

THE PACKRAT

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APRIL - MAY 2000

Art Davis spent much time in preparing the trail up Exshaw Creek - especially building bridges across the creek, and in preparing the camp site.

He also helped the Canmore Group in the construction of a trail up Mt. Lady Macdonald.

It should also be mentioned that in preparing for the snow cave trips, Art would frequently go in a week earlier and build his own cave as well as a fire place. This would free him up so that he could assist others in building their own caves or else he would simply supervise the camp - wine goblet in hand!

By Wally Drew

More tributes follow...

To: The Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association
From: Brent Davis & Family

The turn out for Dad's memorial service was beyond all belief. When I was asked how many people to expect I gave an estimate of between 30 and 100. The actual turn out was about 150. It was beyond my expectations and showed me how many lives Dad had touched.

The Ramblers were Dad's extended family. The stories that people brought up at the reception at our house after the service showed he was many different things to many people. Those memories are the way he would have wanted to be remembered. With so many of you attending our house you also brought a vitality back into a home which had been darkened by the unexplainable events of the preceding week.

Once we have had a chance to deal with the business end of this tragedy I will come to the club and announce the date for the final memorial on Mt. Lady MacDonald. The tentative time frame is around the May long weekend. My sister Anthea and brother Grant from Ottawa will try to come out and join us in the scattering of Dad's ashes.

I thank you for your warm and caring thoughts and hope that you can find some closure to this event which has affected so many lives.

Art Davis will be remembered by many members of the RMRA for his leadership of many types of trips. It was through him that many of us had our first experiences of building snow caves first at Ptarmigan heights overlooking Ptarmigan Lake at Boulder pass and later below South Molar Pass on Mosquito Creek.

These snow caves ranged from the simple one and two person caves to the more complex multi room structures many connected together by a series of tunnels. In February 1982 a group of us led, of course, by Art set up camp at Ptarmigan Heights and built a series of interconnected snow caves. The one we were in was a two room effort designed to sleep 6 persons. That evening all 18 of us had a surprise party to celebrate Art's 55th birthday complete with streamers, noise makers, a birthday cake and bang tang completed the evening. That evening we had two visitors, they were winter camping also a Boulder Pass and just had to see our snow cave complex.

Art was also known for his regular easy backpacks on the May long weekend which trudged about 3k up Exshaw Creek. Being a short distance we could carry many things that made the experience a little more comfortable. After setting up his tent, Art would be seen leaning back in his modified law chair (short legs), feet up on a stump enjoying a cigarillo and drinking wine out of his silver wine goblet. Also Art encouraged members to bring small children.

Art loved the area around Canmore. From the hikes in the Exshaw valley, the innumerable hikes up Mt Lady McDonald and the many easy hikes he coordinated in the Yamnuska Natural Area.

Art was a regular at the annual Thanksgiving weekend at Mosquito Creek camp out. The highlight of this event was the full roast turkey meal with all the trimmings served in the Mosquito Creek camp shelter. The following day various hikes would go out in the surrounding area.

On many of his trips Art could be observed taking notes of weather and trail conditions. At the reception held after the memorial service at Brent and Alma Davis' house we had the opportunity to leaf through Art's trip reports, some going back to the early 1970's.

He will be missed! Marg & Dick Lowndes

Art Davis 1927 to 2000

We are all here today to remember a man who was an inspiration to us all in many different ways. He was a companion and mentor to us all. He was a special man who was precious in many varied ways. He was also a private man who only let people into certain parts of his life. He was a father, grandfather, brother, nephew, uncle, cousin, friend and hiking companion. The quiet confidence, dignity and humour he showed in any situation brought him respect from all who knew or came into contact with him. He faced all his challenges on his own and fought all his own battles on his terms. He was always the first to offer assistance and always the last to ask for help.

Art was predeceased by his father Sam, mother Elsie, and youngest brother Eric. There were other family losses over the years which I cannot list for fear of offending anyone lest I miss someone, because the relative family that he was in contact with is extensive. Many people cannot be here today for health reasons and we understand that they feel the loss just as deeply as we do. Our prayers and best wishes go to them and we hope that they can come to a form of closure with this personal tragedy and know that Dad is now free of the demons he could not tell us of.

In his last two years Dad had a battle with depression with which he could not overcome and, that, was a private part of his life which he chose to struggle with on his own. We all wish now that he could have talked more openly about the last mountain that he had to climb. And we all would have helped carry his pack, but it was a journey that he could not share for reasons known only to him. To try to make sense of what appears to be an irrational act is impossible. What he saw and the pain that he felt had to have been beyond our comprehension for him to see this as his only option. His last written words were "Everyone, please forgive me." In spite of what seems like a selfish act, I hope everyone can respect his last wish and wish him eternal peace. I hope that we can also be reconciled, that

a pain, which we cannot understand, has ended for one we all love dearly.

Art was born on February 2, 1927 in North Bay Ontario. The Davis family at that time was father Samuel, mother Elsie, sisters Winnie and Doris, and brothers Jim and Eric. He grew up in the small town and developed a love for the outdoors at that time living at the edge of the northern Ontario bush. He and his brothers learned how to survive in the woods, hunt, fish and canoe. These were more than skills that they learned. For him, they became life styles. Even as a child he was a private person and in being so he was given the nickname of "Silent Sam". An intelligent child, he was held back in school, but finished high school at an earlier age than most. He entered the military at 17 by lying about his age and, in his words, the second world war fortunately ended after he finished basic training and he did not have to go overseas to see active service. Upon being released from military duty, he started working as an office clerk for the CPR.

In 1953 he married Jean Finlayson. Children then followed with Anthea in 1955, Brent in 1957, Glenn in 1958 and Grant in 1960. Due to irreconcilable differences Art and Jean separated in 1961. Their love for their children insulated and shielded them against any problems they had between themselves. The children's concerns always took precedence.

Art, then, took a job on the road with Prichard and Sons, a construction company involved in projects all over North America, as a payroll clerk. This took him to New Jersey, Illinois, California, Oregon and finally Alberta. In 1966 he was involved with the building of the Crossfield and Jumping Pound Gas Plants and decided that Calgary was a place to put down roots again. In 1970, both projects had come to an end and the company wanted him to relocate to another location and he terminated employment with them at that point. During his time in California and Oregon he had started hiking up mountains and when he moved to Calgary he continued and in 1968 he joined the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association. His passion for the outdoors now became complete. There, he found a group of similar minded

people who enjoyed a range of activities suited to his personality. That association continued until 1998 when his depression precluded him from allowing his extended family from participating in his activities.

In 1970 Art had his children come to Alberta to visit. They went hiking and Art showed them the magic of the mountains, which had so captivated him. In 1971, Anthea, Glenn and Brent came out to visit him again for the month of July after he had terminated with Prichard and Sons and they traveled the Rocky Mountains, camping and hiking for a month. This instilled a life long love of the hills in them, which is currently being satisfied by them in their own ways.

In 1971 Art commenced employment with the Alberta Liquor Board and he was employed with them until November, 1988. On a Monday in November, 1988 he told his boss that he was tired of coming to work every day and that they should get his pension package together because he really didn't like dealing with the public anymore and wouldn't be coming into work after that day.

During the time from 1966 to 1998 he annually averaged over 2,500 miles of hiking during the summer and skiing in the winter with the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association. His son Brent moved to Calgary in 1973 and was quickly drawn into the fold and another life long love affair with mountains had been mentored. His other children visited for holidays and that also involved hiking in the mountains whether they wanted to or not and, in their own way, they have special memories and a love of the hills. One of the most special is the naming of Bighorn Mountain in 1971 along with fellow mentor Jack Carter. This peak is on the Banff/Jasper border near the Columbia Icefields. The opportunity to name a mountain in Canada, let alone the world, today is almost unheard of and took many years of persistence from Art to achieve and it is an outstanding accomplishment all in its own.

The Rocky Mountain Ramblers were one of his labours of love. The friends he grew to know

through that organization are a constant source of inspiration. The common bond of the hills and outdoor activities is one that truly transcends. They have been a part of Arts life for over 30 years. It is one of the longest relationships that he has had, other than that of immediate family, in his life. The Ramblers were very close to his heart and spirit. They are his extended family and our thoughts go out to them for the pain that they are all suffering after not hearing from one of their true friends for the last two of years. His thoughts were with you, but because of the illness, with which he could not come to terms with, he couldn't face you. As I said earlier, he was the first to offer help and the last to ask for help. He has known most of you for over 20 years and some for over 30 years and you were his friends in the truest sense of the word. We have been in situations where we were joined by a rope. Our lives were joined by that rope. It is a bond only mountaineers can know and understand. I know dad was one of my best rope mates, but there was no rope strong enough for his last mountain. We have memories of snow cave trips, his birthday party at Boulder Pass, summits too many to count and backpacks. They are all special memories of man who quietly helped us all out. We have Helga Pattison to thank for the wonderful photograph of dad taken on a backpack on June 21, 1975, up the Spray River Valley which captures that twinkle in his eye and sly grin so common in the back country. He was always his best when the times were the worst and as I recall that day was stinking hot and we all had sore feet and 5 miles to go with full backpacks.

What do we come away from this with? My memory of the man is an accumulation of stories from the late 50's to February 2, 2000. His memory can't be tainted by 2 out of 73 years. The good in this mans life and what he passed on to countless other people is immeasurable. We all wish that we could have helped him in his final days, but "Silent Sam" didn't let us know of his pain and that the end was eminent.

"Everyone, please forgive me"
Dad, you are forgiven