Time Out for Glacier Circle

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WITH only ten more days at our disposal, Sterling Hendricks, Polly Prescott, John Southard and I decided to go to Glacier Circle in the Selkirks. Due to the isolation of this section we would have to backpack in all our supplies for the whole time, so we wished to keep our loads as small as possible. We had only that day in which to plan and prepare for the trip and the heap of equipment and food which we assembled late that afternoon looked hopelessly large at first, but by careful discrimination we reduced the amount to four reasonable loads.

At midnight, August 3rd, 1935, we took the train to Glacier, B. C., where we disembarked early the next morning in a driving rain. After a cold sandwich breakfast, we splashed up the road to Bill Hartley's home where we were received with true western hospitality. By noon the rain let up though the clouds were still low. We packed most of our food up to Perley Rock, located above the icefall of the Illicillewaet Glacier. Here we cached our food behind a large boulder in the snow beyond the reach of inquisitive animals. From this point we had hoped to get enough of a view across the névé to plan our route but the visibility was nil.

Early the next morning we again set forth, this time with the real intention of starting. At Perley Rock, which we now thought of as the Pearly Gates guarded by a jealous St. Peter, we were again turned back. This time we left our ropes and descended to Hartley's.

At 6.45 on August 6th we made our third attempt and were rewarded with enough of a view to make it possible to start. However, clouds closed in frequently, making it almost impossible at times to see each other. But finally we reached the far end of the névé and looked down on Glacier Circle, a luxuriant oasis in the midst of a land of ice. A vertical drop of 1500 ft. was between us and the lovely meadows below. Instead of keeping to the left below Mt. Macoun, we moved diagonally to the right down the cliff. The way below us was over grassy ledges which seemed far steeper with our heavy packs than we anticipated. Eventually we reached one pitch where we had to lower the rucksacks. Polly climbed down first to receive the baggage. At one point her wild

gestures filled us with curiosity but we could not hear what she shouted. We soon discovered that Sterling's rucksack had rolled over and dashed over the cliff.

We located the sad remains about 200 ft. below. Doubtless we would have been more amused at the crazy array of socks, underclothing, food-bags and broken tins, had we not been so weary. Sterling and I remained behind to gather what remains were useful, while Polly and John went in search of the cabin, which is completely concealed in the trees with no blazes or trail to mark the way. It was nearly 6 P.M. until we were all together at the cabin, and before we could make our supper we had to do a bit of house cleaning as the only inhabitants for over a year had been pack-rats which had found the floor and cupboard quite to their liking.

Early the next morning we approached the icefall of the Deville Glacier and crossed below but well away from the towering chunks of ice to the rocks on the left. Here we found some nice climbing up a long chimney and finally out to the top of the icefall where an extensive circle of mountains commanded by the stunning summit of Mt. Wheeler sparkled in the early morning sun. This was our objective, so we crossed to the eastern spur and climbed up the snow to the rocky outcrop. After studying a possible route we decided to descend to the glacier again and make the ascent of Wheeler entirely over the snow slope nearer Kilpatrick. Clouds began to appear over the horizon and rapidly assembled above us. By the time we were between 9000 and 9500 ft. we were completely enveloped by impenetrable fog. We tried to keep diagonally to the left in hope of reaching the Kilpatrick-Wheeler Col, but at a point well above 10,000 ft. we had seen no signs of it. Hoping that the clouds would lift, we halted for a bit of food. Through the thick fog a dark spot attracted our attention and in a few minutes we climbed up to a huge snow cornice over what seemed to be a bergschrund. Over this we worked our way and came out on a rock ridge swept clean by a fierce wind. We followed the ridge toward the left to the highest point where it dropped suddenly off, but the clouds concealed the depth. We knew this could not be Wheeler, but was it Kilpatrick? We could see nothing which could be a clue and because of the cold we dared not stay longer. Guided only by our tracks in the snow, we descended carefully and came out of the clouds into a sunny world as unexpectedly as we had gotten

into them. Though we looked back often on our return over the glacier, the clouds still concealed Wheeler and Kilpatrick.

Our next climb was up the east ridge of Fox, first over smooth slabs, where we used sneakers to great advantage, to the grassy slopes above. Here we left our sneakers and scrambled up to the rocky arête. The huge gendarme half way up was a bit of a problem but we were able to pass it by a traverse to the left and then up a steep gulley. The rock along the ridge was quite sound and offered some interesting pitches. We remained on top for some time to enjoy the view. Everywhere was ice and snowy peaks. Far across the Illecillewaet Glacier Mt. Sir Donald dominated the sky line and challenged us. It was still early in the afternoon, but we had a long distance to cover so started down the ridge again. At the large gendarme we turned off the route we had used and ran down the shaley south side of the ridge to the Fox Glacier. Keeping on the ice, we descended to the level of the grass slopes on Fox where we had left our sneakers. Our descent was to the right of the slabs we had used previously but from tree line we retraced our steps of the morning.

As we had climbed between 4000 and 6000 ft. each day for the past five we decided to take a day off. Polly and I rested by washing all the towels, sweeping the floor with freshly cut rhododendron branches and mending our tattered clothing. The men chopped wood all day, rushing into the cabin every hour or so to get relief from the mosquitoes which tortured them.

With renewed vigor on August 10th we climbed the east ridge of Selwyn. In order to move more rapidly we used two ropes, John and Sterling on one, Polly and I on the other. The appearance of clouds cut short our stay on the top and after all roping together we ran down to the Selwyn-Häsler Col and slowly up to the bergschrund which guards the top of Häsler. We hoped to go on to Feuz Peak[1] but deep rumbling of an approaching thunderstorm changed our minds for us. We hastened down to the col and made the rest of the descent over the ridge of Häsler which drops down to the Fox Glacier.

Our next ascents were the two minor peaks [S. E.] of Augustine.[2] Following the long walk across the Deville Glacier to-

[1] Häsler, Feuz and Michel Peaks are the three summits of Mt. Dawson, highest mountain of the Selkirks south of the C. P. R.—*Ed.*

[2] The highest point of Augustine was first attained in 1909 by Butters, Holway and Palmer.—*Ed.*

wards the Bishops Glacier we chose our route up a rocky rib which appeared below the two central peaks. The rock was extremely flaky. We had to exert the greatest caution to the very top of the rib, where we took a short rest. With all the speed we could summon in the deep wet snow, we hurried to the left below the threatening seracs. Two bad crevasses were crossed before we reached the bergschrund below the summits. Though the snow was soft, a sharp wind made us grateful for the shelter of some rocks near the top.

On both peaks we found cairns built by Mrs. Best's party.[3] One summit she had called "Camerade," but the other was not named at all. We looked longingly across to the highest peak which was seemingly connected by the broken ridge but our better judgment made us abandon the idea of going at this late hour with conditions as they were.

Early on the morning of August 12th we left our cozy little cabin and, profiting by our error on entering Glacier Circle, kept well to the right end of the cliff and reached the Illecillewaet névé without trouble.

The sun was extremely hot and our already badly burned faces reddened perceptibly. Arriving at Hartley's early in the afternoon we enjoyed hot baths and rested luxuriously for the final climb on the morrow.

August 13th was as perfect a day as any climber could hope for. We slowly mounted the path through the gigantic trees which are so typical of this part of British Columbia to the rocky slopes below Mt. Sir Donald.

While eating breakfast on the saddle between Uto and Sir Donald we studied the famous northwest arête of the latter peak. As it was in perfect condition we decided to make both the ascent and descent by the same route. We left our climbing boots and put on sneakers, the better to enjoy the feel of good hard work and firm footholds. The joys of the cragsmen were ours; sound rock, difficulties enough to keep us alert, spectacular cliffs, congenial companions and warm sun to fill us with cheer. Unhurried, we moved upward to the top. Our playground of the last ten days lay like a map below us. Our disappointments were forgotten as we lay here in the sun, reliving each climb and hopefully planning more for some future time.

[3] With Christian Häsler, probably in 1929.—*Ed.*