

First Ascent of Mount Sir Richard

By Don Munday



(Photo Mrs. Don Munday)

Towing and poling the raft through ice on Cheakamus Lake

CAN YOU imagine snowfields never tracked by skis and glacial peaks never ascended by mountaineers, within fifty miles of a city as large as Vancouver? We thought something ought to be done about it.

The region we picked was at the headwaters Cheakamus River in Garibaldi Park. March normally would have been a better month, of course, but the third member of the party, Philip (Pip) H. G. Brock, had too little hardening of the conscience to allow starting before finishing his university examinations the last week in April. "We" naturally includes my wife, Phyl.

We left the P.G.E. Railway at Mile 34. Despite a period of almost daily snowfall we had intermittent skiing through forest to Cheakamus Lake, reputedly only seven miles. Snow slopping from tree-tops 150 feet above our light tents threatened to demolish them.

We carried a generous two weeks' supply of food—if for any reason we needed finding, the rescuers might be a long time finding us if thick weather barred aeroplane search.

Cheakamus Lake is four miles long, elevation 2,700 feet. The rough shore forbade packing; avalanches fall 3,000 feet or more into the lake. We hoped to raft along a fairly continuous channel thawed in the ice along the north shore.

Even a good raft is a poor craft, and the one we found was very poor, barely big enough for two of us and our freight, but too big to push readily through ice which, sometimes eight inches thick (rotted a bit), barred our course in places. Ice blocks impeded paddling, sticky glacial mud or very deep water hindered poling.

Such a hundred yards cost Phyl and me three laborious hours before we could throw Pip a towline. But memories linger of camp on the

lakeshore and moonrise through clouds coiling like cold flame on high snow beyond the lakehead.

Sharp frost stiffened the ice separating us from the next open channel. Shore ice and the rough shoreline often prevented towing. Cold showers made a dismal day.

Beyond the lake came obstructed trailless mountainside. First the valley floor was snowless swamp, then snow-tangled willows in a "ghost" forest killed by an outwash of glacial gravel. Pip and I lost much time route finding with our loads the first day.

This kept us from advancing next day to a camp (3,500 feet) more desirable than the fringe of a new avalanche track in a gorge where precipitous Mounts Cheakamus and Diavolo pierced clouds 5,000 feet above.

In an absent-minded flutter of snowflakes next day we explored on skis through the canyon to another grey "ghost" forest and more avalanche-choked gorges, to the final canyon slanting abruptly up to the lip of the valley of Sir Richard Glacier. First ascent of Mount Sir Richard was desired. Impending snow on these canyon walls made the place too much like a death-trap. We descended hurriedly.

Heavier snow, then rain, held us for a nearly welcome rest in camp. Thrilling blue skies followed suddenly, catching us unprepared for an early start for the narrow glacial valley beyond the "ghost" forest. The mountains gleamed in the sunny, tense silence of avalanches still leashed.

From the main glacier we continued up a lesser glacier to a snowy pass, 6,500 feet, which, instead of a practicable route to Mount Sir Richard, revealed unmapped gorges draining to Lillooet River. Five miles off stood challenging Mount Pitt, white, symmetrical, austere, unclimbed.



(Photo Mrs. Don Munday)

Mount Pitt, one of unclimbed peaks of Garibaldi Park, from upper slopes of Mount Sir Richard

Though cherishing hope of trying for Sir Richard on the morrow, I now encouraged idling at the pass in windless sunshine. It was well—a small avalanche started on the north rim of our valley; within seconds the whole face broke loose, a quarter of a mile in width, tearing rocks loose, roaring almost across our glacier, then turning far down it. When clouds of snow-dust settled we warily set our skis swishing down the glaciers to camp.

Down on the flats we found with alarm that a wolverine was ahead, back-tracking us to camp. We hurried along, hoping to be in time to save something from the destructive brute, but perhaps the mysterious scent of ski wax failed to hold his interest. Presently he turned aside.

Early next morning we went up the main river again. By a steep climb through timber we outflanked the evil canyon below Sir Richard Glacier. Big morainal slopes often are dangerous but we found a safe route down into the glacial valley.

We had not yet seen Mount Sir Richard. The glacier's shining length curved down from a dazzling cirque. Our view ended in what seemed a narrow alcove scarred derisively by an avalanche. Sir Richard must lurk above, behind, rock shoulders towering to the blue.

Spurting snow plumes spoke of a gale on the high crests. A crazy cross-current of wind shouldered gustily against us, often staggering us on our way to the cirque's head. Three blue waterfalls hung as frozen drapery below a cliff glacier. A glimpse of bleached granite high above the white rim might be the mountain top. A lovely lesser peak argued coquettishly, "Why go farther?"

Through broken ice faces for 2,000 feet a practicable ski route led upward. But could so steep a face stand this second day of brilliant sun and warm wind without avalanching? We watched its texture closely, but agreed it still held a margin of safety.

The great shoulders of the mountain began to shape towards the summit. Shining heights of Garibaldi Park, and far beyond, came into view—a vast snow world most of which had never been tracked by ski.

The gale had spared us for a time. Now it burst over the north ridge. Unable to progress against it on skis, we drove them mid-length in the snow, yet they flapped wildly.

Struggling up almost on all fours, the gale forced me to rest every forty steps. I found my companions huddling behind the inadequate windbreak I formed. Big flakes of blown ice-glaze spiralled brightly over the broad summit. We did not reach it till four o'clock.

Late afternoon light gave the high, white ranges strong perspective in the clear air. One unfamiliar with the Coast Mountains might find difficulty in associating a zone of glaciation of over 4,000 feet with a district where most of the mountains do not approach 9,000 feet. Yet here the uplift above the valleys is higher than is usual in the actually loftier Rockies. Contours of the Garibaldi Park map give Mount Sir Richard a height of at least 8,700 feet, 5,000 feet above our camp. McBride Glacier under the northern precipices is one of the major glaciers of the park.

Perhaps if we had had our skis on the sum-



(Photo Mrs. Don Munday)

Part of the great avalanche which swept the party's upward tracks away

mit we would have yielded to the alluring unwisdom of descending McBride Glacier, a longer route probably certain to leave us benighted in unknown gorges with snow floors being washed away by sudden river-flood.

Wet snow made descent to the cirque of Sir Richard Glacier less than ideal. We marvelled the sunny slope still refrained from avalanching as we swung back and forth in long tacks. But we rejoiced greatly in skis to make the long return to camp so comparatively effortless, and, of course, only skis had made the ascent possible under such snow conditions.

Down in the main valley, with night coming on, we found Cheakamus River in unexpected flood and already bursting through bridging snow and ice by which we had crossed back and forth at will to get the easiest going. If

The river ran blackly between dim snow walls where we had to make the last ford when nearing camp, and some resolution seemed needed to enter the water in the darkness. Below this the gorge was a grim passage in the gloom, relieved only by a small carbide light; snow subsided into black pits and roaring sluices. We reached camp about 9.30 p.m., perhaps with a certain sense of escape. To have felt otherwise would have been undiscerning.

A sunny day of rest gave way to sudden rain and sleet—1937 was a deplorable season throughout in the Coast Mountains—and precluded further climbing. Also, the heavy thaw meant we would find much of the homeward route unfit for either ski-ing or walking, so an immediate start was wise.

Cold rain made the first day less than pleasant. Crusty snow, often too patchy for ski-ing, commonly dropped us through as much as thigh-deep among brush, rocks and logs. Slender logs 50 to 100 feet long across the river were not always walked with complete nonchalance even by the member or members who did not hitch across astride to the detriment of the clothing most closely involved in that undignified mode of progress.

Rafting down the now ice-free lake was more pleasant toil, though possible breaking up of the badly-built raft risked loss of our equipment at least in the icy water. The final day to the railway was a bit more exhausting than the first. There were areas less remote where we might have enjoyed far more ski-ing in the park, of course. Doubtless the labor of our trip had been unduly high because made too late, but fortunately memories of hardships dim quickly, while the joys remain like shining snow-crests against cloudless blue.

Jumping Hill Construction

By R. A. Flint

TO THE general public ski jumping is regarded as the main feature associated with ski-ing. To the average skier it is regarded with awe and trepidation. To newly organized ski clubs and communities interested in developing ski-ing, a jump is erroneously one of the first considerations, and in many cases construction of a jump is gone ahead with almost before a ski club is organized, due to the enthusiasm of local Chambers of Commerce, Boards of Trade and Winter Sports Committees who are hopeful of heavy winter tourist traffic coming to their locality.

There is no desire to discuss the various features of ski-ing that should be well organized before a jump is contemplated, except to say that the successful operation of a jump is dependent upon an efficient organization of skiers who know jumping and its requirements.

Briefly a jumping hill is really two hills, one, an upper hill or tower and two, a lower or landing hill. There is a direct relation in degree and length of slope in each of these hills to the other and it is folly in itself to try and erect a larger jump than the hill will stand. In spite of this the usual reaction is to try and get

as large a jump as possible, taking little heed of local club requirements, capital cost or operating costs.

The Ontario Ski Zone Committee have spent much time and money in studying the construction of jumping hills both on this continent and in Europe and have in the past few years supervised the construction of over a dozen jumps in Eastern Canada. They have available the necessary technical data that few, if any, construction engineers or companies are aware of and feel sure that this service to the ski clubs is of inestimable value in avoiding the pitfalls of local construction without the proper technical knowledge.

As there are a number of small ski clubs that will be contemplating building ski jumps this coming season we believe it will be to their advantage to secure recent and up-to-date information on how these hills are constructed. This will save a great deal of unnecessary work and they will have a profile which has been worked out on scientific lines. The Ontario Zone offers this help to Zone clubs but it will be pleased to offer the same service to any other clubs or organizations in Canada.