

The B.C. Mountaineering Club

It is February 14th 2007 & I am reduced, well, almost, to looking at the world I once inhabited for so many days of the year; not enough, I would say now but I also had an interest in earning a living & acquiring a wife to provide me with little Craigs & look after me in my old age.

The Club has a monthly social evening at which there is a showing of color slides or film, of someones trip into the mountains, preceded by a business meeting & followed by tea & cake & cookies. Last nite, we saw slides of the North Creek cabin area taken before there was a cabin, during its early use & more recently ,its restoration. This, North Creek seems to have been considered a winter, ski touring area. The early pictures with ski tracks onglaciers & mountainsides recalled my early days in the mountains, perhaps in the Diamond Head area of Garibaldi Park when staying with & working at times for the Norwegian brothersm Ottar & Emil Brandvold. "working for" meant free lodging & not money in the winter. Before they acquired a snowmobile to bring in guests, I might ski out from the Lodge to the road end (7 miles?) to bring in guests. Breaking track, often, after a snowfall was a glorious experience, fresh, deep, untracked, powder snow, & silence, a solitary & wonderful world.

I can no longer recall, but Diamond Head, The Brandvolds, ski touring, was what must have led me to the B.C.M.C.. Joining the Club has made my life what it is, & certainly has been, today, in the sense that friends, associations with many people have been effected by mountaineering.

I am now an Honorary Member (which means I pay no membership fees, I have grey hair & I have been on climbs that warrant an H. after my name on the membership list)

Over the years of climbing, I have acquired a small library of color slides. Its putting in order, indexing insofar as it is possible to index, & recording in some literary form is my next task (which I am reluctant to commence until I have completed the major part of my History of James Craig & disposed of that part of my stamp collection that I intend to sell or give away).

The Club has prepared a 2 volume index of Climbs since 1907, the year of its forming- The Club has currently got a monthly Newsletter in which are recorded some written record of Club climbs that are scheduled weekly & week or longer trips, & such Newsletters & like records begin with the Club's formation, so that an index of reported trips is now available. Those who understand the index & computers can obtains copies of what has been reported.

Currently, the accounts of climbs I have, 3,4,5, are not of Club organized climbs: McKinley, Logan, St. Elias & Kennedy & Mt. Waddington in a book on climbing by Paddy Sherman. Since my memory, but for a few details, of climbs is completely gone since 2,000 when I had what my wife tells everyone was a stroke, to prepare any extended account of climbs will require looking into the brief ones in the Newsletters.

The Climbing world today is not what it was in 1950-60-70. Just as is not, In 1950, what it was in 1850-60-1900 & perhaps the 1st few years of 1900. I was reminded of this the other night on reading a book printed in 1871, Tyndal's Hours Of Exercise In The Alps recording his walks & climbs in the Alps & England before 1870, some in the 1850's. It, Tyndal's, era was one in which those engaged would be the elite of Europe, & certainly, of Britain. They would be men. They would be Oxford & Cambridge men, often the learned of society. They would be from the great families. They would have with them a guide & usually a porter or 2. The climber would not be carrying anything not needed for use in the climb. It was the role

of the porter to carry the tent & sleeping gear & clothes, food & drink. If the rope was not being used, the porter carried it. The guide was expected to find a route to the top, & down & would be leading, subject to any advice from the climber by whom he was employed. This was a time when champagne might be carried by the porter, for a successful climb might be concluded with the bottle of champagne for all; & not just champagne. It was drunk, not from the bottle or a tin cup but from a 'goblet' carried by the porter. Tyndall refers to stopping on a mountainside, where they had no water & having champagne out of the goblets carried.

When the climbing of mountains began being indulged in in Canada, it didn't have the same society to draw from. Its practitioners came from lesser Universities & from members of professions & even tradespeople climbing usually without guides & porters. I think of the Mundays whose names are associated with the Mystery Mountain (wasn't it once called), Mount Waddington, 1st climbed in and with people of our generation like the John Clarkes. By 100 years ago we had the Alpine Club of Canada, & then, the BCMC, for the numbers espousing climbing had increased; & of course, we in B.C. & into Alberta, lived in mountain country. By the 1930's, one was finding women climbing a mountain.

I came back from a hitchhiking trip to Europe of 13 months, in February 1952, & was completed my Law Studies at UBC in 1956. When I was 1st on a BCMC club trip & then, Summer Camp, I don't recall. Perhaps the Club records will give me a date. The Summer Camps were the times when we would go into an area where there were mountains that hadn't been climbed. If we climbed 6 peaks, the probability was that 4 of the climbs were 1st ascents. This too should be in the Club records. The numbers on a camp would be about 12. We carried our own personal gear. There might be a larger shelter that was not a tent. Food, stoves & the like were shared out among the people for carrying, if there had to be carrying. Choice of food would be a group decision. Access to an area was by float equipped plane if there was water about. Walking in on some trips could take hours, heavily laden. It's somewhat of a guess, but I think 70 pounds for we males was not an uncommon load.

By the 1950's, equipment used in climbing, ropes, crampons, crampons, & personal gear such as tents & sleeping bags was becoming lighter. I can't recall now whether this lightening meant lighter loads or did it permit us to carry personal edibles such as rum & whisky. With time, these could be put into plastic bottles thus enabling us to carry a larger quantity.

By this time those practising climbing were not champagne drinkers as were those of the 19th Century, in the days of the Tyndall's & Smythes & Whympers; & we were content to drink from a bottle or a cup. We did not need wine glasses; & we did not have to carry champagne to quench a thirst, for we were surrounded by streams & lakes.

A further & major change in the practice of climbing must have begun by 1960 but it would be with climbs such as the face of the Squamish Chief that the act of climbing & not just the reaching of a summit gave a new face to climbing. The equipment of the climber may not be just a climbing rope, rope slings, pitons, a hammer, an ice axe. It was equipment that one had to learn how to use. This would not betaken, this new equipment, on the climb of a mountain, unless the ascent was, what we used to call, a technical one; a rock or ice face for example.

With the readiness to go into terrain in which the hazards were increased, the attraction of the mountains to many who were climbing was the difficulty; but Mountaineering draws us into the mountains for the same reason that it drew people in the 1850's.

And I suppose that attaining a summit was always desirable, but it was not the 'end' of the exercise. Being in the Mountains, walking & climbing on them, living with them, looking down from a summit, overcoming fears & tiredness & discomfort, all these were part of the wonders given us by the mountains. I could not, I know, like, want to be on a paid ascent, an ascent which is a commercial venture for its Leader.

These climbs would be on the big mountains of the world such as Mt. McKinley in Alaska height . On the television, I have watched one of these mountains being climbed. Where, when Karl Winter, Vince Bauer & Paul climbed the mountain in, we were flown in by Don Sheldon, the then pilot who took people into & back from Mt. McKinley. There was no ranger station or camp to serve the area. There was, at our time (& certainly, area) no other party climbing. The year of the TV show, there seemed to be a dozen or more parties & a great number of tents for the base camp & buildings for the Park staff. One was expected to carry a potty for the trip & return it to the ranger station. Some of these climbing parties would be "adventure" climbs, commercially run. Today, since the American ascent of Mount Everest, one hears of the number of climbs of Himalayan peaks which required no planning. One's presence & sufficient money sufficed.

This is not the climbing world I lived in, my generation lived in & I think insofar as its object is achievement, getting onto a summit, that is not why I have engaged myself in travelling in & about & on Mountains; & I say this, not to demean what others are doing & have done

I have always gotten pleasure out of attaining a summit, out of doing a 1st ascent, out of climbing a difficult mountain, out of climbing at 20,000ish feet, but what remains is the experience of being in the mountains & away from the working world the great beauty of the mountains & the companionship of others of the climbing party.

I became known in the Law profession as a Mountaineer, perhaps because of the Mount Kennedy climb in 1965, with Senator Robert Kennedy & the big name in American mountaineers for his ascent of Mount Everest, a 1st American ascent. There may have been other climbs reported in the Vancouver newspapers which were read by lawyers, & friends in the profession came to hear of trips I had been on; & I expect that I was away from the office more frequently than was the practice in our profession.

I was not an originator of trips. I was asked, or I joined on club trips, for a weekend or the week or more in the summer. On McKinley (not a BCMC trip) I was asked, as on Logan & St. Elias; & probably, also, on Mount Waddington. I never climbed outside B.C. except for McKinley in Alaska, & Mts. Logan & St. Elias in the Yukon. My 1st prospect of a Himalayan climb of Dhaulagiri V (I think), was with Leif Patterson & he was killed in an avalanche in the Rockies with his son the year, or year after, he talked about the climb.

I have some remembrance of being on climbs with Martin & Esther Kafer & Paul Binkert & I tend to associate them with mountains I have climbed