



# Cliff Notes

Alpine Club of Canada  
Manitoba Section Newsletter  
Fall 2008

"I don't think a wilderness experience is complete until it's been written about." *Ray Bane*

## Visit our website

[www.alpine-club.mb.ca](http://www.alpine-club.mb.ca)

## Upcoming Events

Jan 17, 2009  
Banff Mountain Film Festival  
*(more info on page 5)*

April 25 - May 2, 2009  
Ski Weekend in the Mountains  
*(more info on page 3)*

Winter Event Schedule  
*(see page 4)*

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## The Wapta Traverse

*By David Ford*

I'm proud to be a "Prairie boy". But when a recent ACC "Mountain Adventures" arrived in my mail box, that promo on the Wapta Traverse grabbed my attention. "... the number one spot at the top of everyone's list of must-do experiences ..." (and here I am on the other side of 60), "... spectacular journey across the Wapta and Waputik Icefields ..." (sounded better than the drive from Elie to Winnipeg in a winter storm), and then the ultimate come-on, "... designed for those with little or no previous mountaineering experience ...". That's me! Heck, I didn't even know how we would make the trip — walking? snowshoes? cross-country skis? Well, "No Experience" would be the operative words here.

However, when I was online with ACC National Office to complete my application form, it dawned on me that there is a sport called "alpine touring (AT)", which has a very demanding skill-set and requires a unique set of equipment. Neat! Shortly afterwards, I received emails from the guide (Ferdl Taxbock) and the Camp Manager (Bernie Jess), who politely suggested that I was way over my head and I should first go on an orientation to learn the basics about ski touring. So, I contacted "Gear Up" in Canmore to rent some equipment, and joined Neil van der Putten (ACC Edmonton Section) who was leading a weekend group in Banff National Park: Saturday was a 24 km return trail from Lake Louise Resort base to Deception Pass, and Sunday the 16 km track along Goat Creek. Neil taught us how/when to put on and take off the ski skins, how/when to adjust/release the heel binding, the importance of proper layered clothing

and the necessity of carrying an avalanche kit when going backcountry in the mountains.

On March 15, 2008 I showed up at the Alpine Centre in Lake Louise to meet The Team — Ferdl, Bernie, and seven other members, all of whom had far more experience than me. They actually owned their own equipment! Early next morning we drove northward up to the Peyto Lake parking lot, hoisted our backpacks, put on our AT equipment,



ACC Trip on Wapta

Photo Credit: David Ford

activated our avalanche transceivers, then skied south over the frozen lake, zig-zagged up a tree-covered mountain slope, strapped the skis to our packs for the scramble around a rocky ridge, two more hours cruising along the top of a glacier, around open crevasses, and reached Peyto Hut late that afternoon. And that was the first day!

We spent six nights at an elevation of 2,400 — 2,600m in a series of ACC huts, melted snow for water, took turns learning how to "cook" the dehydrated rations and make tea, then emerged

*Continued on page 3 ...*



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## Simon Says

(Message from the President)

I hope that everyone has had an wonderful summer. I personally have had a fun filled summer of climbing adventures! I was privileged once again to be selected as an amateur leader for the Alpine Club's premier event, the general mountaineering camp (GMC). As most may know the GMC is a long standing tradition dating back to year one of the club (1906). This year's camp was held in the Vowels (just North of the popular Bugaboo range). I spent one week of the six week camp leading people up mountains. The climbs and fellowship were amazing! There is a reason that this camp has been going on for over 100 years. The camp set up is done by Brad Harrison (this year's guides ball patron) who has been doing so for a good number of years, following in the footsteps of his father. The camp is set up in one location and is home for each of the six weeks of the GMC. On week one we had a very rewarding time climbing most of the peaks in the Vowel range. I was discussing with one of the participants as to why it is that we climb (coming from the prairies). We speculated that it is human nature to want to see the horizon and mountains just get in the way so we climb to the top to see the horizon. With that logic we Manitobans should be very fulfilled human beings!

While the GMC was a great start to the summer, the highlight had to be the section trip to Lake O'hara. This year's camp was done jointly with our friends of the Thunder Bay section. We shared the huts and hired a cook (Kelly Mager) who did an incredible job of keeping us nourished. Some of the great hikes and peaks that the area offers were tackled and good times shared with an awesome group of people.

After nearly a week of great climbing based out of the Elizabeth Parker hut in the valley, four of us decided to try an alternate descent from Abbott pass down to Lake Louise. Since we were already at the Abbott hut, there is a ledge system that the old Swiss guides used (known as the Fuhman Ledges) that leads around the sheer face of Mt. Lefroy to a scree cone and down to the moraine covered glacier at the back of Lake Louise. At some places the ledge is about a metre wide and has a fixed rope to clip into. It is a very impressive, moderately technical route from Abbott pass that sure

## Newsletter Information

The newsletter is published four times a year and is posted on our website. All submissions and ideas are welcome. If possible, please send digital copies of articles, ads, or photos. Otherwise, you can submit hard copies to the address below. With every photo submission, please indicate the name of photographer, the subject(s) of the photo, and where the photo was taken.

Our advertising options are:

- \$25 for quarter page or less
- \$50 for half page
- \$100 for full page
- one free advertisement per year (up to half-page) in exchange for a discount to Alpine Club of Canada members; this discount can be a limited or unlimited time offer

Personal classified ads are free for club members.

Send your submissions to the newsletter editor:

Brian Gilchrist  
(204) 269-1587  
brianwg@mts.net

## Executive Meetings

The Manitoba Section holds executive meetings once a month.

Contact our secretary, Len Chackowsky, for details on where and when the next meeting will be held.

**You can also contact Len to see the Manitoba Section's meeting minutes or financial records.**

Email: len.chackowsky@shaw.ca

beats the nasty, steep scree back down the Lake O'hara side. The views are spectacular with the hanging glacier on the face of Mt. Victoria to one side and the Plain of Six Glaciers and Lake Louise down the valley. Recalling these good times I look forward to next year's trip and more adventures! In the mean time there is a new season full of winter activities just around the corner.

Cheers

*Simon*

Masthead photo by Ken Boyko. Summit of Mt. Proteus/Selkirk Mountains, BC.

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healthy (but smelly) 60 km later at the highway near Kicking Horse Pass. Along the way, Bernie and Ferdl showed us how to do avalanche rescue, the use of harness / ropes / knots, long-rope technique for crossing crevasses safely, short-rope technique for climbing peaks (eight of us summited Mount Olive at 3,201m; ten of us summited Mount Gordon at 3,200 m), had lessons in analyzing snow strata / crystals / temperatures, etc., and practiced lots of “up to your butt” deep powder downhill skiing.

Until that week, I'd always associated downhill skiing with a chairlift. Now I realize just how much more you appreciate the experience, how much more you savour the neatly carved S-turns, when you have to walk up the slope first. And even walk up the same slope more than once (e.g. Diableret Glacier) if the rest of The Team wants to ski it again! However, my experience in the ski descent to Sherbrooke Lake still convinces me that all trees should be considered out of bounds and have no place on a legitimate ski run.

All in all, everything that a Prairie boy wanted to know!

Are you like David used to be? Wondering what you need and if you have the skills to go alpine touring? Well, here is your local chance to find out. Join Peter Muir, CSIA ski instructor and national winter ski camp manager for a day at Holiday Mountain.

The day will include a review of the equipment needed, gear tips, free ski lessons/tips and a review of whether your skiing skills are there yet for those big days in the couloirs of the Coast Range or the broad reaches of the Wapta. AND, it's a day of skiing, what could be better than that? Yahoo. Freeheelers can come as well, but the ski tips will be sketchy; AT is the way and the light! Don't like to take lessons for free? Then send a small donation to the Canadian Avalanche Centre to assuage your guilty soul.

See the winter activity list for the dates and how to contact Peter. Members only.

“Up here on the heights, God and Freedom reign. Down below, the others flounder on.” *Henrik Ibsen*

## Editor's Note

This is my last edition of the Cliff Notes. It is time for me to pursue other opportunities and for someone else to step into the editor's shoes.

This current venture started for me back in October, 2005 when I offered to help the then-current editor get the newsletter out. When I set out on this task I was determined to publish the newsletter on a regular basis. For the most part, I think that has been accomplished, although we did miss this summer's issue because folks were just too busy enjoying the all too short season while they could.

Some of my other initiatives worked; others, in particular, “they passed too soon” were luckily not busy at all.

I hope you enjoyed CliffNotes over the past three years. I have fun helping it put it together with the very able assistance of editorial committee members Steve Young, David Cormie, Renee Barclay and Len Chackowsky. They made this part of my ACC adventure all the more fun. They actually do the work; I just reap the profits like all other media barons.

As a written record of the section I like to think that CliffNotes keeps people inspired, and the section busy. As always, as the new banner note says, “I don't think a wilderness experience is complete until it's been written about”.

See you in the hills – the snows a comin!!! Yahoo!!!!

*Peter Muir*

## Ski Week in the Mountains! April 25 - May 2, 2009

Because we are about more than just climbing, the Manitoba Section is looking into offering a ski touring trip. We have a possible week at the Battle Abbey lodge in the Selkirk Mountains of BC. Before we book the week we need to know how many people would be interested in such a trip. There are 10 spaces available and we need to fill them in order to make the trip possible. The trip would be led by Roger Laurilla (VP mountain activities for the ACC and ACMG mountain guide). Below is what Roger has proposed:

**Require 10 people at a cost per person of \$1,600 + GST  
(regular price is \$2,000 + GST)**

Besides our normal have fun and ski program which we will do, is:

- I would conduct terrain/route selection, snow science and applying it to the terrain.
- Advanced transceiver searching with digging and rescue practice.
- Glacier travel and considerations and some ski mountaineering.

**Our website is [BattleAbbey.ca](http://BattleAbbey.ca)**

Costs include helicopter ride in and out of the lodge, accommodations and food for the week. Transport to and from Golden (helicopter staging area), skis and equipment are not included in the cost. I need to let Roger know in the next couple of weeks if we are going to do this trip.

**Contact Simon Statkewich - [s.statkewich@gmail.com](mailto:s.statkewich@gmail.com)**

## Alpine Club of Canada - Manitoba Section 2009 Winter Event List So Far

Marilyn and Grant McLaren are working hard to put together the usual fun fest for your winter. Here is a sneak peak of the list so far. There is still plenty of time to add your own ideas; it is time for that great traverse you have been thinking about and here is how to get some folks to get it done. Contact Grant or Marilyn to set up your activity.

Rumour has it that there will be the Thunder Bay 7th Occasional Ice Climbing Invitational, see next issue for dates.

Date	Event	Leader	Contact
Jan. 17, 2009	Banff Mountain Film Festival Burton Cummins Theatre 7:00 pm	Curt Hull	chull23@mts.net
Jan. 24 or 25, 2009*	Can I Backcountry Ski? (AT)/Holiday Mountain**	Peter Muir	pmuir@ladcocompany.com
Jan. 31/Feb. 1, 2009	Minaki Yurts weekend Ski trails and snow shoe opportunities	Grant/Marilyn McLaren	grant_mclaren@cwbc.ca mmclaren@mpi.mb.ca (204) 222-5242
Feb. 14/15, 2009	Cairns Cabin weekend	Grant/Marilyn McLaren	grant_mclaren@cwbc.ca mmclaren@mpi.mb.ca (204) 222-5242
Feb. 22, 2009	Lake Winnipeg Ski Crossing	Simon Statkewich	s.statkewich@gmail.com
Feb. 28 & March 1, 2009	Bird Lake Food Weekend, maybe some skiing as well?	Peter Muir	pmuir@ladcocompany.com
March 6 & 7, 2009	Minaki Yurts weekend Ski trails and snow shoe opportunities	Grant/Marilyn McLaren	grant_mclaren@cwbc.ca mmclaren@mpi.mb.ca (204) 222-5242

\* the ski day will be determined by the day Peter's soccer team plays, the soccer schedule will be settled in early January 2009

\*\* details in other parts of this issue



2008/2009

# BANFF MOUNTAIN FILM FESTIVAL WORLD TOUR



a program of  
The Banff Centre  
inspiring creativity

presented by



Photo: Caroline George  
ascending Storm Mountain Falls.  
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## The World's Best Mountain Films

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[www.banffmountainfestivals.ca](http://www.banffmountainfestivals.ca)

Join your friends at the **Burton Cummings Theatre** on **Saturday, January 17, 2009** at **7:00 pm** for spectacular, inspiring, funny, exciting, and thought-provoking mountain films from around the world. It is an exhilarating exploration of the mountain world from remote landscapes and cultures to adrenaline-packed action sports. **DON'T MISS IT!**

Tickets are **\$15.00 (\$5.00 rebate for ACC-MB members)** and will be available December 1, 2008 from fine outdoor and other retailers throughout Winnipeg.

If anyone is interested in volunteering that evening or helping with the organizing committee please contact Len Chackowsky, 294-9034 (H), [len.chackowsky@shaw.ca](mailto:len.chackowsky@shaw.ca)

# Building Safe Top-Rope Anchors

by Cindy Klassen

Continuing with the top-roping theme from my last submission, I would like to discuss equalizing anchors. When we build anchors we use several points of attachment for two reasons:

- 1) To provide redundancy; and
- 2) To reduce the force on each anchor point.

The amount of pull on each anchor point is determined by the angle formed at the point where the node is tied (rope is attached). The smaller the angle, the less the percentage of force received by each anchor point when the climber falls. The diagrams were taken from "Freedom of the Hills". They show how the percentage of the force of the fallen climber upon each anchor point increases as the angle widens.

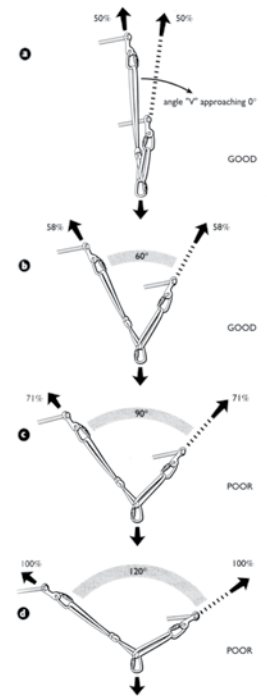
As you can see an angle of 60 degrees or less is optimal since each anchor point receives 58 percent or less of the force generated. 90 degrees is still not bad since it is still less than the full force on each point but it does not reduce it by much. At 120 degrees you are not reducing the forces at all and above that you are dramatically increasing the force on each point. This is not only counterproductive to the objectives stated earlier, but is also very dangerous as you could be surpassing the breaking strength of the gear being used or cause failure in the surrounding rock.

This is somewhat of an explanation of why the "Death Triangle" is so dangerous. This is most often seen at rappel stations where the webbing is simply slung through two rap anchors and tied forming a triangle. It might be an idea to carry a quick link to pull the webbing down to form a "V" and rap off the quick link.

My recommendation for anchors is to keep the angle between 45 and 90 degrees. If the angle gets too small you may have your anchor points too close together such that a failure in the rock could lead to failure in both attachment points.

Of course this is simply my opinion and I welcome your thoughts. We are here to learn from each other's experience.

CLIMB SAFE BY STACKING THE ODDS IN YOUR FAVOR.



**Late Fall... Early Avalanche Risk!**

**Mid-October to mid-December**  
*Chances are someone will die in an avalanche before winter really begins. Don't become a statistic!*

**Ice Climbers**  
 — think "what if"  
 • Even a small avalanche can kill you if it pushes you off a cliff.  
 • Just because you can't see snow on your route doesn't mean it's not there. Wind can deposit unstable pockets of snow in unexpected places.

**Skiers & Snowboarders**  
 — ease into winter  
 • An early season Rockies snowpack—thin, windblown and patchy—is often at its weakest state of the year.  
 • Know how to recognize and avoid wind slab conditions and wind-loaded slopes.

**Be Safe. Continue your avalanche education.**

**Avalanche Bulletins:**  
[www.avalanche.ca](http://www.avalanche.ca)  
**Mountain Condition Reports:**  
[www.acmg.ca/mcr](http://www.acmg.ca/mcr)

Photo: Avalanche over Polar Circus by Max Darragh, Parcs Canada

## Shapes Climbing Wall Coupon

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Provide motivation in an energetic atmosphere.  
 Adult climbers only, evenings.

Apply with resume to  
 Ken at [Finess@Shapes.ca](mailto:Finess@Shapes.ca)

A reminder from Canada's leading mountain safety organizations:

