



Kootenay Mountaineer

The KMC Newsletter May/June 2006 Issue 3 Next deadline: Aug.10/06

Inside

► Information:

Mt. Trudeau to be officially named in June, Directions and Distances, Mountain School Tech Tips

► **Conservation:** Salton Sea Threatened

► Activities:

Club Trip Reports: Kootenay Canal, Sentinel Slog, Beyond Syringa, West Creston Climbing, Along Columbia River, Robson Ramble, Fry Crk. Canyon, Evans Crk. Trail, Balfour-Garland Bay- return, Mt. Gladstone, Pass Crk-Castlegar loop, Crawford Pk., Champion Lakes, Old Glory Mtn., 6-Mile Lakes-return, Snow + Rock Skills Review, Gray's Pk.

Other Trip Reports: Kootenay Pass to Char Crk. Ski Traverse, Mc Bride Range Traverse, Sangrida Pk., Mt. Faith, Mt. Brennan

Points To Ponder

“Always leave as large a margin of safety as you possibly can, especially when you are the guide. Always

proceed in a manner that gives you several options in case things turn out differently than you anticipated. In fact, I have come to the conclusion that things could go wrong on the mountain that would be possible for even the greatest mountaineer to overcome”
Hans Gmoser

“The summit is a small part of the mountain...the cliché saying, ‘it’s about the journey’ rings true for me, yet our culture is so goal oriented and ego-based that the goal of the summit outweighs the journey” Peggy Foster

“Failing has given me the opportunity to truly grow as a person, whereas if I had only had success, I may have never looked deeply into how I was approaching mountaineering and life in general”. Abby Watkins

“I have failed so many times, but people only hear about me when I succeed. Nobody except my friends know how hard it was to get to those moments. That is our nature, people in general always like success” Josune Bereziartu

“Even my failures seem directly related to my success... I know it sounds cheesy but as long as nobody gets hurt and everyone has fun, then that to me is a very successful day, summit or no summit” Sonnie Trotter

“After all, it’s just climbing and failure is a part of the game” Charlie Fowler

from Heather Lea’s article “The Joy Of Failure” in Gripped, The Climbing Magazine, 12/01/2006

Adventure Smart

Each year there are over 1,000 search and rescue incidents resulting in over 200 persons injured and over 80 deaths. There are 93 Ground Search and Rescue teams made from 4,700 volunteers with the responsibility for ground and inland waterways and supported by the Provincial Emergency Programs Public Safety Lifeline Volunteer Services. These dedicated volunteers are trained in Ground Search and Rescue, Swift Water Rescue, Rope Rescue, Tracking, Avalanche Response and Mountain Rescue. If you require assistance from one of these teams contact the police in the area. Visit www.adventuresmart.ca for a downloadable trip form that you can use when you go out on a trip.

Try Needle Sports at <http://www.needlesports.com/advice/abseilknots.htm>
This website provides “notes intended to assist the climber who has already gained some knowledge of rock climbing and is fully aware of its risks but still wishes to progress further up the grades, and indeed the mountains”.



Library News: How To ...

How to cook in the backcountry, stay found off the trail, read a map, plan a route, build a rock or snow anchor, raise someone from a crevasse, lead a club trip. The KMC library has how to books on all these topics and more. We even have a book on how to s**t in the woods. The complete list of books is on the KMC website. Check it out and learn some new skills this summer.

New books in the library:

- Cross-Country Ski Routes of Oregon's Cascades by Klindt Vielbig.
- Mountain Search and Rescue Techniques by W. May.
- Guide to Leavenworth Rock Climbing Areas by F. Beckey and E. Bjornstad.
- Darrington and Index Rock Climbing Guide by Fred Beckey.

HINT OF THE MONTH

Do you need a small funnel for filling your camp stove? To make one, take an empty toothpaste tube and cut off the top about 3cm below the top. Wash out the contents in about 4 changes of water. *Norman Thyer*

PEEVE OF THE MONTH

People who put their packs into the car with ice axes attached. Please remove the ice axes and lay them flat on the floor of the car/trunk. *Norman Thyer, Nelson, B.C.*

Mount Trudeau to be officially named in June

Mount Mackenzie King and Mount Laurier will have a newly christened neighbour this spring when Mount Trudeau is officially named on June 10. Earlier efforts to rename Yukon's Mount Logan as Mount Trudeau failed after opponents complained it was an insult to Sir William Edmond Logan, a prominent Canadian geologist. The future Mount Trudeau is located between Prince George and Jasper. It is part of the Premier Range in British Columbia's Cariboo Mountains. During Canada's Diamond Jubilee in 1927, the names of the peaks in the range were reserved for prime ministers of Canada and Great Britain. Former Prime ministers Arthur Meighen, Richard Bennett, John Abbott, John Thompson, Mackenzie Bowell and Lester Pearson also have mountains named after them in the range, as does former B.C. premier John Oliver. Trudeau, who died

in 2000, was Canada's 15th prime minister. He held the office from 1968 to 1979, and from 1980 to 1984. *From the 13 Apr 2006 online [CBC News](#).*

Directions & Distances

Norman Thyer welcomes you to use directions and distances from the following Kootenay summits on his Web Pages at [Directions & Distances to Prominent Kootenay Summits](#) or <http://mypage.uniserve.com/~nthyer/welcome.htm> : [Abercrombie Mtn.](#), [Mt. Brennan](#), [Mt. Carlyle](#), [Copper Mountain](#), [Mt. Elise](#), [Mt. Fennell](#), [Mt. Freya](#), [Gimli Pk.](#), [Glacier View Peak](#), [Mt. Grohman](#), [Idaho Peak](#), [Mt. Mephistopheles](#), [Old Glory](#), [Saddle Mtn.](#), [Sunset Mtn.](#), [Woden Peak](#), [Ymir Mountain](#). Thank You for this Norman !

And the people turn the page!

"A familiar ritual is under way. Business clears its throat, government stages a press conference on the library steps and the people turn the page...The joke is on nature, which is us. Claiming "balance" as eco-guardian is a flawed concept, inherently implying a level of environmental destruction. It's a euphemism for getting away with as much as possible under a smokescreen of concern. The approach is creating enviro dead zones from coast to coast. Some progress, some future... Government and business prefer to offer "balance", progressing their way to nature's demise. And the people turn the page." *James McNulty in his "Opinion" from the June 25, 2005, [The Province](#) pA12.*

Economic growth?

What is the purpose of an economy? Is it to get everyone working, producing and consuming as much as possible, or to find a happy medium between work and leisure? Our obsession with economic growth obscures the fact that after a certain point more wealth – a bigger car, a larger house, a wider television set – no longer translates into greater well-being. Work can be fun and fulfilling, but it turns out that what really makes us happy and healthy is having enough time for family, friends and just plain old rest and relaxation. Remember the saying "No one lies on their deathbed thinking 'I wish I'd spent more time in the office' ". By Carl Honoré from his article [You Snooze, You Win](#) in "*En Route Magazine*", Oct. 2005

Mountain School Tech Tips: Ice Axes

The days of the wooden shafted ice axe (apart from crossed over mantels in expensive ski chalets) are long over – lightweight aluminum ice axes are now most people's tool of choice. To determine the right length for a general mountaineering axe, hold the head of the axe in your hand with your arm straight by your side and the ferrule (spike on the end) should just graze the floor. Some aluminum shaft axes have a rubber-coated shaft, which makes them a bit warmer to hold onto, but somewhat more difficult to plunge into harder snow. Aluminum heads are nice and light, but might bounce off if you find yourself chopping steps in hard snow or ice and are probably only suitable for winter use only. One-piece steel heads weigh a little more but are sturdier and can be used year round.

the snow **below** you. Should you slip, your weight should drive the shaft more firmly into the snow. If the axe is above you as you descend, a slip will result in levering the shaft out of the snow and you'll lose your self-belay.

On steeper slopes, you can use your ice axe as a stake, plunging the shaft into the snow in front of you, holding it with two hands and kicking steps straight up-hill. You can either have one hand on the head of the axe and one on the top of the shaft, or both hands on the head. Descending facing in is slower, but more secure than facing out. Remember to plant the shaft of your axe as far in as possible to maximize your self-belay.

While the self-belay is a preventative move, it's also necessary to have a recovery move – the ability to self-arrest. In order to be effective, you must be able to **quickly** get into the self-arrest position from all the possible positions in which you could fall – head first, feet first, on your back or stomach. The only way to be able to reliably

On moderate angle snow slopes, holding the axe like a walking stick will generally offer sufficient security for most climbers (there is a pompous French term for this). Most people tend to hold the axe with the pick towards the back of the hand – the self-arrest position – so a slip can be quickly caught. When ascending slopes diagonally, the in-balance position is with the downhill leg straight and the inside leg above and ahead of the downhill leg. The most secure movement sequence is to first move the axe up and plant the shaft firmly into the snow, move the outside leg up (out-of-balance), then the inside leg (back to in-balance), repeat. Descending will generally involve facing out and moving down with an aggressive plunge step. Step down landing on the heel with a straight leg and drive your heel onto the snow for a nice secure step. If you need a self-belay, reach down and plant the shaft of the axe firmly into and quickly self-arrest is to practice. Hard-packed ski runs at the end of the season make a good location.

Submitted by Sandra McGuinness

References (all available in KMC library for loan):
Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills
Alpine Climbing: Techniques to Take You Higher
Modern Snow and Ice Techniques

Gripped Magazine

To help support local Canadian grass roots climbing, *Gripped Magazine* is offering a special subscription package to the KMC. First, there's a special opportunity where Kootenay Mountaineering Club members can subscribe for a one-year subscription of *Gripped* plus a bonus of two free issues for \$20.95. That's a total of eight issues for only \$20.95. Secondly (and this is the good part), all the members of the KMC that subscribe are eligible for a draw to win a selection of Black Diamond Hexes and Metolius Curve Hexes valued at approximately \$100. That means that we're giving away one prize for *every* participating climbing club – pretty good odds of winning and just our way of helping support Canadian climbers. This 6-issue plus 2 bonus-issue subscription deal and prize draw is a limited time offer valid only until July 30th 2006. Sincerely, David Smart, Editor, Gripped Magazine

Yes, Sign me up for one full year of *Gripped* plus 2 bonus issues for only \$20.95!

Give your **Name and address:** (Please Print) Street /City, Province, Postal Code, E-mail:
Also mention that you are a member of the Kootenay Mountaineering Club

Method of Payment: Visa Mastercard, Card Number, and Expiry Date. Cheque or Money Order Enclosed
(Please make cheques payable to *Gripped*) **Please address to:** Gripped, P. O. Box 219, Station P, Toronto, ON, M5S 2S7

Trip Reports

Kootenay Canal Plus, April 9

Eleven KMCers enjoyed an easy, early season hike along the Kootenay Canal, then up to the power line. After a stop for a snack at a point where we had good views up and down the canal, it was "over the hump and down we go" on to the Rover Creek Road and back to the cars at the bridge.

The rain held off all the while and we even had a very brief glimpse of sunshine.

We were: Peter Bartl, Renata Belczyk, Ed & Hazel Beynon, John Golik, Vicki Hart, Anja Logodi, Heather Lyon, Carol Potasnyk, Miriam Williams and Nell Plotnikoff.

Sentinel Slog, 5000' April 19

Nine KMCers showed up for this very early spring hike up the south side of Mt Sentinel. The trail was in very good condition and snow was only encountered at higher elevations. The entire route provides a great vantage point for the viewing of the joining of the Columbia and Kootenay rivers. We easily made our way through the snow to the old road and had lunch overlooking Castlegar. The Bonnington Range, The Norns Range, Mt. Gladstone, Mt Faith and the peaks of the Seven Summits beckoned. Hiking season had begun for the KMC! We were joined just as we finished lunch by two female first year Selkirk nursing students who followed our tracks for the snow section of the route. It was a very pleasant day on the mountain with Hazel and Ed Beynon, Don Harasym, Ross Scott, Muriel and John Walton, Mary Woodward, and coordinators Eliane and Steven Miros.

Syringa and Beyond, April 23

We had a beautiful warm spring day for our hike. Vehicles were parked at the entrance to the Syringa Creek campsite and we walked to the west end of the Yellow Pine Trail at lake level. The trails are in excellent shape and we were soon at the eastern end of the trails and heading into the bush. We followed elk trails high above the noisy Syringa Creek. Eventually we climbed up onto an open rocky ridge where we had lunch and luxuriated in the sunshine. On the return we bushwhacked down to the main trail and on to the vehicles. As usual Bob Dean got the most wood ticks. We're wondering why they're so attracted to him. We were Allan Ayres, Alan Baker, Ross Bates, Renate Belczyk, Bob Dean, June & Don Harasym, Murray Lashmar, Robin Lidstone, Heather Lyon, Susan Port, Jennifer Smith, Sherry Watson plus coordinators Hazel and Ed Beynon.

Warm, Wet, Wild: West Creston Climbing, April 23

A sunny warm forecast for the weekend encouraged me to organize a KMC trip to West Creston Crag. Our regular guide, Hamish Mutch, declined to join us, citing a prior engagement and water underfoot. Indeed the base of the crag was a bit wet, but we

had along a big tarp, which provided dry space, and the crag itself was dry and baking in the sun.

Sadly, despite numerous visits to the crag, I can't remember any route names so I can't list off any stunning achievements.

However, the end of the day did see a graceful climb of Native Being by Rene who was smoking up and down routes all day.

Thanks to everyone who came at short notice.

Participants: Eelco Bolk, Doug Brown, Nicole Carlson, Vicki Hart, Dave Jack, Katarina Lankhorst, Rene LeBel, and coordinator, Sandra McGuinness.

Hiking along the Columbia River between Castlegar and Trail, April 29

The weather was pleasant as we hiked along the Columbia River, which is now part of the TransCanada Trail. Two fast creeks had to be crossed on slippery tree trunks and were the only hazards on the trip. The light green leaves on birch and cottonwood trees as well as the new needles on larches were a delight to see. We also enjoyed the yellow blooms of the Oregon grapes, a few pink trillium and blue clematis flowers. While having lunch along the fast flowing river, we watched some deer nearby. At the end of the approximately four-hour trip, we were picked up near the Trail water tower by Felix, husband of the coordinator.

We were: Rose Anderson, Don and June Harasym, Caroline Laface, Diane Paolini and coordinator Renate Belczyk.

Robson Ramble, April 30

We parked at the Robson swimming pool and set out under clearing skies. The trails brought us west to the Keenleyside Burrow Area, above the dam of the same name, and then up game trails to an old grassy logging road. We headed east on this road and as we were leaving the road further on discovered that we were short one hiker. Fortunately we were quickly reunited. We followed ridges, roads and trails to the north side of The Lion's Head and quickly bushwhacked to the top for lunch. The trail home was saddened by newly fallen trees along the trail, which probably signify the start of logging road construction into the pristine forest in this area.

We were Alan Baker, Bob Dean, Don Harasym, Heather Lyon, Carol Potasnyk, Jennifer Smith, Miriam Williams and coordinators Hazel and Ed Beynon.

Fry Creek Canyon, May 3

Today we were 11 participants on this spring hike. We were delighted to see many calypso orchids...aka... fairy ladyslippers, in the woods as well as the other spring flowers along the way. No goats on the rock slide. Lunch stop on the gravel bar past the slide. A very pleasant day. Thank you all for coming out. M. Woodward.

Slocan City to Evans Creek, May 7

It was a very gray morning, with the forecast of showers. Sprinkles of rain hit the windshield as we drove along the Slocan Valley. What kind of day lay ahead? To our surprise the rain ceased just before Slocan City. As we hiked along the trail we had a few light sprinkles, which helped keep us comfortable as we traveled the rolling shoreline. The falls, spring flowers, luxurious

mosses and great hiking weather were highlights of the day. The 16 km trip took approximately 6 hours including lunch. The group consisted of John Golik, Barb Hanlon, Don Harasym, Anja Logodi, Keith McKay, Diane Paolini, Nell Plotnikoff, Cindy Shlakoff, Susan Toch, Jill Watson, and coordinator Carol Potasnyk

Balfour to Garland Bay-Return, May 11

Today there were two of us. We biked on to the 8:10 a.m. ferry. The weather was not very promising but we pressed on from Riondel in spite of the rain. A little bit of rain, a little bit of sun, a little bit of hail, thunder and lightening; all happened en route. We saw lots of deer but no people after leaving Riondel. Miriam Williams joined me today. Mary Woodward.

Mt. Gladstone, 7350' 2250m. May 13

The Mt Gladstone trailhead is located on the Christina Lake-Castlegar abandoned rail line. One accesses the trailhead by driving down the Paulson Bridge Hwy. Bypass (east of the Paulson Bridge on Hwy #3) to where it meets the old Kettle Valley rail bed. From here, follow the rail bed approx. 2.5 km north to a large open field on the left. An old well placed, but questionable log crosses the creek (which is parallel to the railway bed) allowing access to the field (an old building site) and the trail.

It was a blue-sky day and the prospect of walking in mushy snow didn't deter this group. The snow on the rail bed access however, did raise the eyes of the leader. Not enough snow however to stop the intrepid VW driver who with a, "I can go through that", set the tone for the trip-just was needed for this "more demanding" than was expected day. Our frosty but leisurely start was just after 9pm. Alex scurried across the icy tree and set up a rope for the skinny icy tree-bridge crossing. Part of the group also checked out and crossed the creek further up. It would be great if Parks set up a small bridge to access the trail at this point.

It soon became obvious after a few hundred meters of walking in several foot deep snow that looking for the trail would be futile. We then -perhaps more by chance than planning- beelined straight up the mountainside which brought us just below the first small peak south of the Hopper Creek basin. (This "peak" or what turned out to actually be the southeast end of a ridge) is actually visible from the trailhead due west). On previous trips it was noted that it might be interesting to walk the ridge around the Hopper Creek bowl. Rather than descending a few hundred feet to the creek valley below, the group decided to continue up to the peak (assuming it was the beginning of the ridge) and try walking the ridge. This turned out to be an excellent choice as the firm snow and clear sky made for fabulous ridge walking. It was however obvious that we would not make it to summit for the normal KMC 12pm lunch. This didn't bother anyone as the group was enjoying the expansive views in all directions. After several stops for nibbling and an extra few hundred meters of ups and downs along the ridge, the group made it to the summit at 2pm. It is a great vantage point with views of the Arrow and Christina lakes. Several in the group pondered that an eastern ascent of Mt Faith would not be too difficult with recent logging activity close to its base. The Granby Mountains seemed to beckon us as well. There is lots of exploring to be done in this area!

Altimeters said the total gain for the day was slightly under 4200ft. The summit register was buried somewhere in the deep snow. Nearly everyone was out of water. An easy descent on firm snow brought us to the creek below and we walked the south side of the creek, quickly working our way down to the old cabin site. From here it was a steep hillside down to the trailhead and across the tree bridge. We were back at the vehicles by 4pm. We were Dave Grant, Vicki Hart, Caroline LaFace, Gene Van Dyck, Alex Walker, Jill Watson, Mary Woodward, Leah Zoobkoff and Steven Miros.

Pass Creek to Castlegar Loop, May 19

Nine of us set off on our bikes on a glorious hot, sunny day to cycle along Pass Creek. We loved the cool air coming from the roaring creek and the scent of lilac confirmed that summer was here! A few veterans on the trip knew the best vantage points for viewing creeks such as Goose and Gander! After about two and a half hours, we enjoyed a lunch break at the campground in Castlegar complete with picnic table and a place to top up our water bottles. The trip home was hot, as we chose to come back on the highway. Some of us got through the road construction in time to have an ice-cream cone while the rest of us were held up in the broiling sunshine.

We were Della Fenkner, Don Harasym, Anja Logodi, Irme Mende and her daughter Tara Smedbol on her road bike, Carol Potasnyk, Bess Schuurman, Mary Woodward, and Miriam Williams, coordinator.

Crawford Peak, 7675' 2339m. May 21

Twelve of us drove in 4 trucks to the lower Plaid Lake trail parking lot, with only one small patch of snow on the road. Surprisingly, there was very little water damage from the recent melt.

The entire hike was on snow. At the summit ridge, some chose to ascend the rock ridge, and other went up the snow slope to the top. There was room on bare rock for a brief lunch before there was a threat of rain. The weather held out until we got back to town. It seems like our trip was sandwiched between two days of heavy rain. Perhaps we are blessed. That's not likely considering our group consisted of Don Harasym, Vicki Hart, Peter Jordan, Robin Lidstone, Doug & Goeff Matthews, Carol Potasnyk, Gudrun Rieter, Gene Van Dyck, Jill Watson, Mary Woodward, and coordinator David Mitchell.

Champion Lakes, May 26

Five determined cyclists decided to try this trip without the original coordinator. We met on a gray, cold morning at 9:00 in Salmo. Having donned our rain pants (three of us!), we set off in the rain bound for Champion Lakes or maybe just the golf course tearoom! It rained steadily as we plodded on. At the golf course, Mary decided to go in and dry off. The rest of us continued on and up. The rain held off for this rather grueling 10 km. The first part of the road seemed too steep and I thought I'd be heading back. Fortunately, the incline became less severe and there were no markers until we reached the 8 km. point, so I soldiered on. While we were eating lunch in the chilly day camp area, who should arrive dripping wet (again), why Mary, of course! The caffeine boost got her to the 8 km. marker before the rain started

up again. I never thawed out during lunch, so the trip down was hell! My hands were claws. I tried to shove them by turns under my jacket and came down that hill negotiating with one hand. Clever Anja had kept a woolen pair of mitts ready for this! Yes, we stopped again at the golf course. The cook (?) took one look at me and invited me into the kitchen where he opened both gas oven doors. Oh, bliss! After a thick hot chocolate drink, we set off once again along the highway. Now, the pace kept me warm and I even enjoyed the incredible green growth and a few diversions off the main road.

We were Don Harasym, Anja Logodi, Jill Watson, Mary Woodward and Miriam Williams (write-up).

Old Glory Mtn, 7794' 2376m. May 28

We started hiking at about 8:10 am, on snow right from the trailhead and only had brief patches clear of snow. Fortunately the snow was good for hiking, probably a little softer than ideal, but there was no postholing. We reached Unnecessary Ridge at about 10:30 am with brief showers of rain and then snow. We then went the direct route from Unnecessary Ridge to the top of Old Glory, reaching the top just before noon. Although we had a clear view of the top from Unnecessary Ridge, by the time we reached the top, clouds had moved in. We had lunch in the hut and hoped that it would clear. Unfortunately we only had very brief clearing before we started our return at about 12:45 pm, going a less direct route down from the summit, closer to the trail that could not be seen because of snow. By the time we reached Unnecessary Ridge again, the summit had cleared again. Later we had more showers on our return to the cars that were reached at about 3:30 pm. We were Frank Fodor, Steven Miros, Bryan Reid, Gudrun Rieter, Cindy Shlakoff, David Toews, Gene Van Dyck, Jill Watson, Mary Woodward, and coordinator, Ted Ibrahim.

Six Mile Lakes-return, June 2 ☐

Ten bikers today. It took us 2 hours to get to Sasquatch Lake where there is a small forestry campsite. A pleasant lunch break and then we headed back, mostly down hill once you get back to the Six Mile Lakes. We arrived at the vehicles at 1:45 and the rain came at 2pm. Was that good timing or blind luck???

Participants were David Cunningham, Don Harasym, Janice Isaac, Fernand Moret, Carol Potasnyk, Bryan Reid, Jill & Dave Watson, Miriam Williams, and coordinator Mary Woodward.

KMC? Annual? Snow and Rock Reviews: May 27 & 28

On Saturday, five of us gathered at Whitewater to practice some snow techniques for the upcoming climbing season. We started by building and practicing some quickie snow belays – bucket seats, boot-axe belay and standing axe belay and then moved on to building T-slots with pickets and ice axes. These last anchors were nice and strong so we used these for our crevasse rescue scenarios, and built a whole series of raising systems starting from a simple drop-loop up to a 10 to 1 drop-loop with Z pulley and added advantage. Renee showed me a good way to use a belay

plate with a prussic tied off with a munter hitch for the ratchet brake – this has the advantage of being able to move in both directions (unlike a garda brake) so if necessary you can also lower with this system. Finally, we hiked up the hill to a steeper avalanche slope/run-out and practiced self-arrest techniques. This was a good review for everyone as arresting from a head-down on your back position with your ice-axe in your non-dominant hand can be a bit tricky.

Thanks to all who came out, especially Rene who showed everyone new ways to tie old knots. Kjell Bronson, Kevin Forsyth, Don Harasym, Rene LeBel, and organizer Sandra McGuinness.

The following day was the “official” rock review day. My telephone seemed to be ringing continuously on Sunday morning, as the weather in Nelson was somewhat damp looking. However, we were not deterred by three cancellations and headed off to West Creston crag for some quality climbing. It was raining over Kootenay Pass, but when we drove into Creston it dried up and the rest of the day was dry (so was the rock). Quite a few people had recently taken Laura Adam’s rock climbing course so they took over setting up the top-ropes and did a wonderful job. Soon, we had five top-ropes up and everyone was climbing. We climbed until about 4 pm by which time we were all feeling a little tired. Participants: Nicole Carlson, Dave Jack, Bill Morris (guru Creston climber), Hamish Mutch, Delia Roberts, Joanne Stinson, and coordinator, Sandra McGuinness.

Gray's Peak, 9032' 2753m. June 4

The weather forecast called for afternoon rain showers. The good news was an inaccurate forecast; the bad news was it was raining at the Nelson Safeway at 8:00 am. We managed to make it within 4 km of Gibson Lake parking lot, as the road was blocked by a very large fallen tree. Walking the road we encountered many remnants of old avalanches. The Gibson Lake parking lot was covered in snow, as was the trail to the creek where we started the ascent through the trees, around 10:40 am. The snow was perfect as we ascended to the col, where the rain turned into blowing snow and whiteout conditions. A compass bearing was used to navigate, as the conditions made it next to impossible to see any landmarks, other than the ones you were standing on. With a quick break on the summit, just long enough to take a few photos and sign the register, we descended 60' to the base of Gray's steep snow slope to get out of the prevailing winds and have lunch. Starting the descent just after 2:00 pm we made it to Gibson Lake parking lot in 1 hour 40 minutes, some opting to glissade down the snow slopes. The 4 km walk along the road to the cars took an hour, making it around 4:40 pm.

I would like to give a special thank you to the participants David Cunningham, Maurice De St Jorre, Frank Fodor, Kevin Forsyth, Gene Van Dyck, Alex Walker, and Marry Woodward for being so keen to continue on despite the less than ideal weather conditions and the added 8 km of walking along the usually drivable road. Coordinator Leah Zoobkoff.

Other Trip Reports

These reports are from Club members. The dates and destinations are not on the Club schedule.

Kootenay Pass to Char Creek Ski Traverse, March 26

Maps: Salmo 82F/3 and Creston 82F/2

Char Creek is the next major drainage east of Kootenay Pass on the south side of Highway #3. After leaving a car at the Char roadhead 7.8 km. east of the Pass, our party of five departed from the Pass lot at the scandalous hour of 11:00 am. We were Dave Adams, Howie Ridge, Kyle Ridge, Erin Moxon, and Kim Kratky, recorder. Making good time on the track Howie and I had built two days before on an ascent of The Craggs, we skinned through "Signpost Pass" just SW of The Craggs, traversed along its south side, and gained the southwest ridge/face of u/n 2115 m. (001-333, 6939'). By 1:30, we were on the summit of this peak, which presents as a shapely pyramid from the north. As we found the conditions cold and blowy on top, we did a quick turnaround, retraced our tracks to the 6600' col just to the west, and skied some nice powder on the north aspect into a cutblock in a tributary of Char. We continued on skins to the north, reaching a 6750' open high point (002-352) we had visited a week before. Then a succession of steep north aspects followed by flats (all good skiing) led to the end of the fun when we reached a road at 5400' (010-370). From here down to Summit Creek at 4300' we were challenged by unskiable, breakable crust. I managed to stay on a logging road that led east and south to the Char mainline at 4600' and thence north and west to the powerline crossing and a rendezvous with the others. This avoided the absolute worst of the conditions. From the Char bridge over Summit Creek, we bootpacked the 5-10 min. of snowmobile-paved road up to Dave's truck on the highway by 4:30 for an enjoyable 5.5 hour day.

Kim Kratky

Traverses of Terror: Or the McBride Range Traverse, May 11 to 18

Never done a ski traverse but wonder what it's like? Go to your favourite gym and crank the heat to 40 degrees, then get on the treadmill and crank it to 40 degrees, put a 60 pound pack on your back (40 pounds is way too light) and grind away for 8 to 10 hours every day for a week. Intersperse the physical stress with an equivalent amount of mental stress in the form of deathly avalanche slopes to cross and steep climbs with nasty run-outs and you've pretty much approximated the conditions on the average traverse.

The first decision you have to make when skiing the McBride Range traverse is whether to travel north to south, or visa versa. Traveling north to south pretty much means donating cash to Intrawest for a ride up the chairs on either Blackcomb or Whistler

Mountains. In my mind, Intrawest ranks only slightly lower on the list of evil world powers than Bush and Cheney, so I was loathe to pay \$40 for a one way ride up Whistler Mountain. First decision made. The second decision is whether to come in via Garibaldi Lake or from Diamond Head. Another easy choice, from Diamond Head you can probably be guaranteed of skiing, whereas the plod up the Garibaldi Lake trail with skis on your pack can be pretty dispiriting.

Day 1: Diamond Head to Upper Ring Creek

There is no point detailing the route to the Garibaldi Neve, which is standard fare in the Coast Mountains. We took the summer route to the Elfin Shelter and set up camp in a rain and graupel storm about 150 metres below the Garibaldi Glacier in upper Ring Creek. The route below the Gargoyles and down into Ring Creek could qualify as the first traverse of terror, as, by the time we got there, the snow was sloppy and isothermic and wet slides from above seemed a real possibility. We walked down the moraine at the end one at a time for fear of setting a slide off had we tried to ski this short but steep slope.

Day 2: Across the Neve to Glacier Pikes

The previous nights storm was still going in the morning, but by about 10.30 am a sucker hole enticed us out and we got away in about an hour, soon finding the sucker hole had slammed shut. Nevertheless, we had enough breaks in the storm to navigate our way across the Neve and out to a campsite in the pass west of Glacier Pikes. We had a wonderful sunset with views out to Garibaldi Lake and the sun flaming through a window on the southwest side of The Table.

Day 3: Sphinx and Gray Passes to Crosscut Ridge

In the morning the sun was out and we tootled around Glacier Pikes to the Sentinel Glacier and skied up to Sphinx Pass. A hot, but straight-forward climb. All in all, we dropped about 150 metres to contour around the Sphinx Glacier but it is possible you could stay higher. Traversing the northwest facing slopes around the Sphinx made me somewhat uneasy as the previous days storm snow was loaded onto an old sun-crust and the slope is definitely steep enough to slide (minor terror traverse only). We climbed right up to the ridge on which the blocky turrets of The Bookworms stick out of the snow and traversed more steep slopes across to the southeast ridge of Mount Carr. We stuck to the ridge that runs down into Gray Pass but found we had to climb back up a short section when we got to a steep roll-over with a large crevasse below. We were able to pass this on skiers left (north) on gentle slopes and then got back on the ridge, and, with only one short rock band to ski through, finally got down to Gray Pass. A three kilometre contouring climb to the Mount Luxor – Crosscut Ridge col follows. I initially started contouring too low and found myself on steep slopes of isothermic snow above a big run-out (easily avoidable terror traverse), switchbacking higher we found benchy terrain that was easy to safely cross. There were wet slides running off Crosscut Ridge but they weren't triggering anything deeper in the snowpack so we spaced out a bit and stayed below the lowest debris for the climb up to the Luxor-Crosscut col. Hardly rates as a terror traverse. We camped in spectacular surroundings just below Crosscut Ridge on the glacier on its south side. This area is reminiscent of the Bugaboos or the Waddington Range with granite towers sticking out of the snow.

Day 4: Crosscut Ridge to the Forger Glacier

Next morning was clear again and there had been a decent freeze. We skied around the south side of Hour Peak and found ourselves looking at the ridge that runs northeast above Drop Pass. I became convinced that the route lay about 300 metres below contouring around the most southerly peak on the ridge and wagered all my Bivouac dollars with Robin on that being the correct route. However, the others convinced me to ski down to the col on the north side of Hour Peak and once there, even I realized that the route lay over or around this most southerly summit. Going directly over the peak was distinctly unappealing and would involve kicking steps up a very steep and hard snow-slope with a cornice above. At the base of a rock buttress on the ridge we met a party of two who had just skied around the west side of the summit (described in Baldwin's book), so we decided to take that route.

This was the first real terror traverse as the snow on the west side was unconsolidated and scored with deep runnels from avalanches triggered by cornice collapses from overhead. Doug and I had ski crampons, but even we had to walk as the runnels were scoured so hard and bounded on each side by frozen avalanche debris that we couldn't get more than a centimetre of crampon into the snow. So, we tiptoed our way across the slope, huge cornices above and a long steep run-out to the Isoceles Glacier below.

Back on the ridge we were happy to get our skis back on and to ski easily over the next bump on the ridge until we were above the appropriately named Drop Pass (the slopes on either side really do drop into the pass). Descending into Drop Pass we had to work our way north (skiers left) to avoid steep (cliff) slopes and glide cracks below. As with all the descents on this trip, the slope started out fine, but then rolled away out of sight making descents fiddly as we worked our way back and forth to find a route through numerous obstacles.

On the east side of Drop Pass we followed a ridge up to about 6000 feet and then skied up a bowl to the 6500 foot contour on the map where we judged the upcoming traverse to be least steep. A four kilometre contour around the north side of the Forger Glacier followed, which, was mildly anxiety provoking as, even though the snow conditions were good, the run-out is huge. Crevasses were easy to avoid. At the end of the day we climbed 200 metres over a ridge on the Forger Glacier and skied down a gentle slope with breakable crust to set up camp on the upper Forger Glacier.

Day 5: Stuck at Wolverine Pass

We had a bit later start the next day as we wanted the snow to soften for the descent down to Wolverine Pass. We contoured across the remainder of the Forger Glacier and picked our way down to Wolverine Pass through steep slopes staying skiers left of the ridge that runs into Wolverine Pass (this ridge could be an alternate descent route). Out of Wolverine Pass the initial slope was too steep to ski so we boot-packed up it and with skis back on, climbed to the 6500 foot contour where a steep traverse below the Gatekeeper leads to gentler slopes that can be climbed to the ridge east of the Gatekeeper. We were nervous of this slope as, of course, it has a big run-out, faces due south and the snow was very sloppy.

We started one of those, "we'll just go out and have a look" routines that almost inevitably seem to lead you out onto dangerous slopes. One at a time we inched our way across to a safe location under a rock band, and, just as I was about to inch out further into the traverse a wet slide ran down 5 metres in front

of my skis. A better sign couldn't be had, so one by one we crossed back over to safe terrain and made an early camp. Both Betsy and I had very sore feet so an afternoon out of the boots was well appreciated. That evening, building cirrus and a big sun-dog spurred us into constructing some mediocre walls around the tents, but the night was so warm that by morning (which was clear again) they had sublimated to small mounds.

Day 6: Wolverine Pass to Diavolo Creek

After a much too warm night we started the next terror traverse early. Back out at our island of safety we saw five or six large wet slides had washed down the traverse route some running right to the valley 500 metres below. Already the snow was soft and sloppy but at least the sun was not on the upper slopes and we all made it across to gentle terrain where a steady climb got us to the ridge east of the Gatekeeper.

We climbed up about 130 metres and then contoured (again!) across the Ubysey Glacier to the col northeast of Mount Sir Richard. We dumped packs here and in a warm wind skied right to the top of Mount Sir Richard where we had the most stupendous views. Way to the south we could see Mount Baker. Judge Howay and Robie Reid were prominent and the Misty Icefield with its evocatively named Rain Door Pass and Thunderclap Glacier made up the foreground. Looking north we could also pick out Detour Ridge and our route for the next day up to the Benvolio-Fitzsimmons Col.

The 1100 metre run down the McBride Glacier was mostly a slush-fest but we did hit the odd patch of corn snow where the skiing actually became fun. At the base of the McBride Glacier we scooted out into a fantastic valley and the headwaters of the Cheakamus River. After six days of snow and ice the bright green of the yellow cedar trees was incredible. I really enjoyed the ski down this valley, notwithstanding the huge slide paths on either side of the valley. About 3 km downstream we tried to contour through forest to cross the forested ridge that separates Diavolo Creek and the Cheakamus River but ran into steep, bluffy terrain and had to descend to the river again. About half a kilometre downstream the slope up over the ridge was gentle and we climbed about 100 metres to crest it and then coasted down to camp by Diavolo Creek.

Day 7: Diavolo Creek to Singing Pass

After another clear warm night we started the long climb to the Benvolio-Fitzsimmons col. We wound our way up Detour Ridge and opted to climb right over the final summit and to scramble/bootpack down the other side. I ate too much for lunch at the top of Detour Ridge and was sluggish skiing up the Diavolo Glacier but finally caught up to Doug and broke trail up the final few hundred metres.

The traverse across the head of the Fitzsimmons Glacier to the north ridge of Overlord Mountain is technically easy but made terrifying by the huge cornices overhanging and falling off Mount Benvolio. I skied across just below the furthest reach of avalanche debris and thought "that would hurt" as I skied past blocks of cornice the size of a Hummer. Just before the north ridge of Overlord, there is some strange up-thrust of the glacier and a big chunk of glacial ice is pushed up and carved into two arcs with a perfect gateway between them. The next traverse, across to the northwest ridge of Overlord is also easy and only small chunks of cornice were peeling off here so we weren't too terrified.

We easily found the gully (at about 2450 metres) down onto the Overlord Glacier and skied out to the flats spaced out as the beast above was growling (Robin's words) and chunks of cornice and wet slides were coming off the ridge between Overlord and Refuse Pinnacle. On easy terrain now, we skied through the col between Whirlwind and Fissile Peaks and cruised down to camp at Singing Pass among the aggressive Whiskey Jacks.

Day 8: Culture Shock, Singing Pass to Whistler Village

Appropriately enough, Robin was chirruping away like a bird next morning singing a variety of songs from classic Julie Andrews "The Hills Are Alive" (not my favourite) to a version of "Killing me softly with her socks" for Doug who had been putting up with the stench of my foot rot and one pair of socks recycled each day in the small confines of our tent. It was stinking hot skiing up to Oboe Summit where Robin went through a whole set of songs strumming on his ski pole after I asked him whether or not he had played "air guitar" as a young lad. Doug videotaped the whole thing on our digital camera but none of the words are audible above my shrieks of laughter.

We wound our way into Flute Basin where we picked up a marked ski route leading to "Burnt Stew" trail and eventually down increasingly barren runs to the midway gondola station, where we jumped aboard with our big packs and were belched out 10 minutes later in the middle of Whistler village. From the wilds of the McBride Range to the middle of consumer-ville and our last terror traverse – wending our way past the over-priced shops swimming against the stream of the shopping obsessed hoard to Robin's beat up Subaru.

Skiers: Doug Brown, Sandra McGuinness, Betsy Waddington and Robin Tivy.

Sangrida Peak, 8130' 2478 m. May 16

Maps Burrell Creek 82E/9 and Passmore 82F/12

Sangrida, a Valkyrs peak, is located about 5 km. south of Mista on the height of land between the Arrow Lakes and Slocan drainages. The 1971 edition of *Interior Ranges* describes it as, "between Van Houten and Hutchison Creeks, at head of N. Greasybill Creek." Having made two unsuccessful forays from the eastern, or Greasybill, side (one on skis, one on foot), Howie Ridge and I made a recce from the west via Burton and Applegrove in October 2005 and found we were able to drive to 5650' (GR 262-023) at the end of the Van Houten Creek logging road. This point about 2.5 km. northwest of Sangrida gave us a clear view of the peak and the thought that we could make a straightforward ski ascent of our goal.

About 6:15 am on Tuesday, May 16th, four of us (myself, Howie, Toby, and Kyle Ridge) left Nelson bent on a daytrip ascent of Sangrida. Traveling via Nakusp, we continued south on Hwy. #6, left the pavement at Fauquier, motored south on Applegrove Road, joined Van Houten road at km. 22.5, and drove it a further 7.3 km. to a point where we were stopped at a bridge by snow on the road (4370'). After a four-hour drive, we put on skis and headed out at 10:25 on a gloriously sunny day. Within minutes, we ran out of snow on the road and carried our skis for 20 min. Skis back on, we continued to road's end in 90 min. from the truck. Then, following the south fork of Van Houten Creek, we skinned up through light timber, crossed an east-west strip of

cutblock, and ascended south through steep, tight timber to reach an open basin at 6300'. With Toby now breaking trail, we skinned up a fairly steep couloir to reach a 6950' col on Sangrida's west ridge (GR 260-010). So far, all had gone as envisioned back in October, although the heat on this mid-May day was draining. The final 1200' to Sangrida's summit found us dodging some bare rock as we plodded up the gentle, open slope of its west ridge/southwest face, and then continued along the mostly level summit crest to the highest point on the southeast. By now it was 2:55 pm (4 hrs. 20 min. up), but the snow was still decent—not at all mushy. Howie made a GPS calculation of our elevation, and we settled down for a late lunch. During our 40 min. stay, we enjoyed views of Spiers, Airy, Stanley, Old Glory, and the Mulvey Group from an unaccustomed angle, all the while commenting on the flawless weather. Some systems producing rain could be seen in the Monashees, but these never moved east of the Arrow Lakes.

For descent, we re-traced our ascent route, covering the upper portion with skins on to avoid the rocks. From the 6950' col, we skied north-aspect couloirs singly in good spring conditions. Farther down in the basin, Toby and Kyle put on a Powder Eights exhibition in gluey snow. Fortunately, we avoided the steep timber section by locating an avalanche chute to skier's right that took us on good snow right down to the strip cutblock. From this point, it was just a matter of schussing down the road to our truck, which we reached at 5:00 pm. That gave us a 1 hr. 35 min. descent from the summit and a total day of just over 6 ½ hours. The long drive home yielded the obligatory stop for burgers at The Hut in Nakusp and an arrival in Nelson at 10:00. We concurred that even a few days later this trip could not have been done completely on skis, as the upper portions of Sangrida would have melted off to bare rock.

Kim Kratky

Mt Faith, 2279m. May 30

This was originally intended as a recce for the road and hiking access to Mt Faith.

For the eastern access to Mt Faith go left on the Blueberry Paulson Hwy #3 just before reaching the Paulson Bridge. From here take the well marked McRea Rd for 6.6 km to the abandoned rail stop (future campground for the KVR) of Farron. After the road crosses the KVR railbed you are now on Dog Rd and heading downhill. [1.7 km later you will notice a culvert and trail going off to your left. This is the trail to Peter Lake.] This road is very good and follows the obvious main route that is marked by red and white km markers. At approximately 20 km there is another junction going to the right and marked "Faith Rd." Follow it to the branchment at 24 km. Here you are just below and east of the basin up to Mt Faith. You cannot see Mt. Faith, but the adjoining peak, Mt Hope, on its southeast. The road only goes a km up either branchment (the road on the right is to be pushed through further for logging later.) We took the branch off to the left for another km into a clear-cut where we were met by snow.

We hiked a few hundred meters up to the end of the clear-cut and meandered on firm snow, along the left side of "South Faith Creek" (We returned by the other branchment on the right side of the creek). Because we really did not know the route, we slowly made our altitude gain travel towards Mt Hope (with the creek always down below and to our right). After climbing a rather big and steep bump, due east of Mt Hope, the route to Mt Faith

became obvious. After a considerable descent we walked a straight line to the southeast side of Mt Faith. From the small "Cowpaddy Lake" we kicked steps in the snow up to its dry summit. Millions of ladybugs greeted us. The views were grand, with a different perspective of the Valhallas. We could see all the way up the Arrow Lake to Fauquier and we weren't that far off from Sangrida Peak. After a lengthy lunch we retraced our steps to the small lake below. From here we followed the relatively brush free ridge on the northern side of the creek - our vehicle being in full view, but on the other side of the creek. The ridge slowly petered out and we continued down its treed shoulder to a clear-cut. This clear-cut was the end of the road, and we followed it back 2km to the branch at 24km. A slow and hot jaunt brought us to our truck. We spent approximately 4 hours going up and 2 back down.

Eliane and Steven Miros

Mt Brennan, 9521' 2902m. May 31

Bert Port, Ken Holmes and I drove in via the Lyle Creek route. There is a "private property" sign where the road starts. The bridge across whitewater creek seems in reasonable condition. The road is rough and has a few minor washed out areas but is easily passable for a 4X4 with clearance. There is a big metal gate about 2/3 of the way in, and fortunately it was open. It is a little confusing following the road because there are lots of side roads that didn't used to be there going to ugly logging sites and a residence. We parked about 300 m before the trailhead because of brush but we didn't really need to. Incidentally, the ski trip was wonderful. We left the vehicle at 5:45 and were back by noon. We had to hike up ~700' before hitting snow.
Bill Sones

The KMC 2006 Executive:		Contacts:
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Salton Sea Threatened- A Critical Area For Canadian Migratory Birds

A critical stopping point for Canadian migratory birds is at risk prompting California to spending up to US\$12 billion to preserve its largest lake. Located in a southern Californian desert, the Salton Sea is a major stopover for more than 400 bird species, of which half migrate between the Arctic and South America. But agricultural run-off from surrounding farms, increased salt levels in the water carried in through the Colorado River and complex water agreements threaten the migratory staging site.

"It is one of the two more important areas for birds in all of North America, the most important being the Gulf of Mexico," said Julia Levin, California state policy director for the National Audubon Society. "It is an internationally important resource, so Canadians should be interested as well." The lake is part of the Pacific Flyway, a major migratory route. Mara Kerry, director of conservation for Nature Canada, called the Salton Sea "critical for Canadian migratory birds, especially given the state of conservation in California and in other areas along the west coast of the United States." California has lost 95 per cent of its wetlands.

Charles Keene, an environmental program manager for the state who has been coordinating the Salton Sea restoration process, said the death of the lake would substantially change bird populations throughout the Western hemisphere. "There are no simple solutions to the Salton Sea," Keene said. In an attempt to preserve the Salton Sea, the state has come up with six proposals, ranging from US\$2 billion to US\$12 billion. Legislation mandates that a proposal must go before the California government by year-end.

By Charles Mandel, Canwest News Service in The Province, Jan.19, 2006..

The Wrong Side Of The Edge

I was tired and spent as I rose up over another big wave. Appearing out of white foam like an apparition was the end of a paddle. The paddle, an arm's length away, was that of one of the kayakers who was in front of me. I knew instantly what had happened to him. He was caught, midstream, in a backwash of water known as a hole. I had one fraction of a second . . . and then, our boats crashed together.

Somehow, I had managed to pivot sideways to avoid ramming his body with the nose of my boat, but as soon as our boats collided, I was thrown upside down. I rolled quickly back up. Confused momentarily, I wasn't sure where I was or what had happened, but the other boat was gone. Apparently, I had knocked him loose, but I had also succeeded in planting myself squarely in the hole, and I found myself holding on for dear life in the violently surging water.

It is moments like these when the metaphor "on the thin edge" seems particularly apt. Teetering on an edge or walking a fine line are visual images which give shape and form to that abstract quality of sports in which the element of risk of bodily harm separates it from other endeavors: a climber delicately perching on the edge of the cliff with the abyss looming below, a circus performer balancing on a high wire without a protective safety net--and, yes, a kayaker caught precariously in a vicious hole in midst of a raging rapid. It is that balancing act on the edge that makes high risk activities so powerful in their appeal. The potential benefits to participants in high risk sports are many and profound. One of the most powerful is the intense personal feelings or arousal and excitement, the "adrenaline rush," if you will.

Everyone needs excitement: a baby exploring beyond the confines of its crib, a college student challenging a professor's facts during a lecture, a young man and woman initiating intimacies. But some people need more than the normal forms of life's excitement and take one step further, participating in high risk activities, sports played on the edge, where the consequences are far greater--where, as the great American Mountaineer and outdoor philosopher Willi Unsoeld once said, "it

has to be real enough to kill you." (Leamer 1982)

Isn't all this talk about the possibility of dying--about the wrong side of the fine edge--a little bit fatalistic? Certainly, unnerving thoughts of my own mortality flashed through my mind while I was being flung about in that violent mid-river hole. I stayed up for a moment, then the powerful currents of the hole, slapped me upside again. Under the water, I was tossed from side to side like a rag doll clamped between the jaws of a dog. It was everything I could do, hang onto my paddle. Though weak, I managed to roll up and caught a quick glance down river. It didn't look good. I was midway down long rapids. The river below me strained through a maze of large boulders and slammed up against a cliff. Already tired from the long stretch of rapids above the hole, my energy was ebbing quickly.

I knew that by now my companions were far down the river. If I swam, I'd be on my own. It would be a terrible and frightening swim through those implacable boulders. Instinct told me that my chances of surviving the swim in my weakened state were close to nil.

The German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche once wrote: "When you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you." Indeed, I found my eyes locked on the cold, icy stare of the abyss. I don't recall how many times my boat had been knocked over end for end, but during one of the endos, the bow dove deeply catching a downstream current. Suddenly I was out of the hole, the boat listing heavily to one side and spinning out of control toward the boulders below. With my remaining strength, I made feeble strokes towards shore. Two last pulls on my paddle jammed the boat onto a pebbly beach a few feet above the boulder death trap. I was safe. Although shaken, I got back in my kayak and finished running the rapid without any further mishaps. Now over 20 years later, I still enjoy kayaking, and I still feel just as firmly as ever that high-risk sports are essential, that we must do everything that we can to protect the right of people to participate in such activities. But I also look back at this experience as the beginning of a perceptible change in me. Once you've

seen those red eyes glowing from deep in the dark void, you're never really quite the same. * * *

The world has become far too safe, and heretofore unknown lands, mapped in far too much detail. As a consequence, we need as many outlets as possible for people to participate in challenging outdoor activities. We need wilderness lands; we need rock-climbing areas; we need wild rivers; we need outdoor schools; and given proper environmental safe guards, we need free and unfettered access to outdoor areas. The right to risk is unalienable. It makes our society healthier and more vibrant.

Yet, at the same time, we need to relook at what has happened to high risk activities over the last quarter of the 20th century. In our efforts to provide programs, create new markets and promote high risk sports, we have gradually come to a point where we have over-glamorized them and created an image for general consumption that is far different than what these activities really are. We have diverted people's attention from the not-so-glamorous possibility that one can get killed, concentrating attentions only on the fun and safe side of the dangerous edge. It is a mendacious, one-side view that has pervaded nearly every corner of our society: magazines, television programs, commercials, movies, outdoor education programs, and guided and outfitted trips. The effect has been to make the high risk experience into something akin to a visit to Disneyland or the carnival. There's a big difference. At Disneyland everything is safe. Not so in the outdoors.

We were far better off when climbers, kayakers, backcountry skiers and the like were considered a part of the lunatic fringe. To illustrate the dramatic changes that have occurred it is helpful to look at whitewater rafting. Twenty-five years ago, it was considered fairly adventurous to take a trip down the Middle Fork of the Salmon, a river consisting mostly of Class III rapids. Now glossy, colorful brochures invite the public to take trips down wild, Class V rivers --no experience necessary. Indeed with proper equipment and well-trained guides, Class V whitewater is possible and is run all the time. But what if something goes wrong. What if one of the

clients is thrown out of the boat above a rapid. Then what? If a rafting passenger falls into Class III water, they can usually be pulled back in the boat without much trouble, but all bets are off when it's Class V water. Charlie Walbridge who for years has been collecting data on river accidents has observed a troubling trend. He reports more fatal accidents occurring because boaters are unprepared --or simply overwhelmed-- by the severity of the water they are running. "For years the physical ability, experience, and fitness of rafting guests have been declining," says Walbridge, "Better equipment and improved guiding skills make it possible to run more difficult rivers, but the guest who ends up in the water may be overwhelmed and helpless." (Walbridge 1995) The margin of safety on Class V water is extremely thin. Competent and safe kayakers and rafters who run such water do so only after slowly developing their skills and working up to it.

Yet, more and more commercial guided operations are offering Class V trips to people who essentially walk in off the street. What is alarming is that such trips can create unreal expectations on the part of the paying passenger. They go on the trip. They have an exciting time, and some of them leave with the feeling that now they can run such water on their own. The same thing can happen to those who watch movies and videos of high risk sports. Caught up in the thrill of it and seduced by the nonchalant attitude of many of these films, they say, "Hey, I can do that too."

This false sense of security according to psychologist, Michael Apter in his book *The Dangerous Edge* (Apter 1992) comes from an unrealistic assessment of their ability. Using the metaphor of a cliff's edge, Apter theorizes that every activity in life has three zones: a safe zone where one is far away from the cliff's edge, the danger zone where one walks on the edge, and the trauma zone where one has fallen off the edge and has been hurt or killed. Apter believes that when people seek excitement, they put themselves in what he calls a protective frame, which is built through skill, proper equipment and preparation. The protective frame allows them to come close to the edge, but not to fall into the trauma zone.

What can happen according to Apter is that people can be tricked into thinking they are operating within a protective frame when in reality they are not.

Reinforced by what they hear and see on the media and combined with lack of knowledge and skill, the boundaries of the protective frame are completely obscured. Apter says: "One seems simply to be playing an exciting game with no repercussions."

That is exactly what the over-glamorization of high-risk sports can do. It blurs the distinction of what is real and unreal. It happens to the paying passenger on a guided trip--or the impressionable viewer of an "action video"--who then goes out and jumps in a Class V river on his own and drowns.

There is no protective frame for those lured by Madison Avenue ad campaigns. High-risk sports are dangerous games of brinkmanship--not with another human foe, but with a passive force of nature. Thus, it is incumbent upon participants that, even though they may sometimes balance precariously, they must at all cost stay on the living side of the edge. One misstep and the game is over.

Sometime after my close-call on a river, I began thinking more about the limits of high risk sports. How far do we dare take them? At what point, do we cross the line in our eagerness to interest others and lead people on an uncertain path? Those questions haunted me for a number of years as I worked on the biography of kayaking's most famous personality, Doctor Walter Blackadar (Watters 1994). If there was any life in which the hard questions of high-risk sports were asked, it was in Blackadar's. His story and experiences are worth a closer look.

* * *

Blackadar is one of those giants who come along every so often, who envision great possibilities, make a great leap and forever change the nature of the sport. For anyone who loves the outdoors, his life story reads almost like a fairy tale. He was a well-liked and respected physician in a small town in Idaho. Originally from the east, he moved west in 1949 so he could be near fishing, hunting and river running. He took up kayaking in the 1960s long before it became fashionable to drive around with a kayak strapped to the top of a car. In fact, at the time the number of kayaks in the state of Idaho--one of the west's most profligate states for whitewater rivers--could be counted on one hand.

His early kayaking days were carefree and hedonistic. He was famous for serving up a potent mixture of vodka and lemonade from his water bottle. He had quickly

adopted the west--and its mythology--as his own, and around the campfire at night, he regaled trip companions with wild stories and demonstrated his prowess with a .44 magnum pistol. On a hot afternoon, he would shed his clothes, salvo pudore, and frolic on the beach with his young kayaking friends. The difficulty of the rivers he ran increased each year. He approached rivers cautiously, but there was always a light, carefree attitude to his trips--until a fateful day on the West Fork of the Bruneau River.

The Bruneau River lies in the remote, basaltic desert of southwest Idaho. It is an undulating land, draped in a greyish-green shroud of sage. Slicing through the desert like a bolt and branches of lightning is the Bruneau River with its several tributaries and forks. In April of 1974, Blackadar put together a party of five kayakers to run the West Fork of the Bruneau. Blackadar who had run the river before did not consider the West Fork to be a particularly difficult river as long as the two or three unrunnable rapids were located and portaged.

As they worked their way down the river, they employed a cautious approach: Blackadar was first. Julie Wilson, a young admirer of Blackadar visiting from the southeast, was in the second position behind Blackadar. Wilson replicated his moves, stopping when he did and not passing him. The other three kayakers on the trip fell in behind Wilson. Unless the water was obviously easy, no one was to go beyond Blackadar.

Midway through the second day of the trip, they approached a falls, which consisted of four drops through a maze of boulders. The falls was one of the unrunnable rapids that had to be portaged. But when river runners first approach a rapid, it is sometimes difficult to ascertain its difficulty until moving up closer to the edge. Blackadar found himself in that position. He couldn't see the coming falls. A juniper tree had fallen and blocked three fourths of the river, hindering his view of what lay downstream. To get to a better position, he paddled around the tree and slipped into an eddy, the last remaining stopping point just above the falls.

Looking below him, he now knew that the falls was unrunnable and would have to be carried. According to kayaking protocol, the other kayakers should have stopped in eddies above Blackadar and waited for a signal, but the juniper tree complicated the situation.

Julie Wilson paddled around the tree, but the eddy that Blackadar occupied was too small for her to get into. She drifted towards the edge of the falls. Blackadar, now realizing her danger, yelled. It was too late. Reacting quickly, Blackadar sprinted out in front of Wilson. He knew she was heading into a dangerous falls, and he wanted to be in front of her to guide her along the best path he could pick. They both plunged into the falls. On the first drop, Blackadar capsized and tried desperately to roll.

When Blackadar came up, he had lost track of Wilson. He plunged down through the next drop, and the next, and somehow ran the rest of the treacherous falls. Not finding her at the bottom, he hoped that she might have been washed downstream. Leaving the others who had managed to get out at different points mid way down the falls, Blackadar paddled off trying to find her.

He never found her. After searching for several hours, an agonized Blackadar realized that Julie Wilson had drowned, her body caught somewhere under the water in the falls. It wasn't until three weeks later while Blackadar was attending Julie's memorial service in Atlanta that her body was found by a friend near the falls. She was buried overlooking the river and the rapid which now bears her name.

I interviewed many of Blackadar's friends and acquaintances when I was working on his biography. [Entitled *Never Turn Back*, the book is available directly from the author at 1-800-585-6857]. It was obvious that Julie Wilson's death devastated him. He had danced with danger on rivers, playing the odds but he always managed to come out the winner. He delighted in balancing on the fine edge separating life from death, staying an arm's length away. He had thought carefully about his own death and writing about it, he had said that it would willingly but grudgingly be accepted. But in the end when death came on the river, it was not his own. It was somebody young and hopeful just starting her life.

There are a number of parallels between Walt Blackadar and a contemporary of his in the mountaineering world, Willi Unsoeld. Willi Unsoeld had named his daughter, Devi, after what he felt was one of the most beautiful mountains in the world, the 25,645-foot Indian peak, Nanda Devi. In 1976, Devi who had been well-schooled in art of mountaineering by her father, attempted to climb her namesake.

On the climb she was stricken with a blood clot and died. It was impossible to remove her and like Julie Wilson's grave in the Bruneau desert, the remote Himalayan mountain became her resting place.

Unsoeld could never look at death quite the same way. "How does one handle the death of a surpassing human being?" He asked, and then answered. "You don't. It handles you. It rubs your nose in the reality of your mortality." (Leamer 1982, 328) Both Unsoeld and Blackadar learned the despair of losing someone and dark emptiness of the other side of the edge.

Walt Blackadar never recovered. He returned to kayaking and continued to push back the barriers of the sport. His last great problem was Devils Canyon of the Susitna River which drains the southern half of the Alaska Range, the roof of North America. Although, he ran all of Devils Canyon's rapids, he never quite ran them cleanly without a swim, the way he wanted. His third attempt at the Susitna when he almost lost his life during a horrifying swim through some of the canyon's largest rapids seemed nihilistic. Yet, he was conservative and protective when it came to other members in his party. Once while ABC was filming him and several other outstanding kayakers on the Colorado for a nationally televised program, Blackadar asked one of the kayakers, Lynn Ashton, to wear a larger life jacket. He had long felt that more buoyant life jackets increased one's chances of survival in big water rapids like those found on the Colorado. She agreed. Blackadar turned away with tears in his eyes. It was a moving, poignant moment and there was little doubt that his tears were for Julie Wilson.

What happened to Julie Wilson and Devi Unsoeld can happen to any one involved in high risk activities. We must never forget them. Their stories remind us that our companions, friends and love ones on high risk forays can also slip and tumble over the wrong side of the edge as easily as we can. Indeed, if Blackadar's haunted life after Julie Wilson's accident is any indication, there also is a wrong side of the edge for the survivors as well.

No matter how thoughtful and sound our reasonings, death on a river or on a mountain cannot be easily explained away. Listen to what John Krakauer has to say in *Into the Wild*, a book about a young man by name of Chris Johnson who in April of 1992 traveled Alaska and had attempted to live off the land (Krakauer 1996).

Tragically, Johnson's attempt to survive in the Alaskan wilderness failed, and he essentially starved to death. Krakauer describes a scene in his book where he meets with the parents of Johnson for an interview. Johnson's mother sits at the dining room table looking through pictures of her son and breaks into tears: "weeping as only a mother who has outlived a child can weep," Krakauer writes, "betraying a loss so huge and irreparable that the mind balks at taking its measure. Such bereavement, witnessed at close range, makes even the most eloquent apologia for high-risk activities ring fatuous and hollow."

Walt Blackadar broke into tears often in the years following Julie Wilson's death, and though haunted by her death and plagued by injuries, he doggedly continued to kayak. In 1978 in an attempt to ready himself for another film project with ABC American Sportsman, he joined with several friends to run the South Fork of the Payette, a river not far from his home in Salmon.

Part way down the river, two lead kayakers spotted a log just barely showing above the surface of the water and extending nearly all the way across the river. They quickly caught an eddy on the far right. Blackadar was immediately behind them. To the two kayakers pulled off to the side, it looked as though Blackadar did not see the log. It might have been hidden under a surge of water when he looked downstream. To their horror, Blackadar nonchalantly drifted toward the log. They had no time to warn him.

He was suddenly jarred when his kayak hit the submerged tree. The bow immediately dove under, and the onrushing water slammed his body against the log. Blackadar reached over the log laying on his paddle in a technique known to kayakers as a high brace. The high brace might have helped him get around one side of the log, but the log slanted toward deeper water. As the current bounced the boat, he was pulled deeper and deeper into the water. He held bravely onto the high brace, even as his head slowly disappeared under the water. The back end of the boat rose up, stood vertically and collapsed against his body. The boat and Blackadar were completely trapped and immersed under water. There was nothing the shocked kayakers could do--no way of reaching him, no possible way of getting a throw rope to him. To have someone swim

out and try to get a rope to him would have been impossible--and foolish since it could have risked entrapping two people. And so, Walt Blackadar died on the river. His body was recovered the next day and he was buried in the Pioneer Cemetery overlooking the South Fork of the Payette River.

* * *

Julie Wilson, Devi Unsoeld, Walt Blackadar. What is there to learn from them? Certainly none of them would have discouraged us from taking up kayaking and climbing and other adventurous activities. They all talked of how important such sports were to them. On

the other hand, I'm sure that all three of them would have also agreed that risk in outdoor activities must be carefully evaluated. How is that done? Very simply, one must start slowly, learn the skills of the sport, and put in an apprenticeship. With such a foundation, one then has the knowledge to make informed decisions about how much risk is personally acceptable to them and the steps that can be taken to minimize risk. We all have our own thresholds of acceptable risk, and we must never let bravado or marketing hype or pressure from others influence that.

Accidents, such as I have described here, are warning shots across the bow. They are reminders that we have moved ever closer to the fine edge. Once all the fanfare is stripped away, these activities are real, real enough to kill people. Outdoor educators, guides, writers, outdoor companies, film makers must do everything possible to make potential participants as fully aware of the risks as they do of the fun and excitement of sport. Not to do so does irreparable harm to high risk activities and ultimately to those eager to try them.

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Wilderness and wildlife, both as natural realities and as philosophical ideas, are fundamentally about human humility and restraint. Remember that in Old English *Wilderness* means self-willed land and *wildeor* means self-willed beast. Our war on nature comes from trying to impose our will over the whole Earth. To develop and practice a land ethic, we must hold dear both Wilderness and the wildeor. Only by making the moral leap to embrace, celebrate, love, and *restore* self-willed nature can we stop the war on nature and save ourselves. Recycling, living more simply, and protecting human health through pollution control are all important. But it is only by rewilding and healing the ecological wounds of the land that we can learn humility and respect; that we can come home, at last. And that the grand dance of life will sashay on in all its beauty, integrity, and evolutionary potential...

I am not optimistic. I think that the exuberant optimism that drives modern society is irrational. But I do have *hope*. Tom Butler, editor of *Wild Earth*, writes, "Hope is natural. To early hominids ... who constantly faced an inconsistent ability to exploit food resources, hope would have been a powerful advantage. It might have been a key factor in getting through the hungry times. Hope is wild." Conservationists can rewild nature only if they are lifted up by wild hope. *Dave Foreman in Rewilding North America: A Vision for Conservation In The 21st Century*, Washington Press, Washington, D.C. U.S.A. 2004.

You cannot stay on the summit forever; you have to come down again. So why bother in the first place? Just this: What is above knows what is below, but what is below does not know what is above. One climbs, one sees. One descends, one sees no longer, but one has seen. There is an art of conducting oneself in the lower regions by the memory of what one saw higher up. When one can no longer see, one can at least still know.
Rene Daumal

Challenge is the core and the mainspring of all human activity. If there's an ocean, we cross it; if there's a disease, we cure it; if there's a wrong, we right it; if there's a record, we break it; and finally, if there's a mountain, we climb it. *James Ramesy Ullman*

You've climbed the highest mountain in the world. What's left? It's all downhill from there. You've got to set your sights on something higher than Everest. *Willi Unsoeld*