

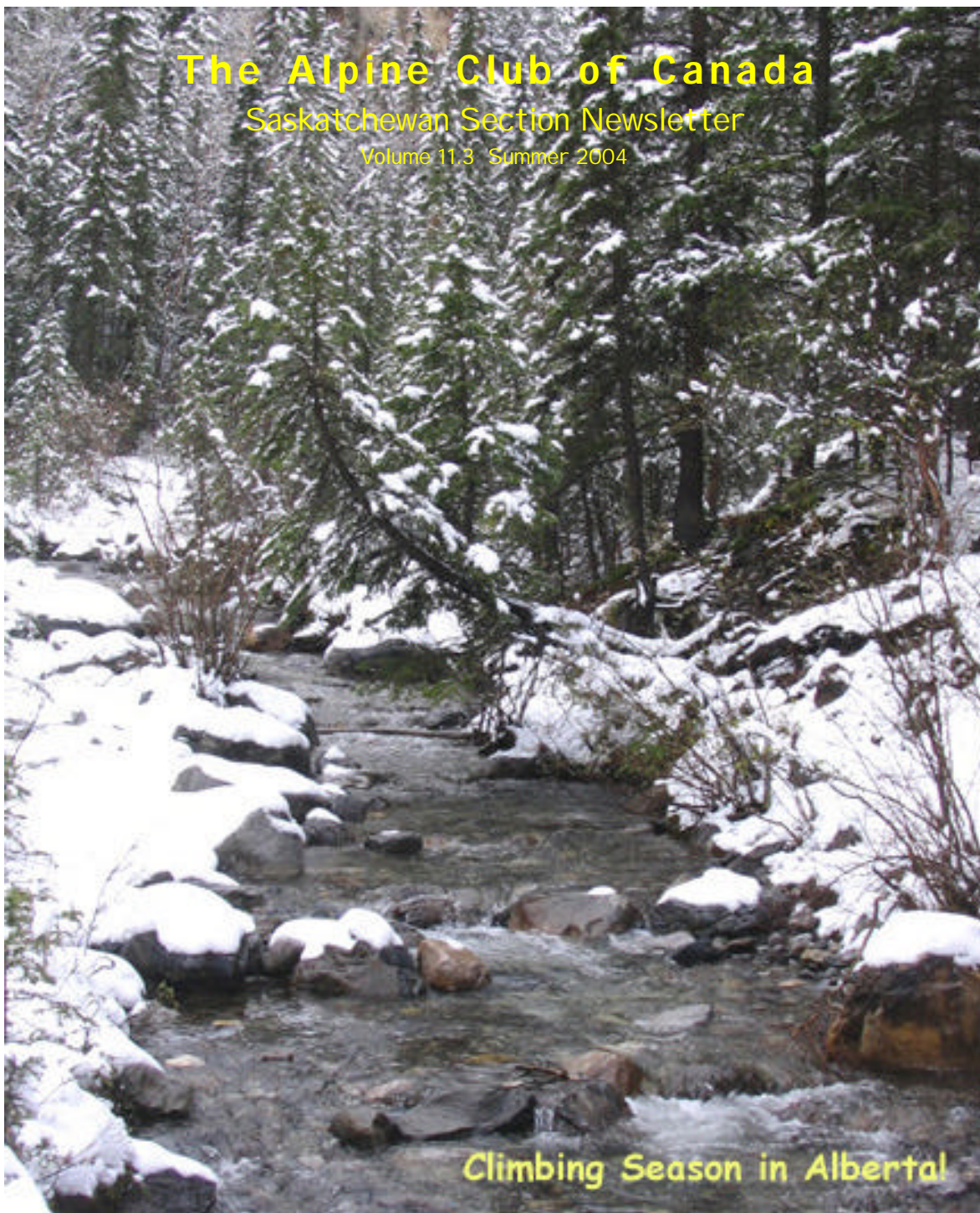


The Prairie Pitch

The Alpine Club of Canada

Saskatchewan Section Newsletter

Volume 11.3 Summer 2004



Climbing Season in Alberta

News & Views

Many of you have enjoyed the backcountry hut facilities owned and operated by the ACC. The following article was written by Malcom "Tabs" Talbot from Calgary, one of a number of people who are instrumental in the maintenance and refurbishing of these huts as required. As you will see from the article, it isn't always an easy task.....

Under the Red Planet

Day after day of hazy orange dawns and brilliant crimson sunsets, valleys shrouded with smoke and skies full of strange and ever changing light. The acrid aroma of a burning world permeates the haze. During the dark hours, the Borealis gyrates beneath the Polar star and as if to menace those aging Earthmen that need to venture out in the dying hours of pale pink moonlight, a huge Red Planet looms ominously over the Southern Icecap. Warm, warm winds blow constantly like a Chinook on an alien world. Barren, arid hills, crags, stones, boulders and naked bedrock form a lunar-esque landscape stretching out to the fumid mountains. "One Small Step for _ _ _ ? "

The Prairie Pitch

The Alpine Club of Canada
Saskatchewan Section
Newsletter

The Prairie Pitch is the official regular publication of the Saskatchewan Section of the Alpine Club of Canada.

Submissions for publication are welcome at any time and will be published given sufficient space and interest. Generally, given the schedule of the editor, the newsletter will appear about 4 to 6 times each year, whenever there is sufficient material to fill an edition and when the editor can find the time to put it all together!! Please send in material. Your stories and pictures are needed.

While we make every attempt to ensure the accuracy of the material contained herein, neither the editor, the Sask Section nor the ACC can be held responsible for errors or omissions. Be aware that opinions or language contained in some articles may be viewed as offensive by some. Reader discretion is always advised !!

No, this was not the set of a new Star Wars movie or a NASA landing on one of the Moons of Jupiter, this was the ACC Work Party at Bow Hut with the Parks on fire all around us and Mars, on it's 2003 vacation trip to Earth, just hanging out over Mount Olive.

It had been a complicated and frustrating summer for the Huts Committee and for our Work Party planning. In keeping with our long term commitment to upgrade all of the Hut outhouses, our original intentions for 2003 were to rebuild the outhouses at Elizabeth Parker and at Wates Gibson. Only days before our starting date, the Parks Review Committee decided not to issue the building and development permits for the Elizabeth Parker Hut and we had no choice other than to shut down the project for the year and to reopen the hut. As a result of this some ACC members "got lucky" when 24 bedspaces for ten whole days in high season suddenly became available, a rare event! Our subsequent meetings and discussions with Park representatives seem to have resolved most our differences and we have high hopes of going ahead with the Parker renovation early next Summer [2004].

Then a persistent mould problem in the bunk room area at the Bow Hut, that we had been keeping an eye on, raised it's ugly head. The EWWM Committee obtained samples of the mould for laboratory testing. The tests showed that, although it is was not an immediate health risk, it did require our early attention. Despite the weeks of planning that had already gone into the Wates Gibson project

we decided that it too would have to be postponed to allow us to transfer all our attentions and all our funding to Bow.

The maintenance staff, under EWWM Committee Chair, Karen Rollins's supervision, properly equipped with protective clothing and respirators, did an interim but thorough clean up of the mould before the Summer Season started, giving us a little breathing space to obtain some expert advice and to work out a more permanent solution. Bow was already scheduled for an improved outhouse in 2004. This was moved up one year so that everything could be dealt with whilst we had the manpower and equipment on site and we could fly in all the materials on the same Helicopter bill.

Any one who has spent time at Bow will remember that with the metal studs and metal siding in the corridor, the whole place resounded like the Drum Corp of the Stampede Band when a door was allowed to slam during a late night outhouse foray. Sound proofing and lining of the corridor was to be our third project. The work party extended from August 15th to the 30th, 16 long days. With the cooperation of the Yamnuska management, Nancy managed to relocate all the people that were already booked into Bow, to Balfour and to Peyto.

Because of the false starts on the other two work parties and the timing changes, several of our veteran journeymen Huts Committee members, who would normally have played major parts in the supervision of the project, were only able to stay for a day or two and some were not able to be there at all. Dick Howe was still in hospital, so everyone else had to take a turn announcing "Miller Time" and handing out the "Trad" at the end of each working day. This has long been Dick's personal responsibility and jealously guarded duty on our work parties for many years. A labour of love!

The mould had penetrated quite deeply into the walls and ceiling, so all of the plywood lining in the bunk rooms and all the internal walls had to be removed. The outer walls were carefully examined but, much to our relief, the mould had not found it's way past the vapour barrier into the studing. The whole room was thoroughly cleaned and completely relined with new pine ply and the bunks were rebuilt with only partial dividing walls, leaving one large "open plan" sleeping area. Two of the windows were changed to improve ventilation and a small woodstove will be added before the worst of the winter arrives. The Custodian room is now a little smaller, having donated space to the new woodstove. Additional ventilation and the warmth of the woodstove will make for a much more comfortable sleeping area and prevent the mould from reoccurring. The bunkroom will be locked in future, to help discourage the ever increasing number of "poachers" who try to make use of our Huts without payment.

The new Outhouse was built on almost the same site as it's predecessor but is now extended and connected to the Corridor. It will no longer be necessary to put on every last scrap of winter clothing and step out into the blizzard in the middle of the night to visit the "facilities" The houses themselves are bigger and weather tight and fitted with "SSTT", Sweet Smelling Toilet Technology, for odour reduction and the new windows offer ventilation, more light and a view. Changing the barrels and flying them out should now be much easier and considerably less unpleasant for Hut users and for our maintenance staff. The Corridor was sound proofed with fire rated insulation and

the new lining has a special flame retardant coating. It is no longer the largest Tin Drum in Banff National Park.

We found a little time to give the Kitchen a "make over" with clear finish pine ply, pine trim, a new green floor and a couple of coats of Brilliant White paint to the ceiling and upper walls and we realigned the drying racks. There are still a few items remaining that need the attentions of our maintenance staff, but you will find Bow to be a more user friendly and comfortable place, the next time you ski up there to start the Wapta Traverse.

I would like to offer my thanks and those of the Huts Committee to everyone who helped during those two long weeks, particularly Andy Fisher and Doug Rennie who managed to stick out the whole sixteen days with me. Two of the ACC maintenance staff, Ryan Mazur and Matt Boekel, already weary from several days of servicing the Jasper area Huts, came back up to Bow for a second shift to help us finish on time and worked long and hard, "above and beyond the call of duty" Thanks Guys!!

Our full grown helpers were: Tim Clinton, Doug Rennie, Jane Rennie, Cam Rennie, Brenda Critchley, Heike Pauli, Andy Fisher, Tim Melville, Diana Knaak, Mal Talbot, Mike Galbraith, Robin Hannigan, Gordon Thompson, Dan Verrall, Ryan Mazur, Matt Boekel, Mike Mahon, Felix Camire, Kevin West, Amy Berezay, Jake Herrero, Tom Knott, Catherine Knott, Ray France, Frank Liszczak, Dan Hallet, Liam O'Sullivan, Steve Manderville, Henry Fan, Dave McCormick, Makoto Shinagawa, Kiyotaka Igura, John Derick, Lynn Martel and Perry Davis.

Our junior helpers were : Benjamin Rennie, Katelyn Rennie, Megan Rennie and the famous Virginia Knott.

Our thanks also go to Nancy Hansen, Lawrence White and the rest of the "Back Stage Gang" in the ACC office, to Lisa Palenchuk for her help with the food supplies and to Don McTighe at Alpine Helicopter.

Mal Talbot, Chairman, Huts Committee, ACC.



Our Trip to Mount Columbia

(a.k.a. Tales of the mountaineers who summit nothing)

By Jesse Invik

Our trip began ridiculously early one morning this past April. The four of us, Natalia Shostak, Tim Friesen, Uli Zimmer and myself, Jesse Invik headed off from the climbers camp-ground full of vim and vigour. Well actually, I, full of impatience, headed off ahead of the others, thinking I would just relax when I got to the edge of the ice and wait for the others there. Since I was the so-called "leader" (who never actually ended up leading very much), this caused some panic in those I left behind who were still packing up, and didn't know me very well at this point. Tim, who'd been so looking forward to his oatmeal, hastily packed it, bowl and all into his back pack, thinking if he didn't jiggle it much it wouldn't spill. Well, let me tell you, we had a thin layer of oatmeal coating everything in our tent for the rest of the trip. And Uli, who had been looking forward to some lovely organic jam over the course of the trip didn't feel he had the time to transfer it from it's glass jar, likewise his coffee or his rum.

The weather was a fine grayish drizzle as we started out, with a fierce wind building. As we roped up and headed across the glacier, I wondered what great fun we were in for. The first and second icefalls were easy enough, just up the moraine beside them. Uli was struggling with his pack full of glass. At the top of the second icefall, the weather became pea-soup thick. You couldn't see the person ahead of you; you could barely see your hand in front of your face. It started to snow a whole lot and the wind, as we were to learn, is always present. Having barely gotten started we pitched a tent to wait out the storm. The four of us piled into a two man tent, boots and all. It was cold, but very fun and a good way to get to know one another. We all fell asleep in one big heap. A couple of hours later, the weather had not improved and we set up a second tent. I don't think I've ever slept so much. After all, there wasn't much else to do, after you've played with your GPS for awhile and bullshitted quite a lot.

Having lost a little too much time on that first day, and realizing what a big bite we had bitten off, we decided the next morning to abandon Mt. Columbia, stay camped where we were and head up Snow Dome. After quite a bit of digging to find all of our gear, we were off with Uli staying behind to man the fort. The visibility was okay, but the wind chill very high, and off we went up the third ice fall. Route finding wasn't too tough, someone had left behind some wands. We were above the ice fall and had gone quite a ways around the back of snow dome, looking for the right ridge to follow up, when the lack of visibility became a problem again. The sky looked positively black and we headed back down in the icy cold. When we got back down we were delighted to be served warm drinks and blueberry cobbler by Uli. We decided the four of us would head up Snow Dome yet again the next morning, weather permitting. As we were standing there discussing this and drinking our nice drinks, we could see a team of 4 on skis coming up past the second icefall towards us. As we watched them move, a slope they had just crossed avalanched behind them. Tim got it on film and it's a great picture. When the team got to us we asked them if they had seen the avalanche and were surprised to hear they hadn't even noticed it. I began to worry

about the slope that we were camped underneath. That night, every time the seracs fell, which they did fairly often and noisily, I worried whether it might be that slope going. It was not a restful sleep. I began to think about acquiring a lot more knowledge about avalanches before future trips. I dreamt that night that our tent was actually set on a hidden crevasse and that we wake up to find all that is holding us out of the abyss is the four pegs in the corners.

In reality we wake the next morning to a beautiful clear sky. We are getting into a routine, digging out our gear, boiling some water for hot drinks, digging holes to do our business. Going up the headwall, Natalia leads, Tim is second then Uli and myself in the rear. We crest the headwall and I feel glad to be off that slope. Following our footsteps of the day before we continue upward. Soon we are moving up a convex hill and then we are stopped. I can only see Uli and I say "why are we stopped?" Then he says, I think Natalia went in a crevasse. My heart sticks in my chest and I prussic up to Uli. When I get past Uli I can see Natalia laying in the snow in self-arrest and it's Tim in the hole. I get close to him and call down. He says he's uninjured but wedged in. I've been practicing my crevasse rescue skills in my living room, but it feels surreal putting them into practice now, and I pray that I can do it under pressure. Get one anchor set up, then another, prussic on the rope, go through the steps. Hauling is tough, despite the mechanical advantage. Even though the lip of the crevasse is padded, there is so much snow on the edge, and it is cutting in. Uli helps me haul. The higher Tim gets, the harder it gets to haul him. There is an overhang of snow between him and us and he tries to knock it down. About this point we made our big mistake. As Natalia no longer had any tension on our rope, she walked over toward us to help, and on the way fell in another different crevasse, about a meter away from the first one. Fortunately she didn't fall in very deeply and with some tension on the rope she easily climbed out. After we got everyone extracted from all crevasses, we decided to call it quits and head down. By then it was hot and very sunny, a beautiful day. We had to cross a few slopes that might have been problematic, except that they had pretty much done all the sliding they were going to do for the day.

Upon reaching the platform where the tour buses park on the glacier, we were inundated by happy tourists, who all seemed to want their pictures taken with us. They didn't care that we had summited absolutely nothing, they thought we were heroes. A very kindly elderly Japanese woman stroked my cheek, and a spunky 40-something woman squeezed Tim's buns, while her husband snapped the picture. It was probably the highlight of the trip.

We learned many, many things on this trip. One big tent would have been better than 2 small ones, reducing energy spent on cooking. A hanging stove allowing one to cook right in the tent is essential. Food should be extremely easy to prepare. Everyone should know crevasse rescue cold. Everyone should carry two anchors, ie: fluke or picket, plus ice axe and ice screw. And everyone should have avalanche knowledge. We finished out our day with much beer-drinking, eating and bullshitting. The next day we went off to do a scramble. We didn't summit that either but that's another story!



May 21-23, 2004 - Thrasher's Weekend: The Mount Kidd Story

By: Linda Breton

Rambling scrambler, based out of a 25' wide forest in Saskatoon.

The May long weekend rolled around again, bringing with it the promise of touching the real rocks of the mountains for climbers, and some magical moments on top of the world for scramblers -- Thrasher's weekend.

This year we were to camp at the Porcupine Creek campground, a private group site reserved exclusively for us on this weekend. Twenty km down the Kananaskis highway, and a pleasant, winding drive after a locked gate, through the forest beyond, brought us to our campground. Tall and quiet trees, a burbling river beside the sites, it was a wonderful secluded place. All was well... except for the heavy snow warning I had just heard on the radio.

Approximately sixteen brave Saskatchewanites arrived Friday evening. Attending were Mark and Coelton Von Eschen, Claude Lapointe, Derek Birkham, Darren and Taylor Swanson, Kim Hitchings, Beth Dauk (from Jasper and the Jasper section), Norma and Larry Remple, Jamie Hogan, Peter Fast, Dave McCormick, Kathy and Ivan Hitchings, and yours truly, Linda Breton.

The rain also arrived that night, and it was soon realized that an open-air gazebo, with no stove or firepit, is not the best place to stay warm on a cold night.

Sometime during the night, the rain turned to snow, and we awoke to flurries. The cold temps plus the white stuff, squelched the plans of the rock climbers, and it was decided all would go with the scramble group, led by Dave McCormick.

At the crack of 9:30am, we found ourselves hiking through a fragrant forest, soft flakes floating down, on our way to the south peak of Mount Kidd...or so we thought... five minutes later, we find a taped off trail that we hadn't counted on and so the plan changed again and we were off to the north, and higher (2958m/9705'), peak of Mount Kidd. All right!

The trail led us through the trees, and eventually to a drainage creek. Following the creek brought us to the base of a large snow-filled gully that split the bulk of the mountain in half. This would be our ascent route.

During our meandering through the forest, the snow had increased in its intensity, and now the surrounding mountains were not visible. No blue skies today, but that was ok, as I had forgotten my polarizer anyway. And besides, the best part of the scramble was to begin.

Snapping out of my self-centered, camera gear musings, I realized that some of the group had decided turn back at this point. About half continued up into heavy wet snow. While Dave and Derek had the laborious job of leading, kicking steps into the wintry gully, the rest of us had the fairly pleasant task of stepping into the neatly set footprints. (Now if only someone could kick steps up scree for me. Hey, I can dream...).

The gully was a marvelous place, filled with odd lumpy shapes of old tumbled snow, gushing waterfalls, steep slippery slab rock, all overlooked by the towering faces of the mountain itself. Sloughs from the new snow occasionally fell off these faces, shaking the gully with a low rumble, and sprinkling extra white powder to the wind.

As we continued, the snow grew deeper, often at the knee, sometimes higher. The falling snow had increased to near whiteout conditions, while the wind lashed icy particles into our faces. It felt like we had stepped back into winter. At one point, it looked like we were very close to the summit ridge, but it was very hard to see and be certain.

The poor weather conditions, as well as some poor clothing conditions, led to the decision that we would turn around. It was about 12:30pm at this point. When I faced back down the gully, I watched seven shadowy figures, scrambling down, disappearing into the white haze. Claude was just below me, and he did not move immediately. He appeared hesitant to leave this high spot, and I could relate. Mountains are fleeting things, and time spent close to them is precious, so it seems. Heavy steps began to take me to the valley below.

The descent was trickier than the trek up, slippery snow causing the occasional unintentional glissade. I recalled the stories of people who had scrambled this mountain, descending the gully in 15 minutes in a controlled(!) glissade. I had to wonder how they missed the water and rock...

The last bit of the trek seemed more like a race through the trees for some lunch. Cheese buns danced in my mind, and a hot beverage seemed almost sinful. Finally back at the campground, Ivan Hitchings had brought out his trusty staple gun and some plastic roll he had just bought in Canmore. A short time later, the gazebo was transformed into a plastic sealed haven from the storm. Most of the crew was up for a nap after the excursion, and many rested in preparation for supper out at the Drake in Canmore. Several hit the local laundromat to dry soggy clothing before making the ascent to Brew Peak. All arrived without mishap to the summit table, and a few moments were spent enjoying the company of likeminded souls, before descending to our snowy tents and bags.

Sunday morning brought even more snow, and all decided to leave early, with the possibility of a Thrasher's II weekend mentioned. A quick hike down the scenic Heart Creek trail (where we spied fresh bear tracks) and some heartfelt good-bye's, ended this short weekend. A mountainous thank you to Ivan, Kathy, Dave and all who organized, led, and participated to make the short time there special. A big hug to those who wished they could have been there, but couldn't...see you on the peaks!

Mt Kidd Revisited

By Dave McCormick



Not content to give up on a missed summit opportunity, I took advantage of one nice day, July 6th, to return to Mt Kidd. Other than a couple of short forays to the hills in May and June, both having significant weather issues to deal with (see story above for an example), this was basically a season opener for me and my legs were feeling the fatigue by the end of the 1350 m scramble. As the pictures will attest, snow conditions were significantly better although it wasn't much warmer, and I did meet and greet a mother black bear and her two cubs not far along the trail. Making noise and carrying pepper spray seem to be prerequisites for these areas!



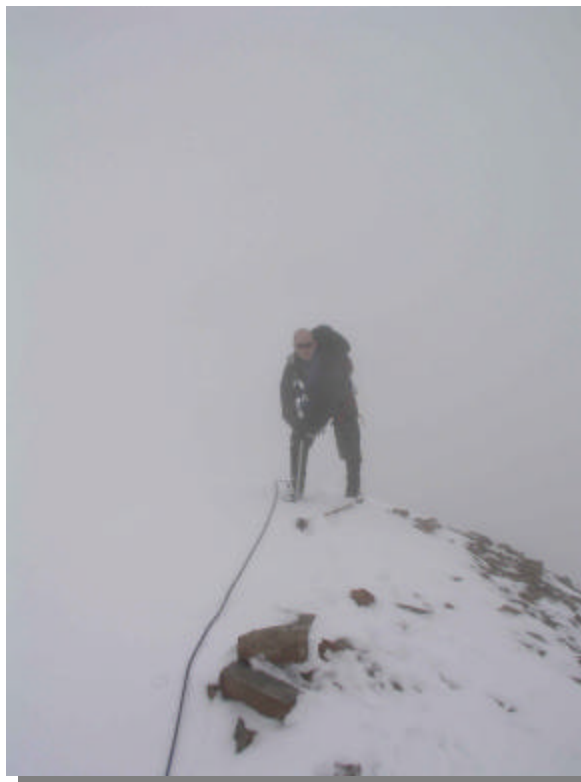
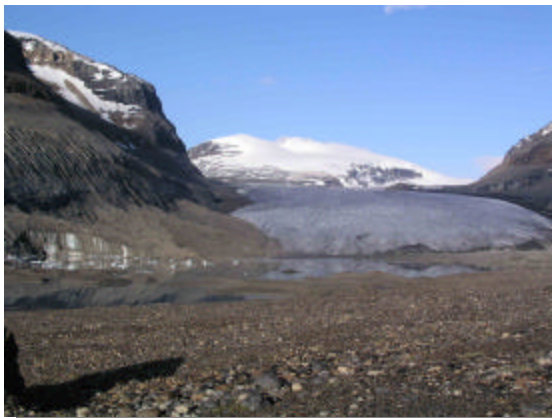
The scramble route is definitely moderate, but straightforward, and I did discover that keeping to the left-most gully (as described in the guide book) is easily the best option. I used it for my descent. Despite the nice start to the day, cold winds, clouds and spits of rain moved in as the climb progressed. I made it back to the van just in time as the showers and rain started in earnest not long after.

Photos: North peak Mt Kidd from the Galatea trail parking lot; the cold and wind-blown author on the summit.

Mt Castleguard – Second Time Lucky?

Dave McCormick and Tm Friesen

With more than a week until the Wapta trip started, we decided to tackle a few peaks. One of our objectives was Mt Castleguard, situated as it is on the edge of the Columbia Icefields at the upper end of the Saskatchewan Glacier. The hope was to have a summit day that would give us a panoramic view of the Icefields and the plan was to hike in, bivi in the Castleguard Meadows and trot up the summit from there. With a supposedly improving weather forecast, we started off, hiking up the rubble plain that used to be the SK Glacier years ago, onto the Glacier and up to the Meadows. We set up a nice bivi site and waited, and waited, and waited. In fact, we spent 18 hours in our bivi bags, but waking up to snow and rain, we gave up and hiked back out, determined to do a quick day trip in a few days once the weather “really” improved.



Fast forward a few days, interspersed with a trip up Mt Hector, and we headed up the SK Glacier again. Weather looked great, summit was still great and still in sight, everything seemed to be in place for a “great” day. By the time we were on the Glacier, the fog bank had started moving in off the Icefields. We pressed on, ever the Prairie optimists. As we cleared the final “hill” and finally in sight of the summit of Castleguard, we saw that the whole peak was shrouded in fog. We decided not to turn back and so waded up the snowslopes to a peak with no view of any kind (note picture of Tim on his side of the summit). Needless to say, we didn’t hang around very long. So the view still remains elusive and I guess there will be another trip up to the edge of the Icefields, some day!

ACC Saskatchewan Section Library News

New Book Highlight – by Jesse Invik

There is a new addition to the library, Maria Coffey's book *Where the Mountain Casts It's Shadow*, recently donated by Suzanne Mills, which looks at the darker side of mountaineering. This book is very different from Joe Simpson's book, *The Beckoning Silence*, which reflects a lot on mountaineers' sometimes horrendous treatment of each other. Maria Coffey's book looks at those left behind when mountaineers leave for the mountains and sometimes don't come back. Maria Coffey herself was left behind by her boyfriend of some years, Joe Tasker, who died along with Pete Boardman on Everest in 1982. The book includes sections of numerous interviews with the world's top climbers, including Jim Wickwire, Lynn Hill and Joe Simpson. Coffey also interviews the families of many climbers who have perished, including the families of Alex Lowe and Anatoli Boukreev. Although the book has an occasional whiney tone to it from Coffey herself, many of the interviews are quite interesting, and I'm sure all of us can relate to a central theme running through the book, that mountaineering has a strangely and fiercely addictive nature to it.

Announcements & Notices of Note

September 18th, 2004 – the annual running of the Prairie Pitch Adventure Race at Greenwater Lake Provincial Park. If you're not participating, then you might want to volunteer or just go and watch. The most up-to-date information can be found on the Saskatchewan Section's website.

September 30th, 2004 – is the next deadline for The Prairie Pitch. Articles, pictures, book reviews and other items in interest should be forwarded to the Editor, Dave McCormick at davemcc@shaw.ca before the end of September.

Saskatchewan Section Executive – Fall is traditionally the time for the Section Executive to be selected for the coming year. If you are interested in helping out in some capacity, please contact any member of the Executive or the current Chair, Shelley McKinlay.

A reminder that the most recent and up-to-date about Section activities can be found on our website which is located at:

<http://www.accsask.ca>



Rescheduled Thrasher's Weekend

Yes, the cover picture is what we encountered in May when we went to climb, but better weather was on the way, although we had to wait until June to enjoy it. Thanks to Ivan, Kathy and Kim Hitchings for organizing a weekend in June when the rock was warm, not covered with snow. Climbing at Wasootch and a scramble of Mt Baldy filled out the weekend. Being the perennial optimists, we hope that "next" May will be more cooperative. Perhaps we can arrange to have the long weekend moved to June



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