



The Sask Summit 2005 team would like to thank the following companies and organizations for their support of the 2005 Mount Saskatchewan Centennial Expedition!

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- *Marmot*

A full trip report will appear in the next SK Section newsletter!

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### Special points of interest:

- The 5th Annual Prairie Pitch Adventure Race, September 10, 2005 at Elkridge Resort near Waskesiu. Go to [www.accsask.ca](http://www.accsask.ca) for more details.

## Upcoming Events

**August 2005 - Little Elbow Bike 'n Scramble** - date to be decided, but objectives in the past have included Banded Peak and Mt Glasgow with many other possibilities in this very beautiful area just west of Calgary. Contact Dave McCormick [davemc@shaw.ca](mailto:davemc@shaw.ca) or 384-3676 for more information.

**September 10, 2005 - Prairie Pitch Adventure Race** will be held at Elkrige (just south of Waskesiu). This is a beautiful area so don't miss it! Deadline for early registration is August 15. Don't forget that as an ACC member you get a \$25 discount on your registration! More information is available at [www.accsask.ca](http://www.accsask.ca)

## Thanks

Thanks to **Mark Rosin** and his crew of volunteers for all the work they put into organizing the Navigation Marathon. Maybe next year Mother Nature will settle on a happy medium and we won't nearly die of heat stroke (this year) or freeze to death (last year)!

Thanks to **Kim Hitchings** for leading this year's Thrasher's Weekend!

Thanks to **Jesse Invik** and **Steve McCartney** for leading the annual Wapta Traverse and to **Dave McCormick** for leading the Bow/Yoho Traverse.

Thanks to **Tony Nadon**, **Greg McKee** and **Shelley McKinlay** for organizing the July 23 Urban Adventure Challenge and to volunteers **Lori Ebbesen**, **Carolyn Wensley**, **Craig Nichol**, **John Mollison**, **Gayle Ebbesen** and, *our youngest volunteers ever at 8 and 6 years of age*, **Gillian** and **Hilary Whorms!** This race was hosted by the **Bike Doctor** and the **SK Section ACC**.

## Fiske 55 Mud Fest

*By Andrew McKinlay*

On Saturday June 4 at 0000 hours (yes, midnight!) the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Fiske Adventure Race was underway. We headed out into the drizzle, jogged across town, through the grain elevator and back to our waiting bikes. Next we had roughly 50 km of biking, mostly on grid roads. We figured it might take us three hours. Little did we know! The full moon that weekend had been promising, but heavy clouds covered the sky and it was pretty dark. Heading out of town the roads weren't too bad and we made good time. Derek and I had just returned from our Mt. Saskatchewan climb in the Yukon so we hadn't been on our bikes much. It didn't seem to slow Derek down, but I felt I was dragging, especially when teams began to pass us in the dark.

I pulled off my glasses because they seemed to be fogging up, but it didn't help. As if the dark wasn't enough the clouds dropped down and wrapped us in a thick fog. The fun really began when we had to turn off the main grid road to reach the first checkpoint. With all the rain lately, the dirt road was six inches deep in soft sticky mud and we were forced to get off and walk our bikes. A few teams managed to ride the downhill parts, getting up enough speed to blast through the mud. The rest of us slogged along the ditch pushing our bikes.

The next 7 1/2 hours were more of the same. Even the grid roads were often so muddy that it was a toss up whether it was faster to walk or ride. Off road, there were sections where it was too muddy to even push our bikes and we had to carry them, which wouldn't have been so bad except for the extra 20 lbs of mud plastered all over them. Eventually the sun came up, but that only meant we had to look at the mud as well as plow through it.

Finally we made it back to the transition area in Fiske. We were happy to be done with the so

called "biking" section! We had passed a few teams a little way back and to our surprise we were in second place. Having only carried food and water for three hours, we guzzled down fluids and choked down some food, pushing through the transition quickly to make up some time on the first place team and stay ahead of the teams that were hot on our trail.

The next foot section started out well, till we reached checkpoint 6, or at least the area of checkpoint 6. We weren't sure if it was a good sign that we caught up with the first place team, or a bad sign, since it meant they were having trouble finding the checkpoint. The only clue was that the flag was on a fence. Unfortunately, there were multiple fences, some of them running through heavy bush, making it hard to search. We got more and more frustrated as time passed and the teams behind us started to appear. Finally, after more than an hour of searching, we found it. Unfortunately, a number of teams had passed us and we pushed to regain our position on the way to the next transition.

We managed to reach the canoeing back in second place, but only barely. Shelley had our canoe ready to go and we ran straight through the transition and got on the water. Canoeing is Derek's specialty and he powered us through this section. I did my best to keep up. There had been rumors that they might end the race after the canoeing so we didn't want to lose our position. At the end of the lake we had to portage the canoe out to a telephone pole and back. Derek said if it was ok with me (!) he'd just do it by himself. We reached the shore, jumped out, and he threw the canoe over his head and RAN around the pole. I was impressed!

When we reached the end of the canoe section they had decided not to cut the race short. The good news was that we didn't have to bike as originally planned, since we'd have been back to pushing our bikes. The bad news was that we now had 15 km to travel on foot to reach the finish. At this point we were 14 hours into a 12

hour race, with other teams close behind us. We grabbed some food and water as quickly as we could and headed out. We were hoping that the teams behind us would be moving slowly enough that we could take it easy on the way back. We should have known that nothing was that easy in this race! Back on the grid road another team appeared about 400 yards behind us. I thought we were walking fast, but they were slowly gaining on us. Derek was ready to run but my legs were in rebellion. We compromised. When the team behind us got too close we'd jog for a few hundred yards to maintain our lead. The only thing that kept us in front was that the team behind us didn't have the energy to run.

And so, after 16 hours and 20 minutes, we managed one last jog into the finish in Fiske, still hanging onto our second place position.

### Swap 'n Shop

In the market for new gear? Or have something you'd like to sell? Don't forget to check out the Swap 'n Shop page on our website. Here's some of the recent listings:

- 4 pairs of Rockterra climbing shoes, sizes 39 and 41
- 1 pair of Scarpa Reflex climbing shoes, Size 37/4,5 new, \$75.
- Varan climbing shoe, lace-up model, \$110 available in size 39/UK 6 size 41/8.
- Tyranno Velcro climbing shoes size 41/7.5, and size 39/6, \$100.

Call Christian Fibich at 306-652-1414 or e-mail [fibichc@shaw.ca](mailto:fibichc@shaw.ca).

- Five.ten Newton climbing shoes, in great shape, size 41 (fits approx size 9 to 9.5 women's). Original price approx \$150, asking \$60.

Call Jackie Hunchak at 306-373-2188 or e-mail [jackieathome@shaw.ca](mailto:jackieathome@shaw.ca).

## Centennial Project #2

*By Dave McCormick*

Just to clear things up a bit, Centennial Project # 1 has to be the SK Section's attempt to climb Mt Saskatchewan. My personal "centennial project" is, therefore, # 2. I decided to attempt a climb of Mt Columbia for a second time.

Situated off in the western edge of the Columbia Icefields, Mt Columbia isn't a difficult climb; it's the fickleness of the weather: wind, storms, whiteouts and the like, that usually deny climbers the summit. I've actually heard of exceptionally unlucky persons who have attempted the peak 20 times. Personally, I think I'd be taking up a new sport.

However, I enlisted the support of Tim Friesen, since I knew he had a high tolerance for long hikes that didn't result in attaining any summits. Our third member, Drew Bell, was pried away from his job for the required week ("are you kidding? Count me in!"), and we set the second week in May as the time. The plan was to take supplies for a week and commit to sit out the expected bad weather until we could nab the summit, no matter how bored or smelly we got.

My first time to the Icefields was back in 1999, when I managed to entice 4 enthusiastic young women to give Mt Columbia a try with me. Job-related constraints meant that we had only one day on which the climb could take place. No surprise, "the day" was almost completely socked in. We left via Mt Castleguard and the Saskatchewan Glacier. However, that trip did give me all the GPS coordinates that I needed.

Tim, Drew and I met at the "Big Bend" very late Friday night (I seem to remember hearing their vehicle arrive around 2 am). Once we warmed up and had breakfast, we loaded up and

hiked to the toe of the Athabasca glacier. Good thing we were hardened mountaineers because Parks Canada still hadn't opened the road to the lower parking lot despite the lack of any snow, and we had to hike through the rubble before we could put on the skis.

The weather on the way in was fantastic, although the ski up the Athabasca Glacier's headwall with heavy packs and a sled somewhat took away from our normal propensity to gawk at all the wonderful scenery. Once we "finally" pulled up to the top of the actual Icefield (seemingly miles further than the top of the headwall), Mt Columbia came into view, along with Snowdome, the Twins, Mt Castleguard, Mt Bryce and everything else we could see but couldn't name.

Our decision about where to set up camp ended up being determined by a desire not to be too close to any other potential rabble-rousers (there being at least 3 other groups up there), an apparent lack of crevasses, proximity to Mt Columbia (no luck there, we camped almost 9 km away!), and how tired and hungry we were feeling. We dug a hole for the tent, started a snow wall, excavated a privy and started on the re-hydration process. That evening was beautiful, with great views, a wonderful western sky at sunset and warm, calm conditions. That was Saturday.

The next morning, somewhat cooler, was still nice, but with a bank of fog resting up against the base of Mt Columbia. The summit could still be seen.

One other group passed our camp, going for their second attempt at the peak in as many days. Tim wasn't feeling well and opted to remain at the camp. Drew and I skied the 15 minutes to the Trench and slogged our way the remaining six or seven kilometers to the base of Columbia. We skied on in the faith that the summit would remain clear because that fog bank was still very much present. In fact, as we approached, we couldn't see the mountain at all.

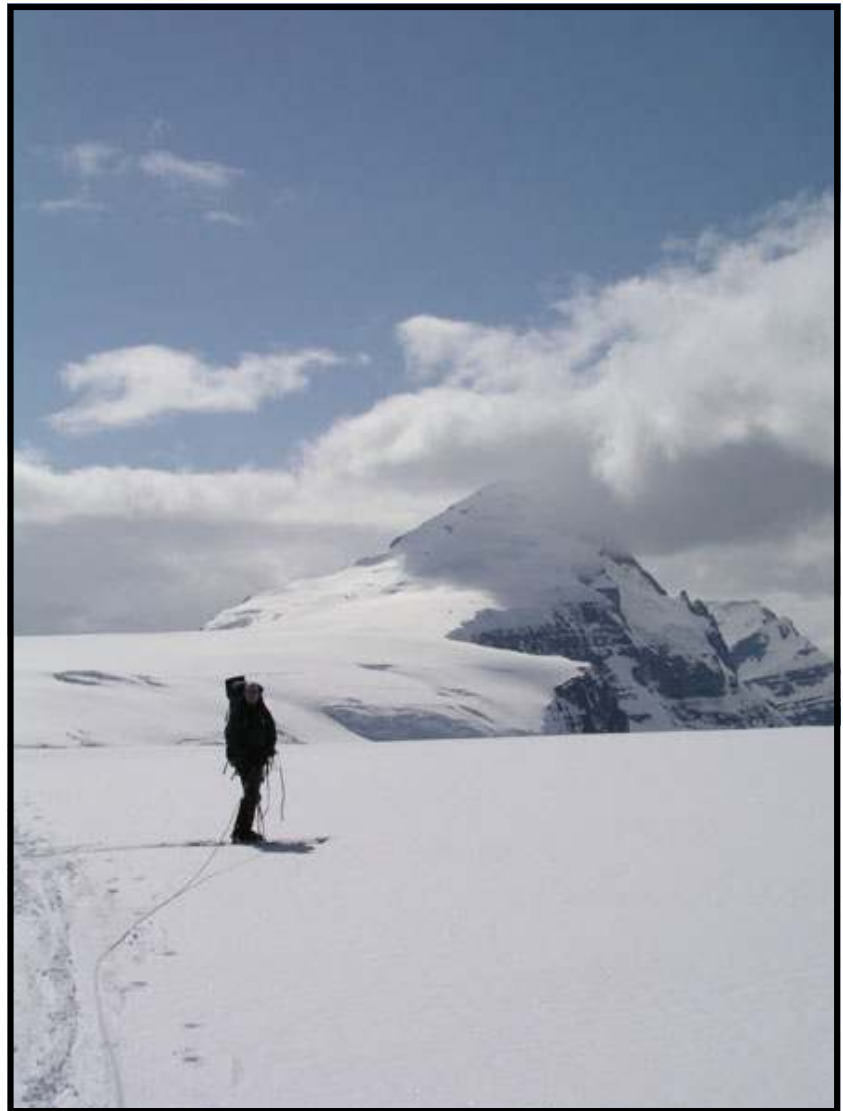
We skied up the lower part of the mountain and left our skis where the slope angle began to increase, calling into question our ability to ski down it. We ran into one group right away, on their way down, with another group right behind them. Nice steps were there all the way to the top, although it did get pretty steep at times. Two hours from leaving the skis, we were on the summit, a broad plateau with stunning views to deep valleys over a kilometer below. Fog moved in and out, but the views were quite acceptable. We stayed long enough to eat lunch, take some pictures and google at the scenery and decided to get going back down before things soaked in completely.

An hour of careful descent brought us back to our skis. Two problems immediately presented themselves: how to put skis on our feet while standing on a steep slope and then, how to ski down that slope (neither of us being accomplished skiers). We managed both with, I think, only one wipeout and it was downhill all the way to the Trench. One more hour back to camp, all out of water, with the sun blasting down.

Tim, meanwhile, had been a busy lad, and had excavated a snow cave. Once again, we began getting much-needed water and food back into our tired bodies. That was Sunday.

Monday was windy, foggy and cloudy with blowing snow. We had to dress up and go outside to enhance the snow wall because I figured that any wind would come from the northwest. Monday's wind came straight from the East. The remainder of the day was spent eating, sleeping and building up the snow wall fortifications. I don't think we'd had so much fun building a snow fort since we were kids.

Tuesday was still very foggy, in fact, it was worse, most of the time. We decided to head out, having achieved the main objective. My boots were killing me and I was in no mood to go anywhere else. We skied across the Icefield plateau in a dense fog, barely able to see each other on the rope. Someone had helpfully placed wands, which we managed to follow all the way to the top of the Athabasca headwall. Not trusting our skiing techniques, we walked down the steepest part, skied down some short hills and down the glacier to the end of the snow. Centennial Project # 2 accomplished.



*Enroute to the summit of Mount Columbia*

## *Yukon Quest*

*By Dave McCormick*

Feeling some pangs of regret at not having joined the SK Section's Mt Saskatchewan trip in May, I agreed to go to the Yukon with a group from Toronto who were attempting a 4200 m peak in the St Elias Range called South Walsh. This was (still is) apparently the highest unclimbed peak in North America. We arrived in Whitehorse on June 11<sup>th</sup> and waited at Kluane Lake for nearly 5 days before we were able to fly to our camp location. The weather obviously wasn't going to cooperate.

Like the Mt SK expedition, we found snow conditions on the peaks to be difficult. A snow

and ice crust covering crappy ice or sugar snow into which we'd sink to mid thigh. Blistering sun from which there was no escape. Snow on the glaciers that turned to mush by late morning. We decided to set up a base camp on the Donjek Glacier and do day trips from there. During our 10 days at camp, we explored the icefall leading to South Walsh and climbed 3 previously unnamed and un-climbed peaks in the 3400 m height range. We found that if we got up at 2 am we were able to have about 8 hours of skiing and climbing before the snow went to pot in the sun. After a few days, we admitted to each other that South Walsh wasn't going to be climbed by us on this trip and we turned our attentions elsewhere.

During our climbs, we generally had good views of Mt Logan, 35 km to the west, along



*Base camp with South Walsh in the background.*

with other notable peaks such as Mt Steele, Mt Vancouver, Mt Lucania, the tips of the Centennial Range and Mt Queen Mary, amid all the other “lesser” peaks.

As the time wore on, we kept a close eye on the weather and decided that we would take advantage of 2 days of good weather to fly back out to Kluane Lake. Accordingly, we called Andy Williams and were evacuated in 2 flights. As it turned out, there were no further flights for the next week.

The group went their separate ways once we got to Whitehorse. One was going back in for a week of glacier travel with his kids, another decided to go back to Toronto early. I rented a car and spent a couple of days in Skagway and Dyea, Alaska, exploring towns of the Klondike Gold Rush back in 1898. Did a lot of walking in Whitehorse as well, visiting various museums and other historical locations.

So, what did I learn on this trip? Well, first, I think I like short trips better than long trips. I also hate waiting day after day for that flight into wherever it is you want to go. I like to have my own separate tent, especially after I’ve been in the same clothes for a week. June is too late to climb in the St Elias range given how early summer is coming these years. Sunscreen and zinc ointment really can prevent sunburn. Someone needs to invent dehydrated beer crystals. Important considerations, but not necessarily in order of greatest importance. It was really a stunning place, but for my next visit, if there is one, I’d like to take a week to do some ski touring around some of those great peaks and just see the scenery. It’s truly one of the wonderful places on the planet and I’m very glad that I had the chance to visit even a small part of it.

## *Youth Wow Saskatoon!*

*By Shelley McKinlay*

To say that I was “wowed” would be an understatement.

Competition Climbing Canada held the Youth National Championships of indoor climbing in Saskatoon at Vic’s Vertical Walls, June 30 – July 3, 2005. Although this was the third time it’s been held in Saskatoon, this was the first time I wasn’t out in the mountains doing my own climbing so I decided to participate as a volunteer and spectator.

Approximately 75 youth, ages “11 & under” to 19 years, from British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan took part in both technical and speed events. As I belayed the 11 & under groups I was hoping the route would stay up so that I could see whether or not I could do it! However, there was a constant change of holds throughout the weekend as fast and professional route setters made changes for the different age categories, semi-finals and finals.

Coached by Jason Holowach, the four Saskatchewan climbers, Teagan Bridges and brothers Emmett, Sean and Ben Fortosky, did very well especially considering they have only been climbing for a few months!

The route setters rated their final “piece de resistance” at about a 5.13c – something I’m sure I couldn’t even get off the ground on! The fact they named it “Anaconda” may give you an idea of what it was like. Starting low in one corner of the lead room it wound its way up, around and across significant overhangs. Even the climbers in the final group were awed by it. During the preview, as they stood looking up at it with mouths hanging open, I saw one of them mouth the words “Holy crap!”

The room was filled to capacity with spectators and you could feel the excitement as each of the climbers in turn got a bit further on

the route, struggling to figure it out, eventually taking big falls. J.J. Mah and Matt Johnson from Vancouver came in first and second respectively, both falling about 10 feet from the top. Then, Sean McColl, three time world champion, came out, zipped through the route in record time and amazed the crowd by making it look like he'd just gone for a simple walk in the park. For the bizillionth time that weekend. . . WOW!

I heard many comments from both parents and coaches about how well everything ran during the competition. Hats off to Sue Holowach, Mark Klopshak and the staff at Vic's Vertical Walls for organizing a fantastic event!

**Articles,  
information, photos,  
quotes, items of interest  
for the newsletter are  
welcome at any time!  
Please send to Shelley  
McKinlay via e-mail  
shelley@axonsoft.com  
or mail to the section  
address noted  
below.**



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