

In August 1940, Dick Carter, Mac Grady and Jim (no known surname) explored the wilderness around Mount Garibaldi. They were not looking for gold but Dick Carter's account of their harrowing trip is a reminder of the hardship and dangers that are awaiting searchers for the treasure—experienced or not.

Dick Carter's notes were transcribed and published here with kind permission of his son, Jim Carter, the custodian of his father's Pitt Lake papers.

Garibaldi trip August 1940

by Arthur Wellesley ("Dick") Carter

SUNDAY AUGUST 11

Left Vancouver in Rapide seaplane at 9 am; arrived Garibaldi Lake 45 minutes later. Clear day, west wind. Packed our stuff in packs and started up Sentinel Glacier about 10:50. Not many crevasses. Ate lunch at 12:30—kipper snacks and loaf of bread—on edge of ice by little creek running down rocks. Some iron pyrites in small seams in slide.

After lunch climbed onto Garibaldi snowfield and over end of Warren Glacier and travelled up around Glacier Pikes out onto a point which dropped down into the Pitt Valley. This was mistake so we had to turn back towards Garibaldi and saw the first ice worms here at about 6,500 ft. Had supper about five o'clock on a small pinnacle of rock sticking out of the ice. Shade of Garibaldi made it kind of chilly. Ate last loaf and can of salmon, honey and rye crisps; also canned butter. Started again over snow and arrived at wind-swept rock on snow at 7 PM. Looked east and saw stunted timber straight ahead. Mac wanted to camp on rock but there was no wood or level spots, so we decided to head on to timbered ridge to the east. Walked till dark (about 8:20) then by light of half-moon, which was slightly obscured by clouds.

Ran into smooth ice and crevasses; roped up and came to tongue of glacier dropping east. Ridge was mountain with valley between us and it. As glacier fell away crevasses became pretty big so we swung to the north parallel to them as they were dangerous in dark and let a ridge with the ice jammed right against it. The ridge was made up of steep loose rock in place (not a slide) and so we scrapped the fringe of snow on the ice level and fixed up a bed with our head against a big rock at 10 PM. Got up at six o'clock and scouted up ridge where we looked down at Rampart Lake and found out we would have to drop down to the lake, a thing which we had hoped to avoid.

Came down and took our packs over ridge to little valley where there were a few trees and cooked breakfast of steak, flapjacks, cocoa. Glacier gave loud boom just as we left about 7 AM to cross ridge. Left about 10:00 AM and cut through meadow and bush to lake dropping steeply. Crossed mouth of lake on log jam, went over small ridge covered with bush, and ate blue berries. Came to creek with large salmon berries which flows out of the lake. Saw muddy bear tracks and deer and goat tracks in swamp. Lots of wasp nests. Cut around swamps and struck through willows etc. to Skookum Creek of cold cooked steak, frying pan bread, jam, etc.—had this at 2:15 PM. Had nap in sun and went up Skookum to see if possible to get up to snowfield by going up canyon—too steep.

Found pyrites on rock. Decided to go straight up side of mountain on east side of Skookum Creek. Made camp and got to bed at 10 PM—3500 ft.

Miscellania

AUGUST 14

Got up at 5:45 AM. Porridge, bacon etc. for breakfast. Made cache of extra food under big rock. Cached three sticks powder also. Mac thought he had lost caps but took one stick along anyway. Started up slide on east side of creek often crossing same on logs. At 10 am then went up couloir and came out on little meadow. At 6500 ft. saw hole made by bear digging and lots of bear tracks yesterday also of goat tracks and up here had lunch—frying pan bread and kipper snacks, jam. I marked tree with ice axe and stuck kipper snack can up.

Skirted side of mountain at 6500 to 5000 ft. Made timberline camp at 6:30 PM. Climbed light to try and see through mist if there was pass through Mount Darling unto Mamquam snowfield. Got some idea although clouds all around us at 7000 ft. Mac is leader and has great sense of direction. Nice sunset through break in clouds. Came down to campsite. Made supper of dried soup, frying pan bread, jam, Oxo, bacon. Mac and Jim put up tent in dark while I cooked most of supper. Saw shadows of ourselves moving on clouds from light of fire. Went to bed on slope at 10:15 PM. Frost in night. Got up at 6:15 am. Had cooked supper on night of 13th of bacon, porridge cocoa, and frying pan bread.

AUGUST 15

Left camp at 9:00 AM after breakfast of bacon, porridge, cocoa. Climbed through pass near Darling Peak after crossing small glaciers and moraines in fog onto Mamquam snowfield, crossed same in fog with odd break. Lunch in pass on rock pinnacle of rice crisp and cheese and jam. Left jam tin (empty) on top of rock in pass.

Crossed Mamquam snowfield and arrived at top of valley at 5:30 PM. Mac saw right away there was a tumbling glacier and said “have you ever climbed the eastern Lion?” So we roped up and started down figuring we could before dark. What looked like two hours work took 18 hrs. There was no timber around to [give?] protection and we dropped 5500 ft. through a tumbling glacier. We travelled till dark and though the moon was up, it didn't shine into the valley as the walls were so steep.

About 8:30, after going down ledges of rock, we got onto a tongue of the glacier and went down through blocks of ice, etc. We had just stepped off it behind a big rock when a chunk as big as a house passed the spot we had turned off, with a roar and bounced away down the slide of ice carrying rocks and ice with it. It went right down the part we had just been on before we stopped to rest.

We travelled over ice and rock till 11:45. Then it became too dangerous to travel any further in the semi-darkness. We got behind a ledge with a waterfall on one side and seepage running over it and ice on the other side. [We] built up some rocks that had fallen over the top of the ledge till we could make a place to put the air mattress and sat and dozed here till daylight started at 3:15. I would just doze and then there would be a slide of ice and rock which would wake you up till you located it and sure it wasn't coming over the top of you.

Here are actual notes from my diary made at the time” “Ice pinnacle fell over at dawn, slide past us. Water pouring down over very smooth rock in a sheet beside us. My back against a seepage of mud descending till 11:45 PM. Made camp by levelling small spot in lee of rock wall as could not get any further in dark. 500 ft. drop and large crevasses ahead. Tumbling glacier in three sections. Soaking wet from cutting through waterfalls.” And here are the noises I wrote down as they happened to try and describe the different sounds: rumble, rumble, crash, thud, smash, all night.

Miscellanea

Well, at the first lightening of the sky we unlimbered ourselves, had a few rye crisps and some cheese and sugar and started down again. It had been a warm night which accounted for all the action on the part of the glaciers. As we were moving the packs getting ready to haul them over a ledge by rope, I heard a grunting noise every minute or so and looking around I saw the gravel starting to run off a large tongue of ice. Finally in about 10 or 15 minutes she let go and plunged down into a hole below and you couldn't see where it had gone except for a few small pieces around the edge. It must have been as big as two houses. We had to cross this spot and climbed over some of the same things, but larger and they were grumbling too. So it wasn't so hot to be in the crevasses of ice between these chunks, relay the packs up by rope.

We finally got onto a moraine which from above had looked like a gravel bar but it was ice chunks covered with mud and rock and gravel, and as the ice was wet, it was very slippery. And there were many holes and crevasses with the water running below.

At 11 AM we came to the top of another rock canyon in the large valley which divided it in half and found it impossible to cross into the descent side of the valley as the ice had scraped it smooth and polished the rock at about 500 or so feet up where we were and we couldn't get over to a slide. So there we were. We could see a swell clump of trees in the other valley for a camp site but a few feet of smooth wall stopped us. So we lit a fire with wood that had been knocked off the ridge above and Mac says we cooked porridge, but I don't remember that part of it.

About 4 PM started back after an hour or so of looking for way through. I suggested trying to get through the canyon, but she was roaring pretty white and Mac said it would be suicide. So I gave that up. There were some grate ice bridges and caverns where the stream broke off the moraine and entered the canyon.

We travelled all night and ate the odd handful of raw oatmeal and sugar and got to the top at 7 AM, just as the sun struck the large canyon walls. Jim had to be talked to all the time towards dawn to keep him awake and then I would leave him on that particular ledge and go up to Mac who had found a way a little further up, trusting that Jim would not fall off and pull us with him when he dozed and swayed about before I got up to Mac [back to Jim] to guide him up as Mac had guided me. I had a terrible time keeping awake myself waiting for Mac to find a route up for a piece. Only the fact that we were wet and cold, I think, kept us awake. I tried whistling and the talking helped, but the funny thing was that you would be surprised to hear your own voice. It seemed like someone else's till you realize it was yourself.

We had been going ever since 9 AM the day before and been up since 6:15 am; almost 24 hours with just a doze off two or three hours. We set off a stick of powder on the ice but it had no effect. I wish we had not been out of film but we ran out half way down the canyon. After a short, one hour rest we started back across the snowfield (Manquam). There is a climb here of 1000 or 1500 ft. steady ahead and the heat and reflection were bad. We protected our heads with clothes and when we rested stuck our hands under the shade of our packs. We were in a kind of basin. We struggled on till about noon, then reached some rocks and stuck our heads in the shade of some small crevasses [and] slept for an hour.

Mac made up some jelly powder and snow water and we drank that and started again. We reached the pass, down into the tongue of the glacier down Mt. Darling and reached our old timberline camp at 6:15 PM, just about 48 hours after we had left. We had not had our packs of for more than 5 or 6 hours in that temperature and had eaten one breakfast and then rye crisp, raw oatmeal and sugar etc.—age going hard.

Miscellania

We cooked some macaroni and dried soup etc. as this was our first timber for fires except a bit in the canyon of stuff that had fallen off the cliffs above. Put up the tents and went to bed at 9:15—51 hours between beds. Mac travelled through a waterfall and under the glacier in one place trying to find a way up when we were in the canyon. He was soaked and it was getting dark so he was pretty cold. I lend him my sweater and that warmed him up. We must have gone up and down 5500 ft. of terrible stuff and crossed the snowfields at 7000 ft. twice in one bang.

We got up at timberline camp by 7:15 am, left at 11 am, arrived Skookum camp 1:30 PM and opened the cache under rock, ditching some food, left rain coat and matches at old camp. Left Skookum at 3:30, cut around swamp and through virgin lumber—no underbrush for some time—arrived at Rampart at six. Slept for an hour, had supper and left Rampart at 10:30 to travel in moonlight (Mac cooked supper). Arrived at top of Garibaldi snowfield moraines at 12:50 AM; left moraine. Bleak camp where we slept on solid rock. First Sunday August 13 at 5:05 AM restart on rock towards Garibaldi at 6:15 (near bas of Mt. G.) and left there at 6:45. Sun rose at 5:30 on the dot. We had cold pancake and bacon for breakfast at Bleak Camp and drink of ice water. Scenery is very pretty in summer with blue and green ice and pink light on Mt. Garibaldi. Supper at Rampart Lake was good—macaroni and cheese and flapjacks, bacon, soup and ___? Saw forest fire start at Squamish when at Skookum camp. On way to Warren glacier near glacier pikes we heard rocks falling on a buttress sticking out of the snow. Saw seven mountain goats in the walls of rock; must get salt there was no vegetation at all as far as we could see.

Mac left us at top of Warren Glacier and went over Red Mountain to try and get a boat to take us to Driftwood Bay. He left us about 2:00 PM. We got down to the lake and found cache OK. That is Jim and I. Made fire and had corned beef. Tomatoes, pork and beans and grapefruit juice. I rested in shade on sleeping bag—very hot day. Jim fished and caught two trout with Mac's rod.

Mac arrived with boat 7 PM. He had seen tracks in the snow on west side of Red Mountain and glissaded down and caught a party with a boat. They rowed him over to Driftwood Bay and he got another boat, smaller, belonging to the water board and Mr. Walker who has a camp up there in the summer for mountaineers etc. They gave him some trout. We cooked the trout and Mac had pineapple juice, canned soup, sausage, trout, etc.

We left there after dark and Jim and I rowed over to Driftwood Bay. Jim almost fell overboard when he dozed off a couple of times. We made camp on beach and hit hay at 11:30—moonlight night. We got up at 7 AM, saw fox on slide. Mac shaved and we started up trail at 9 AM. Spoke with man on meadows where there were several camps and started down trail. Ran most of the way in heat and no water and missed train by 20 minutes. Walked down track to Alpine Lodge and had three glasses of cider at store each. Rested up after dinner which we got there in kitchen as the seats were out of our pants and we looked like bums. It was 98 in shade here. Washed socks and heard there was a boat Tuesday morning at 7:30 AM for Vancouver from Squamish. So after supper Mac and I started to hike to Cheekeye, 14 miles, as it was cooler then and moonlight, leaving Jim to bring the packs down later on Tuesday's train. Not much supper and after it was too late they told us we could have hired a speeder for 6.50 and fares if got dispatcher's OK, but the Cranes [owners of the lodge] wanted to keep us there. Got to Cheekeye about 1:30 AM. Left Alpine Lodge 7:40 PM. Found taxi man who drove us to Squamish but no boat till 2:30 Tuesday, so we looked up hotel and Mac clomped around till we woke up the clerk who gave us a room. Went to bed at 2:30 AM, got up at 10:00 AM, had breakfast at Waltz Mountain Café. Put rubber [soles?] over boots before walking on floor. Being ready on wharf, Mac tried to buy a pair of pants, but none right size. Saw big lock gun in telephone office, Caught boat OK and arrived home via Jack's car about 8 PM Tuesday. Went to work Wednesday at 8; got up at 6:45 AM.

Miscellania

Camps: Forlorne, Lakeview, Skookum (Timberline), Sunshine, Hells Bells (Sunshine again), Bleak, Garibaldi Lake, Driftwood Bay.

The room we had in Squamish was enamelled pale green and Mac says, he woke up and thought he was in an ice cave.

At Timberline Camp the tent blew down over us and we took it down, sleeping in open.

Mac was worried about laying on close, afraid of falling off when half asleep but edge was 100 ft. away.

When I got home the streetcars woke me and I thought it was slides.

For three or four nights I sat up and asked “now what will we do,” or “Now what is it,” showing it affected our nerves.

On way back to Timberline Camp, Jim said afterwards he was thinking of taking the jam tin we left at Mt. Darling all the time.

Mac told us to talk in whispers when in the ice in the tumbling glacier and said we were in terrible danger of bombardment from rocks above a ledge we were on as the ice pushed the rock over from above.