



# The Prairie Pitch



## Alpine Club of Canada Saskatchewan Section

### Events/Miscellaneous

**Partner Rock Rescue – Saturday, April 27.** Review the techniques required if the worst case scenario happens and you have to rescue your rock climbing partner this summer!! Meet at 1:00 at the McKinlay residence at 1722 Alexandra Avenue. Instruction by Pete Burgess and Shelley McKinlay.

**Knots & Anchors – Monday, May 13, 7 p.m. at Vic’s Vertical Walls.** Pete Burgess will help you get ready for the May long weekend and the summer climbing season by reviewing knots and anchors you need to

know!!

**Thrasher’s Weekend – May 18 – 20** – Our annual social and rock climbing event of the year!! We welcome beginners and experienced members alike! Contact Allan Janzen at 244-0909 or [ajanzen@shaw.ca](mailto:ajanzen@shaw.ca) for details. This year will also include some advanced instruction and multi-pitch climbing. Space in this part of the weekend is limited so contact Guillaume Audren at 955-8358 or [guillaumeaudren@yahoo.com](mailto:guillaumeaudren@yahoo.com).

**June 7 – 9 and June 22 – 24 – Leadership Courses** offered by the SK Section and instructed by an ACMG

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guide. See info further in this newsletter.

**Thank you** to the organizers, sponsors, and everyone who attended this year's **Banff Festival of Mountain Films World Tour!!** The fantastic selection of films attracted yet another sold out crowd! We want to express our gratitude to **The Bike Doctor, Outter Limits, Boomtown Outfitters, Eb's Sail & Sports, Vic's Vertical Walls, CKOM, C95 and Rock 102FM.**

Many thanks to **Glen Phillips, Mike Wild, John Mollison, and Richard St.Pierre** for leading ski and ice trips recently, and to **Pete Burgess** for teaching us how to survive winter (even though it was a balmy +7 when he did it!!).

Check out the latest issue of **Gripped** magazine and the photo of **Rob Owens** on the front cover!!

#### Leadership Courses 2000

The SK Section ACC is once again planning two leadership training courses this spring. The first course (June 7 - 9) is a hiking/scrambling course and the second (June 22-24) is Level 1 rock. The courses will be taught by ACMG guide

Murray Toft. Evening classroom sessions will start at 7 p.m. sharp on the Friday evenings at the ACC clubhouse in Canmore.

For the hiking/scrambling course, you don't need tons of experience so don't be afraid to sign up!! Following are the prerequisites that all participants **must** meet before taking part in this training:

- Participants must be members of the SK Section ACC.
- Participants must submit a resume of their outdoor experience prior to being accepted for this training. "Outdoor resume" means the hikes, scrambles, climbs etc. that you've done as well as any related courses ie. First aid, cpr, avalanche awareness, etc.

Participants taking the Level 1 Rock course **must also** meet the following criteria:

- Participants must have prior knowledge and experience in rope handling, building anchors, leading and multi-pitch climbing.
- Participants must be comfortable leading traditional 5<sup>th</sup> class rock (up to 5.4-5.5) in hiking boots as rock shoes will not be used during the course.

The focus for this weekend course is limited to "Safe Group

Travel on Summer Rock”. The emphasis here is on “group” and will look at the management issues pertaining to the movement of multiple roped parties through potentially hazardous summer alpine rock terrain. Accordingly, participants should expect to see techniques that build on, but may be somewhat different than standard 2-person rope team climbing techniques. This course will move into the realm of guiding techniques.

The cost for these courses is \$65. This is a great deal as the Section is covering most of the cost.

Section members interested in applying for these courses should contact Shelley McKinlay [shelley@axonsoft.com](mailto:shelley@axonsoft.com) or 242-0707 as soon as possible and resumes should be submitted by April 1, 2002.



The United Nations has proclaimed 2002 as the International Year of Mountains (IYM) to increase international awareness of the global importance of mountain

ecosystems. [www.mountains2002.org](http://www.mountains2002.org) There are events being held world wide to encourage information sharing about mountain environments, to have fun and adventure in the mountains, and to recognize the importance of keeping the mountain ecosystems safe for all to enjoy.

The Saskatchewan Section is taking part in many events to celebrate this special year and to increase the profile of our club and of the mountains. First, we set up an information and display booth at the Saskatoon Sports and Leisure Show on March 7 – 10, which over 18,000 people are expected to attend. Thanks to everyone who helped put this event together.

We plan to take part in many other events such as the Dragon Boat Races, the Jingle Bell Run, the United Way Stair Climb, Beat Beethoven, and the MS Super Cities Walk, just to name a few. We are also looking into putting up displays at various locations such as the libraries and malls. A display at the annual Ski Show &

*“Without mountains, one wouldn’t see the plains.”*

*Chinese proverb*

QUOTE

Swap in November will hit a specific target audience to educate about the mountains and advertise our club.

We are also planning a joint venture with “in motion”. In motion is a health promotion strategy to have all citizens of Saskatoon and District make regular physical activity part of their daily lives. Sponsored by Saskatoon District Health in partnership with City of Saskatoon, University of Saskatchewan and Particip-ACTION, in motion is a multi-pronged strategy and includes efforts in schools and workplaces. Don Ratcliffe-Smith, an in motion coordinator, has generously agreed to partner to support International Year of the Mountains activities. We plan to have SK Section submissions to the workplace in motion newsletter being distributed in March and the schools in motion newsletter being distributed in April. For each newsletter, we need to provide some mountain trivia, interesting outdoor tips, and activity options relating to mountains (i.e. a mountain fitness challenge or something along those lines), options that are relevant to the adult and elementary school audiences.

Please forward trivia, tips and/or activity suggestions to Lori Ebbesen at 665-6220 (home) or [ebbesenl@sdh.sk.ca](mailto:ebbesenl@sdh.sk.ca)

In order to assist with funding these projects we have applied to the National ACC Endowment fund, along with several other ACC Sections, to support the International Year of the Mountain activities.

If you have ideas, suggestions, comments, or would like to help with any of the above projects please contact Shelley McKinlay at 242-0707 or [shelley@axonsoft.com](mailto:shelley@axonsoft.com).

### Summer Mountaineering

*By Ben Rempel*

This past summer I attended the Alpine Club's Youth Mountaineering Level One Camp from July 8 to 14. Including myself there were six camp participants, who traveled from as far away as Toronto or Vancouver in order to attend. The group's climbing experience ranged from very little to none at all, so in order to keep us all safe and in line we had a faithful, and patient, guide named Grant Stratham, as well as a trouper of a camp manager named Dan Fears.

The first day of camp we had brief introductions, then set up our base camp in the Bell cabin, and headed off to Heart Creek for a day of sport climbing. This was some members' first experience climbing so the day consisted of learning of the most basic climbing skills. It also consisted of a great many falls, one after another, briefly interrupted by rare moments of climbing. Around noon we started to get tired, so we broke for lunch. After lunch we moved down the creek from where we started in the morning: attempting harder routes and falling less frequently. Before we left, Grant treated us to a brief rope-coiling lesson.

***Shrinkage anyone?***

Once we left Heart Creek we all thought that we would head back to the Bell cabin for supper and a quiet evening but Dan and Grant had other plans. They took us to a flooded quarry just outside of Canmore. The quarry turned lake was freezing cold but the weather was hot so we enjoyed our swim.

Next day we climbed at another crag close to Canmore, but not before we reviewed the previous days rope-coiling lesson in the form of a twenty-minute "detanglement" session. On this

day we steadily built on the skills learned on the first, stopped for another swim, then we went back to the Bell cabin for supper. The conversation, around the table that night focused on the next three days of the camp, which we were to spend in Yoho National Park. The plan was to stay at the Stanley Mitchell Hut and climb two peaks named the President and the Vice President.

***President and V.P.***

We arrived at the parking lot at around eleven o'clock and were on the trail by about noon. As we started the approach Grant gave us a brief lesson estimating the time it would take to complete the hike in, and how to hike and climb hills efficiently. After an hour or two on the trail we caught our first glimpses of the two peaks that we were planning to climb. They looked rather large and intimidating, and that got some serious butterflies fluttering in my stomach.

An hour or two after we first saw the Presidents we arrived at the Stanley Mitchell hut. The hut

“A few hours' mountain climbing turns a rogue and a saint into two roughly equal creatures.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

QUOTE

is a beautiful log cabin with a loft, which serves as the sleeping quarters. After supper, we went for a short hike where we learned about route finding on a glacier, and glacier safety.

As I climbed the ladder down from the hut's loft at 4 the next morning I was overcome by the smell of French toast. I was quite surprised to learn that Dan, our camp manager, awoke forty-five minutes early in order to prepare breakfast. I'm sure glad that he did, because if I had to get up at 4:00 am so that I could eat instant oatmeal, I think I would have rolled over and gone back to sleep despite the alarm.

We were on the trail by 4:30. The sun was just rising, so the view was amazing. Around 5:00 we arrived at the toe of the glacier which leads up to the two peaks. Here we learned how to rope up and how to travel safely on a glacier. We also learned how to properly hold and use an ice axe. We didn't stop until lunch. A short while after lunch, we arrived at the pass which separates the President from the Vice President. We took a short break there, while Grant explained the importance of short roping, and demonstrated some various climbing techniques.

After Grant's lesson and a short break to catch our breath we began climbing the President, which is the higher of the two peaks. The climbing was somewhat demanding, but exhilarating. We moved at a fairly quick pace, and were celebrating on the summit by 11:00. From the summit it seemed like we could see forever: the view was so amazing that nobody wanted to leave.

Descent was somewhat more tricky than ascent, and there were a few slips along the way, including one by yours truly. When we finally arrived back at the pass between the two peaks we decided to take another short break, before heading up the Vice President. The Vice President was the smaller, and easier to climb of the two peaks. As it was getting later in the day, and Grant began to worry about snow conditions, we climbed this peak at warp speed. We arrived on the summit in less than an hour, and paused only for some brief handshakes before turning around and heading back down.

### ***Fatboy in the Crevasse!***

The lower slope of this peak was snowy enough that we were able to slide most of the way

down, almost skiing on our boots. This technique was designed to speed our decent from the pass to the hut, that is until an unlucky climber, namely me, strayed a little to far from the trail that we had made on the way up. I crashed through a snow bridge and ended up to my neck in a freezing cold crevasse. Luckily there was no harm done, except that the nickname "Fatboy" stuck for the rest of the week.

When we arrived back at the hut that afternoon, nearly the entire group headed straight up to their bunks for an afternoon nap. After supper, we were all so wide awake that we decided stay up until the early hours of the morning reliving the events of the day.

The next day was spent hiking along the iceline trail from the hut to the parking lot and then driving back to Canmore. Along the trail another Camp participant, named Jon, announced that he had quite an addiction to old AC/DC music, and began to serenade us with a haunting rendition of the 1970's classic "Big Balls." Soon we were all singing along and thus it became the theme song of the group for the rest of the camp. When we arrived back in Canmore we unpacked and spent

the rest of the evening relaxing, enjoying our memories and looking forward to the last two days of the camp.

### ***Big Balls***

Traditionally the second to final day of the camp had been spent doing a day-long scramble. My group, however, felt that the day would be better spent climbing. On this day Grant chose the crag behind Lake Louise as our climbing area: a somewhat different climbing experience than we had gotten so far. Everywhere that we climbed on this day was right next to a busy hiking trail.

Since most people on the trail were unfamiliar with the sport of climbing, they would often stop and watch for a while. The audience gave us young climbers quite a sense of stardom. As soon as we saw cameras we decided that we would give a show: get some slack in the rope, check to make sure there's nothing protruding below, then with a loud urgent-sounding scream, push away from the rock face and fall three or four feet, flailing wildly. These small but crazy-looking falls evoked some rather startled responses, as did the antics that we pulled on the way from back to van.

“Never measure the height of a mountain until you have reached the top. Then you will see how low it was.”

## QUOTE

A group of us got to talking about how funny it would be if, in front of the entire tourist at Lake Louise, we jumped into the lake. It seemed to catch people slightly off guard, like they didn't expect that anyone would actually do it. Nobody was caught more off guard than we were though, because that lake ever cold!

We spent our final day together sport climbing at Grotto canyon. Forced to end our day at around noon, we wanted to cram as much climbing as we could, and woke early. After our final day of climbing was complete we came back to the Bell cabin to clean up and say our good-byes, before we all drove off into the sunset.

*[Ben's Excellent Summer Adventure was partly funded by the Sask Section.]*

## Book Review

*Tents in the Cloud: The First Women's Himalayan Expedition* by Monica Jackson and Elizabeth Stark, 1956, reissued 2000

Reviewed by Catherine McCormick

This book is the story of 3 women climbers from Scotland and England who climbed in the Jugal Himal area on the border between Nepal and Tibet in 1955. The expedition took place before the 'modern era in climbing so the book is an interesting contrast to more recent books about big climbs in the Himalayas. The three women were Monica Jackson, a journalist, wife and mother; Evelyn Camrass, a doctor; and Betty' Stark, a speech therapist and teacher. Theirs is a tale of people doing what they love to do: walk in the wild.

In comparison to other adventure/mountain travel books that many of us read this book will seem 'mild'. The adventure part of it all is very downplayed or barely mentioned. However, these women do achieve a remarkable feat and successfully climb a 22,000 ft peak which they called Gyalgen, named for their lead Sherpa. In fact, to me the real strength of the book lies in the wonderful stories these women tell about the Sherpas that accompany them on their journey. In other mountain books, these individuals are often named and given credit for their climbing

and portering ability. In this book, we see the true personality of many of the hired personnel and the humour and foibles of the Sherpa community are a truly interesting read. Of course, the women had difficulty being accepted as climbers and as being the leaders of the expedition (sexism is inherent to most cultures), but they reached a level of true respect for their Sherpa leaders and, in turn, the Sherpas had an admiration for the climbing ability of these women. The tales of the 'demon chang' were very amusing.

The book is divided into two sections, each part written by one of the two authors. There are not detailed descriptions of all the equipment they took, but it certainly seems a much more cumbersome load than today, with descriptions of their 'boxes' of goods. The meals sounded decidedly uninteresting (lots of mint cakes and sardines!). It seemed as if some incredible risks were taken while walking over various glaciers (unroped!), although this was not always at the call of the women. As Monica writes, 'We found that our Sherpas were on the whole great trusters to luck.' The group

seemed to travel over very difficult terrain without crampons.

The story may not be one of the big adventure 'epics' that have become so familiar in recent years, but this is a very readable book and one that many would enjoy, particularly those who are interested in the history of mountaineering. There are very few photographs (all black and white) and the maps are generally small and undetailed. The story itself, however, is definitely worth the price of the book or the time that it takes to read.

### **Wired Beta**

**by Dave McCormick  
(davemcc@shaw.ca)**

In keeping with the belief that you can find information about anything you want on the Internet, a couple of websites that might be of interest and use.

The first is one on knots. Ropers Knots Page covers knots from A to Z, has diagrams of how each knot is tied and a brief discussion about strength and safety. It's located at <http://www.realknots.com/> and has lots of information that could be useful for climbers as well as people just

interested in obscure knots.

The second is The Canadian Geomagnetic Reference Field (CGRF) is a useful site that allows you to calculate the magnetic declination for any area in Canada. This is the solution for those maps you have which are a number of years old. All you need is a year and a latitude & longitude. This site is maintained by Geological Survey of Canada and is located at [http://www.geolab.nrcan.gc.ca/geomag/e\\_cgrf.html](http://www.geolab.nrcan.gc.ca/geomag/e_cgrf.html)

We're always looking for interesting sites on the Internet. If you happen to find any, drop me a note.

### Poetry Corner

I Am Falling Off A Mountain

I am falling off a mountain,  
I am plummeting through space,  
you may see this does not please me  
by the frown upon my face.

As the ground keeps getting nearer,  
it's a simple task to tell  
that I've got a slight dilemma,  
that my day's not going well.

My velocity's increasing,  
I am dropping like a stone,  
I could do with some assistance,  
is there someone I can phone?

Though I'm unafraid of falling,  
I am prompted to relate  
that the landing has me worried,  
and I don't have long to wait.

I am running out of options,  
there's just one thing left to try -  
*in the next eleven seconds,*  
*I have got to learn to fly!*

by Jack Prelutsky

### Shishapangma (part 1)

By Andrew & Shelley McKinlay

**WARNING: The following article contains graphic details of life at high altitude. Reader discretion is advised.**

We looked like a group of drunks, staggering from side to side, struggling to stay upright in the calf-deep snow. Spread out at even intervals and connected by the familiarity of a climbing rope, we had set out an hour ago from Camp 2. Now, our hoods were battened down tight and we pushed our way forward against the gale force wind. Snow blasted

us and stung against the skin of our exposed faces. Step by slow step, we shuffled forward. Breaths came quickly but didn't seem to bring much oxygen. Our heartbeats pounded in our heads as we stumbled forward. Slowly, slowly, or as they say in Nepal "bastati, bastati."

There was no way we were going to make it to Camp 3 that day. When we came across an abandoned campsite that was relatively flat, we dropped our packs and got out the tent. With it still bundled up we managed to find a corner and peg it down with an ice axe. Even then we didn't trust the wind not to snatch it away from us. We knelt on our North Face VE24 and threaded the poles through the sleeves as quickly as our awkward, mittened hands would allow. The others had a Bibler Bombshelter and from the cursing and yelling we could hear over the wind they seemed to be having a battle of epic proportions getting the internal poles into the wildly flapping tent.

But don't get the wrong idea, the weather wasn't that big a surprise, after all, we were at almost 7000m in the Himalaya and we're masochistic enough to actually enjoy it!

This was our fifth trip to the Himalaya, and this time we decided to choose an "easier" 8000er, both technically and logistically. The non-climbing, bureaucratic and logistical problems were no longer the interesting challenges they once were! Shishapangma seemed to fit the bill. At 8046m (26,398ft) it is the 13th highest of the 14 peaks over 8000m. The Chinese made the first ascent in 1964, making it the last of the 8000m peaks to be climbed. It wasn't climbed again until 1980, mostly because it's the only 8000m peak entirely within China, and access was restricted. Shishapangma (also written Shisha Pangma) is the Tibetan name, meaning, "crest above the grassy plain". The Sanskrit or Hindustani name is Gosainthan, meaning "place of the saint" or "abode of the god". The Chinese came up with the name Xixabangma, which they say means "bad weather".

We quickly assembled a team of six, the two of us, plus four other friends who had all been on previous 8000m climbs with us. Later, a seventh person joined our group, but planned to climb independently.

By the standard route Shisha Pangma is known as one of the

"easiest" 8000m peaks and is popular with commercial expeditions. The normal approach is overland from Kathmandu via Zhangmu and Nyalam. You can drive all the way to the Chinese "base camp" at 5000m. In the past the Chinese assigned an interpreter and liaison officer to each team. Now a single liaison officer stays at the lower base camp for the entire climbing

season and is responsible for all the teams. From here it's a one-day walk to advanced base camp at 5700m. This is pretty high for a base camp and we noticed the difference from other trips in our lack of appetite there. life.

*[Part 2 will appear in the next issue of the Prairie Pitch.]*

**DEADLINE for articles for the next issue  
of the newsletter — April 15th, 2002**



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