray Toft:
Oberlander and Haute Route Traverses

**Tigers Testing Tops for Trips
By Ray Norman**

Last month in Chinook I wrote about the new Trip Scheduling addition to our website. Here's an update.

Progress has been pretty swift over the past month. We convened a team of three people - David Roe, Renee Lavergne and myself - to look at the website closely and to work with the system developer to hone it razor sharp. For some reason this trio have acquired the name of "The Tiger Team". Nobody knows where this name came from, but it seems to have stuck!

Anyway, the Tigers have been setting up all sorts of fake trips on the website - which is still held at a secret testing location. Some of these trips sound quite adventurous. There is a Tiger Hunt, and also K2 by the Easy Route. Fortunately none of us will be required to actually set foot to ground on these adventures - they are cyber-trips only.

We now expect to load the Winter 2007-2008 trip schedule into the new site by the end of November, so that it will be ready for members to use for the winter season. People will be able to sign up for trips online, and leaders will be able to keep track of their participants without the usual scraps of paper.

By the way, in a fit of over-enthusiasm, some Tigers have triggered automated emails about fictitious trips to various members. If you have received an email about a trip you've never heard of you can safely file it in the Tiger-basket.

In the next Chinook, I will be giving brief instructions on how to get started with the new website. Meanwhile, if I could find some red meat.....

**Course Subsidy Policy
for Calgary Section Trip Leaders
by Stacey Karalash**

Did You Know???

Calgary Section Members who take a mountain skills and/or first aid course and, six months before or after the completion of the course, lead a trip for the Calgary Section, can apply for a subsidy under this program

Subsidy amount will be the cost of the course, up to \$100 per course

Any course on the Section's Course Schedule (Winter or Summer) is automatically eligible for a subsidy. Any course NOT on the Section's Course Schedule should be pre-approved by the Executive to determine eligibility

Each person can apply for one subsidy per year

To apply, please give to the treasurer a copy of your invoice and a copy of the waiver from your trip (remember to photocopy your waiver before turning it in following your trip!)

The full subsidy policy can be found on the ACC Calgary Section Website under Summer/
Winter > Documents/Waivers > Trip Coordinators Handbook
<http://www.alpineclubofcanada.ca/calgary/documents/documents.html>
Questions? Ask any member of the training and leadership committee!

Mixed climbing clinic December 16

Learn the dark arts of mixed climbing with guide and professional climber Sean Isaac. The clinic will cover dry-tooling techniques, advanced ice movement, leash-less trickery and leading strategies, as well as advice in evaluating the hazards that go along with the mixed game.

The course is geared towards **intermediate or advanced ice climbers** but would also be suitable for **experienced rock climbers** interested in winter climbing.

Sean has been teaching mixed climbing clinics for the past 7 years and has authored both a guide book - "Mixed Climbs in the Canadian Rockies", and a how-to book - "Mixed Climbing".

This course is open to all members, but is limited to 6 people.

Cost - \$100.00.

Registration deadline - November 15th.

To register, contact Gerry Drotar at 280-7281 or gerrydrotar@hotmail.com

Considerations When Using Half Rope

By Jeremy Mackenzie

Recently I have been involved with the ACC Calgary Section as an instructor for the Waterfall Ice and Rock Leadership Training Programs. These courses are not so much about *lead climbing* as they are about *leadership*. The courses are designed to help members become more proficient and skilled to volunteer as amateur leaders for the section. If you are an active amateur leader, or would like to learn more about becoming an amateur leader, then be sure to watch for upcoming courses. The Calgary Section has taken much initiative to commit a lot of time and money to leadership training, so if you get the chance to attend a course, make sure you take advantage of the opportunity!

One topic that has come up several times on the courses is the use of half ropes. Normally on the course we focus on the use of single ropes, mainly because it is a much simpler and more versatile technique. However, several participants have mentioned using half ropes frequently and were wondering about certain applications of this technique. The most common dis-

cussion involved the situation where a team of three climbers would use only two half ropes. This means that the leader is belayed on two strands of half rope, & then belays the second and third climbers on only one strand of half rope each. This technique is worthy of some consideration.

During the courses I try to encourage participants to think critically about everything they do while climbing. So why do I not teach the technique of belaying a climber on a single strand of half rope, even though some rope manufacturers suggest this technique is acceptable?

For some expertise on this question I turned to my friend Kirk Mauthner, owner/operator of Basecamp Innovations Ltd. Without a doubt, Kirk is one of the most experienced and respected rope rescue specialists in North America, and has published several articles on the topic. He is an internationally certified Mountain Guide, as well as a gear tester and gear designer.

When I asked him about this technique he highlighted two main issues. First is the possibility of cutting the rope and the second is rope stretch. Kirk points out that in a *well managed* belay (ie: no slack in the system), a top-rope fall should have maximum forces of about 2.5 kN on the rope for a 100kg climber (a big climber with a pack). Modern half ropes can easily handle this force. However, given the smaller diameter of half rated ropes there is an increased chance of cutting the rope over an edge or with an ice tool or crampon. In other words, the smaller the rope, the higher the chance of cutting *all the way through*. The second consideration when using a single strand of half rope is the issue of rope stretch. As Kirk points out, there is a significantly greater fall distance before the climber is stopped when using only one strand of half rope compared to using a single rated rope. This means that the falling climber has a greater chance of catching a crampon or impacting a ledge on the way down.

The Association of Canadian Mountain Guides (ACMG) feels strongly enough about these issues that they consider it unacceptable to belay a climber on one strand of half rope in technical rock terrain. So it seems that for a greater margin of safety, and better risk management, the technique of belaying with a single strand of half rope should be avoided. If guides do not use the technique, why should amateur leaders? If an individual chooses to use this technique in their personal climbing, that is their choice; but guides and amateur leaders should default to a greater level of safety.

So what are some of the options? For parties of three climbers, consider taking two single ropes. Two single ropes are not significantly heavier than carrying two half ropes, and you maintain your ability to descend or retreat with double rope rappels. On the most recent Rock Leadership Course we discussed climbing with a group in 'caterpillar style' or 'linked rope configuration'; where the leader ties into the second climber with one single rope, the second ties into the third climber with one single rope, and the climbers all move one at a time. The participants noted that 'caterpillar style' may not be significantly slower compared to double half rope technique which often has complications such as double rope tangles, more difficult belaying, and challenges of climbing two at a time (one on top of the next).

For a party of two, consider using a single rope, especially with an inexperienced belayer. Carry a light weight tag line if the descent or retreat requires long rappels. Alternatively, with an experienced belayer, use the double half rope technique since the second climber will be tied into both

strands, thereby eliminating the concerns discussed above. One common argument for using half ropes is the issue of rope drag. Often this is easily managed with the use of long runners on your protection, and/or choosing to shorten a pitch that has a major traverse by building your own belay in a strategic location. In all honesty, I avoid using half ropes whenever possible, and carefully consider the routes where I think I need to use them. Are they really necessary, or can I manage the route, including the descent and potential retreat, in another manner?

Hopefully this discussion will trigger some thought the next time you are choosing your rope technique. With the current trend in the climbing world of going lighter, lighter, lighter, it becomes especially important to think critically about the techniques and the tools we are using. Are there times when we take it too far and decrease our safety margins for the sake of a kilogram or two?

Jeremy Mackenzie is an ACMG Ski Guide and Assistant Alpine Guide. He lives in Invermere, BC.

It's All About Teamwork

By Paula Corbeil

As a newcomer to the sport of scrambling, every trip this past summer has been a new experience. When I saw TV Peak / Stuart Knob on the schedule, two peaks in one day, I thought well there is a first time for everything. According to Alan Kane's book it was a 7-11 hours, with 4 possible peaks on the Castle Mountain plateau. How hard could that be, after all just last month I had scrambled Mount Aylmer – and that had included a mountain bike ride. With Elisabeth Dupuis leading the trip, 130 + scrambles to her credit, I knew we would be in for an ambitious outing.

We started at 6:00 am leaving from Calgary, Elisabeth, James and myself. We met up with Brian from Wainwright at the Rockbound Lake trailhead. After a brief discussion of the day's plan we were on our way, up the long and winding road to Tower Lake. The air was absolutely still which made for a perfect reflection of Mount Eisenhower and the fresh snow on the talus slopes. A family of bald eagles watched us from the far shore as we made our way up to Rockbound Lake, still in the shadow of the morning sun.

We arrived in time for mid morning snack and at about 10:15 we made our way up the first gully on the right hand side of the lake. We had two options from there, either to keep going up to the top of the knoll toward Helena Ridge or walk around on the grassy terrace. We choose the latter and ended up on the far side of the lake, scrambling up a short gully to reach the plateau. To the left was Castle Mountain, to the right Helena Ridge and straight ahead was our first destination, the Knob. As we set about crossing the plateau I thought about the timelessness of the rock, wondering what it would be like, 530million years ago when it had been created. It was still very much barren rock with very little vegetation to show. With the exception of the marmots, we were the only living creatures. Kind of like a moon walk might feel.

At about noon we reached the end of the plateau and decided to have lunch before we

began the scramble up to the Knob. We had a tremendous view of the Bow Valley and the Eisenhower tower – it is such a landmark. From our lunch spot we clambered up the scree slope, crossing a few narrow bands, to reach the snow covered ridge. Now we could see over to Mount Temple and the majesty of the glaciers. The Knob looked to be most easily ascended from the west, which meant it would be snow covered and quite likely slippery. I really couldn't imagine how my boots would be able to grip onto the snow. I took a deep breath and followed the steps of experience.

With each step I gained more confidence, and then came the final 20 vertical feet. I could see a series of ledges and gullies would get us there but they were filled with snow. I expressed my concern and Brian enthusiastically offered to help out. I mustered up the courage to go up, knowing that somehow I would make it down. In a very calm and reassuring voice he guided me on hand and toe holds, and stood behind me ready to grab my pack if I should slip. After what seemed like a very long time – in fact probably only 15 minutes, we were on top of the world of Castle Mountain. What a view to behold.

Only too soon it was time to leave as we had another peak to go to. After a brief look at going down the east side we decided that the west side would be the best option as we knew it and it looked a lot shorter. Once again with Brian's help and his trusty ice axe, I managed to get down, one step at a time and to my amazement I didn't slip. I was very glad and very grateful for Brian's help.

By now it was 2:00 and we had to hustle if we were going to make the 2nd peak. Elisabeth figured it would be about a 2 hour round trip to TV peak. It looked awfully far away to me, but as this was her 130th plus scramble and only my 5th I decided to trust her judgment. Brian did the math and decided with a 6 hour drive back to Wainwright he would head back. So we bid our farewells and the three of us headed to TV peak. Both Elisabeth and James were still in fine form, but the Knob had taken a toll on my energy levels so I knew I had to pace myself. I kept up as best as I could, scrambling along the side of the bowl that brought us to a ridge leading to TV peak. At this point I knew I needed a rest so I opted to sit and enjoy the warmth of the sun. Just as I was relaxing I was awoken by a powerful whooshing sound. I looked over to my left and about 10 feet away there was a falcon about 1 foot above the ground, wings out stretched; a small bird was making its way to safety. Better luck next time! Off it flew; at this point I sure could have used a pair of those falcon wings to get me home.

The peak baggers made it back in no time at all. Elisabeth assured me that I would have another chance to access the peak – via Protection Mountain. I was beginning my 'list' for next year! Back across the bowl we went. When we got to the approach of the Knob James suggested we travel back on the East side, since we could see what looked like a path on the scree slope. It was snow covered and as I did not have an ice ax, Elisabeth gave me the option of going round the way we came. I decided to try it out, once again following the steps of experience, with James leading the way and Elisabeth ready with her ice axe to catch me if I slipped. Indeed I did, but Elisabeth quickly caught me before I went too far. The crossing brought us back in front of the Knob to a slope leading down to the plateau.

It was now about 5:00 so time was becoming an important consideration in our choice of route. We could walk around the slope back to the route we had taken before lunch or look for an opening in the rock bands below. James was quite confident we would find one so we decided to check it out; if after half an hour we didn't find a way then we would retreat back round the bowl. The first rock band was quite easy; the second was not so obvious. We found several possibilities that would have been fun for James but definitely out of my comfort zone. It was looking like we would have to turn back, and then, at the very last point, before the true cliffs began, a route appeared.

As the sun was beginning to dip behind the mountains, we made our way across the plateau staying high on the north side, at the foot of Helena Ridge. We stopped briefly to say hello to the Castle Mountain marmots. They are so bushy, it's hard to imagine how all that fur fits in their narrow doorways. In no time we were back at the knoll that we had skirted below earlier in the morning. With one last farewell look at Castle Mountain, we began our descent to Rockbound Lake. After a brief stop to get recharged, we started the plod down the trail, a long but easy walk. After the last, of the last last switchbacks we made it to the parking lot, with at least 15 minutes to spare before it would have been headlamp time. Brian's car was gone so we knew he had made it out. James, Elisabeth and I were soon on our way back to Calgary, tired but very satisfied scramblers. Thanks to all of us, we had a fabulous day.

**Tombstone Mt. (South)
Richard Collier**

After the typical ACC calls of inquiry, vague commitments, dropping out, shifting dates, last-minute disappointments, and frantic decisions about cars, tents, food, and gear, I finally got my first Section Trip in nearly fifteen years organized. When we left on the long drive south to the Flathead area of SE B.C., we were a party of only three, but fortunately we had done some back-country climbing together before.

The Tombstone Mt. we were headed for was not the one that climbers in Calgary know and love – the one near Little Elbow Lake in the Kananaskis – but instead a remarkably striking, if often hidden peak within 25 km of the US border. This fine geological upthrust sports a thousand foot N face (quite rotten, I'm afraid) and often casts, as a result, a long, dark shadow: from certain directions, it really does look like a spooky tombstone. But it is not easy to see since it peeks through the trees and surrounding summits to the W only occasionally and is obscured almost completely from the E by the peaks near the West Castle ski complex (see the Beaver Mines map -- 82 G/8 -- GR 831603).

The approach requires a drive down the Chain Lakes highway, a right turn W through the Crowsnest, and then S on the Corbin Mine Road; after the mine (22 km), the road demands

4WD. Another 10 km brings one to Flathead Pass, after which one descends slowly past Centre Peak and into the Flathead River headwaters. After about 30 km, you pass an outfitter's spread (otherwise the area is virtually deserted), then the intersection with the Harvey Creek/Lodgepole exit road, and around 37 km you reach GR 801533 (82 G/2 – Inverted Ridge), where an ancient road that climbs up Middlepass Creek and over to the West Castle River departs to the E. Unfortunately, the unbridged Flathead River intervenes.

I had checked this out a couple of years before, but in June. At that time, the Flathead was in flood stage, and it seemed dubious that one could boat across, much less ford it by foot without getting swept into Montana. It was with some surprise then, that I viewed the river from the road and realized it was only about 8" deep. My truck splashed and wallowed quite happily across the braided strands of the stream and then up the steep bank on the far side. A bit of poking around on a network of ATV trails and we found the original Middlepass track, which we followed through ruts, mud, and up some exhilaratingly steep hills for about 3.2 km, at which point we intersected the old road heading N up Haig Brook.

Here we hoisted our overnight packs and started walking. Two km of easy travel, with the occasional bit of navigation to stay on the trail, brought us to the bend in both trail and stream to the NE; from here the trail stayed on the N side of the stream and several hundred feet above it. We were indeed grateful for the trail since the bush was intense after this point. We followed the trail for another 4.5 km or so until the skies, which had become increasingly threatening, opened up and poured. Time to pitch camp . . . only there were no flat spots and we were high above the brook. Eventually, after getting thoroughly soaked in a variety of willow/alder tangles, we dropped down 250' to a damp meadow right next to the easily fordable stream. It was a wet and snuffly evening, but we had a fine supper and some good stories of the summer's derring-do.

The next morning was cloudless and clear. After a leisurely breakfast, we hiked back up through the willows and continued on up an easy drainage to a col in the S ridge of Tombstone at GR 829597; from there it was scree sloggling to the summit at 8250', an elevation gain from our camp of 2750'. In beautiful warm sunshine (although with a stiff breeze, as is usual for this area), we had fine views of a myriad of unnamed summits to the W; of Commerce Peak, Kenow, Miskwasini, Starvation and King Edward to the S; of Haig and St. Eloi to the E and NE; and of the various divide peaks to the N. The view down the N face was truly inspiring – no doubt about it, much of the face overhung.

It being only about noon, we scrambled down to about 7300' and then around the SE and E sides of Tombstone, eventually side-hilling to the col to the NE – excellent views from here of the huge N face; climbing this damp, loose precipice would be quite a project. We then continued up another thousand feet to a summit to the NE, a twin of Tombstone, at GR 841612, which we named 'Boot Hill'. No cairn on the 8250' summit.

We hoofed back on the slightly overgrown trail (which perhaps leads over to the West Castle) and down to our camp for another fine supper as the evening slowly melted from daylight to a sky filled with stars like salt spilled on velvet.

The next morning we packed up and hiked out, reaching the truck about noon, and then

drove back out and over the still shallow Flathead, exiting the area via the Harvey Creek/ Lodgepole route – this is a longer but faster means of access and exit to the Flathead and spits you out onto the highway at Morrisey Bridge, about 12 km S of Fernie.

Participants: Rick Collier (leader & scribe); Christine Grotefeld; Carmie Callanan

Iconoclast Section Camp Week 3 July 29 – Aug. 5, 2007

By Marg Saul

The bugs were bad but probably not as bad as previous weeks. Mosquitoes, horseflies and black fly like “red flies” were the persistent antagonists although their numbers eased towards the end of the week. A mosquito coil in the cook tent along with some judicious swatting allowed us to socialize and eat in peace without bug jackets over our faces. This is the end of the bad news on the trip.

The weather was gorgeous, the area beautiful and the campsite idyllic. Mountaineering objectives were moderate with very reasonable approaches, which meant you could have a fun day out and still be back in camp in time for a wash and relax before dinner. Often we lingered at elevation and enjoyed the scenery rather than face the bugs back in camp.

Our hats are off to the recce teams before us who scouted the sneaky route up Iconoclast. By Week 3, it was a well known route which allowed all of us to bag the peak quickly on different days. Notably, Jackie Clark, Steve Fedyna and Gabrielle Savard climbed the NW Face direct ice route – accessing it from the col on the ridge that the rest of us climbed.

Because the weather was consistently stable, we climbed all peaks in the immediate area: Window, Goat Traverse to Outrider (recommended), Joy, Pain, Benedict, Goose Bump and of course, Iconoclast. Views from the summits were stunning in every direction.

The camp was pleasant and well organized. Gabrielle Savard did a wonderful job as camp manager, trip leader, safety minder, weather forecaster, musician, songster and general all round positive influence. As usual.

For my first ever section camp, it was a great experience. Thank you to everyone who worked hard to organize it, set up a comfortable camp, and carry out a fun mountaineering adventure.

Participants: Gabrielle Savard (Camp Manager), Clarence Kort, Orvel Miskiw, Andrea Petzold, Jackie Clark, Steve Fedyna, Jim Cossitt, Tim Jellard, Leenjte Verboten, Marg Saul

Interesting in taking a course?

Check out the course provider list in the

Winter schedule for fantastic discounts for various courses.

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 T2P 2M2

ADDRESS CHANGES:

The Alpine Club of Canada
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NO CALLS AFTER 10 PM IS THE POLICY OF THE SECTION, THANK YOU

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