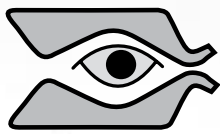




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John Taylor, undisclosed location, Victoria.
Photo: Josie Boulding

Contents: Campbell River above Elk Falls
Photo: Dale Van Dompsele

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#6 Spring 1999

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**Next Deadline,
for Summer Issue,
14th May 1999**



A huge thank you to all that returned their Reader's Survey and congratulations to the winners of the draw (see page 12). This information will be invaluable as we try to seduce the elusive corporate giants into our advertising fold. There were many suggestions and positive comments and all have been duly noted. Hopefully as time and resources allow we will implement some of these ideas in future issues.

If you would like to see a particular topic covered why not write something and send it in along with a few photos? That is the sure-fire way to see content you enjoy appear in *Wild Isle*.

Keep those shutters clicking and look out for details of our Photo Contest in the next issue.

Bring on the sun!!

Philip Stone

MARK THAT DATE

Advertising and Submissions
Deadline for the Summer Issue

May 14th '99

Whose all reading this anyway??

Some results from our Reader's Survey, the percentages of our readership that take part in the following activities

Mountain Biking	74%
Road Biking	68%
Bike Touring	20%
Sea Kayak Day Trips	51%
Sea Kayak Overnight Trips	37%
Canoe Tripping	51%
Whitewater Canoeing	20%
Whitewater Kayaking	20%
Whitewater Rafting	17%
Diving	26%
Rock Climbing	66%
Ice Climbing	14%
Alpine Climbing	17%
Mountaineering	51%
Day Hiking	91%
Backpacking 1-3 Nights	66%
Backpacking 4-9+ Nights	43%
Ski at Lift Area	46%
Snowboard at Lift Area	20%
Skiing Backcountry	31%
Snowboarding Backcountry	9%
Ski Touring 1-3 Nights	23%
Ski Touring 4-9+ Nights	11%
Caving	31%

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LETTERS

Dear Editor

I must say I am always interested to read up on any info. about possible development of Arrowsmith's ski area. So thanks for covering the story. I would like to point out for the record that not all users of Mt Arrowsmith are upset by the thought of development. While I do agreed with Rothermel's assessment that Arrowsmith is "the mid-islands crown jewel," I do not agree with his belief that Arrowsmith should remain the exclusive realm of a few outdoors clubs. I am not alone in this, alot ordinary people are quite supportive at the thought of development.

The road that leads to the top of Arrowsmith is maintained by Port Alberni taxes. The ski hill during the winter is responsible for clearing and maintainece, without this no one would accessing the mtn by road anyway. With development the opportunity is there for many to enjoy this wonderfull mountain.

How about flip side to your article, one that looks at the development and its possible positive benefits? Bottom line though it's a beautifull mountain and I'm quite looking forward to enjoying the scenery from one of the chair lifts in the near future.

Mike Gough

Industrial Revolution in B.C. 1999

Eco-tour operators held a meeting in early February. Annually, more jobs are being created in equipment sales, transportation and delivery of our services. Tourism related business, hotels, restaurants, pubs etc are increasing. On Quadra Island alone, in excess of 400 people depend in whole or in part for employment in tourism. This is for a population of approximately 3,000 people.

Government laws, orders-in-council and provincial guidelines have resulted in logging practices which are more than endangering our industry and the future of B.C.'s economy.

We are not against forestry based jobs: we have an ongoing problem with the government authorized practices.

Forestry representatives repeatedly say that they simply operate within the laws of the province. However, for all the contrary letters and phone calls from non-forestry companies, decisions have hung on the will of the Ministry of Forests, leaving other ministries and tourism companies continuously frustrated.

Increasingly, in the past 14 years, we have been hearing harsh criticisms and concerns from our international clients about B.C.'s forestry practices: clearcuts, loss of old growth, damaged streams, road damage, manipulation of visual buffers, disappearing fish, pulp mill effluent and smells. Impacts of the expanding aquaculture industry, fish farms, and oyster leases must also be assessed through the eye of eco-tourism.

Eco-tourism companies rely on a healthy, growing eco-system, as do the other resource industries. Without the natural beauty eco-tourism jobs will not exist, nor will they be able to provide future jobs for our communities.

We do not have 50 - 80 years to wait for a clearcut valley to regrow. Each year, every season, we have clients to serve, mortgages to pay and our children to feed. We respect that our logging neighbours too have mortgages and families to care for.

Regional eco-tourism companies are organized. We are now uniting throughout the province to lobby the Provincial Government into fairly representing our interests for the economic expansion and strengthening of SuperNatural B.C.

For further information contact: Vancouver Island Eco-tourism Association, (ETAV) Email: cospex@connected.bc.ca or bpc@island.net (250) 285-2895 or (250) 285-2272

Bernard Eberlein

Viewpoint

The view is not always clear

Andrew Smith


Backcountry Fees

If you have ever had the opportunity to experience parks in other parts of the world, like Nepal, Africa, India, South America and Europe, you may already be accustomed to paying park fees. Even in BC, while there may not be a park entrance fee, the public pays to stay in provincial camp sites and enjoy the backcountry services and facilities in such parks as Bowron Lakes, Garibaldi, Top Of The World and Mt. Robson. It should be no surprise therefore, that due to increases in operating costs resulting from higher visitor use, we are having to implement backcountry fees in both Strathcona and Cape Scott Provincial parks this year.

While the necessary fees have been approved, the Strathcona District is seeking public input into the implementation of these new backcountry fees. Although a fee of \$3/person/night has been approved, how the fees will be collected, when and in what areas needs to be confirmed and we would like your opinion. Should overnight fees be applied in all areas of the parks or only where park services or facilities exist, i.e. camp sites, maintained trails, pit toilets, etc? While many may prefer the necessary fee to be restricted to designated campsites or high use areas, this would raise the question as to how to control camping outside the perimeter of these sites (people establishing camps adjacent to the designated area just to avoid a fee). It should be noted that the collection of fees is unlikely to balance the high operating costs associated with backcountry management and maintenance. Many people do not realize backcountry costs often exceed that of the more heavily used "front country" parks (vehicle accessible and having diverse facilities). Once we resolve where the fees should be applied, we need to consider "how" they should be collected, i.e. personally collected, self registration, permits sold in selected stores, park offices, etc. Therefore we are also seeking advice on collection strategies which allow an appropriate degree of control. Initial assessments suggest it would be more cost effective for a contracted Park Facility Operator to be responsible for backcountry maintenance and fee collection. Revenues generated would help subsidize the cost of providing required services.

If you have an opinion, suggestions or advice on how best to approach this fee implementation, send your viewpoint to:

Andy Smith, BC Parks, 1812 Miracle Beach Drive, Black Creek, B.C. V9J 1K1

Phone: (250) 337-2405, Fax (250) 337-5695, e-mail: asmith@prkparksvl.elp.gov.bc.ca 

THE GRAND TRAVERSE

Comox Glacier to Mt. Washington



Looking south over Milla Lake to the Cliffe Glacier, Red Pillar & Mt Harmston(R)
© Glenn Fuller

Randy Jones

I woke up clammy with sweat and feeling drained of energy, it was 7:00 a.m. and the sun was beating down on our tent. We were on the hump before the frog pond with seven days to get to Mt. Washington via the Comox Glacier. My worst fear was going to come true, we would be doing it in a July heat wave.

There were four of us, Glen and Don were team young guys and Russ and myself were team old guys. Don had made the crossing two years earlier but had not summited the Red Pillar, Harmston and Argus which were his specific goals this time.

Heading up the narrow ridge to Lone Tree Pass we exchanged conversation with the last people we would see until the final day of our trek. The heat we were going to experience over the next week was showing itself now.

Lone Tree Pass is the ideal spot for a midday break. The tree is a big one that casts a lot of shade, and a stream of ice cold glacier fresh water flows past from the permanent snow above. If you sit beside the stream it generates enough wind to help keep those pesky little flying carnivores away.

One hour above Lone Tree Pass, we were at the large cairn marking the south summit of the Comox Glacier. The sun was positioned just right so all four of us could sit in the shadow it cast and see the roof of our condo at Mt. Washington. I thought about all the great stuff that lay between us and that rental unit; it made it seem a long way away.

We set off across the glacier for the north summit where we planned to make camp two. It takes about one hour to cross, with stops to wonder at the red snow or bear scat or spiders the size of loonies or just the expanse of bright white snow which is the great Comox Glacier.

Upon reaching the north summit, one is presented with a view of Vancouver Island that is best absorbed with an overnight stay. To the west is a frightening drop off to the crevassed moving glacier, flowing into the emerald coloured Milla Lake. Northwest we saw the Golden Hinde and a sea of other island peaks disappearing into the horizon. Courtenay, Comox and Comox Lake lie to the east with Georgia Strait and Coast

Mountains behind. When we looked southeast we saw Nine Peaks, Big Interior, Tom Taylor, Moyeha and Thelwood.

The last thing we saw that day was a blazing sunset over the Golden Hinde and the lights of Campbell River, Courtenay and Comox below us.

Day three we headed down the southwest ridge towards Mt. Argus. At the base of the knob was a block of snow which gave us some shade and temporary relief from the heat. Traversing around Argus we were soon at the gully leading to the Cliffe Glacier. At the bottom of the gully is a ledge that leads to the right. As I sat on the ledge waiting for the others to descend, the heat was intolerable. I thought "If I just sit here waiting I am going to be cooked alive." I wanted to get down into the bergschrund to get some shelter from the heat. Climbing down, the rock was so hot I could only touch it for a few seconds. From the bergschrund, down the Cliffe Glacier and up to its crest was the most intense heat I've experienced. We didn't have a thermometer with us, but it was blistering hot.

Camp three was established on the west ridge of the Cliffe Glacier with a view of the beautiful Tzela Lake and its surrounding golf course-like meadows. After a short rest and a bit of food, we headed for the summit of the Red Pillar, which we reached just as the sun disappeared behind distant mountains. Descending the glacier back to camp in the light of the stars was one of those magical mountain moments.

On day four, team young guys got up early, summited Argus and returned before team old guys got out of their tent. Soon after their return we were all heading down to the tongue of the Cliffe Glacier. Personally, I found this spot to be the most impressive place on the route. Standing on the exposed ice of the tongue, looking back at Argus and the Red Pillar, it's easy to imagine you are in any of the world's exotic mountain locations.

From the end of the Cliffe Glacier, a short bush bash puts you in the Harmston Pass, looking out at the Sheppard Creek Watershed. This is a great spot for a midday break, with lots of trees for shade and running water, so essential to survival. Don and Glenn summited

Harmston from here, while Russ and I took a less ambitious exploratory hike to the south ridge.

We left the Harmston Pass about 6:00 p.m. and headed down the small glacier on the mountains west side en route to camp four at Milla Lake. Following the Melt River from the end of the glacier, route finding to the lake was difficult. The trial guide book describes this section, in reverse, as “contour around using open areas”. Well, we must have been off course as this was a very ugly one hour bush bash.

Over the years I had gazed down at Milla Lake and dreamed how great it would be to camp at its outlet. When we did arrive at the lake that day, I was so exhausted I could hardly look around at first. Thirty minutes later it was dark.

In the morning when I crawled out of the tent the heat was already intense. Glen provided us with some entertainment as he dove into the iceberg filled Milla Lake. Milla Lake is a place of inspiring beauty but is not easy to reach! It is a place that you would normally want to spend some time enjoying, but this time the heat drove us onward.

Reese Ridge was our next destination and to reach it was going to be hard work in such heat. A small side ridge leads up from the outlet of Milla Lake to a small plateau, before reaching the crest of Reese Ridge. It took us only a quarter hour to reach this flat spot but by that time I already felt roasted. The two thousand foot gain that lay ahead was to be the crux of the trip for me.

As we reached the crest of the ridge about three hours later I was just entering the zone of heat exhaustion. Fortunately, there was a little stream that lay beside for two hours, constantly dousing myself from my water bottle. After this layover, followed by a double Knorr Soup and Cliff Bar, we were off again. Two years earlier, Don had also suffered the effects of the temperature in this very same spot we dubbed “heat stroke point”.

The ridge topped out 200 feet ahead and we looked across the Aureole Snowfield, which seems to be level for a long distance. This type of level terrain was new to us. So, anxious to experience it we crossed to the far side and set up camp five.

As we silently, in single file, crossed this fabulous wonderland, it was shimmering like diamonds in the sun. We shared a feeling of melancholy that time didn’t allow us to fully explore all these amazing places we were passing through.



Day six we were following the height of land past Ink Lake at the head of the Siokum Creek valley and then on to “Peak 1909” where we camped. There are numerous tarns along the way in which we soaked our heads and filled our water bottles. We saw lots of bear scat and deer tracks but not a single sighting. Ptarmigans are commonly seen here and the alpine flowers have to be seen to be believed.

Resting at the head of Siokum Creek, the mosquitos were so bad we wondered how we would have the strength to continue from the blood loss. The bugs had been wicked all trip and we had now reached the phase when you don’t even attempt to shoo them away anymore.

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Another hot summit along the way!
Photo: ©Don Stenner

Camp six was made on the shoulder of '1909' with a nice view of the development at Mt. Washington. We were starting to talk about the condo a little bit now, or at least about the contents of the fridge.

We had time this evening to explore around and found some really nice quartz crystal and scrounged up a bit of wood for a small campfire.

The goal for day seven was to go over Mt. King George and get onto Mt. Frink for our last night. I thought we were in for an easy day after counting contour lines the night before, but was on last legs arriving on top of Frink that evening. Even with maps and guide books the route is not always obvious, as we managed to waste time and energy a few times.

King George was memorable for the turquoise melt puddles on the south side and the boulder field of car sized rocks on the north side.

We stopped to rest in the Frink Pass, which would be a fantastic place to camp if you were so inclined. After a meal we all fell asleep for a little while and I managed to get a bit burned as my shade turned to sun.

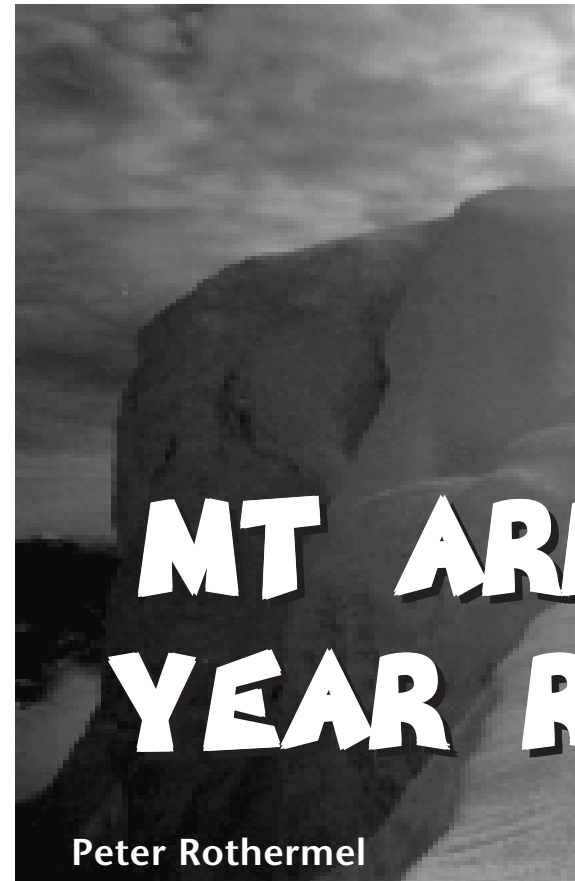
Having been on Frink many times before, I was feeling very good about having 'connected the dots' as we neared its summit. I got a boost when Don said, "Don't worry, I'm just as tired as you," as we made those final few steps to the top. As we set up camp, Glenn

took all eight of our empty water bottles and returned an hour later with them all full. Thanks Glenn!

The morning brought mixed emotions of excitement and great satisfaction, knowing that today I would complete something attempted five times previously and dreamed about for five long years. Also, I felt sadness that this adventure shared with friends would end today. Looking over at Albert Edward, we could see people already heading for its top. My stove ran out of fuel just as the last pot of water came to a boil.

Soon we were back on the "Tourist Trail", passing day hikers left and right. I've never seen so many people in between Albert Edward and the parking lot (must have been at least seventy-five). Some people brought along their dogs, who must have suffered in the continuing intense heat. Hopefully all those canines made it back o.k.

A quick stop at "Sid's" and before long were on the chip trail between Helen Mackenzie and the parking lot. I couldn't keep up with the others, but I was enjoying reflecting on the last eight days as I strolled the boardwalks alone. Every day had been physically hard for me, especially as I don't perform well in excessive heat. I had asked Glenn, at Helen Mackenzie, if the heat had ever been hard on him, and oh so casually he said...."no". damn young guys! 🐸



I kind of think of the Arrowsmith massif as my own personal playground. As it's close to where I live, I can easily do day trips to it. I'll describe here some of the more popular routes, but my main reason for writing this is to bring to public attention just how valuable this crown jewel of the mid-island is, and its need for protection, and not so much because I want a bunch of out-of-towners to come rushing to join me on my mountain playground.

The original hiking trail access to this massif is on Hwy 4 at the east end of Cameron Lake. This trail, now called the Cameron Lake Trail, was built as a pack trail in 1912 to ferry visitors and supplies up Cokely to a small cabin, from which they did day hikes to the peaks of Cokely and Arrowsmith. In recent years, the Island Mountain Ramblers and other volunteer groups have maintained this trail. Since there are easier access points to the Arrowsmith massif, and the trail now winds through a recent logging mess (September 1998) and the blight of a ski hill development, it's used less and less for accessing the peaks. It's still a popular tourist trail, and most who use it go as far as the lookout and come back down. The future of this trail, since a large portion is owned by private logging companies, remains to be seen.

Access to the next four routes is off Highway 4, about midway between Parksville and Port Alberni, just over the Alberni summit (the Hump). Turn left on

ARROWSMITH ROUND FUN

Summit Main at the Arrowsmith Ski sign, then left on Cameron Main, over the Cameron River bridge and left up towards the ski hill.

First you come to the Judge's Route, an old logging road spur marked by a small cairn and maybe some flagging tape, with a pull-out on the left a bit further on. In the summer/fall, this is a popular route for hikers wanting to reach Arrowsmith peak. It's a steep but not technical climb with no real exposure, but it can be dusty and is a thigh burner. I prefer winter/spring, as the snow makes it an easier tromp, kick stepping up with fun glissades down. This is the route we chose last December (Dean Williams, Tom Carter, Bob Schroeder and myself), and it may well become a Christmas tradition.

Next is the Snow Gully Route, an unmarked start from the last switchback but flagged up through first growth forest along a stream to a cirque and a 50° couloir that comes out just west of the summit. In summer/fall the cirque is bushy and the snow is mostly melted out of the couloir, exposing scree, and lots of it. Greg Sorenson has bolted some climbs on the wall to the right at the cirque. Winter/spring is when this route really shines. Kicking up the couloir, in my mind, is the most aesthetic route on the whole massif, whether done in full 'Scottish' conditions in May (with Dean) or one week later in sunny T-shirt weather (with Tom). The cirque drops to a frozen snow covered tarn that makes for an excellent run out and a great place to practice your self-arrest technique, back country ski or board.

The Saddle Route starts from a hairpin turn in the road, up a logging road spur that leads to a col between Mt. Cokely and Mt. Arrowsmith. In summer/fall this route is great for an easy climb up Cokely or a more exposed climb up Arrowsmith, the crux being an arete called the Nose, with 1,000 foot drops over each shoulder and straight out views left and right of Parksville and Port Alberni. This last September Greg bolted in rappel anchors at the half way point and top on the two pitches, knocking out the old rusted pitons (one came out by hand). The same day Tom Carter, Darlene Lane, my ten-year-old nephew Bjorn Reider and myself climbed up and spent the night on the peak, in hopes of watching the sunset and

the full moon rise simultaneously. Alas, we reached the peak just in time to be engulfed in cloud and we had a damp, windy night of it, but did have a beautiful sunrise with a great view of Mt. Baker through the broken clouds. This was Bjorn's second time up this way, last year belayed at age 9 and this year his first big two-pitch rappel.

In winter the Nose is usually all corniced, but in early spring when the snow consolidates it turns into a knife ridge that would be very grippy. I've never done this route in the spring. Hmm...maybe get some more snow stakes...maybe on a running belay...could always chicken out off the top down the Judge's Route...maybe next year! Hey, Dean...hey, Tom...

And finally the Rousseau Trail, an easy and popular route in the summer/fall, leading through old forest and an alpine ridge to the peak of Cokely. I won't tell where the cabin is. In winter/spring, if you drag your skis or board up for a run down through the regional park, you run the risk of being kicked out by the ski developer, or one of his ski patrol staff, and potentially a 4 km walk down the road, through a locked gate to your car (this is a public park !?!)

If we get a deep freeze, there are some possible ice climbs, on a weepy wall on the right at the start of the Saddle Route, and a very big, 120 meter popsicle in the park about 1.5 km past the gate, just off the road on your right. I don't know if these have been named, but I've heard they've been climbed. I haven't climbed waterfall ice (yet), but what looks like a good place to learn is up the Snow Gully Route. There's a couple of spots along the creek that cascade over some small drops where you could easily hike up alongside and put in a top rope. If we get an Arctic front and I can beg, borrow or buy a second axe...hey, Tom...Hey, Dan...

The third access to the southeast side of the massif is along logging roads off the Island Highway south of Parksville at Macmillan Bloedel's Northwest Bay Division. These roads take you to the Arrowsmith Lake Dam site, an area that resembles ground zero after a nuclear blast, but once past this destruction at about 1000 meters elevation is a fairytale-like trail that leads along a creek through first growth forest up to Hidden Lake, where I found a wolf skull last June. Past this lake, over a ridge and a steep descent where you might want to fix a handline, is Fishtail Lake. These two lakes are remote and pristine, in an area that is used winter/spring for backcountry skiing and in summer/fall for hiking and fishing. I've heard whispers that there's a way up Arrowsmith from this side. The Northwest Bay logging road also accesses the northwest ridge on Mt. Moriarty, for a fabulous spring climb, but that's another story.

Well, I hope to see you on my playground. I'm easy to recognize, usually wearing red and a big grin.

*All route descriptions and distances are approximate, as conditions, snow pack and precipitation can change from day to day.



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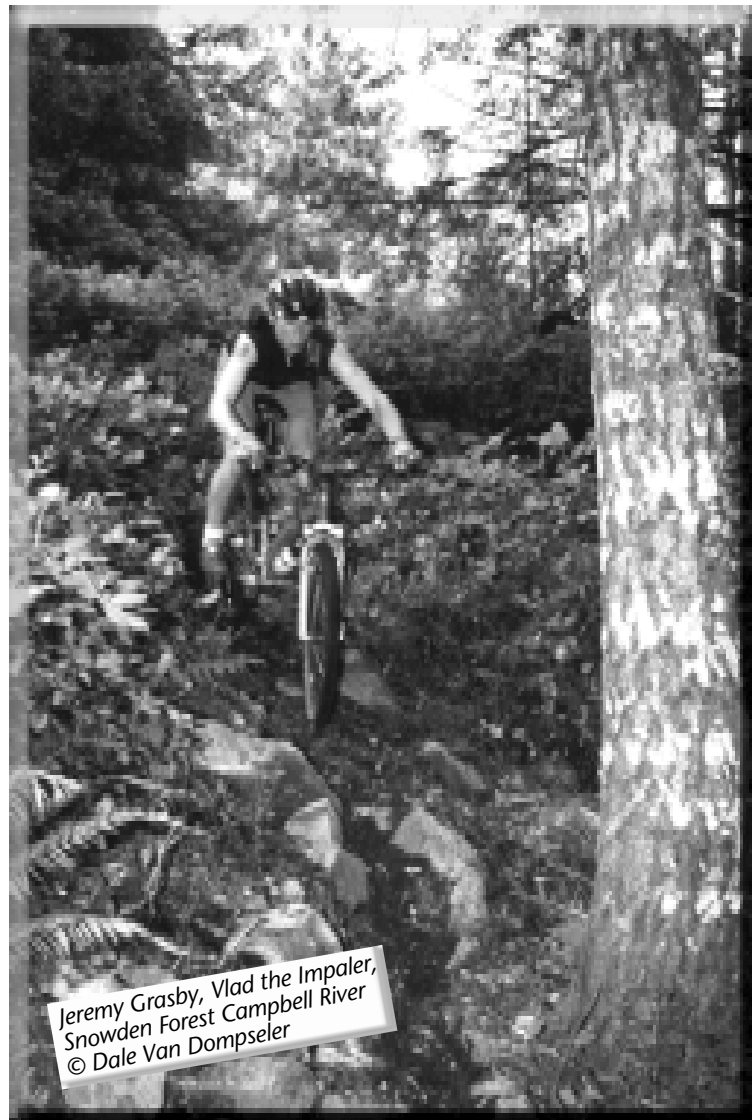
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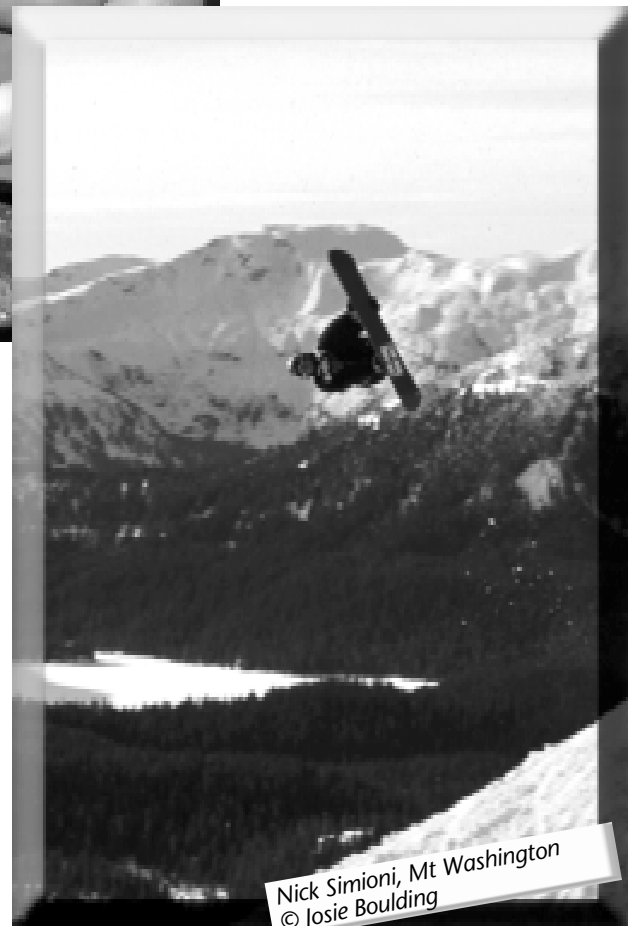


Katie Holmes, Flemming Beach Victoria
© Greg Shea/API

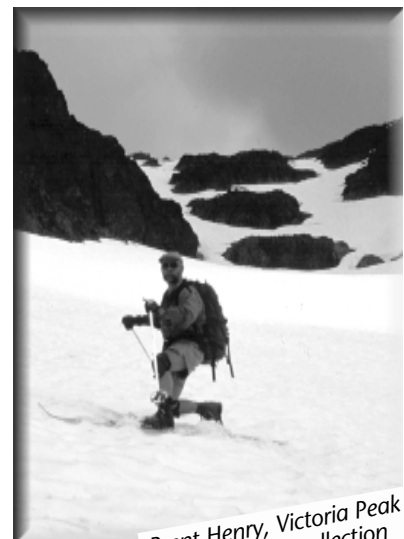
CANVASES



Jeremy Grasby, Vlad the Impaler,
Snowden Forest Campbell River
© Dale Van Dompsele

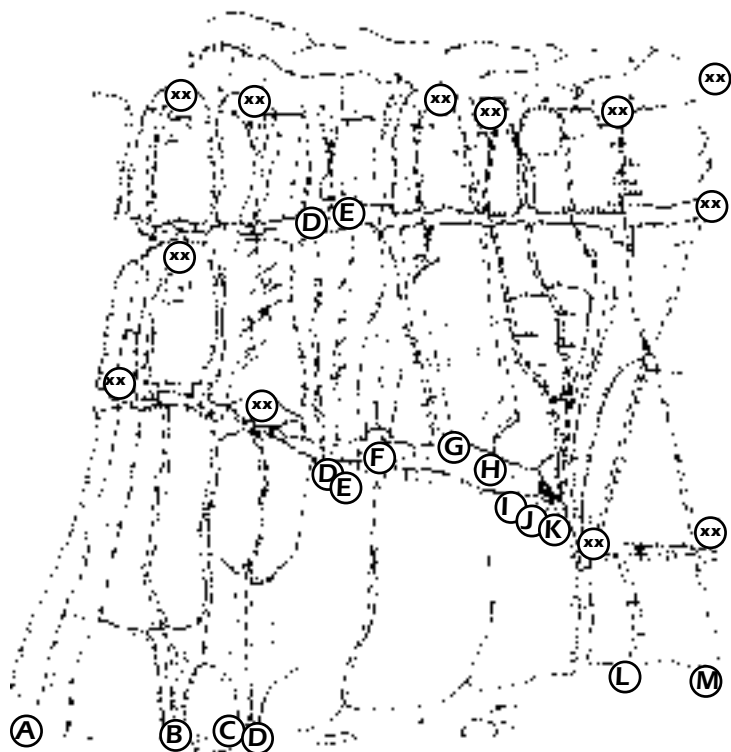


Nick Simioni, Mt Washington
© Josie Boulding



Brent Henry, Victoria Peak glacier
© Brent Henry collection

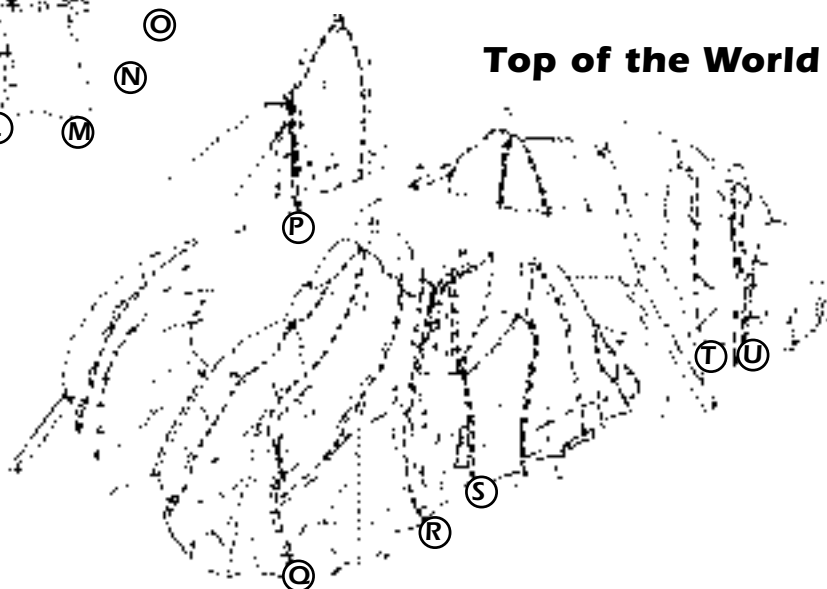
New Routes at Crest Creek



A Big Fun 5.7+
B Beach Run 5.9+
C Triad 5.10b
D A Prelude to Rain 5.10-
E Golden October 5.10+
F Project
G Ya Bin Fishin? 5.9+
H Karmacide 5.10-

I Project
J Project
K Procrastination 5.9
L Joint Effort
M Rainbow Warrior 5.10c
N Hands Off 5.10c
O Whitewater Rodeo 5.?

P Old Lonesome Me 5.9
Q Autumn Dream 5.9
R Harmony 5.10a
S Wisdom Tooth 5.10d
T Tigerlily 5.10a
U Both Sides Now 5.9



Chris Barner

New route development this summer continued to focus on the Joint Wall, Lakeside Buttress and the Top of the World.

Joint Wall: The face between "Above all Splendor" and "Whitewater Rodeo" was scrubbed by John Elliott last year but didn't receive bolts until this summer. The result is "Above all Slander" (5.9 to the walk off), a fine face route, very well protected, on good rock. Much has been happening above the treed platform left of "Joint Effort". Here a large roof featuring yellow lichen is split by two large cracks. The left-most of these was scrubbed by Paul Rydeen some time ago but did not receive its first ascent until the alpine camp. The climb is dubbed "Procrastination" (5.9) and is an awesome outing up a chimney past three bolts to the intimidating crack above. Paul tactfully avoided scrubbing the yellow lichen off the rock. It is hoped that future first ascensionists will exercise similar discretion.

Still further left, "Karmacide" (5.10-) and "Ya bin Fishin?" (5.9+), two excellent top-rope problems scrubbed by Greg Shea circa 1993, finally got bolted courtesy of John and

Fred Put, also at the camp. These two climbs, along with "Procrastination" make this area a superb destination. Access to the base of these climbs when the creek is in flood was made possible by John Elliott when he scrubbed the ledge that traverses the Joint Wall's base.

Next door, at the Lakeside Buttress, two fine new routes flank 'Beach Run'. On the right is "Triad" (5.10b), a Chris Barner/Jim Tanski project that takes the prominent buttress to finish in double cracks through the last tier. On the left is John Elliott's latest project, "Big Fun" (5.7+), which takes a varied and interesting line through the treed buttress closest to the lake, and is very strenuous for its grade. These 1 1/2 pitch outings, along with "Above all Splendor/Slander" and "Beach Run" add a significant new dimension to Crest's climbing opportunities.

At the Top of the World, Mike Dwinnell has completed "Harmony" (5.10a) with his fine lead during the camp. A unique face climb through a bulging crux, "Harmony" is one of the best new routes at Crest. At

Broken Rock, Donna Hartford continued her string of quality climbs as she scrubbed, bolted from jumars, and then 'onsight' flashed "Tigerlily" (5.10a). Anyone who has bolted at Crest without first top-roping the route knows what a fine accomplishment this is. There are also two new projects underway here: Jason Stalker's wicked looking face climb at Ratson's Corner, and Bill Phipp's equally intimidating line at Pine Rock between "Last Autumn's Dream" and "Harmony".

At Another World, Alex Ratson continued work on his chimney there, while Fred Put began work on the difficult looking crack that greets you as you arrive from the top of Gateway. Both should be quality lines.

Over at the "Sunrise Rocks" area, John Elliott, Mike Dwinnell and Chris Barner have all begun to explore new route possibilities. If these routes can be completed this fall their southeast exposure may have us free climbing in January!

So, Crest Creek continues to grow, thanks to the work of tireless volunteers and a cooperative atmosphere. Try some of these new climbs...they are mostly excellent.

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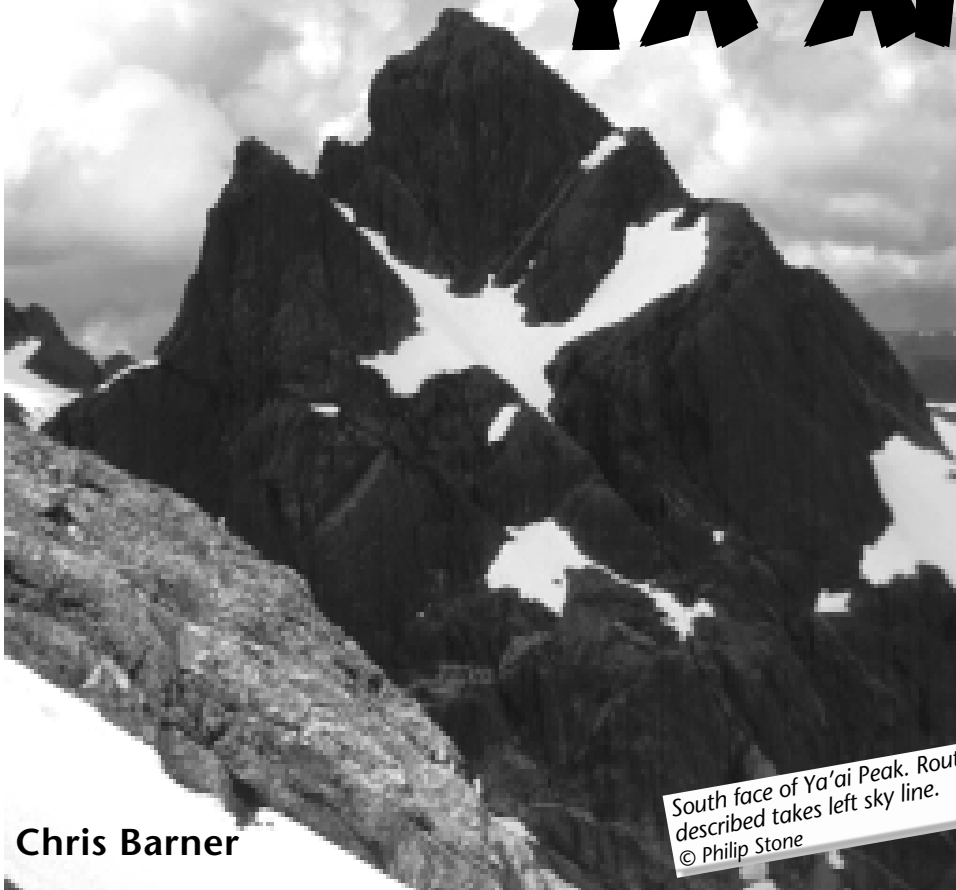


**MOUNTAIN
EQUIPMENT
CO-OP**

Sean Clayton
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Paul Clark
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THE WEST RIDGE YA'AI PEAK



Chris Barner

Paul and I huddled behind the bivy boulder at Rugged Mountain's north col wondering if the bloody thing was going to blow over on top of us! We'd both travelled to the Haihte Range many times previously - this is the kind of place you don't mind coming back to again and again - but we had never encountered a wind quite like this before.

Our early start initiative had been thwarted by the wind, and at least our combined weight in stones covered every object in camp that seemed capable of flight. The destination for the morning, and now for the afternoon, was Ya'ai Peak, the southern aspect of which, in my opinion, constitutes Vancouver Island's most compelling mountain scenery.

The SE ridge, the right-hand skyline from the col, is said to be a classic. Climbed in 1968 by Mike Walsh, it appears to be the obvious line. The left-hand skyline, or west ridge, an unlikely looking series of steps, gendarmes and shoulders, will be our enterprise for the day.

A long contour northward across the hanging glaciers of Merlin's NE face brought us to the base of the ridge, where we evolved from snow creatures into rock creatures and began searching for a route through a series of very intimidating features. There seemed to be two possibilities: a huge chimney system several pitches long, or a graceful arete that would require courageous climbing over exposed terrain free of protection. You guessed it - we skulked over to the chimney.

The rock was that perfect, rough, red karmutzen volcanic that is such a pleasure to climb but difficult to protect. The rope remained in Paul's pack as we soloed past a large chockstone on 5.6 face towards the upper part of the arete. We passed the first gendarme on the right to find a beautiful traverse along the ridge crest above. Soon we dropped down slightly to a small col where one of the shapely S. face snowfields tags the ridge. The rock step beyond looked 5.10ish - not really what we had in mind, so we rapped down the finger of snow about twenty feet

to where a pendulum gained easier ground and the col behind the second gendarme. From here broad ledges led around to the NW side, where a brief doddle along a shallow moat left us at the base of the route's crux - a sixty foot corner with a wide crack. We talked it over, then decided to feel it out ropeless.

The corner began at a low angle, then steepened near its top. With a pack the climbing was "challenging" - say 5.7 or so - but the rock was featured, flawless and offered excellent friction. All that was left between us and the summit was a few feet of loose slopes and a thirty-five foot hand crack in a slab.

The view from Ya'ai Peak is as good as the view towards it. It sits "right smack bang" in the middle of Vancouver Island's most extensively glaciated alpine area, with Woss Lake and one hundred miles of Nimpkish valley on one side, and the longest uninterrupted view in the world on the other.

We rappelled the crux corner on the descent, and were delighted to discover an improbable thin ledge traverse on the S. side of the upper gendarme that led us to a convenient rappel horn, directly above our pendulum point. What remained was the scenic ridge crest traverse, a couple of rappels down the chimney and a metamorphosis back into snow creatures. We scrambled Merlin via the NE slopes and some loose rock on the way back to camp, ogling the SE face of the 5500' peak near the col all the way.

The following morning the wind was even stronger and colder - strange for perfect weather in June. The upside was that the frigid gusts had been keeping the snow of Rugged's E face frozen for days. Paul and I front-pointed this in perfect conditions (after some minor acrobats in the 'schrund). As we soloed along the summit ridge together (after further minor acrobats in the moat), I considered the many successes of this, our latest journey to the 'Ruggedest Mountains'...A scramble up Merlin; a solo of Rugged in ideal conditions; the surprises of Ya'ai Peak's incomparable W. ridge; and the fact that it was our worries that were blown out to sea - when it could just as easily have been our socks! 🧦

A Not Very Original Essay on Wilderness and Communication

By Sandy Briggs

I wonder whether John Franklin or Robert F. Scott would have wished for a two-way radio, or a satellite telephone. I am curious about the extent to which any concept of rapid communication and rapid assistance existed in their times. It seems pretty clear that a radio would have saved Ejnar Mikkelsen and Iver Iversen a lonely winter or two in northeast Greenland. Fridtjof Nansen chose to attempt the first crossing of Greenland in 1889 by going east to west because the east coast was so sparsely populated and inaccessible that there would be no question of turning back. These explorers had no two-way radios because the appropriate technology did not exist - a sufficient reason - but I wonder whether instant communication and the ability to call for help would have been more than a little inconsistent with their view of the enterprise at hand. Did they and their society have a higher estimation of the acceptance of responsibility for one's actions than we have today? If so, was it merely the necessity of the times or was it philosophical independence on a higher plane? Scott wrote in his diary "We took risks. We knew we took them. Things have come out against us. Therefore we have no cause for complaint."

Even if modern-day explorers, either the big-league kind or the weekend kind, could adopt such a high level of personal responsibility it is fairly certain that not all their family members and friends would be similarly inclined to an acceptance of the fates. Searches will be launched. Rescues will be attempted. Responsibility may be assigned. Someone will pay for it all. This is not an essay about who will pay. I have already written one of those.

This essay is about the carrying of a communication device. There are now several kinds: two-way radio, EPIRB (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon), ELT (Emergency Locator Transmitter), cellular telephone, and recently the Iridium* satellite telephone (the first of several types to hit the market). It is now (almost) possible never to be out of touch with help, but it is quite possible to be out of reach of that help.

There are several questions all wilderness visitors must contemplate when carrying one or more of these devices:

1. Have I taken every reasonable precaution to avoid the necessity of summoning a rescue?
2. Am I about to attempt something that I wouldn't attempt if I had no communication device? Think very hard about this.

3. How great is my need to summon a rescue now? Will I (merely) be late for work? Will someone die?

4. Do I have the right to expect society to rescue me now? Can anyone realistically help?

5. Would I like to be front-page news? After I make this call, it will all likely be out of my control.

Probably there are some other questions, but those will get us started.

Outdoor writer Mike Randolph has written an insightful commentary on the advent of the Iridium telephone in the December 7, 1998 issue of the National Post (an otherwise gag-inducing collection of formulaic condescending right-wing twaddle). A Nature-based definition of wilderness might be a large tract of land or ocean within which the effects of human occupation or use are small or nonexistent.

Mr. Randolph offers a different approach: "It's just that I've always had this idea that possibly the best way to define wilderness is to recognize what it doesn't have - people, cars, houses, hospitals, and yes, phones." He writes "And let's be honest. Psychologically, having a back-up makes an enormous difference. Walking a high-wire with a net underneath 'just in case' is one thing. Doing it without the net is something else altogether." He continues "Wilderness is not just a physical place where there are rocks and trees and lakes (and bears). It's the feeling you get when a floatplane pilot drops you off on a remote mountain lake... and says 'See you in two weeks.' Only then do you truly understand that when the pilot leaves, he's really gone, civilization is gone, and you are on your own."

I would like to touch briefly on a related topic that has more to do with self-rescue. It is always said that users of the mountain backcountry in winter should carry shovels, avalanche probes, and avalanche transceivers (and know how to use them). The thing about avalanche transceivers has reached such a level of near-religious dogma that one is certain to be labelled irresponsible if one skis the backcountry without one, and especially if one is caught in an avalanche without one. It seems as though we have crossed over the line and fail now to understand the purpose of the device. An avalanche transceiver DOES NOT give licence to go where you would not go if you didn't have one. It just doesn't!

My point is that an Iridium telephone DOES NOT give licence to do things in the wilderness that you would not do if you didn't have one. It

just doesn't!

The question of whether to carry a communication device (an Iridium phone, say), is complicated by some other factors not yet mentioned, such as legal responsibility and (perhaps) cost. And what if your batteries go dead and your solar panel falls in the ocean, or a fox takes a fancy to your nice sweaty phone case while you're sleeping. Are you still in the game, or was that your only back-up?

There is little doubt in my mind that all commercial adventure businesses will soon have satellite telephones. For clubs of volunteers I am less sure. I guess it will partly depend on what the insurance companies come to require. Readily available and affordable rescue insurance, like that long-known in parts of Europe, may be a necessary concomitant. For my personal trips I guess I'm on the proverbial fence. For the Arctic ski expeditions with John Dunn we have always taken a two-way radio and an EPIRB. Both really do provide a sense of security and a recognition of other responsibilities. However, for the present, I will resist carrying any communication devices on my personal wilderness outings, perhaps because, as Mike Randolph writes, "Self-reliance is exhilarating." I claim this notwithstanding the fact that I initiated a helicopter rescue last summer. Maybe we draw the self-reliance line where we need to in a given set of circumstances. I'm glad to live in a society that considers it morally right and desirable to have ambulances that pick up accident victims from our highways, to have a Coast Guard that plucks the shipwrecked from the ocean, and to have Search and Rescue organizations that will try to help all those stranded or injured in the wilds, whether hunters, fishers, hikers, climbers or victims of an air crash. Let's not push it though.

Let us be thoughtful and responsible users of the wilderness and of communication devices. If it's self-reliance we want, let's make ourselves self-reliable. Let's learn the appropriate skills and take the right equipment. Let's learn some first-aid. Let us be responsible, lest someone else start making rules for us.

* Iridium is element #77. The name comes from the Latin iris, meaning rainbow. It contests with Osmium as the most dense element. It costs in the range of double the price of the telephone of the same name, on a per weight basis.

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