

To the Rev. Hinchcliffe of the Church of England, and to the Rev. Ashford of the Union Church, many thanks are due, both rectory and parsonage being opened to those unable to procure accommodation.

We, of the West find that the Ski Annual has been of great help, and in one of the articles of that splendid sportsman, the late Mr. J. B. Marden, he remarked regarding the rough going in his Eastern ski experiences.

In the southern part of our Lakes District principally Ootsa, White Sail and Eulsuk Lakes, where the hills attain a modest 6,000 feet, are many long slopes, carrying for miles, utterly devoid of timber or brush, where any choice of grade may be made and where the snow lingers to sufficient depth until late June, and for the more intrepid skier are ranges where the snow is perpetual.

The caribou feeding range is the playground of some of our most enthusiastic club members, such as Schjelderup, Pete Sandnes, Nysven, Trousdell and Brunell of Burns Lake and Norman Schreiber or Bill McNeil of Ootsa Lake, British Columbia.

Anyone wishing a trip where they may slalom to their heart's content may arrange dates by corresponding with the Omineca Ski Club, the itinerary being as follows:—Canadian National Railway to Burns Lake, British Columbia; motor to Ootsa Lake, 42 miles; motor boat to any adjacent range, 10 to 200 miles; trails innumerable to the land of June snow (3 to 5 miles.)

CAMROSE SKI CLUB

THE ski-ing season 1929-30 was a very successful one for the Camrose Ski Club. Our ski hill has no scaffold so the boys have had no training in jumping for the past three years, but in spite of that they have been doing very well. The snow conditions throughout the whole season were also very poor.

The Club have not held a tournament for the last three years on account of insufficient funds for the erection of a new tower, but we fully understand that the Club cannot exist without a ski hill, and are hoping for a good year soon to enable us to get an up-to-date tower.

In spite of this drawback our boys did remarkably well last season at the different tournaments. The Western Canadian champion long distance ski runner, P. Gotaas, came second in Burns Lake, B.C. 50-kilometre race; he also got the cup for the third time in the Jasper Park 30-mile race. J. Nordmoe, the Canadian all-round champion, gave a good account of himself by finishing third in the Western Canadian Championship at Revelstoke, close behind first and second; in Banff he captured first in jumping and combined, and also the prize for best style. At Ottawa he again won the Canadian all-round championship for the second successive time for his Club and the West. He was also awarded the first-class gold test badge of the Association due to his performances at the last two Dominion Championship meets.

APRIL AT MOUNT ASSINIBOINE

By G. CAMERON STOCKAND

THE last mile of the steep climb up the pass had been sweaty, strenuous ski-ing in a fall of fresh spring snow, but at that, it was far more pleasant than the raging blizzard that stung our faces and momentarily caught our breaths as we rounded the final high shoulder and attained the summit. We stood resting on our sticks, panting for breath, and looked out on a veritable sea of dead white—the white of deep, wind-smoothed drifts, and the opaque whiteness of swirling, snow-filled air which effectually hid from view all landmarks save a few scattered timberline larches close at hand. Our location was a total mystery to me until Cliff spoke:—

"Well, that's the last climb, anyway. Another half hour or so will see us at the camp. Lord! it'll feel good to stow away a big feed and then sit in front of that old stove and just rest! How about it?"

Cyril grinned, and I heaved a sigh of relief. So this was the last lap of our three days' journey from Banff. My feet were sore and blistered and every time I had moved my ski on the way over the pass they gave me twinges of sheer agony. At the moment the prospect of kicking off my heavy ski boots interested me even more than thoughts of food or warmth.

Compared to that of Cliff's and Cyril's, my own ski-ing ability is but mediocre, so on my account the first two stages of the trip were easy: from Banff to White Man's Pass the first day and from the Pass to Spray Lake the next, then this, a long hard day from Spray Cabin to Mount Assiniboine Camp via the arduous Bryant Creek and Assiniboine Pass route. Food and supplies for a week we carried on our backs in big Bergans rucksacks, and Cliff, as well as his share of the load, had his Graflex to add to the weight. After every stop on the trail, as I hoisted my rucksack onto my shoulders again I was mighty thankful that we were not additionally burdened by blankets or sleeping bags. We were saved that by the hospitality of Walter Peyto, the Park Game Warden for the region, in letting us use his cabins en route, and the courtesy of the C.P.R. who granted us the freedom of the main lodge of their camp at Mount Assiniboine during our stay.

And the roof of that main cabin, all that was visible in the drifted snow, was a welcome sight a short time later, when, under Cliff's unerring guidance we topped the last bare ridge and saw below us the cluster of log cabins that comprises the camp.

The rest of that day is merely a pleasant, warm memory to me, or to be more accurate, a succession of pleasant, warm memories. The roaring heat of the log fire Cyril and I built in the huge stove and which soon took the chill off the long-unoccupied lodge, the sense of satisfaction and content following the substantial camp supper Cliff prepared, and the warmth of the fleecy Hudson's Bay blankets as we snuggled down between their comfortable folds can only be appreciated by those who have travelled on ski all through a long day, and climbed Assiniboine Pass!

We were awakened in the morning by the crescendo howls of the blizzard as it swept and swirled around the cabin, and its fury showed no signs of abatement throughout the day, nor the next, nor yet the one after that. At over 7,000 feet in the Rockies spring weather is an uncertain proposition at best, and this time it looked as though we were snowbound thoroughly. We dared not step outside the cabin except when absolutely necessary to carry water or to replenish the woodpile from the rapidly diminishing pile of logs. On a plateau from which rise some of the highest peaks in our section of the mountains, with Assiniboine's 11,870 feet towering over them all, we could not see a thing as long as the tempest lasted. The only thing we could do was to wait, and wait we did.

For three days we loafed, basking in the radiant heat of the fire, gorging ourselves on Cliff's excellent cooking, alternately playing rummy or reading old magazines and mountaineering journals as well as every book in the camp's tiny library. It was far from being unpleasant, this enforced inactivity, and it gave my blisters an opportunity to heal up; but always there was that undercurrent of anxiety. Would we get an opportunity to enjoy the fast ski running for which the region is famous? Would I at last see the mighty mountain of which I had heard so much? Would Cliff get the photographic studies he wanted so badly? Or . . . would we finally be compelled to brave the blizzard when our limited time expired and ignominiously run for Banff, disappointed? On the evening of the third day the snow still flew, the gale still shrieked wildly, and it looked as though the last alternative was to be our only choice.

Even Cliff's unfailing optimism did not serve to ward off our feelings of frustration and depression as we sat around the fire. I was attempting to wade through "Moby Dick" for the third time but was about ready to give it up as a bad job and crawl under the blankets. Cyril was making heavy

weather of "transition stories" (the lower case letters are correct, Mr. Editor, it was that kind of a book) an anthology of ultra-modernistic literature, which may have been partly responsible for Cyril's gloomy look at the time (since then I have read the book myself and I know it was solely responsible!) Taken all around we were a sad-looking outfit, when Cliff betook himself outside for an armful of logs.

We both looked up questioningly as he came in. "How does it look now, Cliff?" Cyril ventured. "Well, I don't want you fellows to count too much on it yet, but I think she's breaking up," he replied. "The wind's died down a little and the clouds seem to be lifting—there's a star or two in sight already. I've got a hunch you'll see the old mountain in the morning, Cam, and we'll catch up on a lot of overdue ski-ing, too." Which optimistic prophecy caused us to turn in for the night feeling far more cheerful than we had a few short hours before.



SIX FEET OF SNOW, IN APRIL, 1930

Cliff's prognostication was gloriously right, and we were awakened early by rays of brilliant spring sunshine streaming into the cabin. This was to be the day of days, we exulted, and half-dressed, stampeded to the door to gaze enraptured upon the glory of the morning and the grandeur of Assiniboine, the mighty.

It was a spectacle once seen, never to be forgotten, and I was happy that my first sight of the great mount was in April on a morning like this! To see Assiniboine at any other time would be anticlimatic, after feasting my eyes on its wintry magnificence. As though framed in the logs of the lodge verandah its massive walls reached upward for a sheer mile above us on the larch-studded valley floor; clearcut as an etching against the background of deep clear blue that was the sky; towering superbly and majestically above massive peaks

flanking its base, peaks which situated in less regal company would be monarchs in their own rights.

Totally forgotten in five short minutes as we stood there in silence were all the arduous features of the trip—the long, heart-breaking ascents, the blistered feet and aching limbs, the heavy, shoulder-galling packs, even the imprisoning spring storm, became mere incidents for which we had been amply repaid. And still to come was a day of true, Alpine ski running under perfect weather and snow conditions! Our only regret was that it had all to be enjoyed in too short a time, for on the morrow crass, mundane matters decreed that we must start our homeward dash.

Wonder Pass, one of the highest trail passes in this section of the mountains had been agreed upon as the first run of the day, so after a sketchy and hurried breakfast we kicked heavy ski boots into rigid toe irons and turned the points of our ski towards its snowy crest. With the aid of climbing wax we zig-zagged up the steep incline in slightly over an hour, keeping well over to our right under the Towers, a rugged, serrated peak, and thus avoiding a difficult cross-couloir which would be a considerable complication on the downward run. At last, on the wind-swept summit, far above the last few scattered larches that marked the timber-line, we rested by a cairn to munch chocolate and raisins, while Cliff, with his Graflex tried a few long shots of the Marvel Lake side of the pass. Then the snow-resisting gobs of heavy wax on our ski were smoothed down, bindings were looked to and adjusted, ski caps set more firmly on our heads, and the wrist straps of our gauntlets tightened—the ride back to the camp was to be a fast one!

Side by side, and well apart, we lined up, and looking down the unbroken white decline made hurried mental reference maps to guide us in the descent. Personally, I was in an absolute funk—it seemed so dog-goned far to Lake Gog where we would run out on to the first level and it looked terrifically steep, but the confidence of Cliff and Cyril reassured me. They were actually impatient to start! At Cliff's signal we pushed off—a few quick running steps on our ski, a mighty shove with our sticks and we were away. Lord! What a run! We sped down the first long slope in three clouds of flying snow, seeming to cross three of our zig-zags in a split second. Out of the corners of my eyes I could see Cliff and Cyril running level with me, Cyril in the Telemark position with closely locked knees, and Cliff, encumbered with rucksack and camera, crouched low, a la Arlberg, taking the bumps as they came, both under perfect control. Then I lost sight of them, tears came to my eyes as I split the breeze at ever-increasing speed and I had, perforce, to navigate "By guess and by God" as I skied faster than I had ever done before. I was scared to death, scared to stand and equally scared to fall down, but the gods who look after the foolish and ignorant were kind, and after one breath-taking moment down an almost precipitous slope my ski hit the level, nearly upsetting me, and the speed decreased—I brushed the tears from my eyes and saw my companions leaning on their sticks, grinning at me. The first part of the run was over—we were on the snow-covered surface of Lake Gog, and Glory be! I had not fallen once.

The rest of the descent seemed ridiculously easy and in a few breathless, speed-filled moments we ran out on to the flat a quarter mile from the camp without one of us having left a "grave" in the entire run. For myself, I thought this was quite an accomplishment, as the greater part of my ski running is done alternately on the seat of my pants and on the rim of my ear, but the others took it so casually as a matter of course that I refrained from boasting. Not without difficulty, though!

Then came the high, clarion call of the inner man, or rather men, and we ate a prodigious lunch on the wide verandah of our cabin in order not to waste a moment of the glorious sunshine for which we had waited so long. Never did Cliff's cooking taste so good as it did then after our strenuous exertions of the morning!

But we were impatient to be on our ski again, and after a short rest sallied forth, sans shirts and sans jackets, daring the afternoon sun to do its worst—which, combined with the glare from the snow's unbroken surface, it did . . . with a vengeance! For Cliff and Cyril, who had been out on ski practically

all winter, sunburn meant merely that they assumed a still deeper mahogany hue, but I burned to a painful and fiery crimson except where my snow-glasses protected me. This gave me such a weird appearance that on my return to Banff my own children did not recognize me, and strange children on the streets shrieked and clung to their mothers whenever I hove into view. Shaving was utter agony for two weeks afterward, and I could peel huge strips of epidermis from my face and neck at any time. On another ski trip, the sun will be treated with much more respect by this tender-skinned person!

But it was worth it for the ski-ing we were privileged to enjoy on that memorable afternoon. There were hills in every direction; short, tricky, high-speed runs and long gradual ones, deceptively difficult sometimes; there were hard snow hills for stems and christies and others with ample soft snow for Telemark practice . . . slopes smooth and unbroken and slopes studded with larch and scrub-juniper on which we staged some impromptu downhill races at the risk of necks, legs and ski, totally forgetful of the difficulties that even a broken ski or a slight bodily injury would create in this inaccessible region. On a steep, almost perpendicular overhanging drift of snow on the bank of frozen Lake Magog I was initiated into the mysteries of "cornice ski-ing" which can only be likened to falling down an elevator shaft, and is most emphatically a sport not to be recommended to anyone suffering from a weak heart! I was skilfully tutored in the art of the Jump Turn by Cliff and Cyril on a wide patch of breakable crust in the full glare of the sun, but I was not a very apt pupil. All in all, we had more diverse ski practice in one short afternoon at that delectable spot than would be got elsewhere in a whole season, but we knew when at last the falling dusk sent us back to the lodge, that we had not touched even a fraction of its ski-ing possibilities. Our time was all too short.

As Cliff said that night, as we sat yawning in front of the fire for the last time: "A fellow, if he wanted to, could ski himself to death here and never take the same run twice. It's just too darned bad that the place is so inaccessible from town that only a few can spare the time to really enjoy it; but I guess if it were right in the village we probably wouldn't appreciate it." And perhaps, human nature being what it is, he was right!

Conditions proved ideal for travelling the next morning, and we reluctantly bid Mount Assiniboine and our comfortable cabin "au revoir" for, at the very first opportunity we are going back again to enjoy some of the ski-ing we missed in those three stormbound days. Of the trip home little need be said here, save that owing to a perfect crust sprinkled with fresh snow which prevailed for the most difficult part of the descent, we accomplished the return to Banff in record time. We were mighty thankful for the high-speed practice in swings and turns of the previous day as we dropped down through the heavy timber of Assiniboine Pass with scarcely a fall, and in exactly one-fifth of the time it required to make the ascent. The sun was still high when we reached Spray Lake Cabin, and after lunching with Walter Peyto, the Warden, we decided to push right through to Banff as we were still comparatively fresh. Anyway, it seemed far too early to call it a day. And from there on, our troubles commenced in earnest! The snow at that lower altitude soon became wet and soft, and then absolutely rotten. We broke through for two feet at every step, no wax could be made to stay on our ski and they balled up continually. Our progress was badly slowed up, ski-ing became hard physical labor, then sheer punishment, but we had no other choice than to keep going . . . it was useless to turn back at this stage of the game, and we had to cover, before nightfall, what had taken two good days under better conditions on the trip out!

However, we made it finally, but it was long after dark had fallen when we stumbled, weary and footsore into the outskirts of town. Since early morning we had covered over forty-five mountain miles on ski, the last twenty-eight being accomplished under the most miserable and difficult of all snow conditions that ever the ski tourist may meet.

But looking at it now, in retrospection, it doesn't seem nearly so bad!