



# The Prairie Pitch



## Alpine Club of Canada Saskatchewan Section

### Events/Miscellaneous

**Monday, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 7:30 pm** – Author and Mountain Guide Chic Scott will be presenting a slide show featuring some of the best images from his recent book *Pushing the Limits*. This promises to be a great show, so plan to attend. The show will be in the main auditorium at the Main Branch of the City Library in Saskatoon (the Francis Morrison Branch). This is a free event, although we will accept small donations to help defray expenses.

**Monday, May 14, 7 p.m.** at Vic's Vertical Walls – knots & anchors review by Pete Burgess.

**Thrasher's Weekend – May 19-21** – This is our section's annual beginner's rock climbing weekend and it's a LOT of fun!!! Mark it on your calendar now!! Rock climbing will be the main focus, of course, but we should be able to organize a moderate scramble if some participants are interested.

**Map, Compass & GPS** – date to be decided – we're going to try and have a short session on this, perhaps early in June. We'll let you know via e-mail

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and on our website when we have a date arranged.

**June 9-10 or June 16-17 - Nahahi Ridge scramble** and perhaps some mountain biking in the area - Little Elbow Recreation area west of Bragg Creek. Nahahi Ridge is a moderate scramble but it's long. The ridge itself is about 7 km in length and combined with the return, would likely be over 14 km for the day. It will be a long day and physically demanding. There are also a few exposed sections on the ridge. Contact Dave McCormick 384-3676 (or e-mail – dhmcormick@home.com) for information.

**Saturday, September 22 – The Prairie Pitch Adventure Race!!!** Get your team together for this first annual event. Twelve hours and ~ 100 km of non-stop action and adventure!! Great prizes donated by Outter Limits, The Bike Doctor, and Brainsport!! Check out our Section's website for more information.

**Thanks to Rob Owens** for instructing a leadership seminar on March 10. This was very well attended and Rob provided some great advice and leadership

tips that are relevant to all levels of leaders, whether they be interested in leading section trips or just providing themselves and their buddies with non-epic outings. Thanks also to Rob for doing an inspirational slide show at Outter Limits.

**Competition Climbing** – local climbers have been or will soon be competing in Lethbridge (2 firsts), Canmore, Edmonton and Vancouver. We'll have a full report in the next issue.

### Climbing in Cyberspace

*Compiled by Dave McCormick*

I never cease to be amused by some of the postings I find on the Internet, particularly the rec.climbing newsgroup. The issue of used ropes came up recently:

**Subject: Re: How long to keep a rope?**

“A frugal-minded friend of mine got a rope from a questionable source. Unknown history but definitely used. Named it "Motivation." Legend had it that one could climb a full grade

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harder on Motivation than any other rope.

I used my own rope. Piece of mind means a lot to me.

Rob, not motivated.”

*A day or so later, after a few other exchanges:*

“If you are a cheapskate and a chicken, your tendencies balance out and you can follow your best judgement

If you are a cheapskate and an optimist, retire the rope when the first doubts about it surface.

If you have money to burn, go burn it!

But a rope with a perfect sheath that never suffered serious trauma is fine for rappelling only. Just like your 20-year-old floor is fine to walk on but might not hold a hot tub.”

*And later:*

“If, after reading Karl's excellent and succinct summation you are still undecided what to do, post the question to rec.climbing and tally the results of 14 equally split-but-strongly-opinionated climbers who have never seen your rope, three people who want to know where in

Arkansas, one with fond memories but no REI points, one hundred ninety three who had a flamefest (available on Dejanews from 16 months ago) about whether to use static line for top roping, four who disagree on the cumulative impacts of ozone and radon gas on organic polymers, seven who respond with varying physics equations concerning fraction-of-a-second falls, spring constants, and Geoff "Kilonewton" interpolations, two who saw ropes just like this used in Vertical Limit by Ed Vestiers to anchor his tent, one smart aleck who suggests you ask rec.climbing, one newbie who wants to know if the glue from the electrical tape you used to mark the center 20 years ago may have degraded the nylon at that point causing the rope to fail at the exact center the second time your son stresses it over a unwelded coldshut halfway worn through by grit at Owens Gorge, but he was only three feet off the deck at the time 'cause he was top roping (which

***“Those who say it can't be done shouldn't interrupt the person doing it”***

***- Chinese proverb***

**QUOTE**

### Shishapangma Express

*By Andrew McKinlay*

is not recommended through cold shuts at the gorge) and so does not get credit for a failed redpoint but so fortunately he didn't get hurt and we're glad to hear that, one fairly new but accepted climber who somehow relates this thread to the color and style of her underthings, another experienced and accepted climber who flames the first for constantly relating everything to the color and style of her underthings, one retailer who posts often and requests that you either send the rope to him for extensive field testing or check the "Tech-weenie" section of his website, two who somehow work the size of their male organs into the discussion, and seven who use your question as an excuse to mention their most recent big-numbers flash in the gym...

Hope this helps. Some of the above-mentioned posts have not yet appeared on this thread, but trust me, they're on their way..."

*So, if you're ever looking for an opinion ...*

Shelley and I are heading out on another adventure. This will be our 7th big climbing expedition, our 5th to the Himalaya, and 4th to an 8000m peak. It will be the third 8000m expedition that we have organized and led. This time our goal is a mountain called Shishapangma in Tibet. At 8046m (26,398ft) it is the 13th 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 is the only 8000m peak entirely within China, and access was restricted. It is now relatively popular as one of the "easier" 8000m peaks (as far as that's possible). We'll be following the standard route, which follows the Shishapangma glacier to the Eastern Cwm, up the North Ridge, and then traverses the North East face to the summit ridge. Shishapangma (also written Shisha Pangma) is the Tibetan name, meaning "crest above the grassy plain". The Sanskrit name is

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Gosainthan, meaning “place of the saint” or “abode of the god”. The Chinese call it Xixabangma, meaning “bad weather”.

The name of our expedition, “Shishapangma Express” came from our team wanting a “fast”, “easy” 8000m peak. Fred’s last trip was a big, long, difficult K2 expedition, so he was especially keen on something a little “leaner”. But the name is also somewhat sarcastic since there’s pretty much nothing “express” about climbing an 8000m peak. In fact, the penalty for going too fast is death from pulmonary or cerebral edema from the altitude. You can’t rush acclimatization. Any “alpine style”, “speed” ascents of 8000m peaks that you might hear about just mean that the climbers acclimatized first, sometimes on a different route.

As with our other trips, we’ve been training hard for the last 6 months. We try to stay in pretty good shape regardless, but a trip like this supplies extra motivation to get into the best condition possible. Living in Saskatchewan, far from the mountains, most of our training is pretty standard cardiovascular endurance stuff – running and

cycling. To prepare for the hills we also do stair climbing in the tallest building that’s handy. High altitude expedition climbing has somewhat different training demands because the “event” you’re training for is roughly a month of long climbing days, mostly carrying heavy loads, with occasional rest days. We try to adjust our training for this by doing “long”

workouts each week, starting with an hour and working up to 5 or 6 continuous hours by the end. These long workouts involve a mixture of running, cycling, stairs, and carrying a 25kg (55lb) pack up hill. This will be my first “over 40” trip and as our bodies age, especially knees and hips, we have to be a little more careful with our training to avoid injury. No matter what you do for training, it never seems like enough when you’re gasping for breath, humping some brute of a load up some endless slope.

We leave Saskatoon on April 14, flying to Los Angeles to meet up

***“Success is how high you bounce after you hit bottom”***

**- George Patton**

***(this guy couldn’t have been a climber!)***

QUOTE

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with our two American team members, Fred Ziel and Erik Erikson. We then fly on to Katmandu, Nepal where we will meet up with the remainder of our team - Grant McCormack and Monika Bittel from Vancouver. In line with our "Express" name, our six-person team is smaller than our past teams and it's also more experienced. All of us have been on 8000m peaks before, often with each other. After a few days to get organized in Katmandu we'll drive to the Chinese border at Zhangmu where we will meet our Chinese assigned liaison officer and interpreter. Our next stop will be Nyalam, basically a Tibetan truck stop, where we'll spend a few days to start acclimatizing to the altitude. One more day of driving will take us to the end of the road where we'll again take a few days to acclimatize before moving up to Base Camp at approximately 5000m (16,400ft) with the help of yaks to carry our loads.

As with our other expeditions, we won't be using any Sherpas to help us on the mountain. We've always regarded this as cheating.

Although it's obviously harder and more work to make our own route and carry our own loads, it's also much more satisfying, especially if we reach the top. Nor have we used supplementary oxygen on any of our high altitude climbs, partly because we prefer to do it under own steam, and partly because arranging and carrying oxygen is a logistical nightmare.

We'll spend four to five weeks at or above base camp. Most of that time will be spent acclimatizing and carrying supplies up the mountain. Once we have Camps 1 and 2 established and stocked with supplies, the actual climb from base camp to the summit will take about four days, requiring one of the rare spells of good weather.

Technically, Shisha Pangma is a relatively moderate climb. As with any 8000m peak, the big obstacles are the altitude and the weather. The best climbing seasons are the spring and the fall. Most of the annual snow fall occurs during the monsoon season in the summer so there tends to be less snow on the mountain in the spring and

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therefore, hopefully, less avalanche danger. Some of you may remember Alex Lowe's tragic death last year in an avalanche on Shisha Pangma.

After the climb is over, if we have any time left before our return on June 10, we'll have two options open to us. One will be to talk the Chinese into letting us head over to nearby Cho Oyu (another 8000m peak that we attempted in 1997) and try a fast ascent (since we will already be acclimatized). The other option will be to head for the beaches in Thailand. After the debilitating effects of this kind of climb, you can probably guess which it'll be!

As always, we look forward to

### To the Top

seeing you at our slide show when we get back.

#### ***CLIMBING THE SECOND-HIGHEST MOUNTAIN***

*By Michael Apooch,  
Student at Alvin Buckwold  
School, Senior Radius Class*

The date is March 20, 1957.

Two men stand at the bottom of K2, the second highest mountain in the world. Their names are Peter and Mikey. Their dream is to climb K2. In two weeks they will leave to try to climb K2. They will get their gear and leave. It will take 1 month to get to the top of the mountain. On March 30 they will start to climb K2.

It is March 30. They will leave at 8:00. It is 10 to 8. Mikey gets up, wakes up Peter, and they get dressed and they get their oxygen and a helicopter will pick them up at 8:10 and take them 26,000 feet. Then it is all up to them. The temperature is forty degrees below zero, even in the summer. So many people try to climb it but they die, some in an avalanche, some freeze, some go back. But no matter what, Peter and Mike aren't going back. It is cold. They only climbed about two miles. It is 8:00 pm. They camp for the night.

It is 8:00 am. Peter wakes up Mikey and then they start to climb it again. It is a snowstorm and it is so cold. It is colder than yesterday, but they want to

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get to the summit. So they keep on going, but Peter is so cold he stops and camps for the night and so does Mike.

It is 8:46 and Mike wakes up and wakes up Peter and they got dressed and left and it was not too cold out and within 3 hours they got to base camp 2 and ate like they were starving.

The next day they left for camp 3 but it will take 6 or 7 hours. It was cold, but not too cold to stop them. It got dark fast, so they camped for the night.

The next day they got to camp 3. They did not stop, just to get oxygen, and they left to get to the summit. It will take some time, but they did not care. They were too far to go back. They will get to the summit. It was 4:45 and they only got two miles from camp 3 and they were thirsty so they stopped to get a drink. All of a sudden an avalanche came out of nowhere and Mike and Peter ran to a hole and the avalanche covered them. Mikey couldn't find Peter and

five minutes later Mikey found Peter was hanging onto a stick and Mikey got a string and got Peter out of the hole. Peter said to Mikey, "You saved my life." Mikey said, "It was nothing. It was my luck to find you. If I did not find you, you would not have lived, but I found you and you are safe."

Now it got late so they camped for the night and the next day Mikey and Peter were almost to the top. Just 10 more miles and they were at the top. Mikey needed his oxygen tank and so did Peter, but it will take 3 days to get to the top or else if they climb until it got really dark. But it is dangerous, someone can fall into a hole and never be seen again. But they did not do that, it was too dangerous, and then it got dark out and then Mikey and Peter decided to camp for the night.

So the next day they got up and got ready and left and by 3:00 they could see the top. They were so happy that they got to see the top, but it still was 8 more miles to go. They will get to the top, but it will take some

*"You gain strength, courage, and confidence by every experience in which you stop to look fear in the face."*

**- Eleanor Roosevelt**

QUOTE

time. Mikey and Peter were so cold their boots got frozen. It did not stop them, no matter how cold they were. They did not care; they got so sick that they had to get better.

They had to camp for two days, but they got better and when they had enough strength they left to go to the top. They were 5 miles from the top. When they get to the top, they will be known all around the world, but they were not at the top. But when they do they will be rewarded. But it got dark and they camped for the night.

The next day they got 4 miles up the mountain and it got dark again, so they camped and the next day they got to the top. They climbed K2, the second highest mountain. Now they know how it feels to Tensing and Hillary. They both climbed the highest mountain in the world, but Mikey and Peter climbed the second highest mountain. But if they die they will not have far to go to heaven, but they both know that they won't die, so they got off the mountain and in two months they climbed K2.

When they got back they got to see the princess and were given 2 million dollars, so Mikey and Peter had to split it. And Mikey climbed the highest mountain with Peter and that was Mount Everest, but they were not the first to climb it, but they were the first to climb K2. But they both know that if it was not for Peter, Mikey could not have climbed K2, and if it was not for Mikey, Peter could not have climbed K2. But it was teamwork to do the job. Mikey and Peter were the first to get to the summit of K2, but it was climbed by other people after Peter and Mikey, and one person climbed K2 with no oxygen and many more will climb the

### **Foreign Correspondence**

world's second highest mountain in the world.

#### ***Yaks in the China Shop*** ***By Marion E Jones***

*Editor's Note: Marion's correspondence covered substantial time and distance, which we've edited for space reasons, trying to include some of her most memorable moments.*

“After five weeks

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acclimatization in the Annapurna area (circuit and base camp), Ward and I started the long journey from Pokhara to Chengdu. My pack with all of my climbing gear had its own adventure going to Columbo instead of Kunming – needless to say that was a tense couple of days, and the \$60 compensation was not going to replace much gear! At long last we made it to Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province and stayed there just long enough to pick up additions to the rations of dry food brought from Canada. Do you have any idea how much space and weight 100 packages of instant noodles account for? We departed for Jiuzhaigou on Sichuan's border with Qinghai where there are three valleys at 2500-3000m, fabled to be dripping with ice.

It had been ten days of humping loads and dealing with transportation and bureaucracy, and it felt great to be back into the civilization of the wilderness. We settled at the confluence of the three valleys staying with a family of Tibetan origin. People here are from the Bon branch of Buddhism, and so mani walls,

chortens and prayer wheels are circled in the opposite direction – whether or not we still had good karma here became a burning philosophical and theological question. It appeared not, as the area is in the middle of the worst drought for more than 100 years. The area is usually quite wet, with most of the valley bottoms comprised of boggy ground. This year the water table is down more than 5 meters, and the bogs are now dry sinkholes 2m deep. This meant that there were virtually no seeps, and the one that we did find was decidedly inaccessible, due to dead and brittle scrub willows and sinkholes in the valley bottom, and dense rhododendron scrub on the steep slopes. Water was being rationed in the local homes and hotels. Prey was so scarce that the snow leopards had resorted to eating porcupines. So after scouring the area for a number of days in search of ice, we decided to engage in some mountaineering.”

*After some rough travel and thrashing around...*

“We finally escaped tree

line only to find ourselves on sixty degree ballbearing scree on hard dirt for 100 vertical meters. This was followed by rotten rock that made me feel nostalgic for Rockies limestone.”

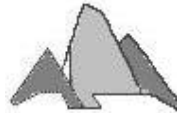
*Somewhat later...*

“That night we had a blizzard, with 20 cm of heavy wet snow and high winds. In the morning when we emerged from our tent to make breakfast, we were astounded to see that the landscape that had looked so barren the day before had yielded up 300 yaks who had been forced down by the bad weather. It is difficult to know who was more surprised when the yaks came round a buttress and discovered our camp – them, or us. The yaks were incredibly silent and still, maintaining a 6m cordon between them and our tent and cooking area. As the day wore on and the snow continued to fall, the yaks drifted down into the main valley.”

“The sky cleared, the sun came out, and it got progressively warmer through the following week, but we were assaulted by winds that were often in excess of 100 km per

hour.”

“With the improved weather came two adventuresome black bull yaks which stayed permanently in our campground. The first day that they appeared, I can remember looking down from the belay in horror about 250 m above the camp site as this huge black yak



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charged the tent. There is nothing you can do from that distance to get a yak's attention, and I was wondering if the good engineers at TNF had factored in yak charges as well as snow loads and wind speeds in designing the tent. I had my doubts. Fortunately it was only bluff charging and our home remained in tact. In the end we

became quite good friends with these two yaks who we dubbed Brutus and Sydney, to the point where Brutus took food from my hand as we were packing up to leave.”

*And so, back to civilization....*

*Marion is in the Economics*

**DEADLINE for articles for the next issue  
of the newsletter — June 15, 2001**



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