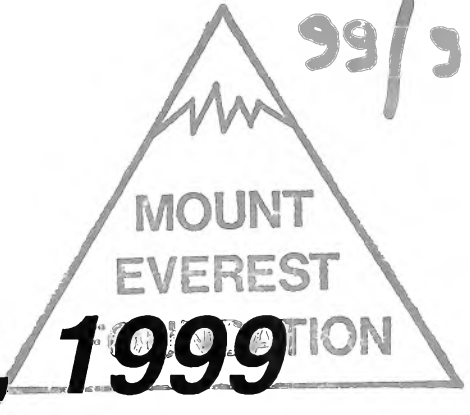


Ac 27496

99/3

Expedition Report
MT Cook: British – Canadian St Elias Expedition



SEA TO THE SKY, 1999

14 June - 26 July, 1999



Mt Cook (4,194 m) seen from Yukatat, over 50 miles away.

compiled by:

Alun Hubbard & David Hildes
Kyana House, Borth, Dyfed SY24 5JA
tel: 01970 871 541
email: ahubbard@geog.canterbury.ac.nz

Expedition Synopsis:

Mt NW Cook - Mt Cook, 14 June - 26 July, 1999

Climbers: Alun Hubbard (U.K.), Greg Brown (Canada), Bertrand Eynard (France) & Dave Hildes (Canada).

Crew: Chris Barnett (Canada), Tobyn Ross (U.K.) & Armel Castello (Canada).

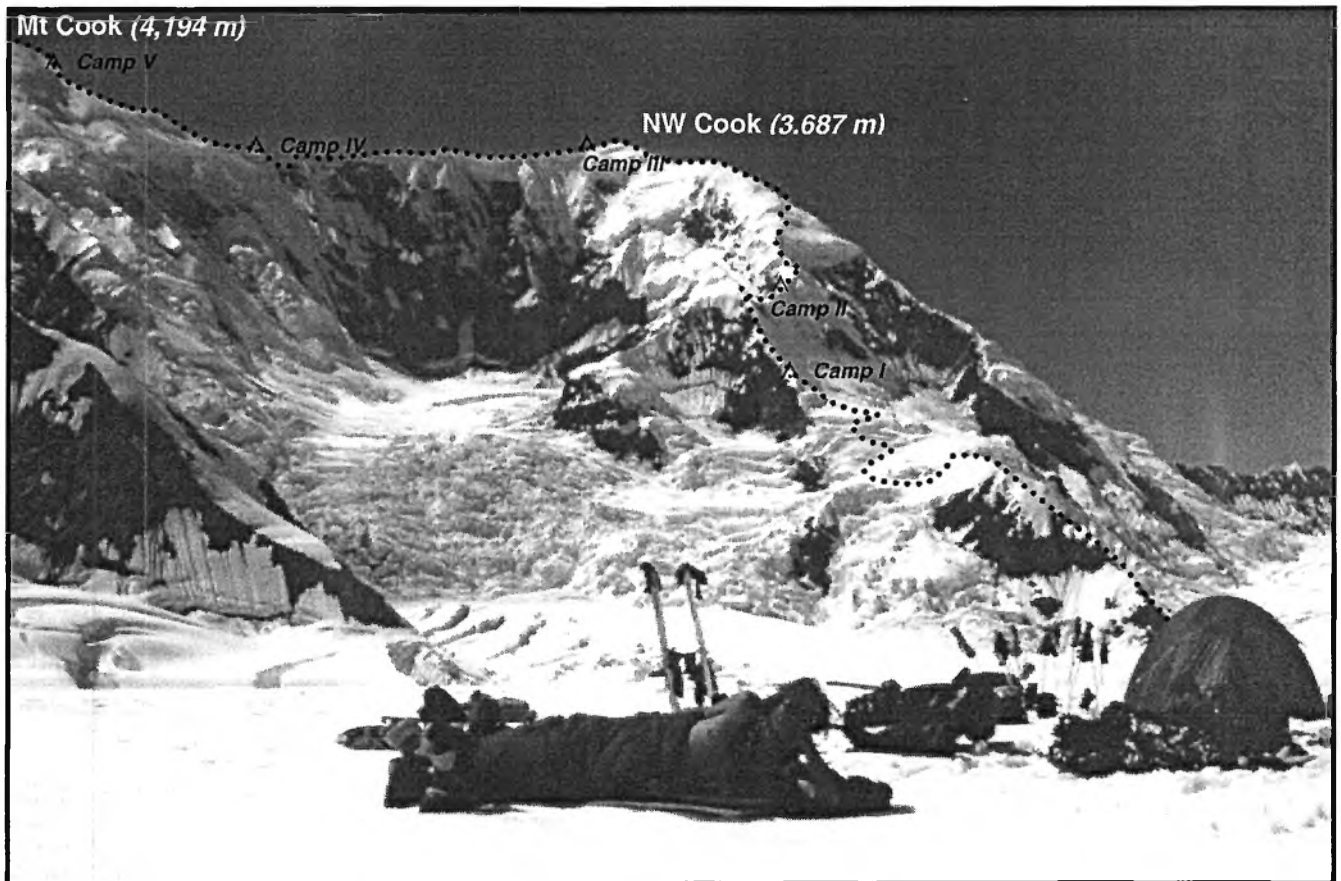
Summary: Sailed from Vancouver into Disenchantment Bay, skied 40 km with pulks up the Valerie Glacier to position ourselves for a 10 day assault leading to a 1st ascent of NW Cook* (3,687 m) linked by a new high-level route via the NW ridge for the 2nd ascent of Mt Cook (4,194 m). Skied 55 km out of the icefields via the Seward and Malaspina Glaciers, finally sailing offshore back to Vancouver.

After some desperate last minute reshuffling, our newly acquainted team managed (against the odds and my own expectation), to depart Vancouver, headed for Disenchantment Bay, Alaska; gateway to the St Elias. What's more, we were sailing, as planned, but aboard a 47' steel ketch, *Gambo*, that had literally fallen into our laps some 3 days previously. Sailing north was a dream, providing us with a full range of conditions by which to test the boat (which handled superbly) and our sea-legs (which were not quite so reliable). Expecting head-on northwesterlies, we were most fortunate to have got a good boot up our back end early on by way of a three day southerly gale which catapulted us past the Queen Charlottes and into the Alaskan Gulf, averaging runs of 200 NM a day. Unfortunately, these conditions were not to last and the dreaded head-winds did kick-in up the *Inside Passage* of Alaska reducing our 'velocity-made-good' to a miserable 2 knots. Such 'trying' conditions were however made all the more palatable with superb views, gorgeous skies, plenty of g&t's, a fantastic array of wildlife including a visit by a school of 80 or more dolphins, numerous sightings of acrobatic whales (not related to the booze) and an appropriately timed stop at Baranoff hot springs.

A successful drop just off the spectacularly calving Hubbard Glacier at the head of Disenchantment Bay brought Greg, Dave, Bertrand and myself abruptly and most unceremoniously back to reality with the rapid adjustment from the somewhat leisurely 'on-board' life-style to shouldering loads and threading a 40 km route up to the head of the heavily crevassed Valerie Glacier, onto the Seward Glacier and finally to the base of NW Cook at 1,650 m. After a couple of days of rest, route eyeballing and further procrastination, we started-out with seven days food and fuel on the c. 2,000 m high west ridge of NW Cook. The climbing was of moderate difficulty, mostly on poor, crusty snow and rotten ice of 30° to 75° with the occasional chossy rock section. Our chosen route was pretty obvious, sufficiently interspersed with relatively safe belay platforms and whilst climbing at night for optimum snow conditions and to reduce objective risks we established day-time bivies at c. 2,400 and c. 2,900 m. We summited NW Cook on our third night in ideal conditions; at higher elevation snow was firm and the weather had remained exceptionally stable (but very hazy) throughout.

After an extended recce that morning, we camped just off the summit and committed ourselves to the 5 km high-level, knife-edge ridge which joins NW Cook to Mt Cook. The following (fourth) night was long, slow and uncomfortably cold but after negotiating a series of massive cornices we arrived at what was obviously the crux of the whole route at about 9 am. A series of rappels on dicey ice and rock, saw us established (committed?) in an exposed and intimidating overhanging notch of 70° ice leading up to a 35 m section of loose but steep rock blocks (bonded by ice) which formed the continuation of our ridge. Warmed by the morning sun, Bertrand put in an inspired lead to regain the ridge proper and by mid-afternoon we were dug into a huge platform area provided by the back of two adjoining cornices and ready for rest after 18 hours on the go. Our sixth day saw an end to the last of the difficulties on the ridge, providing some steep and exciting climbing on the back of exposed cornices and ice-falls to establish us at the base of the summit dome of Mt Cook. However, by midday, our good weather came to an end and soon we were flailing about the summit ridge at 4,150 m in a blizzard. With rapidly freezing feet, I forced a decision to camp in the lee-side of the summit ridge in the hope that the wind would abate but unfortunately it only increased making for an uncomfortable night with the four of us squeezed into a two man-tent which was further much reduced in volume by the constant and severe hammering of the wind. By early morning, however, the wind dropped and we were quick to make a dash for the broad summit of Mt Cook accompanied by a glorious and atmospheric sun-rise as the cloud cleared. The lull was not to last though, and after a couple of hours we were caught out again whilst descending the SE face of Cook, forcing us to shelter in the lee of a huge, detached and precarious looking ice-block. The next morning (eighth day on the mountain) saw another improvement in visibility and we had soon threaded a route down the snow laden face to a Col at c. 2,700 m with just another c. 1,000 m of descent down a 40° - 70° snow slope/ice-fall to be safely off the mountain. All was looking rosy until Dave, who was leading down, suddenly dropped out of view and the rope between us came tight pulling me off my feet and dragging me about 3 m before I was able to get sufficient purchase with my axes; a snow bridge had failed and a tentative recce found him shaken but smiling, hanging upside-down some 10 m down a yawning crevasse. Hildes extraction was straight-forward but time-consuming and once we were all safely across the crevasse, the weather and visibility had again deteriorated and we were stuck-out on a face for a third uncomfortable night with little to eat. It was not until the following afternoon that visibility cleared sufficiently for Bertrand and myself to eyeball a route down the face. Snow conditions were far from ideal with fresh snow sitting uneasily on old crust but we threaded a route down placing regular snow-pickets. It was slow going, with a few exciting near-vertical sections but we were much lifted by the steady clearing of cloud throughout the night and the views to the east which unfolded. We finally rappelled the last section to the base of the slope just as dawn broke across the top of Mt Logan and in a total dream-state, we plodded the 4 km back to our cache and a well earned and somewhat extended breakfast.

View from the north (Base Camp) of the route taken on NW Cook and Mt Cook (left just out of view).



The following morning our plan to return via the Valerie Glacier was put to a quick death by the amount of snowmelt and the condition of Bertrand's toes which were now beginning to swell painfully due to the recurrence of a frost-bite injury. The tenuous snow-bridges of the upper Valerie Glacier of 11 days previous were now dodgy to the extreme, so we were forced to retreat, leaving Bertrand in a tent and to seek an alternative exit by skiing 50 km round and down the south Seward Glacier and onto the Malaspina. The next morning, at the top of the aptly named 'Point Glorious' we were able to make VHF contact with one of the GulfAir Cessnas and our suffering feet were saved from further onslaught. We were soon happily reunited with *Gambo* and after a day spent retrieving our stashed Zodiac and outboard from the head of Disenchantment Bay, we were once again sailing into the sunset with G&Ts all round.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A heartfelt thanks to all friends who helped in the last days before setting sail from Vancouver, to Dai Neale for his patience and sharing his rum on *Gambo*, to Kurt and Leslie at GulfAir Taxi for keeping an eye out and to all at Yukatat who made our brief stay there such laugh. We are most grateful to Gore's *Tilman/Shipton Fund*, the Mount Everest Foundation, the British Mountaineering Council and Malden Mills - *Polartec performance challenge* for financial support, and Sierra Designs (Blackwater Designs, Canada) and Lowe Alpine (DayMen Outdoor) for equipment discounts.

* David Persson, a good friend and original expedition member, fell to his death in late-May, whilst attempting to telemark down Liberty Ridge on Mt Rainier. He was our strongest climber and an integral part of the conception and planning of this project. His death was a tragic blow to us all; his memory was deeply embedded in our thoughts throughout this expedition and we have applied to Parks Canada and the Geological Survey Canada naming committee for NW Cook to be named after him.

The Expedition**SEA TO SKY, ST ELIAS**

The story of a dozen border crossings through the St. Elias mountains

by Dave Hildes.



Chris Barnett and I both clung to the deck as we were tossed about by rough seas through Queen Charlotte Sound; in the cabin below Alun Hubbard (leader) and Toby Ross tried to reconcile sleep with keeping themselves wedged in their berths. Conversation drifted in contrast to our boat which pulled hard on her canvas in response to the gale force winds. When Chris queried my surname, it provoked a reflection on the hastily assembled cast for this spectacle; most of the crew were strangers to me and our lack of history had me feeling slightly dissociated. The exception was Alun, a displaced Welshman with a definite bend towards manic. Our mutual glaciological musings had landed us together in the icy places we studied, which had progressed into climbing ventures. His enthusiasm for adventure can be overwhelming, but is undoubtedly infectious and had suddenly transformed a nice idea into the reality of the sharp spray on my face. Chris and Toby had first met Alun and I a week prior at a pub --- where all crucial expedition planning takes place. With years of blue water sailing experience Chris became the acting skipper of our vessel sometime during the second pitcher.

I gulped fresh air as I pondered, trying to relieve the ill-effects of my fresh sea-legs. Chris, having processed my answer to his question concerning my name, interrupted my reverie with further probing into my background, becoming more and more specific: where was I from, did I have siblings --- it turns out Chris learned to sail at the hands of my elder brother, some 20 years previous. So much for the feeling of disconnectedness.

``The Sea to Sky Highway (also known as the Squamish Highway/Hwy. 99) climbs from the glittering waters of Howe Sound and winds steeply north through glacier-carved peaks, leading travellers from the picturesque village of Horseshoe Bay (Vancouver's northern ferry terminus) through a network of mountain communities. Travellers can sample an exciting array of recreational and historical attractions ...'' from Sea to Sky Information Systems website

We were planning a marine-alpine marriage of a slightly larger scope than our usual weekend sojourn: north from Vancouver by sailboat up the fabled inside passage, following the sea-steps of Captain Vancouver himself in his search for the elusive Northwest Passage. Our destination was the not-quite-so-fabled town of Yakutat, Alaska --- mostly known for its thriving commercial and guided fishing industry. More of interest to us, Yakutat is a community poised on the edge of the St. Elias mountains, ringed by the massive piedmont Malaspina Glacier, Mt. St. Elias, Mt. Augusta, Mt. Vancouver and Mt. Cook --- whose namesake was another great British explorer also seeking the Northwest Passage; he couldn't find it and surmised it didn't exist. Never mind that he was in error, we still wanted to climb his mountain. 60 kilometers from Yakutat lies Disenchantment Bay into which the Turner, Haenke, Valerie and Hubbard Glaciers discharge their icy loads into the sea. Our goal: ascend NW Cook --- a 3687 meter unclimbed peak --- from sea level and proceed from the summit of NW Cook on a new high-level traverse for the second ascent of the 4194 meter Mt. Cook, then return by the original route climbed by Long, Kelley, McGowan, Miller and Mohling in July 1953.

There had been obstacles to our northern odyssey --- namely the lack of a vessel. When Alun initially conceived this scheme with our potential skipper late one night in Fall of 1998 over a few ales, the newly found captain's enthusiasm was substantially deeper than his pint glass. With fighting talk, he certainly wasn't going to be deterred by the arrival of his pregnant girlfriend's baby. However when we caught up with him the following March, six weeks of non-stop crying and diapers had dampened his fervour for two crowded months with a pack of smelly climbers. What's more --- he wasn't going to lend us his boat. The rest of the climbing team was made up of David Persson with whom Alun and I had climbed in the St. Elias the previous summer and

Bertrand Eynard, a colleague and friend of David's. With time running short, we pulled every line, lead and shoelace trying to secure a watery passage and eventually decided to drive to Haines, Alaska to find a boat there. Not quite the same as sailing from Vancouver, but in the end, the spirit of the trip would be preserved.

Events quite precipitously changed our perception of the task at hand, which had been to get north as quickly as possible before the brief St. Elias summer slipped by. Within days of our planned departure, David tragically fell to his death while attempting a telemark descent of Liberty Ridge, Mt. Rainier. He had been a good friend, our strongest climber and an integral part of this project since its inception. We were left reeling --- short of wits, short of an expedition member and unsure on which tack to proceed; we needed some time to sort it through. For myself, it only took a few days to determine that action was the appropriate course; I wanted to continue with the expedition. It wasn't as much a decision as a growing feeling that, strange as it would be to continue on in the wake of David's absence, even stranger would be to remain at home and do nothing. After a week all of us had reached the same verdict: to continue with the climb was to honour David's memory.

The boat shortage ended abruptly as Gambo --- the perfect vessel for our purposes --- quite literally materialised in front of us (all because of the large Welsh Dragon painted on her bow... but that's another story). Our new 47-foot steel ketch was ready for the job and we had found another climber in the form of Greg Brown whose zeal for the project was inspiring and much needed. He had been home less than a week from a successful month on the east ridge of Mt. Logan, but was easily convinced to quit a job (moreover a decent paying one!) and meet the Gambo crew in Prince Rupert. Casanova (Bertrand) needed to attend to his complicated love-life and opted to fly to Yakutat. It was June 15th and Gambo most un-quietly and un-promptly slipped her moorings under her new guise as climber-transportation at the crack of noon with a fine southerly wind blowing. From the dock we did not veer to starboard to follow Howe Sound and the Sea to Sky highway but forged straight ahead towards Alaska --- Sea to Sky, St. Elias Style!

Our first leg was short as a stop was necessary at Quadra Island to wait for suitable tides. Timing is crucial in these waters --- tidal currents reach up to 16 knots in Seymour Narrows where warships have been destroyed in the maws of the whirlpools. These were tamed somewhat when the largest non-nuclear man-made blast at the time (2.75 million kilos of dynamite) was detonated in 1953 inside "Ripple Rock" to make Seymour Narrows a safer passage, but we still opted to wait for slack tide. After a quick call into port at the northern tip of Vancouver Island we were off in search of open water, with a gale at our stern to test the boat (which handled superbly, cruising at 8 to 9 knots) and our sea-legs (which were not quite so reliable). There were some magical images from Queen Charlotte Sound and Hecate Strait --- walls of phosphorescence with green lines carved Zorro-style by a school of fish zipping close to the surface. We never discovered what type despite Alun spending much of the witching hours with a crazed grin on his face and a fishing-line in his hands.



We met Greg at the fuel dock in Prince Rupert in the early morning of June 20th and loaded up with more bags, skis, ice axes, another guitar and then we were five. After checking in through customs in Ketchikan, Alaska we sailed up through Wrangell Narrows into Frederick Sound where at last we had our first view of bergy bits from Le Conte Glacier at the head of the sound. A

little further down we were treated to an hour-long feeding frenzy of approximately 70 dolphins around the boat followed by visitations of whale upon whale. Swinging north around the corner into Chatham Strait, we dipped our bodies into the wonderfully misnamed Baranoff 'Warm Springs'. Steam rose from a natural granite scoop in the midst of a coastal rainforest and when the heat threatened to overcome consciousness, meters away a cold glacially-fed waterfall offered opportunities for self-temperature readjustments. After turning west into Icy Strait and finally past Glacier Bay with Icy Point off our bow (Icy, Glacier --- the names were beginning to sound promising to a ship of mountaineers) we were finished with the Inside Passage and out in the open Pacific. On June 27th, 270 kms north of Icy Strait we arrived in Yakutat only one day after Bertrand had flown in; the team was reunited.

In the interest of expediency we left the next night. After organising a food drop and reconnaissance flight, to cover the 60 kms to the toe of the Hubbard Glacier. The Valerie and the Hubbard Glaciers join a few kilometers upstream before they both spew out their ice into Disenchantment Bay through a long, large calving front. Praising our steel-hulled boat often and liberally, we pushed through the thick brush that we encountered at daybreak, directed by a crew member in the rigging seeking the path of least resistance.

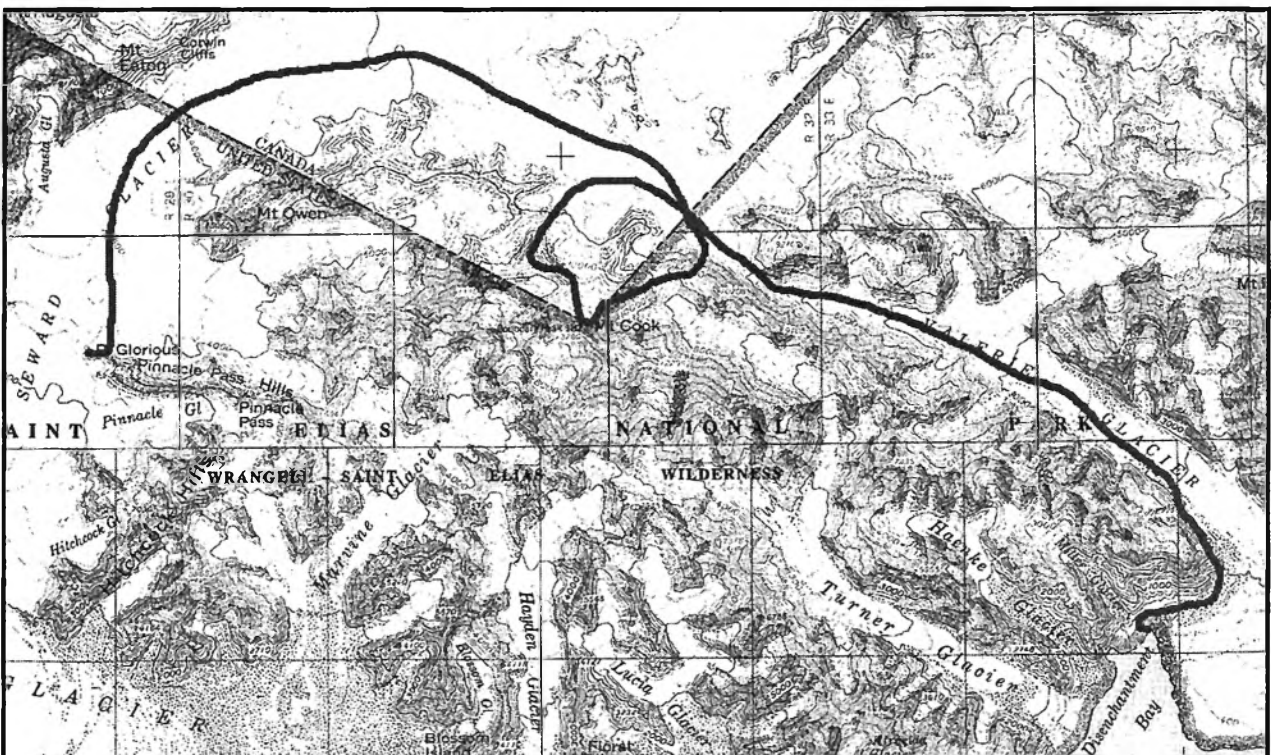
The morning sun warmed things up quickly; activity was high on the chaotic calving fronts of the Turner, Haenke and Hubbard with rumblings, grumbings and bergs breaking off every few minutes. Nevertheless several dingy loads later we were all safely ashore by 0830, with Chris and Toby sailing Gambo back to her berth at Yakutat. Lack of sleep combined with carrying the rubber zodiac, motor and fuel to a suitable burying place shifted the entire team into low gear. It was a scene reminiscent of the poppy fields in the Wizard of Oz: half-full backpacks spitting up gear with the packers strewn about the beach snoring away. I wasn't having any of it though --- after recently seeing the new touched up version of the movie a childhood flashback of those damn flying monkeys scared the living daylights out of me and I continued to bury the zodiac thinking 'Lions and Tigers and Bears ... Oh My!' I had just avoided treading in fresh Grizzly scat so bears were on my mind and I wondered about their cursed taste for rubber.

The poppy effect wore off by midday and soon we were trudging with our packs along the water. There couldn't have been more sublime approach --- sun shining, ambling along a pleasant beach with the active toe of the Hubbard immediately to our right; its jumbled calving front had an ice-cube texture akin only to ice I had seen in ice-falls or surging glaciers. Large bear tracks kept us moving for 10 hours until we could gain the moraine of the Valerie on the night of June 29th --- two weeks after leaving Vancouver. By the next morning, the first day of an expedition's effects were felt. Breakfast conversation was as follows:

Alun: 'Bertrand, could you grab that piton?'
 Bertrand (defiantly): 'In exchange for what?'

But there was no need for bickering; as the sun passed the yard-arm we had reached continuous snow and could deploy our crazy-carpet sleds --- the best little mountaineering invention since crampons. The rest of the day was spent in high spirits as we worked our way up a corridor of gentle snow between a Little Ice Age moraine to our left and an angry crevassed margin to our right.

Under clear blue skies we eventually gained the Valerie through a crevasse maze at midday, June 30th. The upper valley was



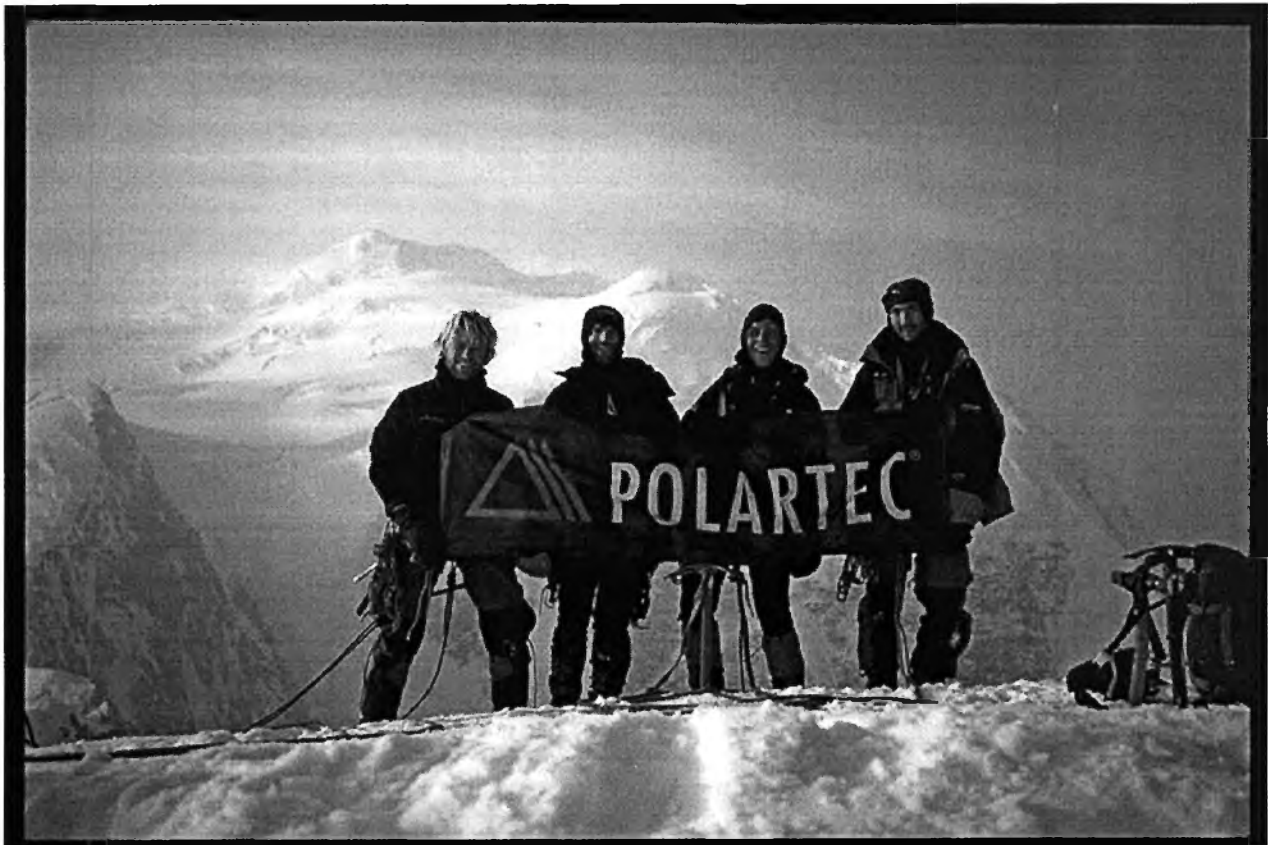
stunningly gorgeous --- the sides of the Valerie basin are near vertical and this end of the St. Elias receives a ton of precipitation: no --- make that bucket-loads of precipitation (I fail to find an appropriate superlative --- perhaps numbers say it all? There was still a meter of snow remaining at sea level in May). That quantity of snow results in a continuous corridor of hanging glaciers and ice-falls through which we were travelling. Tumbling tributary glaciers assaulted us one after the other from both sides, disturbing the

smooth flow of the Valerie and creating crevasse conundrums to contend with. Through each mosaic of slots we tip-toed across the one sketchy snow-bridge that would deliver us through --- it felt as if we were threading a needle through many of these crevasse fields. Fortunate and exhilarated, we reached the divide at the head of the Valerie late in afternoon of July 2nd --- also apprehensive about what a few weeks of melt would do to our return route. But for the moment we skied down the Seward to pick up the food cache and then continued another 5 kms across the USA-Canada border (duty free!) to set up a base camp at 1780 meters close to the proposed ridge. Spirits were high; we had made 35 kms of challenging ground in three days and had finally reached the base of the climb.

As we prepared ourselves for the upcoming escapade, thoughts turned to David. His accident and subsequent absence invited more introspection than average on an expedition: when a friend dies, the questions of how it could have been avoided always float near the surface, especially as these questions relate to your own life. Some aspects were easy for me --- I don't like skiing extreme slopes and so it is easy to say 'Avoid extreme skiing'. On the other hand, I was actively disregarding the obvious solution of 'Avoid mountaineering'. This wasn't an intellectual decision --- there was no weighing of pros and cons: it's because mountaineering isn't an intellectual endeavour, herein lies the difficulty in answering that fundamental mountaineering question 'Why?' and Hillary's somewhat evasive response 'Because it's there.' At that moment, the climb was indeed right there, awaiting our readiness; then was not the time to wonder why, but rather to get on with the business of climbing.

Long mid-summer Yukon days make night laughably bright so we decided to move during twilight to take advantage of firmer snow conditions. After a few days of rest, route eye-balling and procrastination, we pared down our weight, packed 6 and 1/2 days of reduced rations, and with stable pressure we left for the climb just before midnight on July 5th. The conditions were tiring and protection was dodgy --- the north aspect slope we were on had a thin breakable crust over top of a thick sugary powder layer where the penetration varied from shin to chest deep. We set up camp at the base of a rocky ridge at 2100 meters and after lunch (quickly followed by dinner), snoozed in the sun. The following day Bertrand's gut was giving him grief so he curled into fetal position at every opportunity; impatient tugs on the rope elicited moans of "Please say we have the Immodium with us."

Nevertheless despite gastro-intestinal difficulties and even though the rock was no firmer than the snow, Alun and Greg led us up 600 meters where we enjoyed dinner as the warm sun started it's daily routine on July 6th at 2700 meters --Camp II - this travel at

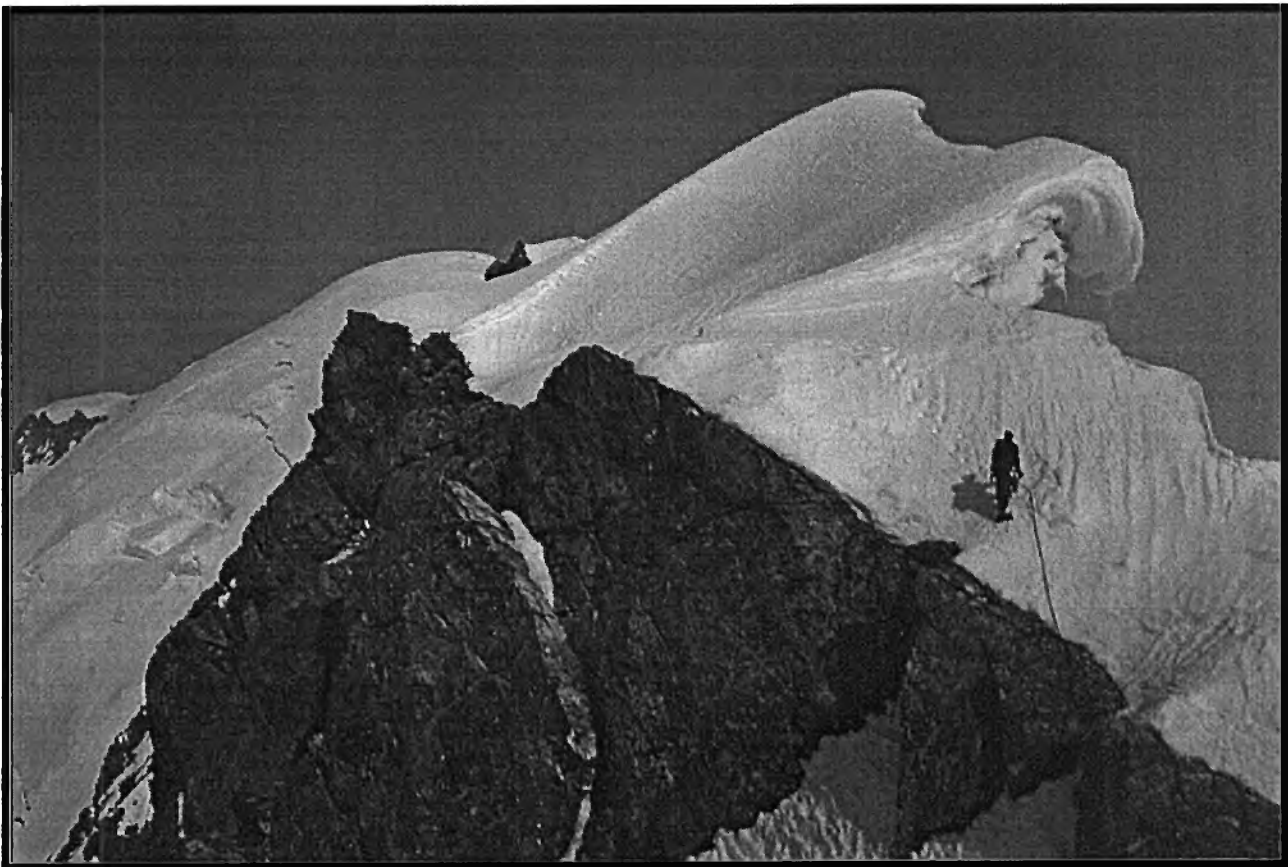


night business had it's advantages. It was another 900 meters to the summit for the third night but the snow conditions were much more favourable so progress was quick. Bertrand led around, through and belled his way over three sets of crevasses to reach the summit of NW Cook (3687 meters) at 0545 on July 7th with clear skies and an excellent view of Mt. Cook, beckoning us from beyond the five kms narrow ridge in between. This un-climbed route had been dubbed 'Two Sphinx Ridge' because of some distinctly shaped cornices on the far end, and this was next on the agenda. We descended towards it and set up Camp III 100 meters below.

Travelling at night through mountains is always a magical time --- the subtleties of snow-reflected moonlight brings out gentle aspects of the landscape that the harsh brightness of the sun washes out. While moving in and out of the cornices along Two Sphinx

Ridge at the start of the fourth night, that gentleness juxtaposed with the sharp realities of the ridge struck a surreal chord within me. We made good time and got to the start of the crux while it was still dark and cold early in the morning of July 8th, two factors that did not lend us any confidence in the face of the upcoming difficulties. This was a turning point; continuing would make return via the ascent route difficult with the amount of food we had. After much humming and hawing (limited by the fact that these are not suitable activities for keeping one warm) we inched our way along to a rocky notch using fixed belays; the descent looked challenging and ascending the far side would not be a cakewalk. We rappelled down and set up a belay for Bertrand as he oscillated between going up the rock ridge or trying the lower discontinuous snow slope to the right to regain the ridge around the corner. He was changing his mind so often it kept him right in the middle of the 70° slope of boilerplate ice, which was fortunate since that seemed to be the best route for the time being. He put a screw in at the bifurcation point, shouted to us that he was going down, then proceeded straight up. It was a bold rock lead through loose and steep blocks, but he managed it and banged in a solid piton anchor at the top of the steep rock where our ridge continued along with a saner gradient. The rest of us came across with peace of mind, and had lunch at the top of the notch. It was fairly late, we had been moving for 15 hours, so we decided to camp (IV) with 800 meters left to the summit of Mt. Cook. The earlier view we had had of two nunutaks sticking out of the mist on the Pacific side had been washed away by the rising clouds and we wondered whether our good climbing weather was coming to an end.

With the increased elevation and temperature drop we switched to a daytime climbing routine and slept the fifth night. The morning saw us finish Two Sphinx Ridge with a few hundred meters of elevation gained by climbing over the backs of the sphinx-cornices in lessening visibility. There were 500 meters left to the summit and it appeared as if the technical difficulties were over and done with; this was fortunate as a white-out descended upon us. Between memory, GPS and our altimeter we managed to locate ourselves immediately below the summit at 1045, July 9th. However, exactly which direction to take wasn't clear. With Greg leading we pressed on towards the nearest local maximum and soon, with Greg flailing about on a vertical ice-mushroom in driving horizontal sleet Alun quickly called for a fighting retreat, deciding it was deteriorating too quickly to continue. We descended 30 m behind the summit ridge to plan our next move; either waiting a little for the winds to subside or forget the summit and lose some elevation to get out of the strong summit winds.



This was the end of day 5, food was low, and an unknown descent lay ahead of us. Alun strongly wanted to set up the tent where we were and wait it out. His argument prevailed, weighted heavily by the knowledge that we hadn't managed to summit yet. And we were so close! As we set up the tent a far-away look came into Alun's eyes and he began to reminisce about his recent Patagonia expedition 'Ah, this reminds me of the summit of Cerro Pared Norte. The storm lasted six days, and we had no food ...' he spouted dreamily. The rest of us thought of reconsidering the decision to stay, but it was too late --- Alun was excitedly unfolding tent poles in the screaming wind. 'That was the storm when the tent got flattened by 12' of snow!' he chirped. Nostalgia is a very powerful emotion.

After fifteen hours of being buffeted by severe winds on the summit ridge, at 0230 a promising clear patch appeared in the sky. We celebrated by making a full dinner ration at the end of our 6th night and emerged from the tent at 0400, just before sunrise. Indeed,

we had not been heading in quite the right way the previous day; the true summit was 200 meters the opposite direction via an easy snow slope, so un-roped we jaunted up to a glorious sunrise on the summit of Mt. Cook (4196 meters) and stepped into the USA once again. We had travelled more than 2000 kms over water and climbed 4200 meters over ice for the past three and half weeks to be honoured with incredible (although cold) views of Augusta, St. Elias, Logan and Vancouver. There is no epiphany upon reaching the goal of a long, committed climb --- simply a quiet sense of awe and accomplishment at being part of the grandeur that surrounds a peak. The sun rising behind Mount Vancouver shed it's light on the vista as we had a celebratory shiver on the summit.

For the next three days we were frustrated by short weather windows, hunger and falls into crevasses (luckily my 10-meter, upside-down excursion into a yawning slot resulted in nothing worse than a delay). By 0500 on July 13th we had crossed the border three more times and were back on the Seward Glacier only a few kms from our base camp at the foot of NW Cook (aka food). We had spent 9 and a half days climbing NW Cook, Two Sphinx Ridge to Mt. Cook and descending via the previously climbed north ridge. On July 13th another solid blocking high pressure system had moved in and we spent the day lazing around base camp and eating. With the release of tension from the climb, conversation passed to David and musings about our reasons for climbing. Tilman, in 'Adventures under sail' has the following motivation for sailing:

Each voyage had a purpose, frivolous though to many that purpose may seem. Rather than escaping from anything we were facing up to reality. As Belloc said "Everywhere the sea is a teacher of truth. I am not sure that the best thing I find in sailing is not this salt of reality ... There, sailing the sea, we play every part of life; control, direction, effort, fate; and there we can test ourselves and know our state."

Self-reliance within the bounds of forces larger than oneself is a common thread between ocean passages and mountaineering. Ultimately I believe that the "it" within Hillary's "Because it's there" is the paradoxical combination of freedom and constraint that the mountains (and the sea) offer --- freedom to follow a self-determined course, to explore magnificent areas of this earth where none have been before, to reduce life to the basics. Freedom tightly constrained by factors completely and utterly out of our control such as the stability of a snow slope or a storm.

David once wrote "I do not know my motivation for climbing. But one thing I do know: having finished a good day of climbing, particularly ice or alpine, I feel happy as a trouble-free child, smiling from hair to toe. It could be that you are just happy still being alive, but I think it is more than that." This is perhaps the most telling. Mountaineering is not simply about scraping through a dangerous situation --- it is not a game of Russian Roulette. There is a deeper satisfaction involved that is difficult to elucidate, perhaps even defies words. It is about living, about living fully and completely and no-one knew this better than David. Safety is of course a concern, but living in complete safety does not lead to a complete life; most extreme sports exist despite, not because, of their extreme nature. In memory of David and his love for the mountains, we have applied to have NW Cook renamed "Mt. Persson".

Bertrand and I headed off to the knoll opposite Cook to get a view and managed to cut some telemark turns on the way down. Heading back into base camp, it was apparent that the sense of relaxation which comes after lifting a long period of stress was prevalent. Alun and Greg were crashed out, kit spread everywhere. With the comfort of warm sun all tension eased from our minds; with full bellies, sleep seemed like the wise choice.

We left that night to return to the Valerie/Seward divide at daybreak of July 14th (crossing the border). Unfortunately the tenuous snowbridges which we had ascended the Valerie on were much worse for wear due to two weeks of melt. Reluctantly we turned and climbed back to the head of the Valerie. The conundrum was that if we didn't get back to our dingy, we had no way of getting out aside from calling for a plane which required line of sight vision for our hand-held VHF. This could only be potentially achieved from the ice-fall at Point Glorious where the Seward joins the Malaspina Glacier 50 kms away. From there we suspected contact was possible with Gulf Air Taxi planes doing their regular route to a logging camp in Icy Bay. Bertrand was in pain from a touch of frostbite on his feet and wasn't looking forward to a long march, therefore a split was in order with Alun, Greg and I going light to Point Glorious (cross-border, cross-border, cross-border) with a two-day supply of food and bivouac gear. Greg, coming from a cross-country ski background, is a certified wax-head. With the thought of a 50 km flatish ski he began to salivate heavily, lost no time in getting out his gear and began layering Swix Special Red vigorously on everyone's skis; Alun observed, somewhat anxiously, having a neophyte's suspicion of the art of waxing, but there is no stopping a frenzied Nordic skier armed with a cork. At 1330 Greg was off at loppet race-pace with Alun and I breathlessly trying to catch up and Bertrand waving good-bye, keeping guard over most of the gear and food, a selection of books and comfortable booties.

By 2330 we had been up for a 24-hour day and going hard for the last ten as we were buffeted by katabatic winds through the weird landscapes of supra-glacial lakes on the lower Seward. St. Elias, Augusta, Queen Mary, King George and the other side of Cook surrounded us, we were dead tired and savoured a superb bivy as the winds subsided with wonderful views through all points of the compass. July 15th dawned and we surprised ourselves by making radio contact immediately upon climbing Point Glorious. Kurt Lawyer, a pilot for Gulf Air Taxi, was on his way within an hour and then a second flight sent Kurt to where we had left Bertrand. By the end of the day we were all back on Gambo celebrating with drinks and fresh Halibut (compliments of some friendly Texan folk).

Bertrand was flying back to Vancouver, and we had arranged for another crew member, Armel Castellan, to meet us in Yakutat; he had been awaiting our arrival. On July 16th, with a quick change of personnel, Armel, Alun, Greg and I went back to the head of the Valerie and Hubbard Glaciers to retrieve the dingy, then out to the open ocean where we stayed on the outside waters in the interest of making good time back to Vancouver. Poseidon treated us well with favourable winds and by July 20th we were coming into Dixon Entrance, crossing the border one last time into Canadian waters. The winds turned against us briefly in Hecate Strait, but we

managed to make time for a dip on Hot Springs Island in the Queen Charlottes, our first bath since the pit-stop at Baranoff Warm Springs weeks and weeks before. This is part of motivation to engage in expeditions: to leave what is ordinary, to expel yourself from everyday life and its set of rituals (like bathing). By ridding life of habits an appreciation for those which really matter arises (like bathing).

Sailing to and from a climb offers an intermediary avenue connecting urban and mountain life where existence is still focused on safely getting to where you want to go, but there are some of the niceties of life which are absent on a climb. July 26th: a clear, hot and unfortunately still day marked our return. After a quick pit stop at Wreck Beach to pick up some friends (and a very welcome beer-vendor who hitched a ride) we were back in Gambo's berth in False Creek. Moored safely again to a dock, the cycle was complete: Gambo had ushered our return to all the follies and wonders of an urban existence.

ACCOUNTS

Transport:

1 x rtn & 3 sgl international flights:	\$2,200.00
Boat haul-out, survey, refit & diesel service:	\$1,200.00
Fuel & lubricants for <i>Gambo</i> :	\$900.00
3 x GulfAir Taxi flights:	\$1,300.00
<i>sub total:</i>	\$5,600.00

Equipment:

1 x MSR DragonFly:	\$80.00
2 x snow pickets:	\$40.00
5 x Crazy-Carpet Pulks:	\$100.00
1 x Double Rope:	\$150.00
Garmin GPS:	\$290.00
VHF radio:	\$290.00
Charts & maps:	\$310.00
Pilot, tides books & Sailing Instructions:	\$120.00
<i>sub total:</i>	\$1,380.00

Subsistence:

42 x 5 man days of expedition supplies:	\$1,500.00
20 li of coleman whitegas:	\$50.00
<i>sub total:</i>	\$1,550.00

Miscellaneous:

EPIRB service:	\$200.00
Safety – flares, fire extinguishers:	\$250.00
Insurance – boat & climbing:	\$1,400.00
Film & DVD Video	\$400.00
Park Permits	\$120.00
admin, phone, fax, editing, applications & report:	\$450.00
<i>sub total:</i>	\$2,820.00

TOTAL OUT:

\$11,350.00

Funds:

Mount Everest Foundation:	\$1,200.00
British Mountaineering Council:	\$1,200.00
Malden Mills - <i>polartec performance challenge</i> :	\$3,000.00
Gore's <i>Shipton Tilman Fund</i> :	\$3,000.00
Personal contributions (covered by AH, DH & BE):	\$2,950.00

TOTAL IN:

\$11,350.00