

THE  
 Packrat 

  
RMRA Newsletter

for all outdoor activities

 October 1992 

**THE ROCKY MOUNTAIN RAMBLERS  
ASSOCIATION**

**ACTIVITIES:** Hiking, Backpacking, Climbing, Skiing, Canoeing, Cycling, Mountain-Biking, Snowshoeing, Educational and Awareness Programs and Social functions.

**MEETINGS:** WEEKLY- Wednesday evening at 7:45 PM  
Rosemount Community Hall  
2807 - 10 Street N.W.

**MAIL:** P.O. Box 3098 Station 'B'  
Calgary, AB T2M 4L6

**FEES:** Annual Membership: Single \$ 25.00  
Family \$ 35.00

**TRIP INFO.:** 282 - 6308 RMRA Hotline  
and at Meetings.

**R M R A EXECUTIVE 1991/92**

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Please note: Ppresidential Ramblings is not on page 3 as it used to be, but on page 6 for better space allocation.

**VERY IMPORTANT MESSAGE: PLEASE COME TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING NEXT WEDNESDAY. YOUR CLUB NEEDS A QUORUM IN ORDER TO RUN THE AGM. It is for your benefit. So please come!**

## The Pennine Way

A major hike or my favourite pub-crawl

by Dave Mulligan

Starting in Edale in central England and finishing 250 miles later just over the border at Kirk Yetholm in Southern Scotland, the Pennine Way is Great Britain's most famous long distance footpath. It was conceived many years ago and eventually put together with the aid of the (British) Ramblers Association in the mid 60's. I first walked it carrying a tent, sleeping bag and an assortment of Ordnance Survey (O.S.) 1 inch to the mile topography maps in the Easter of 69. A major difficulty at that time was the location of the actual path for despite various signs, one was often left wondering which field, path, or moor was the correct right of way.

I should explain that many pathways in Britain are "rights of way" established over centuries of use and jealously guarded by the Ramblers Assoc. and others for public's use. Some farmers try to discourage use by planting crops but legally speaking if it is a genuine "right of way" the public can march right across them. For the most part the Pennine Way combined existing footpaths with some new ones to make a glorious route up the middle of England. It takes in all the extremes of boggy peat moors in the South, some beautiful Yorkshire Dales (home of the Vet. James Herriot), the "mountain" Pen-y-ghent, Hadrian's Wall built by the Romans to keep back the unruly Scots and winding up amongst the wild Scottish Cheviots.

In between it drops down to many picturesque villages and with good timing a good jar of the local brew could be had for both lunch and supper. Most hikers will take between 2-3 weeks to accomplish the walk. For the most part it is possible to stay in the very adequate Youth Hostels right on route and make up the extra nights at bed and breakfast without deviating much from the planned trek. The few remaining long stages have

been "plugged" by various accommodations so that a tent and even a sleeping bag is unnecessary (the Youth Hostels provide blankets or duvets and rent or sell the mandatory sheet liners).

By the occasion of my third and most recent trip in the Spring of 1977, the walk had changed considerably. In the once scanty Peak District, the path had become so boggy that in places plastic baffles or sleepers had been provided to prevent sinking. The path was several hundred feet wide at this point. The signs still existed but helpful tourist map editions of the route were and are available showing the path on 1:50,000 topo and listing nearby attractions. The beer was still good including a local brew "Old Peculiar". The cheeses also were appetizing and Wesleyedale still fell out of hastily made sandwiches. Incidentally I can remember that initially 4 rounds of bread was more than adequate for the day's lunch, but by the end of the trip the major portion of a whole loaf was consumed.

But when it rained, it poured and a bountiful supply of plastic bags, good rain wear, a tolerance for wet boots and compass skills in low mist were necessary to find the next warm night. The people were as friendly as ever. The last long stage of 27 miles over the Cheviots had been "plugged" by the simple task of landing a railway car on the top of the hill by helicopter. It provided a rough but dry night for about a dozen of us. We were interrupted in the morning by what sounded like the last gasp of an ancient mountaineer. An investigation revealed a sheep scratching its back on the side of the "car"! And so to Kirk Yetholm to drink from the fund established for all who complete the way by the recently deceased much travelled Mr. Wainwright.

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Calgary Climate Change in the 1980's  
and Outlook for the Rest of the 1990's

by Wally Drew

Those of us who have lived in Calgary for a decade or more realize that the 1980's was an unusually warm decade here as it was in the northern hemisphere in general. The causes of this are numerous and not well known so I won't go into that now. I'll just give a few results to give long-time and short-time residents alike an idea of how the Calgary climate they have been experiencing the past dozen years varies from the longer term normal for Calgary.

Note that all data are for Calgary Airport. While the data are not representative for the city as a whole, the trends are. The official climate normals for Calgary are for the 30-year period 1951-1980. That period is not long enough to give good curves so I have computed my own normals for the 50-year period 1931-1980 for Calgary Airport at present or equivalent locations in NE. Calgary. Of course the 10-year period of the 1980's is too short to give good curves and some of the anomalies will be obvious in the data presented below.

First I'll present a few of my long-term normals for Calgary. Temperatures: Jan. mean 12.6 F, -10.8 C; April mean 38.4 F, 3.6 C; July mean 61.8 F, 16.6 C; Oct. mean 42.1 F, 5.6 C; mean annual 38.3 F, 3.5 C. Average for the lowest temperature of the year and highest for Jan. -31 F -35 C and 50 F, 10 C respectively. Average for the lowest temp. in July and highest of the year are 39 F, 4 C and 91 F, 33 C. As in most places in Canada and U.S.A., etc. Jan is normally the coldest month and July the warmest. Precipitation: Normal annual precipitation is 15.7", 399 mm including 11.5", 191 mm of rain and the water equivalent of 58.5", 148.7 cm of snow. Official 30-year normal uses 10:1 ratio for water equivalent of snow for the first 10 years, while the average ratio is 14:1, giving too high precipitation normals. June is normally the wettest month by far with 3.4", 86 mm of precipitation and Nov., Jan. and Feb. the driest with 0.5", 13 mm. each. Apr. on average has the most snowfall with 9.6", 24.4 cm.

For the 1980's the mean annual temperature was 40.3 F, 4.6 C which was 2 F, 1.1 C above the long term normal. However, most of the change was in the months of Jan.-April while summers and falls were relatively unchanged. Jan. with a mean temperature during the decade of 20.4 F, -6.4 C, a rise of 7.8 F, 4.4 C had the greatest warming. That produced the anomaly of Dec. being the coldest month of the year in the 80's. Sept. was actually cooler during the 80's with a drop of 1.1 F, 0.6 C in mean temperature. In the 1980's the lowest temperature of the year and highest for Jan averaged -28 F, -34 C and 54 F, 12 C respectively. It got nearly as cold as normal but cold waves didn't last long. The lowest temperature in July and the highest in the year for the 80's averaged 40 F, 4.2 C and 90 F, 32 C respectively, little changed from long term.

Annual precipitation for the 1980's averaged 15.8", 402 mm which is very close to the long term normal. We had cold season droughts with the months Oct.-Feb. and April averaging well below normal. That was compensated for by Sept. which during the decade averaged nearly twice as much precipitation as for the long term. June also averaged below normal in precipitation and July above, so that July temporarily replaced June as the wettest month of the year. Because of the dry winters average annual snowfall during the 80's was only 44.0", 111.9 cm or 3/4 of long term normal. Every month had less than normal snowfall (July normally has 0) with the greatest deficiency being in April. March was above normal in precipitation due to 3 unseasonal rains during the decade. There is normally no significant rain between Oct. and April in Calgary.

The following comparisons are between the 1980's and the official 30-year normals because I do not have the data to compile the 50-year normals for them or have not taken the time to do so. The 1980's averaged 110 days per year with measurable precipitation compared with the normal of 113 days. There were 69 days with rain vs normal of 58 and 53 days with snow vs normal of 62 per year. (Some days have both rain and snow.) Thunder occurred on 28 days a year vs the normal of 25. Jan. Feb. and Apr. had appreciably less days with precipitation and snowfall than normal, while Sep. had appreciably more. The decade had 54% of possible sunshine compared with a normal of 52%. The excess of sunshine occurred during the winter month of Dec. Jan. and Feb. The mean wind velocity for the 80's was (.4 mph, 15.1 kph compared with a normal of 10.1 mph, 16.2 kph. All months were subnormal in wind vel. but especially Mar. Oct., and Nov.

In summary the 80's was a mild decade due to the winters and springs being much less cold than normal. Precipitation was normal but due to the abnormal distribution there was much less snow and more rain than normal. Sunshine and thunderstorm activity were a little above normal while

average wind velocity was subnormal. The decade did give us some extremes eclipsing more than 100 years of record: the highest Jan. temperature of 62 F, 16 C and lowest Oct. temperature of -14 F, -26 C as well as a tie for the coldest Dec. on record.

What does all this indicate for the 1990's? In the longer term the curves tend to smooth out. With the general global warming we shouldn't go back to the long term normals in the foreseeable future. We should continue to have relatively mild winters on the whole and especially mild Dec. and perhaps cold Januarys to restore Jan. to its normal place as the coldest month of the year by an appreciable margin. Feb.- Apr. should not be quite as mild as in the 80's. These things haven't happened yet which increases the probability of their happening in the remainder of the 1990's. Mild winter are caused by westerly winds which are dry ones here. Thus we can expect a continuation of subnormal winter snowfall. (Bad news for the skiers who don't want to drive far.) This should be at least partially compensated for by some big spring snowstorms in April during the remainder of the 1990's so it would again replace March as the month of most snowfall. Again this hasn't happened yet this decade. We should see some wetter and colder Junes like the past two and likely drier Julys to restore June to its normal position as our wettest month. We are due for some more dry, mild September and less severe Octobers than in the last two years. That would extend our hiking season but delay the ski season, at least on the east side of the Rockies. I don't think the number of thunder storms or total amount of sunshine will change much from the 1980's. So far this new decade has been remarkably less windy than normal and we should compensate for that during the remainder of the 1990's.

This analysis applies specifically to Calgary and vicinity but generally to S.W. Alberta. In conclusion always expect and be prepared for the unexpected in weather in this part of the country. Averages don't tell you what is going to happen in a specific period of time. This current fall weather in the later half of August 1992 is an example of that.

### **BRAZEAU RIVER AND POBOKTAN PASS**

an extract from J Carter's journals (July 1970)

submitted by Tony Moran

A 9-day trip was undertaken by 13 people into this remote area of southern Jasper National Park. They were: Tom Thurston, Tony Moran, Madeline LeSeur, Daphne Smith, Vicky Bernhardt, Fred DeVries, Wally and Quita Mills, Ted Prince, Marge Sharpe, Helga Dauer, Francis Walcott and myself.

On July 20 we left Calgary at 6:30 pm. and drove to Cirus Mt. Campground, where we met Wally and Quita, who had preceded us by only a few hours. They told us that the warden at Sunwapta would not issue a fire permit due to the fire hazard existing at the time in this area. July 21 was a wet day, so rather than lose the trip that had been a year in planning, Madeleine, Tom and I drove to Jasper and purchased about 40 butane tanks and 2 small stoves. With the success of the trip now a possibility we returned to Cirus Mt. to the rest of the party, who had by now packed a mountainous supply of food into their packs. With these heavy loads 9 of the party started out for Nigel Pass, while Tom, Francis, Tony and I arranged the cars so that there were two at Sunwapta Warden Station, where we were to come out 9 days later. I learned later, talking to Bob Barker, the warden, that the 9 did not see the bridge over Nigel Creek and all 9 crossed the raging torrent with the water up to their asses much to Bob's amusement.

The four of us caught up with the rest on Nigel Pass which is 4 miles from the Banff-Jasper Highway. It was getting late so we decided to camp over the pass on the Banks of the Brazeau River. Next morning it was clear and while we were eating breakfast warden Bob rode up on his horse and talked with us for a couple of hours. After this breakfast talk we got everything packed and spent the day following the Brazeau River., hiking on past the Four Pt. Warden Cabin with Cline Pass to the South-East. We camped the night of July 22 at the old campsite that outfitters had used before. The next day we crossed Brazeau River on logs, and doing lots of wading, reached the warden's cabin near Brazeau Lake around noon. After eating our lunch we set up camp as fast as possible for the clouds were becoming dark and rain threateningly appeared over the Le Grande Brazeau Mountains. Some of us went climbing the mountains to the North while others took it easy. July 24 was an easy day for some of us. We took photos down at the lake. The clouds still plagued us. Some others hiked up the mountains north of the lake. Then we made our way up the river to look for a natural arch that Bob Barker had told us about. We found out that we started too late from base camp and went back at 3:30 pm. in order to reach it before dark.

We arrived in camp at 7:30 pm. to find that the rest of the group had an enjoyable day down stream from the camp visiting some falls. The last evening in the camp was very enjoyable. Bob paid us one of his many visits and told us some of his stories.

On Sunday, July 26 we left Brazeau around 11 am. We said our farewells to Bob and proceeded past the South shore of Brazeau Lake and then headed up the creek that drains Poboktan Meadows to the lake. We established a camp site 8 miles from our last at another site that Bob Barker had equipped with outfitters stoves. The next day we crossed the vast uplands of Poboktan Pass. It was a showery day with the clouds moving among the peaks. We camped at an old camp at the headwaters of Poboktan River, then built a fire and dried out. On Tuesday, July 28 - rain and thunder during the night, but after breakfast the weather showed signs of improvement. Unfortunately for them, Wally and Quita decided to go out to Jasper Highway ahead of us. Quita was feeling ill. It was too bad, for they missed the highlight of the whole trip and the best weather! The remaining 11 of us decided to climb Jonas Shoulder. We were not climbing long when we saw three Woodland Caribou which are known to frequent this part of Jasper Park. This being the furthest penetration South known. Francis was able to get some excellent pictures with her telephoto lens. We later reached the summit of Jonas Shoulder that separates the headwater of Jonas and Poboktan Creeks. The view from the shoul-

der is so wonderful that I find it hard to express in words. All the Alplands of Jonas, Poboktan and Indian Passes lay at our feet. Beyond and above lay a sea of mountains in every direction. One could only stand and admire, taking pictures to try and remember it, as it was in that moment of time of our lives. We saw two Grizzly Bears in Jonas Valley and later on in the afternoon some of us got very close to a lone Caribou getting some excellent photos. That evening was ended by one of the loveliest sunsets I have ever witnessed in the Rockies, but an angry sky brought with it snow. Next morning under 4" of the white stuff, Tom's tent collapsed. The sun came out quickly and the snow soon melted. We experienced yet another of nature's changing moods. We broke camp and hiked down Poboktan Valley and had lunch at Waterfall Cabin. The woodshed beside the cabin gave us shelter from the falling shower. What a rough unkept bunch we were! The only conversation amongst us was: "pass the jam, pass the butter, pass the Ryvita". Anyone who did not just grab, missed out. After dinner we walked out the remaining 6 miles to the highway. To all of you who made this trip, I thank you for making it a success. For many of us it feels good to say "we know the Brazeau" or "we know Poboktan Pass", but of course we do not - what we do know better is ourselves, and Poboktan and Brazeau have helped. (Editors note: Thank you Jack, for sharing with us part of you, now - after life).

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#### PRESIDENTIAL RANBLINGS

John is back from Europe (maybe he will write about it) and it is Packrat time again. Please let us know right away if any member did not receive an A.G.M. notice. I hope you will consider attending. Last year we had to phone around to get a quorum so we could legally hold the meeting and fulfil our obligations to the club and the provincial Government as a registered society. We're planning to have free coffee, tea or juice and carrot cake after the meeting. The Awards Dinner will be held Friday November 6, details to follow shortly. I would like to thank you all for helping to keep our club a pleasure to belong to.

**MONT BLANC 1982 (conclusion)**  
by John F Schleinich

We had supper early. Very thick and very tasty vegetable soup, and beef stew, washed down with hot tea. The food was excellent, especially so since we did not have to carry it up. As we ate, we heard a chopper flying outside. Later we found out that a climber was killed on the wall by falling rock. On our way up we noticed crosses marked on rock with names of climbers killed on that spot. Now another name will appear on the wall, and this unfortunate climber made his last climb. Another old alpine custom.

We settled down early. Everybody was scrambling for a few inches of space to get comfortable for the night. Climbing next day started around one or two o'clock in the morning. We had to make it to the top and back to Tete Rousse the same day. No one was allowed to stay over night in the Goutter Hut on the way down. There remained 2280 ft of slow climbing on glacier to the top, and 5430 feet of descent to Tete Rousse. For us seven, all exploratory. I did not sleep well. My buddies were somewhere else in the dark and the fellow beside me did not sleep at all, he talked all night. Guess we were all excited. When I finally closed my eyes to sleep, Bob woke me and mercilessly announced the beginning of our big day.

What a nightmare! Everybody was up, and everybody was trying to get ready searching for their stuff in the "pack-room". Everybody at the same time. Our headlamps helped. At two in the morning we were all roped up, three and four, and in the light of our lamps and the bright stars we started off. It was fantastic. Some parties which were faster in leaving or started earlier, were far ahead. We saw their lights in the distance.

The start was slow. Everybody knew how important it was to gain altitude slowly. Schlot in front was forever calling back to us: "langsam, langsam" which in German means slow, slow. I thought he was nuts. Any slower and we would be going backwards. Half an hour later, a message came from behind telling us that Bob's son was going back and so was his wife. Guess the mother did not want to leave the young boy by himself in case he got into trouble. And now there were only five of us. We reroped.

Around four it started to get light and an hour later the sun started to appear. The scenery was magnificent: blue skies, the white around us and the deep red on the horizon in the east. In spite of many climbers we didn't see anybody. Guess, with our "langsam" we fell behind and most likely were the last ones. After climbing steadily for two or three hours we came into a depression from where we saw the "Snow Dome". A huge pile of snow and ice which we had to bypass. We did not know which side to take, yet this was important to avoid very crevassed sections of the glacier. Luckily we saw imprints of crampons and ice axes and we followed them carefully. Above the depression, on snow covered rock, there was a bivouac hut for emergencies. The weather in the Alps often changes very suddenly. At this altitude one is completely helpless, and a shelter such as this one, can be a life saver. We crawled to investigate, but got out very fast. Of course no windows and no door, so the air inside was foul. Guess the poor souls stranded in those quarters did not fancy outside toilets. It stank.

A number of packs were lying outside, in the snow. Parties ahead of us left them there, rather than carrying everything to the top. We added ours, except for some clothing, and went on. By now we saw quite a number of climbers staggering around as if drunk. They were vomiting all over the nice and clean snow. For them this was the end of their trip. Altitude sickness. I felt sorry for them, so close to the top and they had to turn back. Perhaps Schlot's langsam warnings helped... but not for the entire party. Another couple of hundred feet higher, and Schlots daughter started to sway in danger of falling. She got sick, and everything stopped. There was a long Powwow and the result of their discussion was that everybody goes back. Lack of oxygen does effect the brain.

I looked up and saw Mont Blanc in a cloudless blue sky, perhaps another 1000 feet higher. If I turned back now, I was sure never to return. Very quietly I told my friends that I was going on, alone.

Bob was furious; he called me some nasty names. I knew it was nothing personal, it was lack of oxygen. I un-roped just as a party of two came by, and asked them if they would take me in. They didn't know me and decided against it. So I started out by myself. Thin air was getting me too. Then suddenly they all decided to leave the daughter in warm sunshine on a secure spot and come along. The daughter would wait for our return, which could, at the most, be three hours. I don't know what made them change their mind, but perhaps it was Schlot who wanted to get to the top too. So on we went. Two and two. Bob roped to me.

A short while later we arrived at the final ridge which led straight to the top. Very narrow, with a cornice on the Italian side and a very steep glissade on the French side. Step by careful step and very slowly, tired as we were, we inched our way up...and then suddenly... my view widened, the knife edged ridge flattened out before me .. I was on the top. Relief and endless joy filled me. We were on a small dome, enough space for all of us. We fell into each other's arms and laughed and talked nonsense and were just infinitely happy. There were other parties up here with us enjoying the grand spectacle on the highest point of the Alps. In the distance we recognized Matterhorn and Monte Rosa amongst thousand of snow covered peaks glistening in the sun. Way below us, we saw Chamonix and a bit to the left the notorious Bosson Glacier twisting his way down the mountain, breaking and splitting, and creating huge crevasses and seracs.

After taking pictures and saying a silent prayer of thanks we left about 15 or 20 minutes later, shortly before 11 am (I think). I remembered hearing about climbers, relaxing on the top or on their way down, and freak accidents killed them. I was very careful, avoiding mistakes. We managed the long ridge and after a while reached Schlots daughter, in about the same condition as we left her. We had to hurry back. It took us a little over three hours to get to the Goutter Hut. It was still early afternoon. We had lunch at the Hut and then prepared for the dangerous down climb. We were in for more excitement than we bargained for.

Slowly we started on our way down. I saw other parties coming up and was inwardly grateful not to have to spend another night in the Goutter Hut. I clearly remember looking straight down where Bob and his family were, twenty or thirty feet below me. Then I heard a scream. Excitement that electrified the whole wall went through me and the next instant I saw a body falling down past me. It was a climber. His body hit rock protrusions, bounced out and just kept falling. Not a sound anywhere, except for the horrible thuds of soft flesh against hard rock. He came to rest a hundred or so feet below me on a shelf. I was under shock. It took effort to concentrate, calm down and continue. Silently I prayed, for his soul and for the loved ones he left behind, and then climbed down to Bob and his family. Some climbers gathered around the fallen body, we were of no use to him any more. We reminded each other to be careful and went on. Five minutes later we came upon the spot covered with blood, where the climber from yesterday was hit by a rock and taken out by a chopper. Little way further a replica of the first site. An accident of this morning when someone else got killed by falling rock and flown out. We had quite enough. I was grateful that we did not have this experience on our way up. It would have influenced our climb and we might not have gone to the top.

Deep in my thoughts I arrived at the couloir traversing the glacier which fell out of site near the Tete Rousse hut. We crossed it yesterday early in the morning when it was frozen, with crampons and ice axe. Now everything was neatly fastened to my pack and I was too lazy to go through the work of taking them off and putting them on again.



Besides the snow felt soft, and it was only a couple of hundred feet wide. But most of all I wanted to get out of here and in to the safety of the hut. Without hesitation I stepped out onto the soft ice. It was all right until I came to an open flow of ice water in the middle of the couloir. To avoid wet feet I jumped across...and landed on ice that was not soft. Like in a dream but not in slow motion, I slipped on the ice and went down the glacier toward infinity and into eternity. Instinctively I turned on my stomach and jammed my fingers and toes into the ice, hopping for friction. But I kept going. And as I was reflecting on my end, I slowly came to a stop near the edge of a huge drop. Below me was disaster. I had to get back up to the ledge and out. I was scared but not ready to die. My fingers were my only hope. Luckily the ice was not too hard and I carefully clawed myself up. The cold of the ice reduced the pain in my fingers and the fear ignored it. God was with me, I know it. I reached the ledge, pulled myself up and walked out to the other side into safety. Not a minute too soon. The noise of the chopper, which came to pick up the body of the fallen climber, realised rocks thousands of feet above us. They came flying down the couloir like shrapnel or bullets making horrible sounds. It was terrifying. Another traumatic shock in the last few hours. I crouched behind a rock and waited. My buddies on the other side, well hidden put on their crampons and took their ice axes and when the rocks stopped coming, crossed the couloir without any trouble.

In the evening in the Tete Rouse hut we celebrated my birth day. One more alpine custom: when someone has a narrow escape everybody celebrates his birthday. First birthday celebration I did not mind.

Note: The Globe and Mail carried an article last August on fatalities that happen every year in the Mont Blanc Massive. In 1992 by the middle of August: 46 were killed. Same as in 1982. Last year there were 48 fatalities in the Mont Blanc area and the record occurred in 1984 with 69 dead. What it tells me is, that the French and the Swiss authorities are less concerned with the number of people dying on the mountains as they are with giving them as much freedom as they want to risk - and of course ~~not~~, at no cost do they want to stop tourism. I wonder what the Canadian government would do in Canada under similar circumstances?! Level the mountains or stop mountaineering.

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RAMBLINGS

by Bob St.John

I will try not to get into too much of a 'what I did on my summer holidays' type of article, however I think some things about my trip to the Fairy Meadows camp in the Adamant Range north of Golden, BC are worth noting. The trip was the Alpine Club of Canada's annual general mountaineering camp. The camp is held in a different area every year so as to minimize environmental impact and to offer an opportunity to see new terrain. One can attend any of the four weeks from mid July to mid August for about \$600.00 per week. Tents, meals (great food), guides, and group equipment are provided. Attendance is limited to 30 people, again to minimize impact and to give a decent guide to hiker ratio (5 guides - 2 professional, 3 amateur). To attend you must join the Alpine Club (\$50.00). This year I attended the 3rd week, August 1st to 8th.

I believe there may be some misconceptions about these camps as to the experience level required. This was my first camp, and I do not consider myself to be a technical rock or ice climber. I was apprehensive about going for fear that I would be badly outpaced or lacking in technique. As it turned out I needed not to worry. Of the twenty-one attendees that week I was probably in the top quarter in condition and second quarter in technique. There were people of all ages (twenties to seventies), from all places (England, France, California, New England, and across Canada). There was an even mix of males and females, and slightly more singles than couples. About half were returning from previous years and knew one another (one person returning for his 27th time!).

The camp areas are usually chosen so that there is a choice of either hiking or climbing trips. In these areas people can organize themselves on unguided hiking trips of the nature we do in the Ramblers. Unfortunately this year the camp was in an area that had limited unguided hiking opportunities. It is a spectacular glaciated region with granite peaks rising from the ice. Here all of the trips were guided and some basic equipment was required. Crossing glaciers requires that people be roped together, thus everyone required a harness, an ice axe, a hard hat, crampons (spikes attached to your boots), and two carabiners (to attach to the rope). I had never used this equipment before and was thus somewhat nervous about it.

The first day of camp a snow school was organized for tenderfoots like me (8 attended). We learned the basics of walking up and down slopes of snow, using the ice axe to prevent and arrest falls on snow slopes, walking up and down ice slopes using crampons (amazingly easy), roping up together for glacial traverses, and some simple crevass rescue techniques. After one day I was by no means an expert, but I had basic knowledge and moderate confidence to participate on trips.

Each day one has the choice of 5 trips of varying difficulty, or one could take the day off and relax around camp or go on short picture taking excursions. The easy trips were such that anyone who can tackle a Rambler upper intermediate trip and who had attended the first day snow school would have no problems at all. The most difficult trips definitely required technical ice and rock experience. I started the week with easy trips and progressed to more difficult offerings near weeks end. I will relate 4 incidents that I recall standing out from the many others I had. Two happened on easy hikes (one funny and another annoying) and two on more difficult hike/climbs (one scary to me and the other very serious).

The funny incident occurred while traversing the Gothic Glacier on a brilliantly sunny day. The Gothic is a high alpine glacier surrounded by granite spires rising 500 to 1000 feet above the ice. Being at a high altitude (10,000 feet) the ice was covered with a foot of snow from recent storms. I had at this point 2 days of glacier travel behind me and was feeling more confident, even bored at the monotonous white plain ahead of us. The nice white featureless surface was however, hiding treachery below. I knew there were crevasses below, but being at the last position on the rope, I figured the 4 people ahead would discover any danger, especially the guide at the front. To keep myself entertained, I got out my camera to capture some of the surrounding beauty; however, not wanting to slow the party down, I continued to keep pace whilst at the same time looking through the lens. You can guess what happened. While looking through the lens I veered 3 feet off the beaten path and bingo, fell through with my left leg. The crevass was a small one, only a foot wide, but deep. It was completely covered by snow. I tried to recover quickly so as to not alert the others to my obvious blunder. The guide was not to be fooled and I received his 'why me' frown and a suggestion to inform him to take picture stops. Ok, so its not REALLY funny. Aha, I am at page end. The next packrat will have the other 3 incidents. I may also give a short slide show this fall. Bye.