JOHN SCHLEINICH - 1924-2004

The Rocky Mountain Ramblers has lost one of our most active and popular trip coordinators with John Schleinich succumbing to brain cancer in June.

John was a strong survivor having bounced back from twice being captured and tortured in World War II, falling off two mountains and undergoing angioplasty. At age 79 he still read without glasses and his hair was still black. But cancer doesn't give a strong man a chance.

John had a rich and varied life. A retired geophysicist, he had many other pursuits, both mental and physical, besides the mountains and Ramblers. He could converse in 5 or 6 languages.

In Ramblers he was best known as a very active coordinator, although he also served on the Executive. He led trips of all levels from easy trail hikes to difficult scrambles. He was an accomplished climber, having topped Mont Blanc among others.

His climax in Ramblers was during the year he turned 69 during which he took out 69 trips. John specialized in easier foothills hikes or XC trips that were much in demand by many members. He also attended the meetings faithfully rather than leaving it for someone else to announce his trips. He was also known for his very brief trip reports... "we went up, we came down and had a good day".

In addition John was well known for his ability to hike or scramble in the mountains all day on only a handful of food.

Perhaps less known about John in Ramblers was what an exceptionally kind, caring and charitable person he was. He had several foster children through SOS. When we traveled in Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and Costa Rica he would leave folding money tips under his pillow for the maids because they didn't get paid much.

His own three children were the most important to him. John was an excellent father. This was brought out by the excellent and moving tribute to him at his funeral mass by his daughter, Mary Anne. She has now joined the Ramblers to follow in her dad's footsteps and will have a long way to go. His children and grandchildren will miss him even more than the rest of us Ramblers will.

Submitted by Wally Drew

PROFILE:
JOHN SCHLEINICH

by Reg Fryling

Born in 1924 in Yugoslavia (now Croatia), John led a comparatively peaceful childhood which was completely shattered by the war. He spent some time in the airforce, was taken prisoner and escaped, eventually making his way to freedom and the end of hostilities. He earned a degree in electrical engineering at a university in Austria in 1951 and was torn between staying in Europe where rebuilding required engineers, or joining his parents already in Canada. He came, and joined Mobile Oil which lived up to its name and sent him all over the world starting with our North. Oil exploration was big in the 50's, and after a stint North of Great Slave Lake where he on occasion drove across on the lake's ice, he settled in Peace River, long enough at any rate to meet a girl and get married. The town of Peace River is nestled deep in the river valley where he observed the temperature to usually be 10 to 15 degrees F colder than on top. Next they were off to Paris, Tunisia, Libya, Algeria and the West coast of Africa before returning to Canada and Calgary, where he eventually chose an early retirement. His advise to me when I was contemplating the same was to go for it! He has two girls and one boy.

John's mountain life started in the alpine meadows when he was 5 or 6. The pastoral pleasantness was badly eroded one night as he huddled in a shepherd's hut while the heavens flashed and banged threatening to blast him to oblivion. His attraction for high places survived, obviously, and he remembers scrambling in the Slovainian Alps at around 10 or 11. He climbed and downhill skied during his college days in Austria. His most difficult climb back then was Mt. Skull. The wall was close to 90 degrees -- hob nailed boots and no rope! He got hung up and had to climb the rest without the clumsy boots.

His second close call was recorded in the PackRat, about December 1993 "climbing Mont Blanc". Some quotations: "...we arrived at the final ridge leading to the top. A knife-edge ridge with a huge cornice on the Italian side and a steep cliff-side into oblivion on the French side. Step by cautious step, gasping for air, we inched our way up". They made it (1982) but the close call came on the way down when, almost at the overnight hut, dog tired, he tried to cross a creek in a gorge without putting on his crampons. "After a second of hesitation I jumped. My foot landed on the icy rim at the other side of the gorge. Hard ice. Like in a dream, not in slow motion, I slipped and fell down the glacier, sliding into a barren emptiness". He managed to roll onto his stomach and stop on the edge of a drop-off. "Adrenaline pumped through my system. Fingers exploring for cracks, my boots for soft spots

in ice, I was praying for grips to claw my way back out. Fingers bleeding, my face pressed on the ice for friction, skinned, totally soaked from icy spray I slowly inched my way up."

He had a third close call on Mt. Bogart in 1986. He was climbing on some cliff bands when a large rock hand-hold gave way. His left shoulder was dislocated, left knee damaged, and extensive lacerations to hands, head and face. A week after he was back at work he decided to retire -- life may be too short to work when one could be having fun! Some other memorable trips include a later attempt on Bogart with Mary and myself when he and Mary down-climbed (the same cliff band) to Ribbon Creek while I made my way back to the car at Spray Lake. He remembers with fondness a solo January climb of Mt. Allen.

John hiked mostly alone from 1972 to 1982 when he met Hino and some other Ramblers at Fish Lake. They invited him to stay an extra day but he had no food left, so they fished and supplemented the food supply. Well, Hino and Co., you recruited a very loyal and hard working club member. Last year, at age 69 John took out 69 trips. This year he said he climbed nine new mountains. He's optimistic that once his back operation heals he'll be back in the hills as usual.