

The

Pack Rat

Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association

January /
February 2009



Del L took this on the exploration road leading West from the West Bragg parking lot in early November. 'Aren't bears supposed to be hibernating at this time of the year?'

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The Packrat is published six times a year by the Rocky Mountain Ramblers Association. We welcome articles, comments and ideas from our members, and if content is deemed suitable and space permits, we will use it.

E-mail contributions to the editor at packrat@ramblers.ab.ca

or forward to RMRA
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rambles by the editor

Two Ramblers with So Many Stories to Tell

by Sharon Wingenbach

Not long ago, the Ramblers would fill the Rosemont Community Centre almost every Wednesday night. We handled business, heard about hikes going out and talked to our friends.

Thanks to the Internet, we rarely fill the hall any more. But one Wednesday in November, it was standing room only. The draw - a slide show and a birthday cake.

David Mulligan - enthusiastic hiker, scrambler and skier - showed a collection of his slides from 2007 and 2008. A keen photographer, David has given many slide shows to Ramblers over the years. Between jobs in 2006, David backpacked 1000km, or most of the Canadian Great Divide Trail from the USA border in Waterton to Mt Robson Park.

We'd also gathered to celebrate **Del Lavallee's** 85th birthday.

Like Dave, Del is a natural outdoors person - with good balance, stamina, endurance, a strong yearning to go further and do more - and no fear of heights. She'll tell you that she joined 40 years ago because the club offered camaraderie, and the coordinators were such characters. There'd be times when she didn't think she was ready for a particular hike, but they'd encourage her to go, and then they'd help each other along the way. That's what the Ramblers was all about.



Del wants to thank everyone for the lovely birthday cake, your cards and your good wishes.

In the early days, Ramblers were nothing less than pioneers. They ventured out without a travel guide, and sometimes without even a good description of their route. And the topo maps available then weren't very accurate.

Sometimes, they were often the first or the second to ever reach a peak. Del remembers little plants and junipers, struggling to survive harsh conditions at the top.

Back then, Kananaskis was accessible by one rough gravel road, and you had to wade across the Kananaskis River to get to the other side.

They rarely met other hikers.

“No one had even been there before us. Now people are everywhere,” says Del. (Peter Minarik agrees - see pages 12-13 of this issue.)

Now, of course, you can loop through the heart of Kananaskis on Highway 40, and you can cross a bridge to go over the Kananaskis River.

And when you get to the top, all too often, boots have trampled many of those little struggling plants.

That’s a lot of change in a short period of time.

Aren’t we lucky to live this close to the Rockies. But with that, comes responsibility.

Del told me, “Many times, I got that feeling.” We’d been talking about the feeling you get when you do



Del enjoying the views at the summit cairn of Prairie Mount taken two weeks before her 85th birthday

something challenging, like when you get to the top and you say... ‘WOW. I did it. This is so beautiful.’

Good on you, Del. And Dave. And Wally. And Peter.... And everyone who has ever rambled.

Car Fares going up - or is that down?

With rapidly changing gas prices, the car fare we set for car pooling is out of date. In November, the executive voted to change the car fare from a fixed rate to a range that’s based on the current price of gasoline.

The executive will review gas prices around the first Wednesday of every month based on the prices at the Canada Olympic Park gas stations, and then suggest a car fare. We won’t be trying to capture every up and down on a daily basis.

When the price of gasoline is...	we recommend a car fare of...
\$.50 to \$.749 cents per litre	5 cents per km
\$.75 to \$.999 cents per litre	6 cents per km
\$1.00 to \$1.249 per litre	7 cents per km
\$1.25 to \$1.499 per litre	8 cents per km
higher than \$1.50 per litre	8 cents per km PLUS 1 cent per km for every increment of 25 cents per litre of gasoline

Activities

Hiking
Backpacking
Cross-Country Skiing
Downhill Skiing
Snowshoeing
Cycling
Climbing
Scrambling
Mountaineering
Camping
Education and Awareness Programs
Socials

Meetings

Every Wednesday evening at 7:30
Rosemont Community Hall
10 St NW at Confederation Park

Contact Us

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c/o Calgary Area Outdoor Council
(CAOC)
1111 Memorial Dr NW
Calgary, AB T2N 3E4

Trip Info

The Information Line at 282-6308,
our website and weekly meetings

Website

www.ramblers.ab.ca.

If we have your e-mail address,
we will automatically notify you when
an electronic copy of the Packrat
is on the website.

A Message from the President

by Peter Fischer

Fellow Ramblers:

Hope that everyone had a wonderful Christmas, good company and stockings full of presents.

As the incoming President for the RMRA's 54th year, allow me to reiterate how lucky we are as a club and as individuals, to be living in such a peaceful and prosperous part of the world. While other regions of the globe are torn apart by strife, civil wars, famine and other calamities, we can enjoy our favourite outdoor activities without trepidation or harm.

We are also very fortunate to have one of the continent's highest number of sunshine-days per year, the proximity to both the Rockies and the Prairies, gorgeous blue skies, clean air (well.....most days!), affordable housing and abundant food. Life is good!.....

Your executive continues to work hard at offering new venues, programs and events to make the Club appeal to a diverse group of people. Are we ready to abandon the yearly bus trips and the once very popular annual dinner/dance?

One of my concerns continues to be the Club's appeal to a younger crowd. As I look around at Club hikes and functions, I see a sea of grey(myself included);... fit and active, mind you.....but we need to attract the next generation of Ramblers to keep the "flame burning".

If you have any comments on this or other topics concerning the Club, drop me a line (by email). Wishing all of you a healthy, active and fulfilled New Year.

From all of us, thanks, Tom.
And thanks, Peter Fischer, for
taking the torch. We're looking
forward to another great active year.



Christmas potluck dinner - Ramblers have the very best potluck dinners - always.

...the Turkish Riviera and more

Turkey

by Carolyn Croasdale

I thought Turkey was all about magic flying carpets. I certainly saw a lot of carpets when I was there but disappointingly, they were either on the floor or covering walls - nothing magical.

And Fezzes - those red felt hats with tassels - were banished in the '20's and 30's by Ataturk who endeavoured to bring Turkey into the modern world.

We did meet many handsome, charming Turkish men but sadly we didn't meet many women. Most women were clad in silky headscarves and fitted cotton coats that must be very warm.



When we arrived in Istanbul, we checked into the AND hotel. Centrally located, it's over the watery depths of the **Basilica Cisterns**. Some day, it'll be demolished to preserve those ancient cisterns.



Even though it was late, we ventured to the **Hippodrome** to join in the Ramazan celebrations. In Byzantine times, this was the scene of races. Hoards of people were happily ensconced in brightly lit booths that line the length of the Hippodrome. We sat on low stools inside one booth, enjoying cay (tea) and watching families break the fast by eating domair kebab, drinking hot apple juice and cay, and smoking hookahs.

The next day, we met our intrepid group. We were a mix of different age groups, and that worked well.

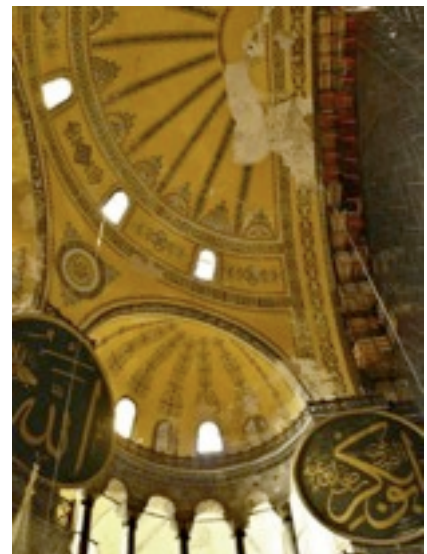
Our Turkish guide started the two week tour by showing us the main attractions of Istanbul - the **warrens of Grande Bazaar**, the **Spice Bazaar** (a compass would help) and the **Rustem Pasa mosque**.

Once outside by the harbour on the **Bosporus**, the first clue that our guide knew food was when she consumed eight stuffed mussels.

Ah, food....

We enjoyed a type of donair, - chicken and lamb - kebabs and shishkebabs. Entire shops sold only baklavas - sweet and flaky. I chose Turkish coffee served with a glass of water over the common offer of Nescafe! And we often enjoyed ayan, a yoghurt drink, or a little dish of milk pudding.

The **Aya Sofya museum**, built in 537 AD by Emperor Justinian, was my favourite museum.



A short walk took us to the **Blue Mosque** (1606-16) with its fabulous blue tiles and domes.



Our guide led us to the little **Kucuk Aya Sofya mosque** - tranquil and away from hoards.

We finished by having apple tea in a beautiful shaded garden.

The **Topkapi Palace**, built by Mehmet the Conqueror circa 1453, was our next experience. The sultans lived here before moving to the Palace on the Bosphorus in the nineteenth century. The Topkapi Palace included the harem which was the source of much intrigue. Of course, I found it oppressive.

The rest of the palace was enchanting with trees and gardens overlooking the Bosphorus.

In the time of Suleyman the Magnificent (1520-66) Istanbul is said to have been the most civilized city. His architect, Sinan,

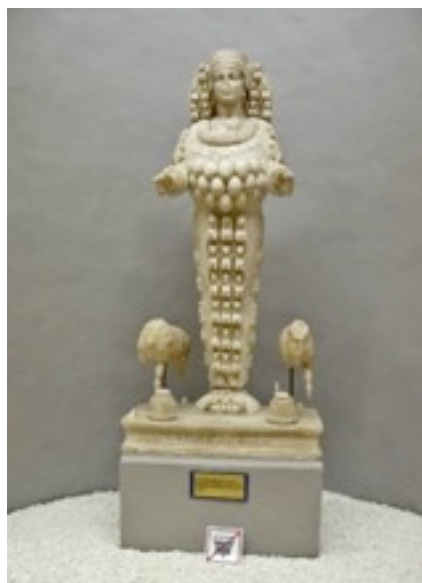
was responsible for much of the imaginative construction.

Next we visited **Bursa** at the end of the Silk Road, famous for its silk market. There, in an ancient domed and marbled building, I had a hamam, a Turkish bath. I was stripped of most everything including a massive amount of skin which was swept away and unceremoniously washed down the drain.

Physically purified, I visited a madrassar for a show by the Whirling Dervishes where our guide was part of the musical accompaniment. We later visited a café where he and his friends gave us a musical performance as we drank cay.

We took a bus to **Selcuk** via Izmir to see **Ephesus**. On the bus, an attendant handed out drinks, cakes and hand cleaners.

Ephesus, also called Efes which is a name of local beer, is first mentioned in 2000 B.C. It's near the temple of Artemes, known earlier as Kybele.



A rotund and fast moving archeologist rushed us around Ephesus ahead of a perceived crowd. He impressed us with his knowledge and enthusiasm. The stadium, public toilets and Celsus library were among the impressive remnants of that period.

Our hotel in Selcuk was close to the place where St. John created his writings and a little further away was the Virgin Mary's house. But we did the modern thing - we spent the hot afternoon in a pool and the evening on the roof of our hotel where we had our meal and experimented in smoking hookahs. They are tempting.

The next day we visited **Ottoman**, an old Greek village in the Sirince hills. It's a cottage industry village. People there have blue eyes, which is considered attractive in Turkey. We had fun with the locals, and one woman showed us around her ancient wooden house - complete with a computer.

An early start took us to **Pamukkale** and the calcium-rich healing waters. Travertine (white calcareous rock deposited from mineral waters) flows down the hillsides to the ruined city of **Hierapolis**, founded in 190 B.C. by the King of Pergamum. Many of the esophagi are being overwhelmed by the travertine.

Reinvigorated by calcium, we ventured to the very hot port of **Fethiye** where we saw the **Lycian tombs** built into the hillside.

Next we caught a durmish to **Kayako**, a village where Ataturk banished to Greece the Greeks who'd lived there for centuries, in exchange for Turks living in



We spent the next night in **Ucagiz**. The **Lycian Way** rises up steeply behind the hotel via the remains of many tombs.

While we had breakfast, we watched a man fishing off the

dock for sardines. He gave the sardines to his cat. Cats are all over and seem to be well cared for.

Myrna, the resting place of St. Nicholas, was the next stop. We saw a statue of Father Christmas in the square and the St. Nicholas museum boasted of some lovely frescoes. His esophagus is empty - raided as are all the other tombs.

We traveled along the turquoise coast on the Turkish Riviera, to arrive at **Egirdir** late in the afternoon. This has to be one of



the most sensational drives in the world, with steep cliffs and azure waters. Although next to a huge freshwater lake and enveloped in blowing grit, to me Egirdir is memorable for its big apartment blocks built against an obviously unstable hillside.

The next day, we traveled in increasingly miserable weather towards **Goreme**, via ancient **Konya** and its archeological museum, over a never-ending steppe. The monotony was broken only by the sight of occasional mud buildings and the warm welcome at a truck stop. These truck stops are quite the places to hang out with lots of male help and really good canteens. On asking where the toilets were, one man took me by the hand and led me there, and then showed us where he sleeps - in an old North Face tent, open to the elements.

Before reaching Goreme, we stopped at **Derinkuyu**, an underground city. These caves were dug out to seven layers below the surface and people hid there in the dark for as long as six months. They rolled huge rocks over the entrances to keep out the enemy - hence the words "open Sesame".

We progressed to the **Arch Palace** with its tuff fairy chimneys where we stayed in Goreme in Kapadokya. This was a lovely part of the tour and I think we could have stayed a little longer. Goreme is a very nice village, light and airy - everything is constructed of light coloured tuff and surrounded by spectacular landscape. We rented bikes to explore the area. It's a little like Alberta's

Greece. The village is now abandoned as the new Turks couldn't make a living there.

Our hotel, in its bucolic setting with edible grapes hanging over our dining table, seemed less attractive at night with donkeys, dogs and roosters making noise all night. Very early in the morning came a call to prayer, preempted by a drummer.

Through the abandoned village and over the pass, we came to the most beautiful coast line, crowded with tourists. The clear blue salt water called and we had refreshing dips, and then welcome ice cream.

The next day, armed with grapes we'd picked, we headed for **Kas** on the coast to take a boat for a couple of days. A gale blew in so we boarded our boat in **Ucagiz**, a small fishing village. It took us to sheltered waters. In the evening, we docked in a tiny bay, swam. and then slept well on the roof of the boat under the moon and stars.

We sailed to the sunken island of **Kekova** to see the remains of Lycian and Roman buildings which were damaged by earthquakes.

Badlands - more sensational and certainly less muddy. Homes, restaurants and Byzantine churches are carved into the chimneys. We cycled up valleys and then climbed up to higher



spots. There is a UNESCO open air museum of **Byzantine churches** with frescoes built into the tuff. Most of the faces in the frescoes have been scraped away by zealots who believed in



deleting any exhibition of idols. We visited the local carpet and ceramic factory. Everyone has something to sell.

Coming to the end of this part of our journey and traveling in the

van, we passed a huge salt lake, and then visited another truck stop. Arriving in **Ankara** and the palacial railway station in the dark, we spent the last night on the train, four to a couchette, and then arrived early in the morning in Istanbul. Then we took the ferry over the **Bosporus**. After saying goodbye to our new friends, we returned to our hotel for a extra few days in Istanbul.

We had arranged to visit **Gallipoli** and **Troy** and the **ANZAC/Turkish battlefields**.

Mustapha Kemal, renamed Ataturk, had found his fame there, but what a sad place. We didn't visit the British/French area as that was further down the coast at **Hellespoint**.

The next day, a little lighter in mood, we tramped around the remains of Troy and climbed into the model Trojan Horse used in the movie.



To return to Istanbul, we were put on a public bus with no tickets and then we got off on the wrong side of the sea in the dark. Fortunately we were able to find a "feribot" and make our way to the hotel.

The following day, we took a ferry to the Black Sea and back. We sailed by palaces,

beautiful wooden homes and huge fortifications. It's a busy waterway with some massive commercial ships and it's hard to see how collisions are avoided. We spent the next couple of days shopping in the Grande Bazaar

and the Spice Bazaar, and visiting other interesting must-sees. We were sponsored by the local carpet man who treated us to a vehicle and chauffeur. We visited the **Kariye Muzesi**, famous for its 12th century mosaics, the **Pierre Lote lookout** in the Eyup area and the **Galata Tower** to view the entire vista of Istanbul. This was a fitting ending to an incredibly interesting and entertaining holiday. ###

**NEXT
PACKRAT
DEADLINE
February 28**

Thank you to all those who wrote articles last year. I need you. I can't do it without you.

On most of our daily hikes, we're often the only people.

Winter Hiking in the Pacific Northwest

by Annette Le Faive

It was pouring buckets here in

Anacortes, Washington when Sharon, our Packrat editor, asked me via an "email chat" to write a story about winter hiking in the Pacific Northwest. Fortunately, we had just returned from 2.5 hours of relatively "dry" hiking in the nearby community forest. That's the bonus of being out here in the shoulder season/winter - we can hike all year!

I am experiencing my second fall/early winter on the Pacific Northwest coast in Anacortes, a community of 16,000 residents. Anacortes is situated on **Fidalgo Island**, accessible by a bridge from the mainland, just east of Victoria and the San Juan Islands. Temperatures are usually above freezing all winter, and there is rarely any accumulated snow. Yes, it rains a lot, but inevitably, we find a window of time when the rain stops to head out for a couple hours of hiking in the forest or in nearby state or local parks. I was amazed when I saw an air photo of Anacortes at city hall – 45% of the city lands is protected as park, mostly natural forests!

Opportunities for hiking abound, within 5 to 20 minutes to a trailhead by car - Anacortes Community

Forest Lands (ACFL), Washington Park, Deception Pass State Park, to name the most popular. The famed Olympic Peninsula, with its National Park and adjoining State Forest Lands, is relatively nearby. Heading north up towards Bellingham, there is an extensive hiking system on Blanchard Mountain as well as on



Maple Leaves on the Cranberry Lake Trail

Chuckanut Ridge.

Most days we head into the ACFL. It's divided into three units: **Whistle Lake, Heart Lake, and Cranberry Lake.** These forest lands are undoubtedly the jewel of Anacortes with 60 miles of well marked, inter-connected hiking trails, all in a temperate rainforest!

You can loop around any lake, or hike to the top of the area's local "mountains" - **Mt Erie**

and **Sugarloaf.** Mt Erie has several climbing pitches, appreciated by the local climbing community. Sugarloaf is well known for the open meadow (locally called a bald) at the top

which allows views out to salt water. On a clear day, you can see the San Juan Islands and Vancouver Island to the west, and the Olympic Mountains of the Olympic Peninsula to the south!

Hiking in the Anacortes Forest Lands has its daily surprises. Late afternoon walks allow us to experience the evening light glow, with wonderful reflections in the lakes. On our Solstice walk, a bird flew across my path – and perched in a tree nearby. I saw two yellow eyes looking back at me - it was a saw-whet owl! What a pleasant surprise! Birdsong of kinglets and chickadees is common in the forest, and the tapping sound of a woodpecker is often heard. I find that winter is a time to wander quietly and pensively – stopping often to admire the old growth trees, the big-leaf maple and alder leaves covering the trail, the new growth of fungi, and the amazing number of evergreen plants. We never tire of walking the same trails – the forest



View to the San Juan Islands and Vancouver Island from Sugar Loaf

landscape changes constantly! Just before Christmas this year, Anacortes received an unexpected week of snowfall, accumulating to about twelve inches of snow in the

Community Forest lands. It was an incredible winter wonderland! The snow clung to the branches of the



Snowfall on Whistle Lake

Western red cedars, Douglas Firs and hemlocks, at times pulling them down to the ground. The forest was such a pleasure to wander through, first in hiking boots, later breaking trail in snowshoes. It was a delight, and we were sure to be out in the forest lands two to four hours daily, to appreciate this unusual phenomenon! Snowfalls in Anacortes are rare, and usually amount to barely a skiff of snow that melts shortly after it falls.

Outside of the forest lands, but also within the city limits of Anacortes, is Washington Park. There is a popular trail around the perimeter of the park that leads to several balds (rocky meadows) with views of **Rosario Strait** and **Burrows Channel**.

Several hiking trails are found in **Deception Pass State Park**, a twenty minute drive from Anacortes. (Note: Deception Pass is a sea

water pass, not a land pass.) There are circle routes to lookouts, and some trails hug the coastline and allow for beach walking at low tide. These coastal trails are especially great on clear days, or alternately, on stormy days, to watch the waves crashing on the shore!

Within a 2 to 3 hour drive and ferry ride, we are well onto the **Olympic Peninsula**. It is possible to explore

the ocean coastline, and the lower reaches of the rainforest, without venturing into the snow of the higher Olympic Mountains. We have hiked several of the beaches – **Rialto** and **Second Beach** at **La Push**, **Sand Point** and **Cape Alava** at **Lake Ozette** area, and the wide sandy beach at **Kalaloch**. In hiking the ocean shorelines in January last year, we encountered a gamut of weather conditions – a gale (winds over 35 miles per hour), rainstorms (squalls in local parlance), fog and



Washington Park, on the Bald

clear, sunny, blue-sky days! Walking the beaches at low tide often provided fascinating beach-combing and tide pool opportunities.

A walk into the **Hoh Rainforest** was in a gentle rain – a most fitting way to experience the temperate rainforest of the Pacific northwest coast. Massive old-growth trees covered in lichen dominated the forest, with large sword ferns providing ground cover.



La Push, Second Beach on the Olympic Peninsula

What really amazed us is that on most of our daily hikes, we are often the only people in the area venturing out to explore.

North of Anacortes towards Bellingham, it is possible to hike trails on **Blanchard Mountain** most of the year. A favorite trail is to the **Oyster Dome**, a grand viewpoint overlooking **Samish Bay** and **Georgia Strait**. Closer to Bellingham, we have hiked

up to **Fragrance Lake** on the **Chuckanut Mountain** system of trails. These routes can be icy so yaktraxs are most useful!

Despite sometimes donning several layers, rain gear, and well-greased boots, it is a pleasure to hike through the late fall and winter, during the time of little daylight. I feel refreshed by the old trees, the wide expanse of the ocean and the abundance of natural life around me. These “dark” days pass much easier, and I must admit that I do look forward to snowshoeing and skiing in the Canadian Rockies come late winter! ###



Along Cranberry Lake

A big warm welcom to our new member

Adran Cornescian

Lorna Paquin

Christina Arnold

Emilia Godina

Heather Bretz

Nicole Kaufmann

Christine Oliver

Phil Waldenberger

Paul Sutherland

Sharon Milner

John Buhr (returning
after a 10 year absence)

Happy trails to you!

If you received this newsletter in the mail, but instead you prefer to receive it online, send an e-mail to the editor. About 85% of Ramblers receive the Packrat online only.

Online, you can see all the brilliant colors in the photos, and you save trees....

packrat@ramblers.ab.ca

PACK RAT ADVERTISING RATES

The Club offers advertising space in Pack Rat and the following rates apply:

Quarter Page	\$10
Half Page	\$20
Full Page	\$40

Payment MUST be received prior to publication

A tale of two people

Hiking the Akamina Ridge

By Peter Minarik

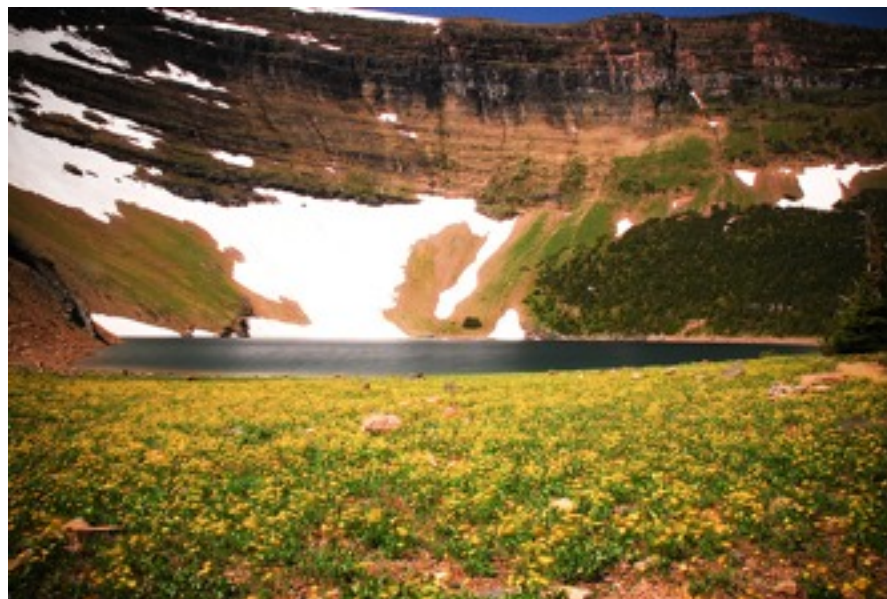
In the early morning darkness one summer day in 2008, Becky and I were travelling south on Highway 2. Destination - **Akamina Ridge**, an increasingly popular hike that straddles the Canada–USA border in Akamina Kishinena Provincial Park, west of Waterton National Park.

Originally, I registered for the trip with the Calgary Outdoor Club (COC). Becky phoned me and talked about how much she wanted to go on that trip. But the COC trip was full and with only a couple of days left, she was still fifth on the waiting list. Would I go with her instead of COC?

I knew the area well so I cancelled my registration with COC to go with Becky. We decided to go on the same day as the COC group but leave Calgary half an hour earlier. In Waterton National Park, we took the Cameron Lake road, and then parked at the Akamina Pass trailhead.

When we got to the forest-enclosed **Akamina Pass** on the continental divide, we had to decide whether to take the more challenging **Kane's route** or the easier **Tourist route** from Forum Lake.

The Kane's route, a moderate scramble, is a ridge walk to **Forum Peak** on the east side of Akamina Ridge. I'm not as bold as Becky. In 1983 and 1984, I did a variation of Kane's route with a group from Lethbridge. We



Forum Lake

followed the continental divide to the first cliff band, which we bypassed on ledges to a small gully falling from Akamina Ridge. Then we scrambled up a goat trail on the right side of the gully. I don't have fond memories of that route because the rocks were dripping wet. While the ledges are wide enough, the big drop-off to **Forum Lake** made me nervous.

Becky and I took a close look at the beginning of the Kane's route, a narrow path on a cutline demarcating the boundary between Alberta and B.C. Right from the beginning, fallen logs lay across the trail. I stepped over a few of them and I didn't like it. I much prefer hiking a good trail to bushwhacking. Apparently, as posted on the Internet, the cutline hadn't been cleared in years. Becky thought we could easily step over the logs but I thought we'd be better off on the Tourist route. I said, "Yeah, but this is only the beginning and it's a long way to the tree line." I told her I'd found the Tourist route challenging in the past but she

was not entirely convinced it would provide enough challenges for her.

We descended briefly and then took the trail to Forum Lake. On the way up, we made a short detour to **Forum Falls**, offering variety to the forest-enclosed trail. It occurred to me that Forum Lake is definitely more civilized than it was on my last visit ten years ago. A sign pointed to a newly built trail on the side ridge that separated Forum Lake from **Wall Lake** to the west. Before, it was rare to meet another soul here but now every man, woman, and their dog seemed to be going up this trail. And that is why I call it the Tourist route.

As the trail climbed through patches of stunted trees and grass, Becky set a brisk pace so that we overtook all the parties ahead of us. Before long, we reached the side ridge where the trail ended below an exposed cliff.

The precipice falling down to Wall Lake looked intimidating but the

slopes on the Forum Lake side were gentler, composed of low cliff bands alternating with grass, clusters of trees, and scree. Daunted by the precipice, I followed a well-worn path up a grassy slope to the left, only to be slowed by a difficult step up a low cliff band. I could hear Becky, who stayed closer to the crest, already chatting above me with a guy whose girlfriend was still stuck at the bottom of the cliff where I was. I managed to go straight up but the girl looked for a break in the cliffs closer to the crest. Higher up, we scrambled up some easy rock steps which the non-scramblers could bypass on the left. At the top of our ridge, we crossed a narrow connecting neck to reach the broad Akamina Ridge.

We made a detour east to Forum Peak, the point where the borders of Alberta, B.C., and the USA meet. A huge cairn sits on top. I walked down on scree to the edge of a cliff band to examine the Kane's route but I didn't see an easy way down. Becky shouted, "Peter, be careful." We signed the summit register that was brought here as part of the Alberta centennial celebrations. We were the only recent visitors.

We retraced our steps to the summit in the west, which was so broad that it was hard to determine the high point. Then the character of the ridge changed abruptly as it rose toward a high summit. The ridge offered comfortable walking on red shale but as it narrowed and steepened, it turned to an easier south slope. However, we chose to stay on the sharp crest.



Glacier Park from Akamina Ridge

When we reached the summit, the sky was blue and the strong wind howled over the ridge. Suddenly a strong gust lifted Becky's baseball cap and blew it out of sight. Becky winced and expressed her anguish - that was her favourite hat. I walked back to the summit to look for it, and saw it caught on some rocks. Becky went to retrieve it while her hat waited patiently for its rightful owner.

We descended to a broad saddle to get out of the wind. In a fold of rocks and scree, we found a sheltered spot for lunch, and then had time to enjoy the scenery.

The border between Canada and the USA follows the 49th parallel and as such, it's completely arbitrary. Yet the two sides contrast sharply. On the Canadian side, the mountains extending from Waterton to the Castle River look smaller, gentler. They're mostly talus heaps with the low valleys of the Flathead to the west scarred with clear cut logging. In contrast, Glacier National Park on the USA side evokes the feeling of wilderness adventure and true to its name, it shows glaciated peaks rising above 3000 m.

The map revealed that the next summit was the highest, slightly higher than the summit we just left. We gained it quickly and descended the other side on good sliding scree to a gentler section of the ridge. As we approached the west end of Akamina Ridge, we saw people coming on the ridge on the **Bennet Pass** trail, which would be our return route. This used to be a wild place, domain of the grizzly bear. Now it's as busy as any trail in Kananaskis and Banff.

A small cairn on the ridge signaled the beginning of the Bennett Pass trail. We left the ridge and descended steeply through stunted trees to a pleasant valley. The valley is filled with meadows and scattered trees, with a bubbling brook in the middle. The bear grass and colourful flowers of mid summer were gone but it was still a pleasant and relaxing walk. Yet Becky declared, "I am bored." After all, she's a scrambler, not a trail hiker.

We had our last rest break at Wall Lake, looking back at the mossy cliffs below Akamina Ridge. There used to be a campsite here but the campsite is gone now and so are the horses. Just before Akamina Pass, the trail became crowded again. A big inviting fire crackled in the nearby campground.

The 270 km return journey to Calgary acted as a background to our conversation. I hardly noticed the darkness of the night setting in and the drumming of the rain replacing the clear sky as we approached Calgary. ###

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Treasurer Laszlo J, President Peter F and
Ron H (right), presenting a special award to
John D (wearing slippers with fur on top) as
thanks for being our webmaster

Thanks John! It just keeps getting better.