

Mts. Monarch, Silverthrone and the Klinaklini Glacier

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FOR our 1936 visit to the Coast Range we had in mind as a main objective the ascent of Mt. Monarch (11,712 ft.), both for the climb and as a means of learning more of the little known region between the Klinaklini and Bella Coola Rivers. If this were successful we planned to join Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Don Munday for exploration of the Klinaklini Glacier and ascent of Mt. Silverthrone at its head as a supplementary viewpoint over the same general region. These objectives were all attained. I had previously explored the approaches to Monarch and the possible routes of ascent. The Mundays had visited the tongue of the Klinaklini glacier in 1935 and found what would be needed to at least get on the ice.

Two students, William Hinton from Putney, Vermont, and his cousin Sherrit Chase from Philadelphia, were anxious for adventure in the western mountains, and were accordingly assigned to accompany the Mundays out from Vancouver early in July. In the meantime Hans Fuhrer joined my brother-in-law, John H. Storer, and me at Williams Lake on June 30th. In one automobile we three and the driver with all our food and equipment essayed the rain-soaked road west from the lake to Graham's at Tatla Lake the same day. Stories of vanished horses greeted us and after being joined by Sam Chulin, an Indian whose trap-lines center on Knot Lake, we set out on July 2nd with borrowed transport. Stopping the first night at George Powers' ranch at Charlotte Lake, the next night at the brow of the great drop into the N.-S. (Klinaklini-Atnarko) trench valley, we reached our campsite of three previous visits on the S. shore of the alluvial fan from North Creek (later called Success Creek) on the W. side of Knot Lake. A sandy beach, tents just in the shelter of big trees with sufficient breeze to drive away any lurking mosquitoes, and the superb view down the lake to a bold, dark, glacier-hung rock rampart rising over 7000 ft. above the lake's 2000 ft. combine to make this one of those rare, perfect spots which one always hopes to revisit.

Storer had come more to see this country and to photograph the wild animals than to climb. While Hans and Sam made a first relay up North Creek he and I spent the day in search of moose, deer and bear, for photographic purposes, securing the latter two before returning to camp. We were rather worried when Hans and Sam failed to return by bed-time or even for breakfast the next morning, but met them not far from camp, and while Pete and I went on, the others returned to the lake for loads. It rained, and Pete and I spent that night under an overhanging bank of the creek just below the glacier, reaching the cache at 5500 ft. the next forenoon, July 6th. The others came up the following day also having spent a night en route—for although the distance was only some eight or ten miles the going over rock slides and through heavy brush, especially with heavy packs, was not conducive to speed, particularly for men fresh from the city.

For the next week rain or threatening weather was in order. Fresh snow fell down to 6000 ft. On the 8th I went over to the glacier which sweeps past the N. side of Monarch. We called it the Talchaako (White Water) after its river which joins the Atnarko at Stine to form the Bella Coola River. Ernest Feuz and I had started our fifty-hour circuit of the mountain by it in June, 1934. It describes a flattish U, ending in almost the opposite direction from its southerly start. Where it passes the head of Success Creek it has deposited a bulging, now almost stagnant lobe, which is melting away in a lake, seepage from which, under a high moraine, runs across the divide into the creek. On the 11th Storer, Hans and I explored the lower eight miles of the glacier, the total length of which from the crest of the névé is 18 miles or more. The ice-stream, two miles wide where it passes Monarch, is squeezed into an immense 3000-ft. canyon for its last two or three miles, to a width of only a few hundred yards. The snout is perhaps 1500-2000 ft. above sea-level. At its head is a fine glacier-hung, squarish rock peak perhaps 10,500 ft. Two prominent peaks of better than 10,000 ft., which I had seen clearly in 1933 from above Stine, rise above its left bank. Several goats were seen on the rock and grass slopes above the ice during the day.

After two more days of rain, Hans and I made a reconnaissance up through the icefall of N. Horseshoe Glacier on the 14th to see if this would be a feasible route for our first attempt on Monarch when the weather should permit. The result of the trip was

the highly satisfactory discovery that not only would the icefall be less formidable than previously supposed, but that this route would join ours of 1933 from the S. Horseshoe Glacier, and thus take us to the base of the route which we had abandoned that year.

After one more day of delay to allow for more complete clearing, Hans and I started out at 2.30 A.M. on the 16th, in clear, mild weather. In the first light of dawn we negotiated the icefall and in three hours had gained the upper snow-covered glacier on a ringing crust, the temperature dropping rapidly before sunrise. Above 8000 ft. there had been no melting since the recent heavy snowfalls and we were soon struggling knee deep in powdery snow up a 30° slope. At 9000 ft. a keen wind blew clouds of snow into our clothes as we negotiated a small crevasse at a steep angle. By 8.30, about an hour later than expected, we reached the connecting ridge between Monarch and a 10,200-ft. peak to the south which we had called Queen in 1933. The rocks and hanging glacier of Monarch appeared from below to be in worse condition than when we had seen them three years earlier. However, as we soon learned we were in exceptional luck. The sun had softened the new snow surface sufficiently the day before to permit of a very strong crust forming during the night. After climbing easy rocks, made troublesome by the new snow, we came to the glacier which literally hangs astride the south-east ridge of the mountain as it departs from the actual face below the main bergschrund. Before, we had feared avalanches on its steep 40° to 60° surface. Now with crampons and occasional step-cutting we walked up almost unhindered as far as the bergschrund. The sky was covered by a thin, high film of cloud. Despite the fairly good pace my hands were none too warm, under heavy gloves, with the strong west wind. The bergschrund nearly defeated us, at least the nature of the new snow on its upper and lower lips was such that two shorter men might have been hard put to it to bridge the gap of something like ten feet between solid footing below and sufficiently firm snow above to hold the weight of a struggling climber. Finally Hans, from my shoulder, got a hold with both ice-axes, pulled himself up three feet, handed down one axe with which I pushed him up another four feet, and finally reached the underlying ice twenty feet above. We continued, cutting steps in hard blue ice for a hundred yards, and then in the hard crust again

as we approached the main couloir leading up directly to the summit ridge. With the slope we stood on nearly 60° and apparently 70° or 80° above, Hans turned up a side gully in which snow steps were safe and better than the underlying ice. The climbing was everywhere steep but nowhere really difficult. At 3.30 we came out on the summit ridge, but were forced to traverse past the head of the main couloir and around to the west side before reaching the actual summit at 4 P.M.

One view which we had so long anticipated was perfect in every direction. To the N. and W. stretched a jumbled maze of peaks, snowfields and an occasional deep valley. Directly north beyond the Talchaako Glacier and W. of the river stood the cluster of sharp rock peaks lying S.W. of Stine. Several of these appear to rise above 10,000 ft. They are bounded by valleys on the N. (Bella Coola), E. and W. (Nusatsum), less than 1000 ft. above the sea. Recurrent rumors of a peak over 11,000 ft., just S. of the Bella Coola Valley, seemed to be effectively answered in the negative. The Nusatsum Valley does head up into the W. slope of the Talchaako snow-fields, ten miles W. of Monarch, confirming the report of a white trapper. The Sheemahaut heads not more than five miles from it, going thirty miles W. into Owikeno Lake, really an extension of Rivers Inlet. To the S.W. stood out clearly the rugged backbone of Vancouver Island, 125 to 150 miles distant; Mt. Silverthrone, not very important but the highest peak at the head of the Klinaklini Glacier; and farther to the S., the Klinaklini Valley. Knight Inlet (the water not visible), and then the Waddington group itself. Resting just on Waddington's summit was a light band of smoke, which descended around the upper 2000 ft. in the next hour. Every peak near Waddington was clearly visible with field-glasses, the whole group being only between 40 and 50 miles away. Perkins Peak could be made out, and the 3000-ft. rolling plateau country to the E. must have been visible for the maximum possible distance, perhaps 100 miles. Camp was just hidden, a matter of only a few hundred yards. While Hans retired to shelter to make cocoa I succeeded despite the strong wind and a slightly injured hand in sweeping the horizon with my camera. Thoughts of the necessary descent were put away as long as was safe, and then only the lure of hot cocoa got me off that summit, Hans wisely yelling that I could only have it by joining him below.

Our upward tracks were hard and safe. The bergschrund we jumped in turn. In just over two hours of fast going we were back to the 9500-ft. ridge—it had taken over six for the ascent. Crampons made this climb. Without them we could not have done it in one day. A short halt for a tin of pears and we trudged steadily down through the powdery snow area, then onto breakable crust, a wearisome business, and finally at dusk to the icefall. Here our tracks of two days before and that morning had melted, and despite considerable care we soon got off the proper route and wandered aimlessly in a labyrinth of towering ice blocks in the dark. I had already suggested to Hans the advisability of seeking a safe resting spot for the night when we came quite by chance on the morning's route, and succeeded in following it not without several temporary deviations, through the worst of the icefall by 10 P.M. In pitch dark with the candle lantern we returned to camp, guided at times by the fire, at 11.30 P.M.

One more crossing of the Talchaako Glacier to climb a 9000-ft. peak for a better view of Monarch from the N., as well as some of the peaks at the head of the Nusatsum, and we prepared to leave, as there was not time to put a camp across the glacier for an attempt on any of the important peaks W. of the Talchaako Valley. From camp the morning before we left several goats and kids were seen crossing the snout of N. Horseshoe Glacier below us. Pete had been busy discovering a "gold mine" while we were climbing. This district, according to him, will most likely be found to contain gold whenever it is more thoroughly prospected, whether in paying quantities is the question.

Under a hot sun in a cloudless sky we moved down to Knot Lake on the 20th, encountering some difficulty in crossing Success Creek which had risen enough to submerge the logs previously used as a bridge.

Except for the stalking of a large bull moose to within fifty yards for photographic purposes, the journey out to Pete's cabin was accomplished without greater incident than Sam's "dutch leave" as soon as we reached Charlotte Lake, just another example of the rather childish unreliability of this Indian, an otherwise good man in the mountains. Storer left us with Pete at Charlotte Lake to go out by Stine while Hans and I returned by road to Williams Lake and Ashcroft, thence by rail to Vancouver.

On July 29th Hans and I took the Union S. S. Co.'s *Venture* from Vancouver, reaching the cannery at Glendale Cove at 2 A.M. on the 31st, where James Stanton met us with his gas-boat. On the way up Knight Inlet a few hours later, at Glacier Bay, we met the combined Sierra Club-B. C. Mountaineers party led by Bestor Robinson and President Dobson of the B. C. M. From them I learned of the success on Waddington's S.E. rock tower (the first complete ascent of the mountain) on the 21st by Fritz Wiessner and W. P. House, as well as the first ascent of Mt. Bell by a party led by Robinson.

At Stanton's cabin on a slough of the Klinaklini River we were greeted by Fritz Wiessner, Bill House, Elizabeth Woolsey and Alan Willcox, who had gotten out of the Franklin Valley only the previous afternoon.

In fine weather the next morning, August 1st, Hans and I with Stanton and Jim Varney in his narrow, flat-bottomed boat set out up the Klinaklini River to join the Mundays. Varney had come in with them the year before and being fascinated with the country and the life had stayed throughout the winter to assist Stanton with his trapping and other work. In three hours, with two portages, against the strong current, Stanton took us up to the first cabin, near the head of navigation, a distance of six miles. Stopping only to eat and load everything on our backs the four of us set out through the heavy forest for the second cabin, which we reached at dusk to be greeted by Mr. and Mrs. Munday who had come back from the glacier. They with Bill and Sherry and assisted by Stanton and Varney, had come in two weeks before with far more labor, since they had had to back-pack the whole way after Stanton's boat had broken down. The Mundays, Hans and I walked up the Klinaklini flats the next morning, passing over the bluffs on the W. side of the roaring W. branch of the river, a mile below the tongue of the great glacier, where camp had been established.

In 1928 the survey party led by J. T. Underhill, B.C.L.S., while triangulating the Klinaklini Valley had walked across the snout of the main glacier without difficulty, thus circumventing the W. branch. Some time between then and the Mundays' visit in 1935 the ice had retreated, uncovering a stream which issues from a box canyon out of a side valley to the W., which was absolutely uncrossable by ordinary means and which they had called

Tumult Creek. Munday had brought in a quarter-inch steel cable and a wheel to run on it and, before Hans and I arrived, had placed it across the torrent. The Mundays in a long day went up Tumult Valley, crossed Tumult Glacier, came down on the opposite side, and camped. By signaling across to Jim and Sherry and after twenty attempts a line was gotten across, the cable secured on the high south bank to a log buried under a stone pile, and held on the N. bank by two A-frames. In the stream was a huge split boulder, in which an intermediate stick was inserted to prevent too much sagging of the cable as persons or baggage were sent across on a small cross bar attached to the six-inch wheel which ran along the cable, held in place by the weight suspended from it. The stream was about 100 ft. wide. A complete crossing of the whole party and all equipment consumed one and a half hours.

On August 4th, after a previous day of relaying, the six of us moved camp, in a long day, ten miles up the main glacier, and after some difficulty found a campsite on the west side in the woods at dark after Munday had had a nasty fall while crossing a glacial brook. A day of reconnaissance by the Mundays and me, and relaying from the glacier cache by the others was followed by a similar day during which we went up the middle branch of the main Klinaklini Glacier for a distance of twenty miles above the snout and ten above our Midway camp. On this second day the Mundays and I came to very close quarters with a yearling grizzly and a large female grizzly with her two young cubs, all at the same time, the mother bear at last charging us and stopping only six feet from Munday. We were very fortunate to escape unhurt. Later in the day we located a good spot for a camp about eight miles from Mt. Silverthrone, near the head of this, the west central branch, one of three main branches of the huge Klinaklini Glacier, the longest of which may turn out to be nearer 35 than 30 miles in length, measured above the snout of the main glacier.

After two days of rain, Twenty Mile Camp was made at 5200 ft. on a heather-covered slope near tree-line, 200 ft. above the ice. Then followed four more days of rain. On the 14th we climbed a small rock peak behind camp, which because of its shape was called Fang. Just below camp was a pond between glacier and solid rock, which completely emptied and filled two times during the rains. It was perhaps 200 by 100 yards and 80 ft. or more in depth. Directly across from camp this branch of the glacier

alone was over two miles wide. Half a mile above camp the glacier became snow covered. Melting had produced a deeply pitted surface, difficult to traverse on foot or ski. The Mundays and Bill and Sherry had carried in skis all the way from Stanton's, who had lent the party two pairs abandoned by Watson and Beumann at the tongue of Franklin Glacier in April, 1934.

On the 16th a start was made before daylight in rather too warm weather for Mt. Silverthrone. After five hours up the scarcely frozen surface, we came at eight o'clock to a broad snow col from which another long glacier dropped away to the N.E., with the peak itself to our left. The climb was an easy snow walk with a short steep pitch up to the summit ridge, which we followed in a westerly direction in a few minutes to its highest point beyond which the rocks dropped away to a divide, on the N. of which another new glacier flowed far below tree-line for some eight or ten miles. Clouds soon drifted in but not before we had gained a fleeting glance at the entirely unknown country to the N., after a brief look at Monarch towering impressively twenty-five miles to the E. Hans and I had covered 900 miles to get from one peak to the other. Our aneroids placed Silverthrone at 9700 ft., a great let down from the 11,000 ft. which we had placed it at from Mt. Combatant two years before. The clouds now shut out much of the view. We returned to camp, and repeated the ascent two days later, on the 16th. Sixteen hours were required on both days.

The second ascent was made after an earlier start and was fruitful of an almost complete view for the first half hour on top. The mysterious peak near Bella Coola, which could not be seen from Monarch, was also invisible from Silverthrone. We could not be certain whether the rivers from the two N.-flowing glaciers, which evidently united, eventually reached Owitseno Lake and Rivers Inlet, or the nearer Kingeowe Inlet. Silverthrone, a secondary peak of the range (but the highest for twenty miles), yet gives rise to what is the largest glacier so far discovered in North America, S. of Alaska. At its snout the glacier has retreated but a few hundred yards from its farthest point of advance in recent times, but has greatly thinned, all along its course. From the snout at an altitude of 450 ft. there is a rise of only 4500 ft. in the first twenty miles of its length, and the bed is comparatively even. Bad crevasses exist principally at the turns. There are no important icefalls.

On the way out, from Midway camp, we crossed the gently rolling ice and climbed up through steep forest to the middle ground between the Klinaklini Glacier and river to an altitude of some 6400 ft., and had a fine view across to the Waddington and Bell groups. There is one good peak of probably at least 11,000 ft., W. of Mt. Bell, rising out of the Klinaklini Valley almost its full height, which is, however, going to be difficult to reach.

From our snout camp, we watched several goats on the cliffs across the main glacier stream, which joins the Klinaklini River two miles farther on, not far below the canyon which prevents travel up the main river valley. This branch may supply as much as one-third to one-half of the full volume of the river. The goats seemed to be seeking shelter from their enemies, the wolves, tracks of which were numerous on the gravel bars, but for each wolf track there were scores of bear tracks of all sizes. Bill and Sherry were chased 300 yards by one of two grizzlies which they came upon while going along the gravel flats on the way out. They dropped packs and ran at first, but the bear running the faster, they made a stand. It came straight for them, swerving when only ten feet away and disappearing into the bush. The actual tracks and distances were fully on record in the sand when the rest of the party reached the scene a few minutes later.

On the 24th Stanton and Varley came up to the first cabin where we had all arrived the afternoon before, and by noon we were all back at his slough cabin. Later in the day we moved down to his new log house then in early stages of construction near the shore at Dutchman's Head, the prominent headland between the Klinaklini and Franklin River mouths.

At dawn on the 25th the six of us started for Vancouver in Munday's gas-boat, reaching Minstrel Island after a somewhat rough passage down Knight Inlet for the first night's stop. Two black fish, really moderate-sized whales, blew and thrashed about in the water quite near, and the usual seals bobbed up at intervals. The sail was completed without special incident in three and a half days in lovely weather, forest fire thickening the air south of Toba Inlet. Hans and I drove down to Mt. Baker Lodge the next day, August 29th, and climbed Mt. Baker among the crevasses of the N.E. side on the 30th, at the same time that Bill and Sherry, stopping off a day on their bus ride to Colorado, were climbing Mt. Hood.