

More First Ascents in the Coast Range of British Columbia

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[This is a sequel to William L. Putnam's "First Ascents in the Coast Range of British Columbia," *A.A.J.*, VII (April 1948), 25-32.—*Ed.*]

SHORTLY after dawn on 20 July 1947, the Tellot névé glistened in the early morning sun. As the four of us at High Camp—Charles Shiverick, Harry King, Leonard Winchester and I—had made plans for a reconnaissance of Mount Serra, and as the highest peak seemed inaccessible from the north or east, we crossed a steep ice col between its first peak and Stiletto, with the hope of traversing to a route we had noted both from the air and from Dentiform. A long traverse took us to the brink of a lateral rim. After some scouting we found a 300-foot ice gully which gave access to a névé basin on the south side of Serra's first two peaks. Climbing through knee-deep snow on a 45-degree slope was tiring work. At 11,700 feet, I chopped some steps in glare ice to gain a rock ridge. Two hours of moderately difficult climbing on this sharp ridge ended the day's efforts, for we spotted a possible traverse that should lead to the "Y" ice gully just below Serra's summit. We plunge-stepped and glissaded down another arm of the basin, and then returned to camp via the traverse, finding an easier route 100 feet below our old steps.

We had planned to continue our route the next morning, but decided instead to take a shorter trip and chose the challenging Claw Peak. We descended one and a half miles of névé to its base, then climbed a snow and rock face to its west ridge. Having heard reports of the first attempt, we came well armed with pitons. The Claw Peaks are merely the continuation of the Tiedemann chain that separates the Tellot and Tiedemann Glaciers. The west and highest Claw Peak rises opposite a great icefall which spills the Tellot reservoir directly to the Tiedemann.

After donning sneakers, we roped in twos to meet the first major obstacle: a great slab. A strenuous layback provided the solution to its problems, but then a steeply pitched, knife-edged ridge

loomed overhead. The granite sides of the ridge were smooth and without enough cracks to justify an attempt. Straddling technique helped on the first portion. I placed two pitons from awkward stances, continuing the very difficult ascent. For ten feet it was necessary to make a hand traverse from the sloping ridge crest while hanging directly above the Tellot, 500 vertical feet below. Beneath a great tilted slab I placed another piton, and struggled to easier ground.

Consolidating here, we continued by making an airy traverse to the right of the ridge and then climbing directly to a notch 100 feet from the summit. Here another piton was needed for safety before a rounded arête led to the very peak. The profile of the knife-edged ridge was such that we were unable to rappel and had to make a very difficult climb down.

Little did we suspect how tragic July 22nd would be, as we followed our steps up the basin on the south side of Serra. The circumstances surrounding the death of Charles Shiverick have already been reported in these pages.* Whatever the cause of the accident, it brought on us, and on the country, the loss of a splendid companion and a fine mountaineer. We agreed that evacuation of the body would be unjustifiably dangerous, and subsequently held a burial service and erected a cairn at the head of the icy gully. In tribute to Charles Shiverick, we have asked that his name be given to the fine isolated peak which he had climbed with Putnam.

We descended to Base Camp on the 23rd and broke the bad news to the other four, whom we met on the lower Cataract Glacier—Putnam, David Michael, Graham Matthews and Frank Magoun. Putnam turned entire charge of the expedition over to me and left, with Michael, on the 24th, wishing us all good luck. Winchester, King and I were slowed by injuries. Matthews went hunting often, generally returning without luck, but always bringing a bucket of berries. Rain fell almost continually.

Rain stopped on July 28th, and interest in climbing revived, although three of us were not yet up to par. Pocket Valley beckoned,

* See *A.A.J.*, VII (April 1948), 89-91. It should be pointed out that, from the day of the accident, considerable attention was of course devoted to problems surrounding the proposed evacuation of Charles Shiverick's body.—*Ed.*

a green gem between the Parallel and Scimitar Glaciers; and we packed five days' food and equipment to a camp near the Parallel Glacier that afternoon. Early on the 29th Magoun, Matthews and I left this 4000-foot base for Frontier Mountain, the castle-shaped rock peak of 10,000 feet at the west side of the 7200-foot pass leading to Frontier Creek and the Klinaklini River. We ascended morainal debris, the Cornelia and Frontier Glaciers, and some very soft snow in a steep couloir. The south face offered an airy 500-foot ascent in sneakers, the latter part of which was quite difficult and exposed. Our vantage point proved excellent for mapping unexplored regions to the north. At daybreak on July 30th Winchester and King left for the 10,000-foot peak just east of Frontier, which is the highest point on the long ridge from Mount Projectile to Granite Creek. From the pass on its west they ascended snow and rock, then an icy gully to the north ridge. The angle of the ridge proved to have been most deceptive, for it was very narrow and exposed, requiring continuous belaying. Mount Delusion was considered a good name.

The next day we all left for peaks at the head of the Parallel Glacier. We circumvented its lower icefall by a passage on its left. Near the base of Threshold Peak, some five miles up the glacier, a narrow snow bridge proved a thrill. Here we split. King and Matthews made the ascent of 9600-foot Threshold Peak, a face climb of ice and rock that was quite trying. The rest of us climbed 10,000-foot Hermit Peak. Only the summit pinnacle and a bergschrund near the Geddes col were troublesome. The five of us reached camp about midnight.

On August 2nd Magoun and I left the valley at daybreak to climb Outpost Mountain, the 10,500-foot ice peak just north of Mount Roovers. Access was a problem. Several miles up the Parallel Glacier, we turned north to ascend its north branch, which we called the Oval Glacier. A 2000-foot ice cascade made reaching the upper Oval a difficult procedure. We climbed through many rubble piles, chopped steps up teetering séracs, and worked across countless ice bridges. Luckily, there was a route through, and we found it. We then trudged north across several miles of breakable crust to the base of the mountain, had lunch, and climbed an ice face to a narrow rock crest at the flank of its east ice face. Except for a few exposed traverses, we had little to worry about. The clear atmosphere allowed us to view distant peaks in all directions.

We saw that we had scaled all the outstanding unclimbed peaks we could reach from Pocket Valley, with the exception of Mount Roovers. The east face and adjoining ridges of its towering summit seemed hopeless. On the descent we avoided the dangerous icefall by traversing east across the south face of an unnamed peak flanking the Oval Glacier, before dropping to the Parallel.

Since several planes had flown near us recently, and had us wondering, Winchester and I returned to Base Camp. At 11.00 P.M. on August 3rd King, Matthews and Magoun left for 10,600-foot Roovers. They climbed to the ice col overlooking the Roovers Glacier via the Parallel. At dawn they descended 1000 feet and travelled down the Roovers Glacier to the center of the 2500-foot west face. They climbed a long series of ice gullies, rock arêtes, and snow patches to gain the south ridge near the summit. The whole ascent was very exposed. In the early afternoon they left the summit and returned via the same long, exacting route. In the dark, they had to climb to the ice col on the Parallel-Roovers Glacier divide, and then make the long descent to Pocket Valley. After 28 hours of climbing, they took advantage of some extra time to sleep.

On August 9th King, Magoun, Matthews and I made the tiring ascent to the Tellot again. Winchester, having planned to be out by this date, had left. Ever-widening crevasses made route-finding on the Cataract Glacier more of a problem than before. As we reached Cataract Col at six, a plane message dropped to us stated that it was urgent we reach the Tiedemann Glacier in three days, conforming with evacuation plans. King and I climbed empty to High Camp and brought the tents and some duffel to the base of Claw Peak, where Magoun and Matthews had brought the remainder of our duffel from the col. In the dark we set up camp on a rocky brink overlooking the névé slopes leading to the Tiedemann Glacier. Even though it was very cold at night, it seemed appreciably warmer here than at High Camp. A cloudy night brought new snow in the morning, stalling activity.

The 11th dawned brilliantly, so King and I reascended the very difficult Claw Peak, finding the climb every bit as exciting as before. In the afternoon we all descended 3000 feet to the Tiedemann Glacier, placing camp on a medial moraine. A plane

had dropped four food bundles across the glacier, so in the dusk we chased after them. Another drop provided us with more gas and two "walkie-talkie" (SCR 536) radios.

Our big hope was a clear day on which to try 12,400-foot Mount Asperity, provincial Canada's highest unclimbed peak. August 13th dawned beautifully, so we set out from camp. In less than an hour we turned off the Tiedemann, at about 6700 feet, and began climbing the glacier salient directly beneath the gigantic upper walls of the peak. In two ropes we worked up a crevasse maze that had only one route. A most insecure bridge at the junction of a crevasse and a hanging ice wall was very difficult. The cascading glacier here forced us over to the right, where we had to climb rubble and icy séracs. Above us was the great 2000-foot ice couloir leading to the serrated divide connecting Tiedemann and Asperity. A skewed tunnel cut through the overhanging upper lip of the bergschrund, providing a means whereby Magoun worked above the schrund, cutting away obstructions. Once above this, we made rapid progress, as crampons bit into the steep, grainy ice. As the sun struck the upper granite walls, it melted verglas, and small rocks showered down on us. We hurried to avoid the danger and reached a safe rest spot at 10,800 feet.

A steep ice pitch took us to the 11,500-foot ice col. We were struck by a terrific wind, which bit through all the clothing we could muster. The tremendous chasm of the Radiant cirque, below to the north, was an appalling sight. Blue ice seemed to cling to the north walls of the Tiedemann chain at terrific angles. After a lunch in a protected recess, we climbed east up a steep, powdery-snowed ice arête, and then a droop in the ridge which had a great cornice. Soon we reached the base of the final 300-foot rock face. Here we seemed stopped: a narrow ridge offered only a little hope. Both flanking faces were hopelessly steep and glazed with icicles. But a little advance revealed a way. I led a difficult traverse on glazed rock and then worked up 50 feet of iced rock to a small notch in the arête. Then a dry 80-degree slab taxed our ability. Finally Matthews, wearing Bramani boots, did a fine job of scaling the slab to a pinnacle suitable for belaying. In another rope length of glazed arête climbing, we joyfully finished the difficult climb at 3.00 P.M.

We were happy also to find shelter from the wind in a rock

cranny. Among the surrounding peaks, only Waddington and Tiedemann rose higher than our summit. We could see the waters of Bute Inlet and Middle Lake. The startling sheer faces of Serra, Tellot and Tiedemann attracted much attention, but so did Waddington and the Parallel Glacier peaks. Rappelling facilitated descent from the difficult rock ridge. The fierce wind blew so hard on the ice arête that we had to "duck walk," with arcs of rope far to the lee. After descending the treacherous caked snow of the ice arête, we donned crampons to begin the descent of the great ice couloir. It was pleasant to be out of the wind and also clear of the regions where rocks fell. The long couloir was again trying on the ankles. The many crevasses, the tunnel and the rubble slopes all gave us trouble, but without further incident we reached the tents at nine.

On a beautiful mid-August day, King and I made a reconnaissance of Mount Stiletto and its great west needle. We climbed to the ice col between the needle and Serra's first peak, descended 200 feet, and climbed to a notch at the west base of the needle. In four rope lengths of climbing up glazed rock and insecure snow patches, we reached a great slab. Here we changed to sneakers and traversed to a platform. I went up a series of short vertical granite blocks, placing one piton. In two rope lengths, King belayed me across an awkward traverse. Soon I was up a chockstoned chimney and reached the ridge between the needle and Stiletto. Routes appeared on both, but since it was already five, we deemed it best to wait another day. On the descent we left a fixed rope below the slab. In the evening the other two arrived from the Tiedemann Glacier camp. On the 16th we climbed to Stiletto's base, but waited for a local snow-showering cloud to clear. It did not clear by mid-afternoon, so we returned to camp. In the sun, the heat was terrific at times, but an afternoon cloud would immediately freeze water on the melt tarp. Technical climbing under such conditions was too dangerous on these exacting peaks.

The 17th was clear; but, since it was unbearably windy on the Tiedemann Peaks, King and I climbed Mount Shand while Matthews and Magoun scaled the east peak of McCormick, some ten feet lower than the west summit, which we had already climbed.

On the 20th Magoun and King joined Fritz Lippman and

Bud Gates, of the Sierra Club party which was now on the scene, in the successful ascent of Stiletto's needle. They followed our route to the ridge between the needle and the main peak. Here they made a traverse on the north face, and ascended a most difficult crack. A piton pendulum and a direct-aid pitch finished this very spectacular ascent. Even the descent *en rappel* was nerve-wracking. In the morning King and Magoun left for Base Camp. Matthews and I confirmed our suspicions that an attempt on Stiletto, with all the fresh snow on its ledges, would be unduly risky. Since we did not have time to await a clearing, we also left. The Cataract Glacier had changed much even since our ascent of 11 days before. Photographs of earlier parties show that these glaciers have receded generally, especially the Cataract. The Scimitar and Parallel Glaciers, however, seem to have held their own. Grainy ice can be reached on both just beyond their snouts.

On the 22nd Magoun travelled quickly to the raft ford, where he found Wilson and Batic. We all returned seven miles to Base Camp in the afternoon. Next morning, with three pack horses, we moved camp to the Homathko. Matthews and I were still interested in climbing a great peak in the Five Finger Creek region, between the Homathko forks, largely to scan unknown regions to the east. The rest of the party moved out in the morning of the 24th, wishing us luck, and leaving a little food and equipment for our use. They would leave caches along the route. Matthews and I took food for three and a half days and began strolling through the sandy forest to Five Finger Creek. Since this raging stream emerges from a narrow gorge, we had to climb 1000 feet up the forested hillside and traverse a mile to gravel bars farther up-valley. A few miles on the bars took us to a valley fork, some six miles from the Homathko. Here we saw a great glacier in the right fork, with our objective between the glacier and upper Five Finger Creek. We thought the forks a good base. Since, we have given the names Royal Glacier and Pagoda Peak.

At daybreak we crossed a quarter of a mile of terminal moraine to the snout of the Royal Glacier. Well developed and high lateral moraine showed greater activity in earlier years. A big rock cliff and icefall, similar to that of the Parallel, blocked our route, but we managed a snow and rock climb on the right to by-pass this barrier. We hurried, being exposed to any falls off the huge

north walls of Hanging Peak. Fluted ice patches and hanging glaciers clung to the near-vertical walls for miles on either side of us. Soon we crossed a flat, crevassed section of the glacier and saw its source at a rim of rounded peaks. It was all of three miles in length and at its head fanned away in several directions. Royal Peak fed a huge icefall at the southeast corner. Pagoda crowned the high, serrated, sedimentary ridge to the north. The bulging south face had some overhangs, so we climbed a long diagonal slab to the ridge crest east of the summit. Slab rock, verglas and icy snow patches gave us no chance to relax vigilance. The whole massif is composed of westerly dipping sedimentary rocks, although Pagoda had numerous granitic outcrops. We expected a great drop on the north face, after what I had noted from the plane in June, but the reality of its sheerness was terrific. Even the tremendous north walls of Hanging Peak, and those of the Tiedemann chain, could not best the ice-patched face below. A narrow, jagged ridge rose above.

We changed to sneakers and left axes, to begin the final assault. Holds were generally sufficient, but untrustworthy. I led several rope lengths of both difficult and very exposed rock work. Finally, some granite pitches, although difficult, ensured success, as the holds were all sound. A succession of false summits, all difficult on their own, led to the apex. We estimated our height at 10,400 feet and noted Pagoda was the highest point between Razorback and the Homathko Forks. Hurriedly, as a stratus layer was rapidly converging from the north, we built a cairn, mapped and admired the scene. We saw scores of unknown glaciers, peaks and valleys. The walls of Reliance, Success, and Queen Bess seemed close to the south. In one view to the west we could spot every summit of the Cataract and Tiedemann chains and Waddington's crest also.

We were prompted to leave by a hail flurry. Long rappels quickly took us down the very difficult ridge. The intricacies of the slanting slab took time and much belaying. Lower down, we descended a heather spur, crossed crevasse mazes, and climbed down ice slopes to camp, finishing the 7000-foot descent at nine. On the 26th we returned to the raft-crossing in three hours, finding the travelling along the northwest bank of the river much faster. The next day we pushed across the swamps and bushy trail to the cabin of Pat, the trapper, half a mile north of Middle Lake; and on the 29th we finished the last 29 miles to Tatla Lake.