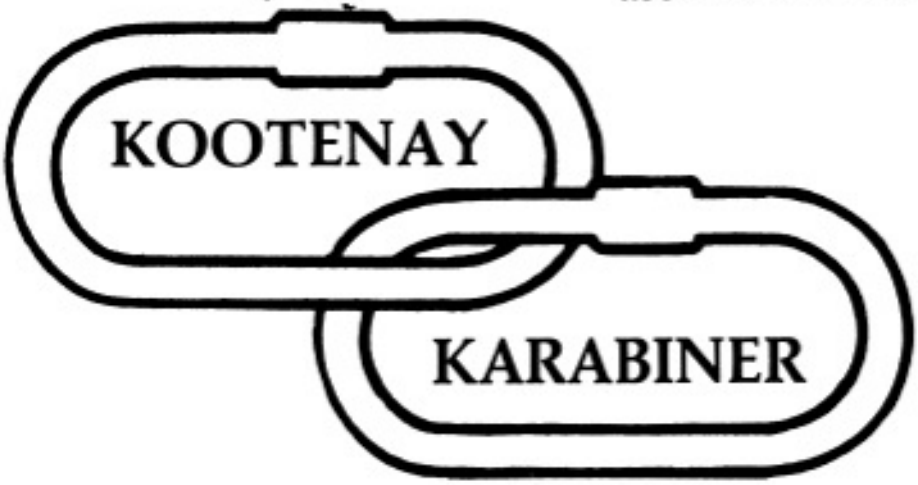
KOOTENAY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB
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KOOTENAY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

Autumn 1981 **Volume 24**



KOOTENAY MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

KMC Executive
81 - 82

Chairman - Ken Holmes, Rossland

Secretary - Jim McLaren, 509 Observatory, Nelson, 352-5203

Treasurer - Bob Dean, Crescent Valley, 359-7759

Karabiner - Ian & Roberta Hamilton, 995-7th Ave., Castlegar, 365-6749

Trips - Carl Johnson, R.R. 1, Nelson, 354-4075

Summer Camps - Fred Thiessen, 1124 Selby, Nelson, 352-6140

Social - Dave Adams, 1312 Grosvenor Pl., Castlegar, 365-6430

Cabins, Trails, & Equipment - Julie Norton, Box 694, Rossland, 362-5813

Newsletter - Anne Dean, Crescent Valley, 359-7759

Mountaineering School - Sue Port, 1107-10th Ave. S., Castlegar, 365-6056

Conservation - Derek Willans, 1704 Topping St., Trail, 368-3772 or 358-2449

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Chairman's Report

The summer climbing season of 1981 appears to have come and gone remarkably quickly. In July, Kokanee Lake was still frozen solid with snow cover around the lake. Since the club's interests include winter activities, this resulted in an extended ski-touring season, since ski tours were still possible through June.

Many club members are very active, unfortunately not always with the club. Trips have not been well attended generally and there were problems finding willing leaders. Some trip leaders report not even having one phone call to enquire about a trip. There are always exceptions and some trips proved very popular. Probably the best attended was the canoe trip down the Columbia from Robson to Trail. Perhaps we should examine our policy and philosophy towards the trip schedule. Our thanks go to Carl Johnson for organizing the schedule - a frustrating task.

Mountaineering school was very successful with a keen compliment of students, and the usual, faithful instructors who turn out year after year. The school was very well organized by Sue Port who deserves credit and thanks for her efforts. Attendance was high at classes, rock school and the snow and ice weekends. Unfortunately, the weather and conditions on the final Glacier Creek weekend did not allow the school to reach its high point - literally. The school was marred by two incidents - one broken leg and one benightment. The broken leg happened to a student practicing solo climbing. Since this happened before the official rock school opening time of 6:30, we could claim it didn't happen during rock school. The second incident involved an instructor and two students ending up in the wrong valley on the Ymir snow climbing day. They were none the worse for the experience and learned from it. We had the opportunity for a search practice which was remarkably efficient considering the lack of practice in this field. The efforts were capped by an organizer from the official local Search and Rescue organization turning up at Whitewater without a team saying he could send out the KMC team again, and after requesting if he could see a map asking "and where are we on the map". Anyway, we are considering holding a separate winter mountaineering school. This would include navigation on its curriculum.

The climbing and hiking camps were successful. Fred who has hibernated for the winter to the coast, should be thanked for his work and organization of these camps.

The newsletter has been published regularly thanks to Anna Dean and the club is quite well off financially with thanks to Bob Dean for his able management of our financial affairs.

In the environmental and conservation field, Derek Willans has continued his dedicated work with much effort and time being spent on the Valhalla Wilderness Proposal. His dedication certainly deserves our thanks. However, I am sure Derek would like to see this expressed in a more positive way by club members writing letters supporting the preservation of the Valhallas as a wilderness area.

Another topic of great importance to all of us is access to the mountains. This year we have seen some deterioration in the condition of roads up Keen Creek, Woodbury Creek, Kokanee Creek and the gating of the Little Slocan Lakes road preventing access to Bannockburn. I would urge club members to phone government departments to express their concerns when they encounter poor road conditions etc. I phoned on behalf of the club to express concerns and it made me realize that government departments would like members of the public to express their views. Even a complaint proves that people care which is better than apathy. I asked myself, would I have phoned as an individual

as opposed to my official capacity of club president. The answer was probably not! In that respect I am equally guilty of apathy, in taking things for granted and accepting things as they are. However, I am sure that those club members who are also government employees would agree that they would like to know that people care. This can only be done by phoning or writing letters to express your concerns. We depend on the commercial operators - logging and mining companies - for access to the mountains. Certainly we ski-tourers follow the winter logging roads. Perhaps government agencies such as Forestry, Parks, Highways, etc. can get bigger budgets on the basis of the number of complaints they receive, so play your part in the bureaucratic system.

On the social scene the spring dinner and meeting was a success, together with other social events such as Christmas party, Whitewater skiing slide shows and a midnight cross country ski trip - all ably organized by Dave Adams. Thanks Dave!

This year we have had several trips when other clubs participated. The Spokane Mountaineers joined a Joker Lakes trip and some of their members joined the Glacier Creek weekend of the mountaineering school. We have received invitations from a newly formed Kelowna Climbing Club to join their activities. Perhaps the club needs this type of joint venture so that members can meet new people and hear fresh viewpoints. It should be encouraged.

Finally, the clubs' thanks should go to other officers: Jim McLaren (secretary) for keeping the paper flowing; Julie Norton (cabins and trails); and the Kavabiner Editor.

A final point. It takes a lot of effort to keep a club going, however, club members should reciprocate by making an effort to participate in club activities. This is the main purpose of a club.

Ken Holmes

The lover of mountains must go to the mountains; otherwise he will cease to be a person, for others as well as for himself, and he will lose the very joy of life.

Kurt Diemberger, Summits and secrets, 1971, p. 327

Climbing Camp 1981

by Kim Kratky

The article from the 1972 Canadian Alpine Journal was entitled, "You can't get there from here: The Remillard Group." Perhaps it was that promise of remoteness, or maybe it was the intriguing names like Serendipity Spire or Waldorf Towers; whatever the cause, the climbing camp committee decided upon the Remillard Group in the Northern Selkirks as site of this year's camp, July 13 - 26th.

The Remillards are located at the head of Windy Creek, some 50 miles almost due north of Revelstoke. They are bounded on the east by the Adamant and Sir Sanford groups, and on the south by Stitt Creek and the Coldstream Neve. Only three parties had previously climbed in this area, the first recorded visit being made in 1972. Geographically, here are essentially three portions of the Remillards: the peaks along Yardarm Ridge and south of Windy Creek (rather crumbly marble in the Sir Sanford mode); and the peaks north of Windy Creek and bordering the O.K. Glacier (for the most part rubbish heaps).

On Friday, July 17th, we all started the automobile trek via Nakusp, Revelstoke, and the Goldstream River. After an unsatisfactory supper in Revelstoke (a climbing camp tradition), our party drove north past construction site of the Revelstoke Dam, which at night looked like the baleful "last outpost of progress" from Apocalypse Now. Fifty-four miles north of Revelstoke we turned east onto the Goldstream River road followed it for 13 miles past a Noranda copper mine to camp at a spot north of Downie Peak.

Saturday arrived sunny and warm, the Jet Ranger fluttered into view on time, and within three hours, all 17 of us had been ferried 15 miles up the Goldstream, Stitt Creek and over Nadir Notch to a big outflow plain at 6,000 ft. near some ponds on Windy Creek. Our camp family was composed of the following people: Ian Hamilton, Steve Horvath, Carl Johnson, Dave Kennedy, Kim Kratky, Peter and Chris McIver, Haru Kanimitsu (cook), Iain Martin, Derek Moule, Don Mousseau, Hamish Nutch, Sue and Bert Port, Fred Thiessen, Eric White, and Peter Wood.

What follows is a summary of our activities for each day of camp.

Saturday - Ian H. and Peter W. were the most ambitious and scrambled up Peak A (7,900') west of Nadir Notch. The Ports and I had a look at the Remillard icefall and scouted a route to the upper glacier. Carl, Dave, the McIvers, Don and Iain visited the south end of Yardarm Ridge.

Sunday - Promising weather moved us to an early start. Fred, Eric, Don and I climbed both of the Waldorf Towers. Hamish, Bert, Sue and Dave climbed Remillard Peak (9,455') via snow and a rock scramble. A traverse of Peak F (later named Apogee Peak), Staircase Peak and Craw Peak was undertaken by Ian, Peter and the two McIvers. Climbing the Remillard Icefall kept Steve and Derek busy all day. Later, they tried to return to camp by Nadir Notch and were benighted.

Monday - A beastly drizzle oozed out of the low overcast as a large party set out at 6:15 to look for Steve and Derek. Fortunately, they had encountered no dangers and returned to camp by way of the Remillard Glacier. Most of our group (Fred, Eric, Ian, Peter Mc, Chris, Carl, Don, Pete W. and I) groped our way through a whiteout and rain to Remillard Peak by gratefully following the Port party footsteps. Sue, Bert and Iain inched their way up a crumbly headwall to O.K. Point. Once there, they found a cairn and record, but could see nothing else. The most sensible, Hamish and Dave, explored the ridge north of Remillard Peak.

Tuesday - Will the weather improve? Not likely! Most of us settled into a camp day during which some read, some slept, and four others played

bridge continually. By mid-afternoon the rain stopped long enough for Bert and I to clamber up Peak A and for Dave to explore the alpine area north of camp.

Wednesday - The weather having improved, Sue, Bert, Pete W., and Ian traversed the four peaks of Yardarm Ridge from south to north. Traverses were popular on this day; Carl, Hamish, Fred, Don, Eric, and I travelled above the north bank of Windy Creek and climbed D, E, and Serendipity Spire. By this time, we were growing tired of letter and number designations, although the summit record on D provided the name, "Courthouse Peak". ("A facade of marble with a rotten interior", the register informed us) Steve and Derek after kicking steps for us to the Courthouse Peak - E col, continued north to climb Peak B. A highlight at camp this day was the appearance by helicopter of two rather secretive Noranda Mines geologists.

Thursday - Unpromising weather did not discourage Ian, Pete W, the Ports and McIvers as they repeated our travels over Courthouse, E, and Serendipity. By noon Hamish, Don, and I summoned enough energy to climb Apogee Peak, an enjoyable scramble in the Valhallas style. Others were content to stay near camp: Eric and Carl identified flowers, Iain went for a stroll, and Steve and Derek tried their hand a bridge building.

Friday - The rains returned with a vengeance. More bridge playing, reading, and helping Haru chop vegetables for her excellent meals. This year the cuisine followed an international theme: Chinese stir-fry, Carl's famous Norwegian meatballs, shrimp creole, chicken curry, and tinned ham for the Britons. We even had Dave Kennedy available to read the information written in Hindi on some of the packets.

Saturday - Came the last day for climbing and all parties were out in force. Steve and Derek made a valiant attempt on the unclimbed One-Way Tower, but got no farther than previous parties. They did climb Apogee Peak, which was on their route. Hamish, Carl, Iain, Dave, Peter and Chris, Don, and I amused ourselves on Yardarm Ridge. The series of Apogee Staircase and Craw kept Bert and Sue busy. Finally, the only ascent at our camp of the aesthetic looking Whiteface Tower (i,100') was made by messieurs Thiessen, White, Wood and Hamilton.

On Sunday the helicopter pilot stunned us by once again arriving on time. Fortunately, the weather was favourable; none of us wanted to march 15 miles through the bush of Stitt Creek and the marshes of the upper Goldstream River. In fact, as we flew over the serpentine loops and muddy bogs of that river, I thought of one of Fred's aphorisms: "That's why God invented helicopters." The article was right: you surely can't get there from here.

N.B. The map originally appeared in the 1972 Canadian Alpine Journal



A Swiss View of Foreigners

The attached letter was received from a Swiss Alpine Guide who runs organized ski tours in the Swiss Alps. Obviously, the mountains of the world where one can ski tour stop at the Swiss border. Anyone on the 'wrong side' of the border must be a real 'softie' and a beginner to the sport.

Ken Holmes

Ed's Note: I trust climb members ski touring in Europe will not use this guiding firm.

ALPINE SPORTSCHULE ANDERMATT **IN THE SWISS ALPINE CENTER**

Leitung: Martin Epp
Telephon: (044) 6 77 33
Bank: Urner Kantonalbank
6460 Altdorf

Mr. K. Holmes
Box 29
Rossland V0G IY0 B.C.
Canada

Ihre Nachricht vom 14.3.1980

6490 Andermatt, 25.3.1980

Dear Mr. Holmes,

Thank you for your request for information. At the week of 20th - 26th April we only have a High Alpine Ski-Touring Week, which obviously would be to tough for a person coming from abroad.
I would judge to join if possible the Easy Touring Week 13.-19.April or the Instructional Week 27. April to 3. May 1980.

If you are interested in our programm or have any further questions, please write to us again.

We would certainly welcome you here at the Alpine Sportschool Andermatt.

Yours sincerely,

Martin Epp, Mountain Guide

M. Epp

Peak Experience

by Dunnery Best, Saturday Night, Oct. '81

A team based in Calgary is planning to attempt the South Pillar route up Mount Everest. If successful, the climb will stand as one of the most dramatic in mountaineering history.

A year from now, in the fall of 1982, a team of climbers will attempt to place the maple leaf flag on the summit of Mount Everest. If they succeed, their feat will rank not only as the apex of Canadian mountaineering, but as one of the greatest climbs ever made. There's nothing novel about reaching the top of the world's highest mountain - there have been more than two dozen successful ascents - but the Canadian team is adding a perilous new wrinkle. It will make its attempt via the South Pillar direct route, which has never been climbed. Expedition leader George Kinnear, associate professor of physical education at the University of Calgary, calls the route "perhaps the hardest on Everest."

The Canadians will arrive in an Asia that would be scarcely recognizable to George Mallory and Andrew Irvine, British climbers who one day in 1924 set off for the summit of Everest clad in tweeds, cotton, and leather, eventually to disappear without a trace. Today, the bazaars of Katmandu are the world's best source of cut-rate climbing equipment, sold to the merchants by Sherpas returning from a climb. The Canadians will have no need of such last-minute supplies, however, since they will be financed and equipped to an extent that would have made Edmund Hillary's jaw drop.

In March, Mike Breckon, Air Canada's advertising director, announced that the airline would provide all travel and cargo services for the Canadian climbers and their twenty tons of gear, plus up to $200,000 for training and ground costs in Nepal. This represents a substantial portion of the team's anticipated $465,000 budget.

Breckon had noticed a newspaper story saying the a Canadian Everest expedition needed financial support. Reminded of a highly successful promotion mounted by Barclays Bank in England in conjunction with a British expedition in 1975, Breckon began considering the idea in earnest. The Himalayas represented a logical promotional opportunity, since the airline intends to establish a new route to the Indial sub-continent in 1983. Breckon phoned George Kinnear and discussed a sponsorship arrangement. The expedition members expressed keen interest. Air Canada conducted a five-city survey that indicated Canadians were fascinated by mountaineering - and by Everest in particular - and the deal was struck.

Next spring, when the expedition members make final preparations for their departure, Air Canada and other, as yet undetermined co-sponsors (Everest is big enough for all of us," says Breckon) will kick off more sustained campaigns. Southam Inc., the Toronto-based publishing chain, has agreed to pay $25,000 for first rights to the story. And the team has established a connection with Calgary's oil patch through Roy Fisher of Ocelot Industries and Jim Gray of Canadian Hunter Exploration. ("We have a lot of sympathy," says Gray, "with people taking risks,") In short, the expedition has no financial worries.

Technological advances will afford the climbers an unprecedented degree of protection. Each climber and Sherpa will wear sophisticated equipment worth more than $2,000. Their oxygen sets represent the height of metallurgical technology. A recently developed waterproof material called Gore-tex breathes out water vapour and serves as an excellent insulator. Down and synthetic-insulated suits and neoprene overboots add a measure of safety and

comfort. In total, the expedition will have fifteen climbers, a support staff of five, 600 porters, and twenty-eight climbing Sherpas.

All of this is not to suggest that the Canadians are guaranteed success. Of the fifty-one known attempts on Everest since 1921 (others may have been made from the Chinese-controlled northern side of the mountain), twenty-six have failed and more than 100 lives have been lost. In all, 112 climbers are known to have made it to the top. Chris Bonnington, a British climber and Himalayan expert, gives the Canadian expedition a fifty-fifty chance of success. If the team were to try the South Col route used by Hillary and Tenzing, its chance of success, in his opinion, would rise to eighty per cent.

The Canadians plan to arrive in Nepal well acquainted with the conditions they'll encounter. The team is based in Calgary and, says Kinnear, a veteran of more than twenty years in the sport, "there are no more difficult climbs than in the Canadian Rockies." The Rockies are formed largely of upthrusted limestone. The rock is dangerously brittle and apt to dislodge, causing loss of protection or injury through impact. Weather in the Rockies, as in the Himalayas, in highly temperamental and, in winter, bitterly cold.

Where the Canadians may be at a disadvantage however, is in their high altitude experience. Even Mount Logan in the Yukon, at 19,510 feet the highest peak in Canada, is poor preparation for the rigours of physical exertion above 25,000 feet. For this reason the team's training programme aims to get all the climbers above 24,600 feet this season. At this writing, an eight man contingent is planning to attempt, around the time this article is published, a difficult new route up 25,849 foot Nuptse, one of the major peaks near Everest. Four other members of the team are planning to attempt the remote, 24,757 foot Muztagh Ata, a mountain the Chinese only recently opened to climbing, at about the same time.

Still, no amount of preparation can ensure success. Luck and weather will be the deciding factors in determining how long it will take to conquer Everest - or whether, indeed, the new route will be mastered at all. The South Pillar is a 6,000 foot buttress that rises out of the mountain like a castle turret three-quarters of the way to the top. Five support staff - including two doctors - will stay at base camp. The climbers will be ferried through a system of camps toward the summit. On the South Pillar itself, the camps will have to be literally dangled from the face of the rock prior to the final summit bid, which will be made by two climbers.

If the team does conquer Everest, it will be the first Canadian team to do so, though not the first to get approval for an Everest climb from the Nepalese government. In 1973, a smaller expedition received permission to make an attempt in the fall of 1975, but the group broke apart as the result of financial and bureaucratic problems. Hans Gmoser, now best know as the originator of helicopter skiing, attempted to reorganize the expedition, but the Canadian government withdrew its blessing and the project had to be scrapped.

The present team was originated in 1976 by Roger Marshall, a British born climber who lives in Golden, B.C. The climbers come from all over the Commonwealth. Their average age is thirty-five, and most have a long list of Canadian successes to their credit as well as a growing list of international ascents. John Lauchlan, for example, head climbing instructor at the Yamnuska Mountain School at Exshaw, Alberta, was one of the four Canadian climbers who made the sensational first ascent of the southwest buttress of Mount Logan in 1979.

Whatever their past achievements, however, all of them naturally view the South Pillar as the climb of a lifetime. It's a chance to do something no one has ever done, and a chance that's unlikely to come along again. The Nepalese government is flooded with applications for climbing permits, and Everest remains the greatest prize. Another permit to make an attempt on Everest likely could not be obtained before the end of the decade.

Cook's Tour-or-Happiness is a Pair of Dry Socks and Boots

by Jane Steed

An account of a week in Kootenay Joe Ridge area with Arnica Adventure - July '81.

The party left Lardeau, Monday a.m. July 13th, by helicopter during a break in the occasionally overcast skies. First in were John Carter, Tom and Daphne Van Alstine, who helped set up and stayed one night. Next in were the three female guests; then cook and guide, Jane and Jack Steed. Destination: a meadow directly north of Kootenay Joe Ridge at the head of central drainage of Salisbury Creek.

It was not at all surprising to set up camp in the snow that measured up to four feet in depth. We were fortunate to get the tents up before it really deteriorated. And was it filthy! Everyone was comfortable although the five inches of snow that fell that night bent some tent poles. All the first day it was overcast, rainy, snowing and cold. When we awoke on Wednesday, that blue cloudless sky was most welcome - no one wanted any more of Tuesday's dreary weather. The birds were singing and after breakfast away we went on our first good day - a circuit trip to a height of land from which we looked down the south tributary of Clint Creek. Looking east, Bulmer, Begwin and Winter Peaks were seen.

The next day, we climbed the south peak above the camp and dropped down into the pass between it and Kootenay Joe Ridge. (The route taken out on Tuesday by the trio John, Tom and Daphne) Then we circled north around the west base of the peak, crossed the valley and climbed the ridge north of the camp. We saw the first of numerous bear tracks, fortunately empty and heading the other way. We saw two golden eagles quite close and three male deer.

On Friday, another peerless day, we climbed over the pass and dropped down into the north drainage basin of Salisbury Creek. We crossed the basin to the snowed-in lake, and then over to Tooth Ridge. The view of Kootenay Lake from Tooth Ridge is unique, spectacular and memorable and all those other super adjectives. One can see south for miles - Shutty Bay, Pilot Bay, etc. We saw goat and elk tracks and followed a game trail along the face of the ridge. It was very good going. There were grizzly tracks down a steep slope into Willerr. We had fun boot skiing on the way back, but the snow remained pretty heavy throughout the week. The sun slowly made inroads in the snow. We could have made longer hikes on harder surfaces, but the snow slowed us down. I guess we were lucky that it supported us at all.

We watched the partial eclipse of the moon and the rising of the full moon - a magnificent sight through the peaks.

Sunday, we hiked to the ridge southeast of the camp and saw more bear tracks and signs of ptarmigan. There were most unusual colours in the partially thawed lakes. Tourquoise and amethyst of unusual intensity made a ring at the perimeter, with the centre frozen solid.

Skies were threatening and feet were damp so we enjoyed a relaxed afternoon watching the clouds and fog in a turmoil of continuous action around us. Jack picked a large variety of brilliant flowers on his return to camp via the north side of Winter peak.

It was an enjoyable week. One would like to see the area in summer! ie. sans snow! - or else take skis, I suppose. All sustained by the culinary delights of the writer. May your salt be always free flowing.

Emperor and Archduke

by Kim Kratky

"We'll do it differently this time," said Ian. "There won't be any rain." These remarks or something like them, passed among Ian Hamilton, Bert Port and me as we sat in the Mariner Inn in Kaslo on the eve of Friday, Sept. 11th. For our goals, Archduke and Emperor some 5 miles west of Truce Mt., had been bathed in murk and rain on several of our previous visits this year, most notably on July 5th when we reached the 8,900' level on Emperor before being turned back by a shower which lasted four days.

Well fortified, we motored on that Friday night in Bert's "Scout", travelling up Glacier Creek road about 5 miles to the turnoff for Deep Creek, a north flowing tributary. This "track", which ascends 2,000' in about 3 miles, has one of the worst surfaces imaginable, thanks to some diligent work on the part of a fiendish "Cat" operator.

Nevertheless, by 10:30 we were peacefully snoozing in Ian's MacKinley near the end of the "road" at 6,600'.

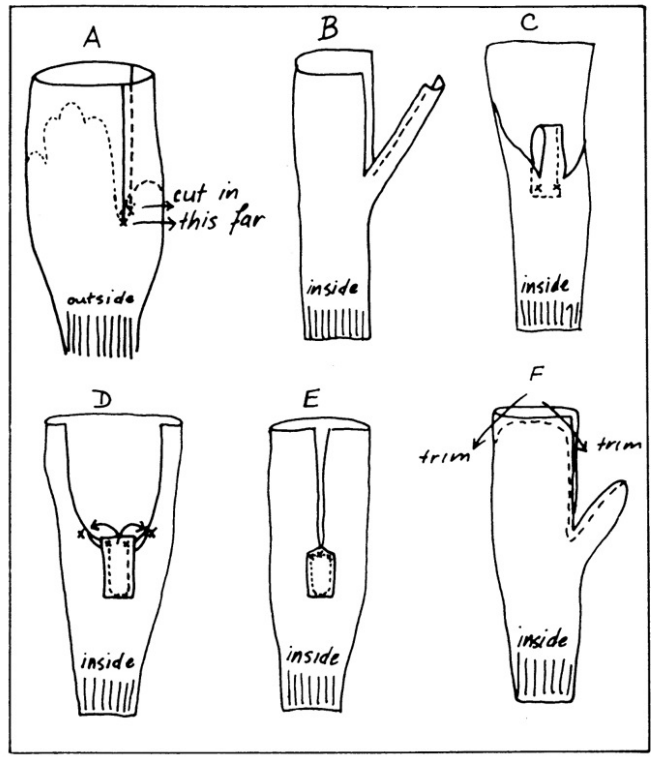
Saturday we were away at 6:30, tramping up a picturesque valley to the northeast. Above and to our right loomed the shattered claws of Fingerboard Pk., flanked by our goal, the west face of Emperor. To reach the rock, we had first to ascend a frozen tongue of snow, an easy feat with crampons. Once onto the rock, we enjoyed 1,500' of high quality scrambling on grassy ledges, smashed ribs, and rotten gullies of the steep face. (Howie had predicted two months before that this route would go) At 11:45 we reached the summit of Emperor (10,200') after scrambling the last 15 minutes on the southwest ridge. Time for lunch, a survey of the scene, and an opportunity for me to hit Ian in the head with my ice axe.

"Very good gentlemen", Ian replied imperturbably, "shall we carry on to Archduke?" An easy descent and a 25 minute plod across a col above a dizzingly-steep north glacier got us to our next goal. This 10,350' summit gave us fine views of Howser Spires, Truce and Cauldron, and the Macbeth Icefield on a gloriously sunny day.

Of course there was nothing for it but to continue to the slightly lower south summit of Archduke, an easy task. Retracing our steps to Emperor, we descended unroped from that peak in 2½ hours. As the late afternoon shone, each of us lounged by a glistening creek in the alpine meadow above our camp. Sunk in exhaustion after an 11½ hour day, we all savoured that moment.

Schladmingers

by D. Hermen



So, you've darned your best knicker-socks ten times and they're finally shot! But gee, the tops are still great from the ankles up! Also, the cost of keeping the whole crew in Schladminger's is rising! Try this with your old knee socks and see what happens.

1. Cut off worn feet just above heel and perpendicular to the length of the sock tube.

2. Put hand in the top of the sock tube and cut as in figure A. The strip should be about 4 cm (1½ inches) wide. Do not stretch the wool when measuring this.

3. Turn sock inside out as in B.

4. Fold in strip for thumb as shown in C; stitch as far as marked.

5. To finish the narrow edge of the thumb strip, sew half of this edge to the left side of the cut made when the thumb piece was cut out, the other half to the right side as in D.

6. The thumb is finished as in E.

7. Finish the mitt by stitching top and open side, round the corners at top and trim excess material away as in F.

If worn with stitching out, the "raw" edge can be blanket stitched. The first pair you make are usually "so-so" but serviceable. The second pair are usually "ace". And there you have it.....home-made Schladmingers for the price of a worn-out knee-socks.

Mt. McKinely or There and Back Again

by Steve Horvath

"...adventures...nasty disturbing uncomfortable things! Make you late for dinner! I can't think what anybody sees in them", from J.R.R. Tolkien, The Hobbit.

Indeed, who needs them. A somewhat dangerous train of thought to engage in while trying to pull a sled with some sixty odd pound of fuel, food and other supplies up the steepest part of the north east fork of the Kahiltna Glacier. But, there we were, Hans Smit, Jim Gillman and myself making our way through crevasses up the "valley of death". By then we could see the name was deserved, as through the fog we could hear almost constant sounds of avalanches coming down on both sides of the valley. Hard to believe, that the whole thing started, as so many climing trips do, by a chance encounter in the Red Mountain parking lot, some five months before, at around Christmas time. There and then we decided that we were going to climb east ridge Mt. Logan, something I long dreamed about. However, five months later, after numerous meetings, even more numerous bureaucratic hurdles, here we were, attempting to climb the west rib of Mt. McKinley. First one, then the other member of the original party dropped out so we decided to go to McKinley as the U.S. parks service has recently considerably relaxed the requirements for permit to climb McKinley, as a matter of fact there is no permit necessary any more, only registration. The drive up took us five days and it alone was well worth the trip. For years, as a boy, I was devouring every Jack London story I could get my hands on, and now I was finally here, at the scene of them. The sheer grandeur of the country is to be experienced, certainly beyond my powers of description. We had great weather all the way, except the last day. As we were coming closer and closer to Talkeetna the weather was steadily deteriorating and we all were getting quite tense. We arrived at the air strip about 5:00 p.m.. A few disreputable looking types (if I only knew how I would look in a few weeks time), obviously climbers, were lounging around. We asked one of them if they knew of a good outfit to fly us in. One of them pointed to a youngish man that was just parking his car, and said "he's the best one". Nothing ventured, nothing gained, we asked him if he indeed was a pilot and would he fly us in, and he replied, "when would you like to go." Right now, said I and, half an hour later after frantic last minute repacking and public undressing and changing in a Talkeetna civic park we were incredulously watching how he was stowing the contents of our almost fully loaded Datsun pickup truck into his Cessna 180. He packed it all in, somehow we all fit into it, me sitting on Hans' lap and Jim hunched up behind the pilot and we were off. The weather in Talkeetna wasn't the best, but the weather at the landing strip, 75 miles away on the southeast fork of the Kahiltna Glacier was still good. Another half hour later we were standing on the Glacier next to all the boxes of our gear, looking at the north butress of Mt. Hunter.

Talk about culture shock. After five days of steady driving, being constantly on the move, our whole being oriented forward, we finally stopped moving and there we were; right in front of us, the south face of Mt. McKinley. Next day the weather was still perfect. I felt that we would need at least one day to acclimatize ourselves, physically and emotionally, to the area. We spent the whole morning just puttering around packing and repacking our supplies and in the afternoon went skiing (all of us on cross country skis) up the glacier under and beyond Mr. Hunter. Slowly, we were beginning to realize the size of the place. Cross the valley, seemingly only a stones throw away and yet a full days trip, was Mt. Foraker, gracefully fluted ridges rising up

to the summit at 17,000 feet. To the south we could see the north buttress of Mt. Hunter, still the major unsolved problem in North American mountaineering. As we were gazing, somewhat awed, at the tracks of a party that had to retreat from it a few days ago, a big avalanche let loose from the hanging seracs above it and swept right down their proposed route. Even though we were some two miles from it across the valley, we could still feel the airblast and a drop in temperature.

The base camp at the glacier was quite a sight. A small international community and for someone who enjoys people watching as much as I do, a place of unending entertainment. Next morning found us pulling our sleds up the main Kahiltna glacier. We camped at about 8,000 feet and built our first encampment. As time went, our snow architecture became more and more elaborate, that first one though I would rather forget about. The next day, being well aware of the dangers inherent in travelling up the north east fork of Kahiltna glacier, we pushed on right up the 11,000 foot level, a trip, that most parties take two days for. Weather wasn't very good, foggy, snowing mildly, however there was a reasonably safe spot where we spent one day acclimatizing. In the evening Hans and Jim went across the valley to have a look at the 3,000 foot about 50 degree steep ice gulley leading to the west Rib proper. They came impressed by the size of it, however quite optimistic, as technically it does not present any major problems. However, we felt somewhat differently the next day. Jim had a bad night, his stomach bothered him a good deal, our packs were rather monstrous, Hans wasn't feeling all that confident as this was to be his first major ice climb, so, after a few pitches we turned back, planning to go back down to our cache at 8,000 feet, pick up our skis and go up "tourist route" up the West Buttress. During our last three days we could see the weather moving into the valleys below. Unfortunately, to reach our 8,000 foot camp, we had to go down and through bad weather systems. Easier said than done. A few hours later, we had to admit that we were lost. Found a place that felt reasonably safe, made a camp and settled down. The white-out was rather complete, as I found it next to impossible to distinguish small snow drifts a few feet in front of me from a hundred foot wide crevasse about a mile away. Towards the evening the weather partially cleared for a few minutes and Jim and Hans were off like rabbits, trying to find a way to our 8,000 camp. The weather, of course, closed in shortly, Hans came in, but there was no sight of Jim. We were getting quite worried, when he finally showed up. He felt that he found a reasonable way down in the general direction of our camp and indeed, the next day, still in a full whiteout we got there. Next day, we could see another tent only some 100 feet below us. Jim went to investigate and two hours later we joined forces with a young American, Brent X. His buddies were climbing the Cassin Ridge, but he did not feel that was for him so he was waiting for them hoping to join with some party climbing the standard route. This suited us rather well, as we were quite cramped in our tent.

The next day we were off again, at first we had decent weather but soon the weather closed in again. However, there was a well worn path on the tourist route numerous parties were descending down, and towards the evening we made it to 11,000 foot level and were up above the clouds again. Next day up through the Windy Corner which fully lived up to its name and to the 14,000 foot camp. We had a beautiful day of acclimatizing there. I found ample opportunity to practice my German, and had several, most pleasant, informative talks with a West German guide taking a client up the mountain. Nice people, on their way down gave us some of their Saleva freeze dried food which was quite a gourmet treat compared to our Har-Dee freeze dried crap. The only real climbing and pleasant one at that is between 14,000 and 17,000 feet. At first about 1,500 vertical feet up wide ice gulley and then lovely knife edge

ridge. Unfortunately, the weather was agin not the best, it was getting quite windy. Near the top of the gulley I looked up and saw two huge ravens soaring in updrafts. When we got to the top of the gulley Jim was not feeling very well. As Brent and I felt quite good we went ahead. Climbing was pleasant despite the weather. By the time we got to 17,000 foot level, we were again above the weather. We sat down to wait for Jim and Hans, but this proved to be a long wait. When they finally came Jim was in a bad way, the altitude appears to have gotten through to him. We made a rather luxurious camp, the only unpleasant note was the presence of great quantities of yellow and brown snow. Everyone going up or down the West Butress camps at this place and as it is a rather small area and at this altitude there is not too much accumulation of snow and some people don't know any better, it seems that the major danger in this place is a variety of intestinal disorders "by drinking water derived from polluted snow". It is rather distressing to see the destructive influence of man extend itself even to such a remote and beautiful place as that.

From the beinning of the climb I had developed a personal measure of acclimatization; so long as I have enjoyed smoking my pipe, I figured I was still well acclimatized. And, somewhat to my surprise, so long as I did not move too abruptly, the pipe tasted just wonderful even at 17,000 feet, so the next day Brent, Hans and myself set off towards the Denali Pass. It took us about two hours to get up. Up until about 14,000 feet we were able to maintain the speed of about 1,000 vertical feet per hour. At this altitude our speed slowed down by 50%, two hours for every thousand vertical feet. We were feeling still quite good, however as we started fairly late in the day Hans and Brent were reluctant to push on towards the summit. Daylight was not a problem, as it never gets really dark up there, however they were reluctant to come down from the summit after the sun set as they were afraid of frostbite. The temperature gradient was quite drastic. While the sun was still up, the temperature was between 15 to 20 degress Celsius. Within some ten minutes after the sun set (this happened usually around 11:00 or 11:30) the temperature plummetted to some -20 Celsius and about midnight, which is when we usually went to bed it was between -35 to -40, still falling. As their logic was inescapable, we decided to go back. This proved to be a good decision as the next day turned out to be the perfect summit day. We were making a reasonably good time up to about 20,000 feet. There is a large plateau at the end of which is a last hurdle before the summit, shortish, about 500 vertical feet, not particularly steep, snow slope. True heartbreak hill. Until this point I was able to shuffle up, lost in daydreams, without any major problems. Once here though I would make about 40 steps and then sit down and wait until my pulse returned to halfways normal level. And then, summit ridge and the summit itself. Beautiful day, hardly any wind, balmy temperature of 15 degrees Fahrenheit and a view that has to be experienced to be believed. On the summit we met with two members of a South Korean expedition that climbed up West Rib in an expeditionary style. Quite a lucky break, as this way we got good pictures of Hans and me standing on the summit. As always with me, instead of being relaxed, all my thoughts were on the descent. This proved to be somewhat slower than expected, because not having eaten very much, due both to exhaustion and a rotten quality of our freeze dried food, I got somewhat sick to my stomach. I made myself vomit and this made me feel much better. Completely lost in thought and daydreams I finally made it to our 17,000 foot camp. Next day the weather was again not very good and thus, much to my dismay, again we were unable to really enjoy climbing on what, as I mentioned, is the most pleasant part of the climb. Jim was still not feeling very well, so it took us some time to get down to the 14,000 foot level and we decided to stay there rather than to continue on down. The day after was the longest day.

We put our skis on and pushed off in high spirits, however, skiing on breakable crust in 3 pin bindings, with 50 pound packs at the end of a major trip did not prove to be the most enjoyable way down. However, despite numerous falls, it still was probably less exhausting and certainly faster than walking down.

Unfortunately, once we got to the 11,000 foot level the weather closed in again. Total whiteout this time, too dangerous to ski. So, just when we were hoping to really enjoy our skis, on the wide Kahiltna Glacier, we had to take our skis off as the only way to proceed safely was to go by touch; by then so many people went up and down the mountain that there was a well defined trough in the snow; so long as we could feel reasonably firm snow under our feet we knew we were on a trail, the moment we sank in to above our waist we knew we were off the trail. The only thing that kept us really going was the thought of the cache of all the goodies that we left behind at the base camp. At about 8,000 foot level we put our skis on again and pushed on. I remembered big crevasses opening up where we skied up just 14 days ago. Several times, I was vaguely aware of skiing on snow bridges and alongside huge crevasses. At about 1:00 in the morning, after some 16 hours, we finally arrived at the base camp only to discover that our food cache was either lost or stolen. Adventures, indeed, who needs them. Next morning, the air was clear and brilliant as only after a major storm. The colours of the many tents, people talking in different languages, smells of cooking and towering above it all, seemingly only a stones throw away, Mt. Foraker. At about 3:00 in the afternoon that day I was sitting on a porch of a log house in Talkeetna, barefoot, strong spring wind rustling in the leaves of the poplars and aspens, and I could smell the grass and flowers, could hear the birds singing and time stood still. Adventures, indeed, I'll be back gain as soon as I can.

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Prepared by Sue Port

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