



The Chinook

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

Volume 41, Number 8

September 2006

The next Calgary Section Meeting is at 7:30 pm on Tuesday, 19 Sept 2006 at the Bow Waters Canoe Club, 1975—26th Street SE

This month:



Kelly Adams, Bugaboo Spire in the background
By Bill Corbett

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CASA BENEFIT SHOW

The Climbers' Access Society of Alberta (CASA) presents an evening with Andrew Brash and Will Gadd. Both men will be presenting slides of their recent adventures including Andrew's rescue mission on Everest. In addition, there will be door prizes and a live auction. This is a fundraiser with all proceeds going to CASA and maintaining access to the Ghost River Valley.

Date - 30th September 2006

Time - Doors open 7:00 pm

Location - Leacock Theatre, Mount Royal College, Calgary.

Further details will be posted on the CASA website as they become available including a reduced price for advance ticket sales. Please see www.climbersaccess.ab.ca



BLACK DIAMOND EQUIPMENT

Speed Buckle Harnesses Used During Mountain and Rock Climbing Recalled for Fall Hazard

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission has announced a voluntary recall of Speed Buckle Harnesses. Consumers should stop using them immediately unless otherwise instructed. The harness could be threaded incorrectly. If threaded incorrectly, the webbing will easily slip when loaded. Incorrectly threaded buckles can loosen, which could cause climbers to slip out of the harness and fall.

These Speed Buckle Harnesses were sold under the following model names: **Gym Speed, Focus Speed, Momentum Speed, Vario Speed and Wiz Kid**. The names can be found on a tag sewn inside the waist belt of the harnesses. The harnesses are various colors and were sold individually. **Only Black Diamond Equipment Speed Buckle Harnesses with incorrectly threaded buckles are included in this recall**. There have been no injuries reported.

The harnesses were sold at rock climbing and mountaineering specialty shops from December 2005 through July 2006. Consumers should immediately stop using recalled harnesses and contact the firm for a free replacement harness.

For more information, call Black Diamond Equipment collect at (801) 278-5533 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. MT Monday through Friday, or visit the firm's Web site at:

www.blackdiamondequipment.com/about/speed_harness_bulletin.php

or

www.blackdiamondequipment.com/

**Calgary Section Summer Camp – Vowell Glacier Week 1
July 15-22, 2006 By Kelly Adams**

On a beautiful sunny Saturday, we met in Parsons to convoy up the Spillimacheen logging road to our staging area. Armed with an email that had very specific detailed instructions, we thought we were cruising...until we reached the end of the directions, pulled out the GPS and found that we were about 10 km away from the agreed meeting spot, with only 1 hour to go. So we threw away the directions, went back to our last known spot and used the GPS to try again – great navigating by Gabrielle and Orvel got us to the staging area at least 15 minutes before Don McTighe arrived to fly us in.

I had read the pre-camp info which said we were limited to 50 pounds and that we were not to bring duffel bags, so I very carefully dried my food and sorted my clothes and rationed my beer to come in close (kind of) to the weight restriction. At the staging area, I noticed people with huge duffel bags and totes full of fresh produce and I realized that not everyone had read the pre-camp info. We had 3 last minute no-show's, so there was plenty of room on the helicopter and I regretfully thought of all I had left behind.

A beautiful flight up Vowell Creek and we landed just below Bill's Pass, where we were to set up camp and call it home for the week. We set up our tents on the gravel and boulder flats and set up our gear and food tent in the snow so we could keep our beer cold. We had a few laughs over Sandy's instructions to poop in the shyter and pee in the bushes, since the nearest bush was at least 2 hours away! Setting up Orvel's homegrown shyter provided opportunities for more laughing and giggling. And what a camp spot we had – with amazing views of the spectacular granite spires of the Bugaboos, it was panoramic and awe-inspiring.

Our first day was spent setting up camp and getting settled. Our second day we all went as a nine person group to Mt. Wallace to attempt the west ridge, which is looser and less fun than advertised. Excessive rockfall eventually convinced a portion of the group to turn around, while four people continued to successfully make the summit. Gabrielle discovered while reading the summit register that she had actually climbed

the peak a few years earlier. Bill commented that she could now hide her own Easter eggs!

After our big group experience on Wallace, we split into smaller groups for the rest of the week. Our group climbed Brenta, Crescent, Pigeon, Conrad, Malloy, Robert the Bruce and Howard the Duck (who comes up with these names anyway?!!) We had fabulous weather, marred by only one nocturnal storm. We had fantastic views from all of our objectives, although we all agreed that the best views were from Brenta, which, by the way, isn't really 4th class – it's not a good idea to leave your rope at the col and need to be rescued by another party like some people in our party did. Other than our day on Pigeon, we had the peaks to ourselves. The fantastic rock on Pigeon made it easy to tolerate the rush hour traffic. It is nearly impossible to get lost on Pigeon, just follow the path where the lichen is worn away.

Being part of a section camp and staying in communication proved to be a challenge for several of us. The system was a little less than perfect for the first few days – “time for radio call –who has the radio?... Oops.” By the end of the week, we all remembered to carry radios and to turn them on for the scheduled radio calls. Who says you can't teach an old mountaineer new tricks?

We enjoyed lots of laughs and some excellent meals, in spite of the weight restrictions. Our last night was a festive one, with all attempting to finish their alcohol to avoid the dreaded curse of bad sex for a year that follows anyone who flies out alcohol. Tim had the biggest cans of beer I had ever seen. Despite valiant efforts to consume it all, Gabrielle was seen pouring out wine in the morning to avoid flying it out. Gabrielle had brought her guitar and led us in an “E-less” sing-a-long, since one of her strings broke on the first strum and all of Orvel's efforts to fix it were unsuccessful.

The camp was billed as the “Vowells”, but reaching most of the Vowell peaks was a daunting undertaking due to recession of the East and West Glaciers. Orvel was determined to find a way onto the West Glacier to access the Vowell peaks; on our last day, he and Gab found a way over to the Glacier, but didn't have enough time to climb any peaks. It was a great camp, but we found it was better situated for the Bugaboo and Conrad groups than for the Vowells.

For those of you who haven't had the pleasure of attending a section camp, I would highly recommend it – it's like a backcountry wilderness experience without all the grunting to get all your stuff in there. The group tents make it into a sociable experience, providing a warm dry place out of the wind to congregate. Thanks to Sandy for all her work in coordinating the camp.

Participants: Gabrielle Savard, Mark Lane, Tim Jellard, Derek Evoy, Bill Corbett, Orvel Miskew, Chris Beers, Sim Galloway & Kelly Adams (author)

VERBOTEN CORNER
August 13-14 Trip Leader: Peter Lloyd
By Ken Lee

"You are going to write an article in the next Chinook," says Peter. I can't remember if he uttered those words before or after we topped out in the darkness. If he said them before the start of the last pitch, his words would have carried with them the implicit understanding that this would be a tale to tell years later around a campfire. If he said them after the 11 PM top out, then his words would have been buoyed by the relief of not having to spend the night on a ledge on Yamnuska. After all in the grand scheme of things, hunkering behind a boulder on the top of Yam waiting for the moon to rise is infinitely better than being stuck on the face. Maybe he said those words several times in various instances.

A fool and his headlamp are soon parted. Those are the words that resonate through my head. Unbelievable that I never took my own advice to trust one's instincts, no matter how much more experienced other members of the party may be. Not that we are unprepared. We've brought everything we need, except for the fact that the tarp, fleece, toque and both headlamps are in my pack tied to a tree branch over 250 meters below.

Darkness is falling and we have yet to start the hardest pitch on the route. Peter is verbally rehearsing the sequence of moves. I see the load limiter he has placed on the piton by his feet. I look at the blank air he must step across to gain the overhanging bulge in order to place a cam at the crack behind the detached block. Over his shoulder I can make out the seemingly tenuous, ungenerous face of the bulge that he must climb across and up the committing crux to some bolt that is out of sight.

It is all business and internal meditation now. I silently wish him peace, not wanting to disrupt his mental state. I set myself to ensure the rope runs freely and won't pull Peter off the wall, as it has snarled badly in previous pitches.

"This rock has been like this for over a hundred years. It's not like it's going to come off now." I silently concur, but also think back to the website printout Peter had shown me earlier at the parking lot about the huge loose flake. With fading daylight he steps across the gap.....

Peter has methodically connected the dots and given me the play by play of what to expect. I have the security of being second, but with failing daylight I also know that I have to move quickly and clean faster than I have ever cleaned before. My regular climbing partner has described me as climbing with glacial speed. I try to forget that as I breathe deep and prepare to flow as efficiently as possible.

I negotiate the gap, downclimb the block and move across to the right. I climb up the crux move that goes up eight feet to the bolt, glad that I am on a rope with tension. Peter re-emphasizes that the ledge traverse after the bolt is very friendly regardless of the exposure. I understand this to be true, but am still glad for the pro he has placed to prevent a 25 meter pendulum should I slip. I fixate on the wall and not on the ground far below.

I rejoin Peter, relieved that there is one last 5.7 pitch to go. Darkness has now fully set in and more time has been consumed as there is no bolted station. Peter has set up a four cam anchor and is cursing moderately as he flakes the ropes in preparation for his final lead in the darkness. With the faint light I can barely make out the etchings on my reverso.

While there is enough light to make out the mottling of the friction slab, my appreciation for Peter's climbing ability jumps several orders of magnitude. It is my turn to climb. I keep telling myself, "5.7 slab, 5.7 slab. You can do this blindfolded with another 20 pounds in your pack." But my right foot slips again on the runnels as I grunt and curse up the pitch. I top out onto the scree and plunk myself down on terra firma, and for the first time I am aware of the stars high above us.

"So what is the definition of an epic?" I ask. According to Peter you have to see the sun rise in order for it to be an epic. He clarifies a bit further, saying that making it to a pub or Denny's to wait for the sun to come up doesn't count. It is too dark to find the descent trail, and even with the moonrise we cannot make out the cliff edge below. Cell phone reception is excellent at the top of Yam. So while we could shiver our way through till daybreak, it is reassuring to know that Karen has made a phone call, and Dave and Craig are on their way to find us and possibly point and laugh.

Stories spill out as we lie on top of the ropes in fetal position behind a rock as the wind sweeps over us. But stories can only keep you so warm and our conversation gravitates to immediate needs and wants. After wishing aloud that I was fatter or that some large marmot would lumber up and huddle with us for warmth, we start evaluating what we have. The Sam splint works great as a neckwarmer, and Peter's chalk bag becomes a uni-mitt. In the meantime we come up with the ultimate invention: a cell phone that can serve as a heat source and comes with a focusing light beam.

Why do I climb? I have asked myself this question many times and received many different answers. But I had no answer to this question as the day wore on, even when looking down the sheer face to the myriad of trees below. For two years I had imagined what it would feel like to be on the face of such a storied wall, looking straight up, then straight down. We see headlamps bobbing east on the ridge. I thank Peter for taking me up a climb that I am convinced I will never do again. I wryly joke that the trip should have been listed as multi-day.

On the descent trail Peter tells us about his personal truism, that if he sees some wildlife, be it a bear or an eagle, then he knows it will be a good climbing day. And he saw no wildlife before we started. Surely going off route near the very beginning and losing the lucky coin between the rocks on a ledge were not signs of things to come. Nor would I allow myself to believe that missing the descent gully the day before at Brewer's Buttress could foreshadow trouble ahead on Yam. I remember telling Marg and Frank about my "trip luck" during the hike in to the Castle hut. If anything it was simple lack of preparation due to conscious decisions made before and during the climb.

There is a saying that goes "*Beyond the mountains are more mountains.*" The meaning of this saying very much depends on one's situation and current state of mind. Climbing in darkness I contemplate that I am no Vockeroth or MacKay. I am a mere simpleton in the mountains. Writing about this beneath the warmth of a blanket instead of shivering behind a boulder also gives a different perspective. Would I ever go back to Forbidden Corner?

I suspend my usual activities, and for the first time I willingly forgo a night of climbing. Is it out of fear? No, I knew even while moving across the tension traverse that I would not stop climbing. I still need time to decompress. But decompress from what? I struggle to come up with more internal revelations. I have been stuck on mountains before, found a way off and out, and resumed life as usual the very next day. But something is different this time.

The contrast between the two days of climbing strikes me. On Brewer's Buttress every move I made was sure, and I could envision myself one day

leading some friends up the route and sit ting on the ridge overlooking Rock-bound Lake. On Verboten Corner I found myself struggling mentally and physically on the corner climbs, on the long traverses, on the exposed faces.

Another day passes, but I am still in a detached headspace and cannot quite grasp why. I listen to coworkers and clients whirl around me. That night I hear the rain pounding outside my window, and I am glad to be sheltered indoors.

And then it occurs to me what has been working its way into my consciousness. I have always known that I could back away from a pitch and put aside all pride, desire and personal dreams. But could I *commit* to a pitch at the periphery of my ability in spite of all my doubts and fears should necessity demand it?

Will I climb on Yam again? It is never outside the realm of possibility or imagination or desire. Beyond the mountain are more mountains.

Many thanks to Dave Roll, Craig Hrycoy, and Samantha the scrambling husky for trekking up to the summit bringing us headlamps, warm clothing and good spirits, and for not pointing and laughing. Thanks to Marg Saul and Frank Campbell for a beautiful day on Brewer's. And to Peter Lloyd for sharing his stories, experience and wisdom. May you always see wolves and bears.

**Northwest Ridge of Mt. Lougheed, July 22, 2006
By Warren Piers**

As part of an official ACC alpine trip, regular scrambling partners Henry Doornberg and I (Warren Piers) joined Ian Hunt (trip leader) and three others (Allan and Evelyn Mathies, and Steve Peters) for our first roped alpine ascent up the northwest ridge of Lougheed, a climb rated at 5.5. Neither Henry nor I had any idea what this actually meant, and both of us approached the trip with a minor degree of trepidation—a feeling that did not diminish as we approached the face/ridge to be ascended. The route is approached via the West Wind Pass trail at Spurling Creek on the Smith Dorrien Trail, circumnavigating the Wind Tower to the south to get to the base of the Lougheed ridge. I kept hoping that the views as we got closer to the route would reveal obvious weaknesses and that the apparent steepness was an illusion due to foreshortening. No such luck! As we got closer, we monitored the progress of a group of BASE jumpers heading up the Wind Tower via a pleasant looking walk up a long slope—I al-

most wished I was one of them instead of one of us at that point.

About 3 hours after leaving the car at 6:45 am, we got to the start of the real business. Ian had done the route twice before, and in combination with an early start, and Allan's professed knowledge of the scramble route descent, I was prepared for a 12 hour day, i.e. no headlamp, despite Ian's suggestion to bring one. This later proved problematic. The others had heeded Ian's advice (when will I learn) and were ready with the lamps.

The route to the summit took us more than 7 hours. After climbing up some ledges, the more serious climbing began with a pitch that had me wondering just what the hell I was doing up there. Allan was the second rope leader, and my initial answer to his trademark refrain "are we having fun yet?" was less than charitable. However, things soon settled down (after surpassing the "holy shit factor"), and with the exception of one or two nasty little sections further on, the climbing was a blast. Intense, but a blast—yes, we were having fun! Ian was awesome, placing a lot of protection for his neophyte charges, and providing rock-solid belays and anchor points. The biggest danger (aside from Ian taking a header!) was that of rockfall, as much of the route was punctuated by ledges covered in loose rock. We each launched a few big ones throughout the course of the day, but aside from a few minor direct hits ("my helmet just paid for itself!"), the rock gods were smiling and we were spared from major catastrophe. Quite unnerving at times.

Most of this part is a blur to me now but the route was done in approximately 10 30M pitches, working close to the ridge on climber's right. There appear to be numerous opportunities to go off-route, and it was here that Ian's experience with the mountain was most valuable. Nonetheless, moving six climbers up this terrain is a slow business, and when we topped out, it was already 6 pm. Ian, Henry and I waited for the threesome below to join us before scrambling over to a more secure, broad area on the ridge for a well-earned rest. At this point it was almost 7 pm, and I was a bit nervous about the time, mostly because of the misinformation I'd given my wife about our estimated time of return. Fortunately, cell phone reception is excellent up there, so I was able to leave a message with her to let her know we'd survived the ascent and that I would be home late. (She was out indulging in Johnny Depp and Orlando Bloom at the movies!)

At this point Allan and Evelyn began to poke around, looking for the scramble route down. We'd decided that, in light of the time, we would not go to the true summit, which was a few hundred meters of scrambling along the ridge, but head down instead. Unfortunately, the fabled scramble descent did not present itself in an obvious way, and uncertainty about where the correct gully was, eventually sent us back up to the ridge. At this point, Ian decided we would

take his descent route back down—it was somewhat longer, but known. This meant going over the true summit, which was good, because we can now say we summited, but bad because it meant we all had to put our harnesses back on to accommodate the required 25M rappel on this route. This also turned out to be good, because the rappel was most entertaining!

Ian's descent route took us down nice scree slopes towards a couple of fins below the col between Loughheed's first and second peaks, heading to the left of a rounded, mushroom shaped hump. Here the scree turned into more talus-like hardscrabble, but descent was still quite rapid. The route led to a broad ledge that had to be traversed for some distance to the descenders left, to a point where small cliff bands could be breached, and a rappel station reached. Steve built a rap station with the available pitons while the others were coming down through the cliffs; I watched him disappear over the lip of the cliff, thinking "now, how does this work again?". All I could remember from a day long rock climbing course taken a few years ago was "ass out, legs wide apart", which Allan confirmed, and this seemed to work just fine. The rappel into the scree filled bowl was spectacular in the waning hours of sunlight, as the cliffs around us were lit an amazing golden hue. What a setting.

Once all were down, it was about 9:20, give or take, and I was feeling exhilarated and surprisingly energetic. Adrenaline is a wonderful drug. This feeling was slowly beaten out of me by the brutal and long exit to the road down the creek bed draining this basin. At first open and pleasant, in flower-filled meadows, it soon became a relentless grunt down boulder beds and through willow bushes. At times, some relief was to be found on the banks of the creek in mossy forests reasonably devoid of undergrowth, but these sections were rare and going was slow. It gradually darkened and I very much regretted not taking the headlamp. Allan ably led the group out down this hellish path and by the time he finally broke down and donned his headlamp, we were five minutes from illuminating a yellow road sign that signaled the end of the creek. It was 11:15 pm, the culmination of a 16.5 hour odyssey on Mount Loughheed.

What an experience. Judging from the summit register, not many parties visit this peak and I feel privileged to have stood on one of its peaks. Having attained over 50 summits via scramble or glacier routes, this was a new level of mountaineering for Henry and me. Many thanks to Ian, who was awesome, filling his role as trip leader with great aplomb and skill, and to Allan, who provided excellent advice and help to us from below. The day was fine, the company most enjoyable—does it get any better than this?

Participants: Ian Hunt (trip leader), Warren Piers, Henry Doornberg, Allan Mathies (second rope leader), Evelyn Mathies, Steve Peters.

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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.