

Canada

ST. ELIAS RANGE

Fairweather and St. Elias mountains traverse.

On April 25 a group of four acquaintances-cum-friends were shuttled across Haines inlet in an outboard motor boat. At Davidson Point, just across the water from Haines, Kari Medig, Merrie-Beth Board, Jacqui Hudson, and I, Lena Rowat, were dropped off and left

to our own devices to find our way across the Fairweather and St. Elias Mountains. This was to be the final leg of an effort to connect a route from the group's roots in Vancouver, B.C., to Canada's highest peak, Mt. Logan, climbing its east ridge and skiing down the King Trench on its west side.

If you have ever traversed a range of heavily glaciated mountains, you know generally what happened next. Days stretched into fine long periods of meditation, as we took in the continually changing beauty around us. Of course a few misadventures made our story more interesting.

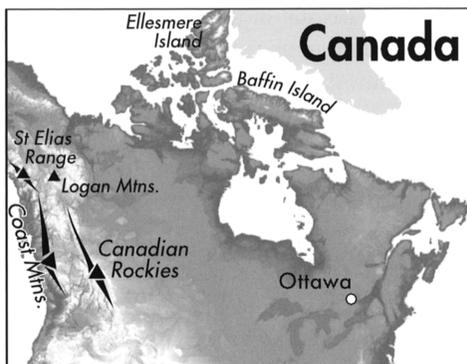
The weather smiled upon us in the first two weeks, so much so that I began to feel snow blindness coming on. Eye drops only worsened the problem, dilating my pupils for the next week. We entered "The Twilight Zone," traveling only at sunset and sunrise. We would set up and break camp twice a day. After 10 days we had crossed the Fairweather Range and returned to sea level at Alsek Lake, where we stopped at Gary Gray's wilderness lodge. This was the only point along our route where we were off snow and ice, and, with its grassy runway and marine radio, was our closest contact with civilization. We bathed by heating tubs of water that were hauled from the river.

On May 7 Gary boated us across the Alsek River, and our journey took a turn through a milk bottle as clouds descended upon us for the better part of two weeks. We followed a compass that invariably led us in zigzags.

On May 18 we finally approached the much-anticipated Logan massif. I approached with a lopsided gait for three days, as I had lost a pole down a crevasse. The Logan East Ridge base camp was the trip's biggest social event, and Kari was particularly psyched to be meshing with other testosterone. He was learning what many women mountaineers face regularly: it can be fun being the only one of your sex in the group, but it adds emotional challenge.

Climbing Logan began considerable changes to our routines and group dynamics. Whereas we were all comfortable skiing across mostly flat terrain with relative independence, suddenly we were literally tied to each other, and the differences in our styles of doing things could not be avoided. With the added stress of constant exposure, group dynamics went through some growing pains. Having never climbed all together before, we all worked hard to adapt our methods, and managed to stick it out, supporting each other well through the upper altitudes, where thin air wore badly on Jacqui and me. We all took turns skipping or hurling our meals.

After 15 days of mostly magnificent East Ridge climbing, ferrying loads, and sitting out a few bad-weather days, a beautifully calm and sunny day allowed us to crawl along, skirting the tops of the clouds, to reach the summit col at 18,500'. We camped as low as possible on the



west side of the summit plateau, feeling good for having made it “over the middle.” From that camp three of us made one failed summit attempt in bad weather, before proceeding toward our descent. We stumbled across a research camp on our way off the plateau, where in good company we rested and fattened up for 24 hours. From here Kari and M.-B. climbed to within meters of the west summit and got some excellent powder turns on the descent.

On June 7, after 18 days on the mountain, in four hours we got 9,000' of good skiing to the King Trench base camp. It was all kudos and boundless energy, as our lungs filled with the intoxicating dense air of the lower elevations.

Here we switched back into flat-terrain mode and sped off across the last 250 km of glacier to our exit point, Cordova, Alaska. The first half of this leg was a straight line across the massive Bagley Icefield. Once across the icefield, we were glad to be back in more exciting terrain, with passes and small icefalls to navigate. On June 14, day 51, this terrain proved to be more exciting than hoped for, when Jacqui miraculously survived a 25' fall on her head, on the rocky bottom of a crevasse.

The last four days continued to serve up unexpected challenges. Glacial recession had taken away much of the ice that we had hoped to travel upon in order to reach Miles Lake and the Million Dollar Bridge. We were especially impressed by Jacqui's continued endurance, especially when later x-rays revealed that she had fractured several vertebrae in her fall.

Finally, on June 18, after 675 kilometers, an elevation range of 19,000', and 55 days in the wilderness, we stood by the first road that we had come across, and waved down a ride into town.

This trip would not have been possible without support from a myriad of sources, both personal and organizational. Mountain Equipment Co-op, The Canadian Himalayan Foundation, and The Jen Higgins' Fund all contributed significantly to reducing the financial burden. We are most thankful.

LENA T. ROWAT, *Canada*

Juneau Icefield, traverse. A ski traverse of the Juneau Icefield, with part of the terrain crossed being in Canada, is reported in Climbs and Expeditions under Alaska.

KLUANE NATIONAL PARK RESERVE

Kluane National Park Reserve, mountaineering summary and statistics. During the 2002 climbing season in Kluane National Park Reserve, a total of 130 persons participated in 35 mountaineering expeditions. This accounted for 2,258 person-days in the Icefields of Kluane. This is somewhat lower use than in previous years.

The weather this year was relatively normal—unpredictable, depending on where and when you were in the Icefields. Snow conditions were a bit unusual. It appears that low winter snowfall and warm conditions made for a shallow, unconsolidated snowpack. Many expeditions reported crevasses being poorly bridged, and in many areas a breakable crust and deep sugar snow prevailed, while on the King Trench route in the early season hard wind pack and huge sastrugi created problems for expeditions.

Most expeditions aimed for Mt. Logan, with 27 teams attempting it—16 on the King Trench, 7 on the East Ridge, and 4 on other routes. Fifteen teams were successful at reaching one of the main summits (Main Peak, East Peak, West Peak). Successful expeditions took from