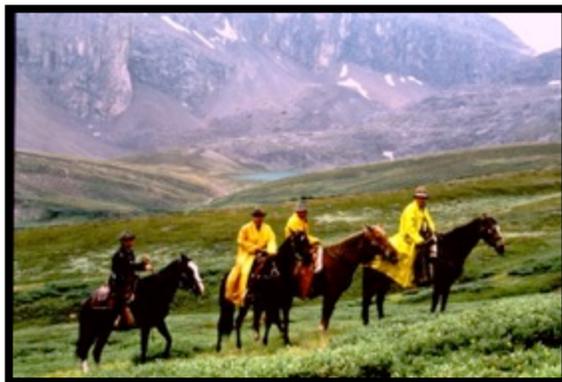


PARKS CANADA CENTENNIAL COMMEMORATIVE CLIMBING CAMP  
July 24<sup>th</sup> to August 1<sup>st</sup> 1985.  
by Clair Israelson, 1985



In the fall of 1984 Parks Canada management requested the Warden Service to propose events and projects to help celebrate the 1985 Centennial of our National Park system. As the mountain National Parks were first used and explored by horse outfitters and mountaineers, and since these traditional activities continue to be essential skills for park wardens today, we decided an exploratory trip using horses for access and climbing previously unclimbed peaks in the Clearwater Group of Banff Park was an exciting and appropriate Centennial project.

Since the inception of our National Parks six park wardens have lost their lives in the line of duty. In 1929 Percy Goodair was killed by a grizzly bear in Jasper's Tonquin Valley. In Riding Mountain National Park Lawrence Lee was shot by poacher(s) in 1932. James Brink and Robert Marak died when their patrol vehicle was struck by a transport truck in Banff in 1972. In 1981 in Banff, Neil Colgan died after being kicked by his horse while on backcountry patrol. Also in 1981 Robert Leblanc was killed in a fire fighting accident in Kouchibougeiac National Park. To commemorate 100 years of Canadian National Parks, and to recognize the dedication to duty of the Warden Services across the country we will request the Canadian Permanent Committee of Geographic Names to designate the mountains surrounding the north fork of McConnell Creek as the Warden Ranges, and to name six of the peaks climbed after these men.

On July 24 (1985) park wardens from British Columbia to Newfoundland met at Lake Louise to do a final equipment check and get organized to leave the next morning. Trip participants were Darro Stinson and Willi Pfisterer from Jasper, Hans Fuhrer from Kootenay, Tom Elliot from Yoho, Ed Abbot from Elk Island, Eric Dafoe and Frank Burstrom from Revelstoke/Glacier, Peter Deering from Gros Morne, Brent Kozachenko from Waterton, and Don Mickle, Ron Tessolini, Gaby Fortin, John Nylund, Dale Loewen, Tim Auger and Clair Israelson from Banff.

At 6:30 am on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July 1985, Dale Loewen, John Nylund, Don Mickle, Darro Stinson and Gaby Fortin rode out of Lake Louise with 30 head of horses we would use for the trip. By 2:00 pm they had covered 58 kilometers of rough trail and were waiting at Scotch Camp for the rest of the crew to arrive by vehicle. The remainder of the day was spent organizing food, camp and climbing gear, saddles, packboxes and personal kit into loads for the packhorses.



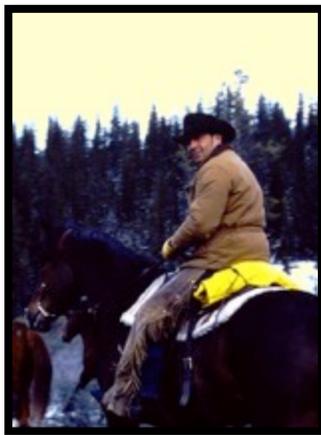
Tim Auger, Frank Burstrom, John Nylund and Gaby Fortin

At daybreak the next day the work began in earnest. Horses were saddled and packed, and soon small groups of three or four men were started off up the Red Deer River trail. At McConnell Creek we turned north and followed the right side of the creek, along an old trail that had been cleared of deadfall a few days earlier.



John Nylund & Willi Pfistered tying off the diamond hitch before leave Scotch Camp

Travel was good for the first six kilometers, until the trail petered out at the end of the gravel flats below the creek forks. Past this point there had not been any trail clearing, so we picked up an elk trail on the north fork of McConnellCreek. Although this route seemed to be a good idea at the time, it turned out to be a poor choice. The timber became thicker, and the horses had to jump, squeeze and crash through the bush. Packs came loose and had to be reset, horseflies attacked in earnest, and the terrain changed from gentle slopes to a steep canyon where a slip would result in a 50 meter fall into the stream below. Our admiration for the early explorers who bush-wacked for months at a time grew immensely.



Dale Loewen



Tom Elliot fording the Red Deer River on Charcoal

It was a great relief when we finally entered the open alpine meadows. A few kilometers more and we arrived at our campsite, a meadow beside two small lakes, just below treeline. Although we had only travelled 15 kilometers from Scotch Camp to the campsite, the horses were tired and we were glad to have that part of the trip behind us. As we were riding into the campsite we met John, Dale, Don and Gaby who had found an easier route up the west side of the valley. Their trail up the left side of the creek was used for all further travel in and out of the valley.



The pack horse support team.



Tim Auger at the Red Deer River



Hans Fuhrer, Tom Elliot, Willi Pfisterer and Darro Stinson



Arriving at Two Lake camp.

By evening camp was set up, and while Don, Dale, Gaby and John returned to Scotch Camp in order to pack in more supplies the following day, the climbers set out to scout out the surrounding countryside. Later, after a swim in the lake and an excellent supper prepared by Frank, we sat down and planned our climbs for the next few days. For each day the reports from various parties listed below.

July 27, 1985

Peak 662286, elevation 3065 meters, climbed by Clair Israelson and Eric Dafoe. From Two Lake camp to the ridge immediately north of the camp, then following the crest of the ridge up steep steps interspersed with gentle saddles, 3 kilometers to the summit. The steps are occasionally overhanging but the rock is solid in these areas, difficulty UIAA V, 5 ½ hours from camp to summit. No evidence of prior ascent was found. We built a cairn and left a register, then descended a ridge to the southwest to a saddle, then via southeast facing slopes into the valley above the camp. Two hours from summit to camp. We proposed to name this peak "**Mt. Colgan**".



Clair Israelson

Peak 658275, elevation 3050+ meters, climbed by Darro Stinson, Brend Kozachenko and Willi Pfisterer. From Two Lake camp, past the third lake to the large fourth lake, (45 minutes) around the north shore of the lake and up the scree slope and cliff bands to a fifty lade (40 minutes). Turn north, up a scree slope and rock ridge to the start of the east ridge (1 hour), and follow up the ridge to the summit (1 ½ hrs), difficulty low grade 4 UIAA. One the summit no evidence of prior ascent was found, so a cairn was built and a register was left. Descent was via north ridge and west face to the col, one rappel, time 1 hour. We propose to name this peak "**Mt Brink**".

Peak 655282, elevation 3050+ meters, climbed by Darro Stinson, Brent Kozachenk, and Willi Psfister. In conjunction with peak 658275 described above, ascent via west face and ridge, 2 hours from col. Loose rock and shale slabs throughout the climb, UIAA grade 3. No evidence of prior ascent was found, so a cairn was built and a register left. Descent was via north ridge and east face, 4 rappels, then down climb to the scree slope, then over snow and boulder fields to the fourth lake (2 hours). We proposed to name this peak **"Mt. Marak"**.



Peter Deering, Tim Auger and Tom Elliot



Ron Tessolini



Eric Dafoe

Peak 667261, elevation 3110 meters, climbed by Hans Fuhrer, Ron Tessolini and Ed Abbott. From Two Lake camp hike up to the third lake, then up easy but loose rock directly towards the north ridge (2 hours). At the base of the north ridge traverse into the east face and rope up. Climb loose 3<sup>rd</sup> class rock and traverse to the east ridge via an indistinct ledge. Follow the east ridge on loose rock (UIAA grade 4) up to the summit buttress. After some problems with down-sloping rock, a final 5 meter chimney leads to the summit. (6 hours from camp). At the summit a cairn was built and a register left. No evidence of prior ascent was found. Descent via easy west ridge to the west saddle, then down north facing scree slopes into the head of the valley and back to camp, 3 hours. We propose to name this peak **"Mt. Lee"**.

Peak 651261, elevation 3080 meters, climbed by Tim Auger, Tom Elliot and Peter Deering. From Two Lake camp hike up the valley to the fifth lake, then hike up huge scree slopes to the ridge. Short rope over tottering piles of shale to the first high point on the ridge, then continue approximately 300 meters to the true summit, where a cairn was built and a register left. No evidence of prior ascent was found. Descent was via ascent route. We propose to name the highest of these peaks **"Mt. Goodiar"**.



Tom Elliot

July 28, 1985

Peak 659302, elevation 3050+ meters, climbed by Clair Israelson, Frank Burstrom, Hans Fuhrer, Brent Kozachenko and Ron Tessolini. From Two Lake camp hike north into the next valley north of camp, then up an easy open ridge into the east ridge of the summit. Follow the crest of the ridge until the summit buttress is encountered at 2895 meters. Rope up here, and follow gully and ledge systems staying close to the ridge of the buttress until the summit is reached. Loose rock throughout, difficulty UIAA grade 3, four hours from camp to summit. No evidence of prior ascent was found, so a cairn was built and a register left. We propose to name this peak "**Mt. LeBlanc**".



Willi Pfisterer

Clair and Frank returned to camp via the scent route, 3 hours required. From the peak, Hans, Brent and Ron continued north along the ridge and climbed Peak 655324 (Smoky Mountain), elevation 3133 meters, which was first climbed in 1919 by the Topographical Survey. They descended via the southeast slopes to the valley below and returned to camp in 3 ½ hours.

Peak 683263, elevation 2835 meters, is the apparent peak on the ridge immediately south of camp, and was climbed by Tim Auger, Eric Dafoe and Tom Elliot. From Two Lake camp up the valley to just below the third lake, then following a sloping ramp to the center of the face. Several pitches of belayed climbing on moderately good rock led to an easier ground and the base of the final cliffs. Two more belayed pitches lead to the summit ridge. UIAA grade 5, 4 hours from camp. Descent was via a large scree gully back to the lake in two hours.

July 29, 1985

On this day it was raining and clouds obscured every ting above treeline, so Willi, Tom, Hans, Darro and Clair saddled horses and rode up to the head of the valley to scout out the access to mountains in that area. Highlights of the day were observations of a grizzly bear, 6 mountain goats, a nursery herd of 102 elk cows and calves, and Willi trying to light his pipe in a thunderstorm.



Hans Fuhrer and Ron Tessolini

July 30, 1985

Peak 709326, elevation 3050 meters, climbed by Darro Stinson and Ron Tessolini. This peak was attempted by these climbers on July 28<sup>th</sup>, via the SSW ridge. However, approximately two-thirds of the way up the ridge they encountered an overhanging drop of approximately 65 meters which could not be negotiated. On July 30<sup>th</sup> they climbed smooth 35 to 40 degree slabs directly up the west face, (UIAA grade 3) requiring 2 hours from the foot of the climb to the summit. No evidence of prior ascent was found, so a cairn was built and a register left. From the peak they followed the ridge south to Peak 713312.

Peak 713312, elevation 2988+ meters, climbed by Darro Stinson and Ron Tessolini, (also Willi Pfisterer, Peter Deering and Eric Dafoe). From Peak 709326 follow the ridge southward, an easy (UIAA grade 2) traverse to this peak. On the summit they met the Pfisterer party who had reached the peak via the south ridge. No evidence of prior ascent was found, so a cairn was built and a register left. Both parties descended this peak via the west face on good scree. When a cliff slab was reached, two 50-meter rappels were required. Descent required 1½ hours.

Peak 718305, elevation 3020 meters, climbed by Willi Pfisterer, Peter Deering and Eric Dafoe. This mountain can be climbed without difficulties via the SW ridge, bypassing both fore-summits. The first fore-summit was by-passed through the valley to the north, then traversed the second through its north face (UIAA grade 2+) to the SW ridge 500 meters below this summit. Then an easy walk to the peak, ascent time 2 ½ hours from the base of the climb. A cairn was built and a register was left; no evidence of prior ascent was found. Descent was via the north ridge (one rappel), 1 hour to the col, then ascend peak 713312 via south ridge, UIAA grade 2+, 1 hour to the peak where the Stinson party was met.

Peak 720295, elevation 3020 meters, climbed by Clair Israelson, Ed Abbot and Brent Kozachenko. Up the valley to the north of the peak to by-pass false summits on the ridge, then up scree and loose slabs of the NW face to the summit, 2½ hours from treeline, no technical climbing required. No evidence of prior ascent was found so a cairn was built and a register was left. Descent via ascent route, 1½ hours.

Peak 725288, elevation 2988 meters, climbed by Hans Fuhrer and Tom Elliot. Ascent via valley to the north of the peak, then hike up scree and slabs of the west face to the summit, 2 ½ hours from treeline. No evidence of prior ascent was found, so a cairn was built and a register left. From the summit the ridge to the south was followed for an ascent of Peak 728281 (Boar Station), elevation 3040 meters, previously climbed by the Dominion Survey party in 1955. Descent by easy slopes of the west face, 1½ hours back to treeline.

That night back at camp we packed the climbing gear away and counted up our accomplishments. Twelve previously unclimbed peaks had been reached, as well as two other summits which had been climbed earlier by others. While much of the climbing had been of a high technical standard, the experience of being in this beautiful valley, climbing with our colleagues from other Parks, and exploring a valley in the Park where not a single trace of human passage could be found made this camp an unforgettable experience for everyone involved. We felt certain the wardens, who over the years had lost life in the service they believed in, would approve of our efforts.

At daybreak the next day were out of bed and breaking camp. Tents, kitchen, food and all the other gear was prepared into packhorse loads for the 27 kilometer ride out to Cyclone Cabin at the head of the Red Deer River. The only problem was that two of the horses had pulled out overnight and could not be found. Eventually, John found them, 12 kilometers from camp, headed for Scotch Camp. As a result the last group did not leave the campsite until almost noon.

As we rode over the hill to leave the valley of the north fork of McConnell Creek we stopped and had one last look. While we were all used to being in the backcountry, this valley had been a special place. We felt proud to be custodians of parks where it is still possible to feel the thrill of exploration similar to that experienced by the climbers and outfitters of 100 years ago.

The trip to Cyclone was long, hot and uneventful. Each of us seemed lost in our thoughts, riding along soaking in the sun and the scenery. At the cabin, the horses were put out to pasture, tents were pitched and everyone sat around talking in tired voices.

August 1, the last day of the trip was a short 18 kilometer ride out to Lake Louise by way of Baker lake and Boulder Pass. The weather was perfect, and the horses were stepping out as they knew they would soon be home. As we rode of Boulder Pass down into the trees we passed a group of hikers who inquired if we had had a good trip. Their answer was a big smile and a "You bet!"

For this excellent Park Centennial event everyone involved offers our sincere thanks to the Centennial Committee, Western Regional Office, for providing the funds necessary for this project. A special thanks to Frank Burstom for the superb job he did cooking for 15 hungry men, and to Dale Loewen and John Nylund whose equestrian skills contributed greatly to the success of this venture.



Back row: John Nylund (Banff Barn Boss); Frank Burstrom (Rev/Glacier); Peter Deering (Gros Morne);  
Ed Abbott (Elk Island); Ron Tessolini (Banff); Darro Stinson (Jasper); Brent Kozachenko (Waterton)  
Front Row: Clair Israelson (Banff); Dale Loewen (Banff); Hans Fuhrer (Kootenay); Tom Elliot (Yoho);  
Eric Dafoe (Rev/Glacier); Willi Pfisterer (Jasper). Missing from photo: Don Mickle, Tim Auger, Gaby Fortin and 30 head of patrol horses.