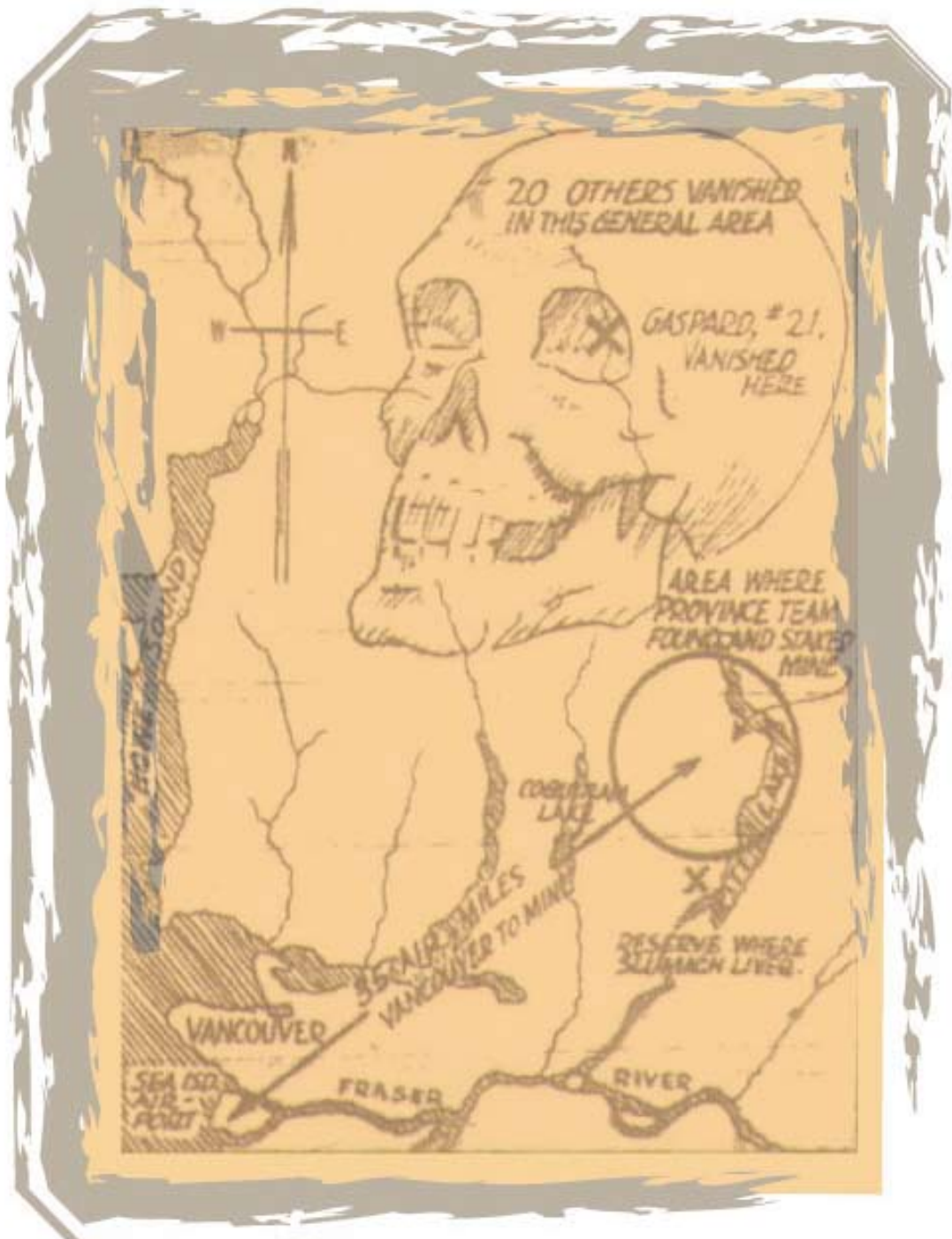
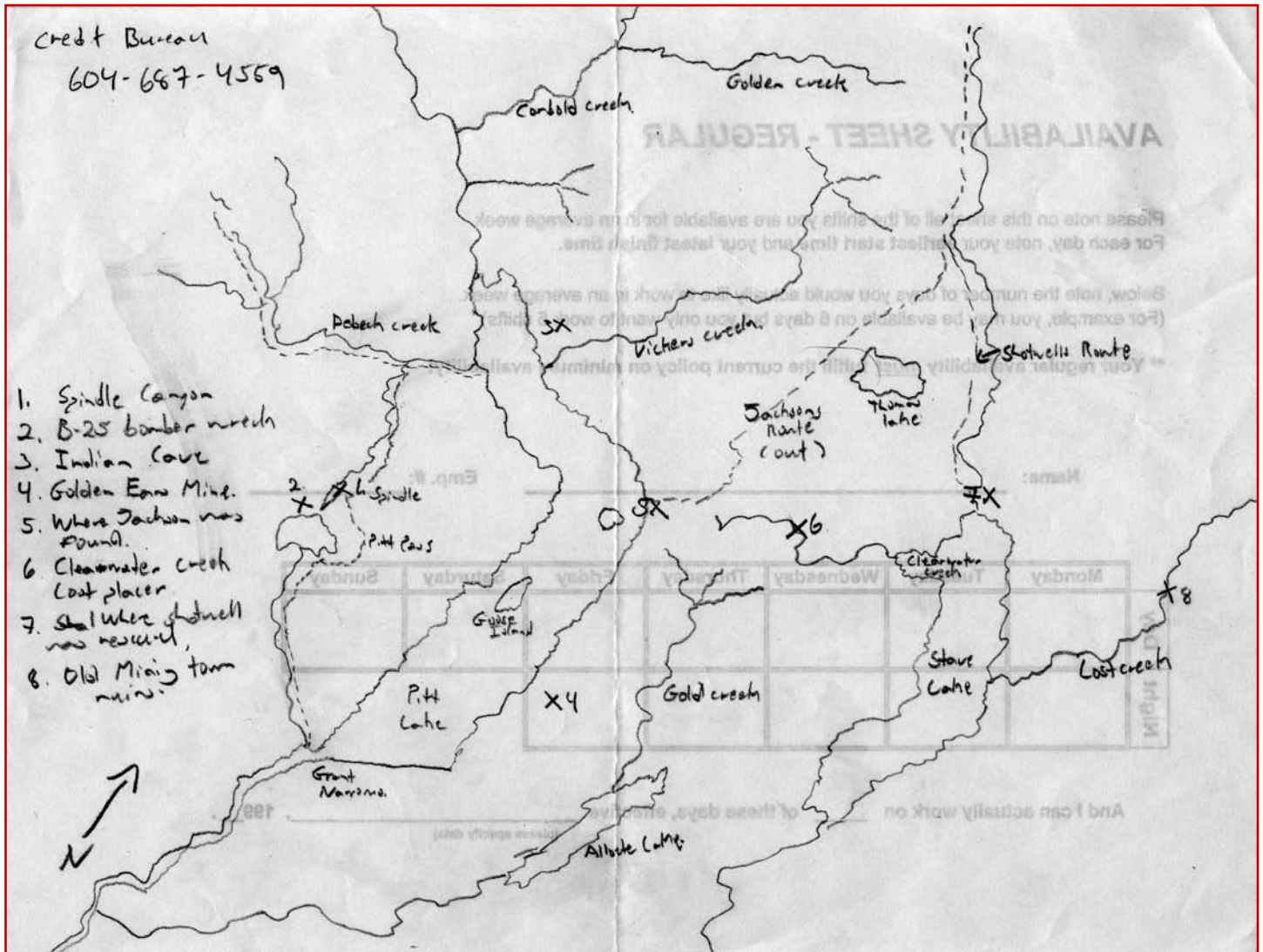


# *Spindle Quest*

*Chasing Lost Creek Gold*



by Daryl Friesen



Sketch map of the search area, 2003.

To Mom and Dad



Lower Spindle Canyon

# Acknowledgements

I am indebted to:

— my parents, who always supported my passionate chase to the end of the rainbow.

— my friends who took part in those great adventures.

— Don Waite and Mike Boileau to mention just two of many who generously shared their knowledge and experience with me.





Standing in front of one of the waterfalls that flows into the Upper Pitt. Notice whip and pouch . Heavy Indiana Jones influence at this time.



# By way of an introduction

Vancouver BC May 2001

Stuart Brown  
PO Box 765 Station A  
Kelowna BC V1Y 7P4

Dear Mr Stuart Brown

I would just like to thank you for talking to me on the phone a while back about your involvement in the search for the lost mine of Pitt lake and I guess I should explain a little about why I called you in the first place.

You see, Mr. Brown, I have been searching for Slumach's gold for most of my life. I first heard about the gold when I was twelve years old. At the moment I am trying to write a book about my own adventures searching for the mine. I know all about how dangerous and rugged the terrain is which hides this gold. I have been there and seen it myself.

When we talked on the phone you said that you wanted some reassurances if you where to give the location away and I guess that is the main reason I am writing you this letter today. What sort of reassurances are you looking for?

I have read all your letters to the government concerning protecting Garibaldi park and I agree it is a very beautiful area and must be protected if the mine is truly where you say it is. There are people out there who would strip this area clean if they where to find it. I am not one of those people. I understand the value in the place's beauty and wonder. If you were to share with me your knowledge of the gold mines location I can promise you that I will tell know no one about what you reveal to me. I will only take what I need and will share whatever percentage you want with you for revealing this information to me.

You don't have to journey to the location with me. You have my word that I will keep you informed of what I find and when I journey in as well. As far as me risking my life going in there, do not worry about me. If you do agree to talk to me would it be at all possible for me to meet you as well?

I am 27 years old and have travelled all over Central America and British Columbia and have plenty of experience in mountain climbing and bush travel. I have been in some hell holes that make the Pitt Lake mountains look like paradise and can handle all of the danger that will be faced on such a trip. So please do not worry about endangering my life.

If you don't want to reveal anything to me, would you at least be able to put me on course as to where the canyon is?

I have tried to locate the canyon with the help of the information in the Jackson letter and also made efforts to find out where Volcanic Brown's last camp was located on the eastern lip of Stave Glacier.

I have enclosed two topographic maps of the entire area in question with this letter. You are the last person alive who claims to know the location of this legendary gold mine I would be forever in your debt if you where to share any information with me

Thanks again for your time.

Daryl Friesen

PS You told me on the phone it would be OK to call you again. I will call you in two days after you get this package to hear your answer. Also would it be ok if I talked to Edward Harvey about his involvement with you in the search for the lost mine?



We used a disposable camera to take the pictures in Spindle Canyon.



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# First Discoveries

THE OLD INDIAN SLUMACH walked the dusty streets of New Westminster with his backpack hanging heavy on his back. He was growing tired, as at last he had returned to civilization after spending weeks in the mountains behind Pitt Lake where his greatest secret awaited him. Hidden deep in those mountains away from the prying eyes of the white man, there was a river that contained gold nuggets the size of walnuts. It was enough to make a man rich for a thousand lifetimes, but he would tell no man where it was. He would take its secret to his grave. The legend tells us Slumach entered one of the many saloons that lined Columbia Street which he did on several occasions after making one of his many trips to his secret mine. As he entered the bar, he sat down and ordered himself a whiskey. Some of the patrons glared at him as he reached into his backpack and paid the bartender with a gold nugget. He watched their eyes light up with greed. He then reached into his backpack and tossed several more nuggets across the floor just to have the satisfaction of watching the white man fight each other over the gold that was their god. Slumach made several visits of this kind to New Westminster in his day, spending his gold on drink and woman until his cache went dry. He would then head off into the mountains behind Pitt Lake only to return with more of the yellow metal and do it all over again. Several prospectors in the town even tried to follow him to his mine, but he lost them all in those treacherous mountains. However, Slumach's luck would not last forever... The next time he returned to town, Slumach attracted the attention of a young woman named Molly Tynan. Using her womanly charms she was able to make friends with Slumach in the hope she would be the one to learn the location of his treasure. Molly got close to him all right and he took her into the mountains on her next trip. She grew excited as the two of them paddled up the lake in Slumach's canoe. Molly was in front and Slumach in the back. As they got closer to the head of Pitt Lake, Slumach took out a hunting knife and plunged it into Molly's back. She gave out one loud blood-curdling scream as Slumach pushed her out of the canoe and into the lake. That's where he made the mistake that would cost him everything, so the legend tells us. Shortly after Slumach returned to town from his last trip, a fisherman on the Lower Fraser River recovered Molly's body with Slumach's knife sticking out of her back. The knife was identified as his and he was hunted down and captured by the RCMP. Slumach then had a quick trial where he was found guilty of murder and rushed to the gallows. Before Slumach was hung, when he stood waiting for the platform to fall, he mumbled a curse on all those who tried to find his secret mine, "MEKA MEMOOSE MINE MEMOOSE." *df*

I WAS twelve years old when I walked through the doors of the library in my hometown of Langley, BC. I had no idea what I would find that day, thrilled with the prospect of finding anything there about lost treasure in British Columbia. My father started my interest in treasure hunting when he took me up into the hills near Yale one summer to an ancient abandoned silver mine. Crawling into the mine's darkness I had my first taste of reaching out and touching the mysterious hidden past.

At the time I was reading treasure-hunting guidebooks by a fellow named Karl Von Mueller, and his advice was that a reference desk was the best place to start finding information on hidden treasures. I walked up to the reference desk, my heart beating faster. The reference librarian on duty that day could not have realized that the information she was about to place before me would change my life. As she sat there with her glasses down on the tip of her nose, chatting with one of her colleagues, she reminded me of a teacher I once had in the second grade. When she saw me she looked at my face with a puzzled curiosity. I was probably glowing with the excitement of the hunt for treasure and definitely not at all at ease.

"What may I help you with, young man?" she asked.

"I was wondering if you could help me find some information."

She was an adult and at the time adults made me nervous. They always acted like they knew what they were doing, and I was not so sure.

"Yes I can, but you will have to tell me what kind of information you are looking for before I can help you," she said, not only looking but also sounding like a school teacher.

"I'm searching for information on lost treasure in BC."

"Ah... I think I know just what you are looking for," she said and she got up.

I quickly followed her as she made her way across the room to a large filing cabinet where she began searching the paper files.

"Let's see now...I know it's here somewhere...yes, here we go."

She handed me a large envelope with the words Pitt Lake Lost Gold Mine written on top of it.

"Now, I must warn you that you can't sign any of those articles out. They are for library use only."

"Okay," I said and I stared in wonder at all that spilled out of the envelope on the table in front of me. I picked up one of the articles and started reading. I had found my first gold.



**Here is a transcript of a conversation I had with Bill Barlee about the "Jackson Letter" he published in 1970. See opposite page.**

- Is Bill Barlee in?
- Can I ask who is calling please?
- Eh, yes, he doesn't know me but tell him please it's Daryl Friesen.
- Hold on please, Sir.
- What can I do for you?
- Is this Bill Barlee?
- You bet ya, the one and only.
- My name is Daryl Friesen and I am trying to write a book on the lost mine of Pitt Lake.
- What do you want from me?
- Well the reason I am calling you is because you were the first person to ever publish a story which contained the Jackson letter. I was kind of wondering where you got it from.
- Volcanic Brown gave it to my father.

- Really, the old prospector who died on Stave Glacier?
- That's right, my father showed it to me when I was 20 and I made a copy.
- Where is the letter now?
- My father sold it to a collector, some rich American I believe.
- I have one more question for you, Mr Barlee. Do you think that the lost mine of Pitt Lake exists?
- Yes, but not where most people think it is. Most people think that the mine is somewhere past the head of Pitt Lake, that's the most commonly searched area.
- And where do you think it is?
- Somewhere west of Harrison Lake.
- Have you ever gone looking for it?
- No, let me explain something to you son. If you fly over the country and you'll see why not!
- Thank you for your time Mr Barlee.

It is said that at least 30 prospectors have gone to their death while searching for Slumach's gold. His first victim was said to be a prospector from San Francisco who went by the name of Jackson.

The first record of a prospector who went searching for the gold after Slumach's death is that of a veteran prospector named Jackson from the gold fields of Alaska who had heard about the gold in San Francisco. When he arrived in the New Westminster area he talked with the local Indians and headed off into the mountains behind Pitt Lake to try his luck in finding the fabled Eldorado. No one saw Jackson for several months until local Katzie chief Peter Pierre found him on the east side of Pitt Lake. Jackson's skin was cut and his clothes were in rags, and he was clutching his heavy backpack. Peter brought Jackson to New Westminster, where the prospector caught the first boat back to California. After his arrival there Jackson got very ill and feared he would not be able to ever return to the Pitt Lake country. He wrote a letter to a friend named Shotwell, describing what he found in those forbidden mountains.

If this letter is true, as many believe it is, there is indeed a fortune in gold waiting to be found somewhere in the mountains at the head of Pitt Lake. N. L. (Bill) Barlee published the letter in a book. He said that he found it among some papers belonging to another prospector, Robert A. Brown, who decades later followed in Jackson's footsteps. That fellow was generally called "Volcanic" Brown.

I was hooked and kept on reading the articles one after the other. Too soon came the dreaded message over the loudspeaker, "The library will be closing in five minutes," putting an end to that first exciting session.

**"D**ARYL! Time for dinner!" my mom called as I sat at my desk dreaming about my discoveries.

"I will be right there!" I called back.

"Hurry up it's getting cold!"

As I walked into the kitchen the smell of roast beef surrounded me. My father and my brother were sitting at the table talking about motor cross racing. My brother was an expert motor cross racer, and conversations around the dinner table were generally dominated by his struggles to succeed at this dangerous and exciting sport.

"Dad, if I could get a Factory 125 like the one Larry Ward is riding, I know I could do so much better," my brother said as I sat down.

"I don't think it's a better bike that wins the race. I think it takes a better rider," my dad explained in his rational way. "Maybe if you trained harder, you could do better." Disappointed my brother picked at his rice.

"What were you up to today?" my mom asked as I started to gulp down my roast beef.

"Well, I got some information from the library that is really great! Dad, do you think at some time you could take me to Pitt Lake?"

"Why? What's up there?" he asked with curiosity.

"There's supposed to be a lost gold mine up behind the Pitt Lake Mountains."

"Oh really?" he answered.

"It's amazing!" said I, "this old Indian named Slumach found a river where he removed gold nuggets the size of walnuts!"

I could see by the look on my dad's face that the story was not washing with him.

"If there was that much gold up there, I am sure it would have been found by now," he said, "but when spring comes, I don't see why we can't take the boat up there and have a look anyway."



I had been out over two months and found myself running short of grub. I had lived mostly on fresh meat for one cant carry much of a pack in those hills. I found a few very promising ledges and colors in the little creeks but nothing I cared to stay with. I had almost made up my mind to light out the next day. I climbed up to the top of a sharp ridge and looked down into the canyon or valley about one mile and a half long, and what struck me as singular, it appeared to have no outlet for the little creek that flowed at the bottom. Afterwards I found that the creek entered a ----- and was lost. After some difficulty I found my way down to the creek. The water was almost white, the formation for the most part had been slate and granite, but there I found a kind of schist and slate formation. Now comes the interesting part. I had only a small prospecting pan but I found colors at once right on the surface, and such colors they were. I knew then that I had struck it right at last. In going up stream I came to a place where the bedrock was bare, and there, you could hardly believe me, the bedrock was yellow with gold. Some of the nuggets was as big as walnuts and there were many chunks carrying quartz. After sizing it up, I saw there was millions stowed around in the little cracks. On account of the weight I buried part of the gold at the foot of a large tent shaped rock facing the creek. You cant miss it. There is a mark cut out in it. Taking with me what I supposed to be ten thousand dollars (in gold) but afterwards it proved to be a little over eight thousand dollars. After three days hard travelling, it would not have been over two days good going, but the way was rough and I was not feeling well, I arrived at the Lake and while resting there was taken sick and have never since been able to return, and now I fear I never shall. I am alone in the world, no relatives, no one to look after me for anything. Of course I have never spoken of this find during all this time for fear of it being discovered. It has caused me many anxious hours, but the place is so well guarded by surrounding ridges and mountains that it should not be found for many years, unless someone knew of it being there. O, how I wish I could go with you to show you this wonderful place, for I cannot give you any exact directions, and it may take a year or more to find. Dont give up but keep at it and you will be repaid beyond your wildest dreams. I believe any further directions would only tend to confuse it, so I will only suggest further that you go alone or at least only take one or two trusty Indians to pack food and no one need know but that you are going on a hunting trip until you find the place and get everything for yourself. When you find it and I am sure you will, should you care to see me, advertise in the 'Frisco Examr.,' and if I am living I will either come to see you, or let you know where to find me, but once more I say to you, dont fail to look this great property up and dont give up until you find it.

Now good bye and may success attend you.

Yours truly,

W. Jackson

The Jackson letter

from: "Lost Mine of Pitt Lake" by N. L. Barlee, *Canada West Magazine*. Vol. 2 Number 4 Winter 1970

**VOLCANIC' BROWN LOST IN MOUNTAINS**  
**Prospecting in Pitt Lake Country and Not Seen Since Middle of August**

Grand Forks Gazette - November 6, 1931 -

"Volcanic" R.A. Brown, who has made his home 12 miles north of Grand Forks for the past 40 years, and famous alike as a prospector and herb-doctor, is again reported lost in the hills near the coast.

Search Parties Out - The following dispatch appeared in Tuesday's Daily Province: R.A. "Volcanic" Brown, 86, prospector, is believed lost in the mountains north of Pitt Lake, and a party left Vancouver this morning to look for him. The party, headed by Game Warden G.C. Stevenson and Provincial Constable E. Murphy of Vancouver, is going here by boat.

The aged prospector was last seen in the Pitt country on August 17, when a prospector named Swanson, who was on his way out sold him beans and rice to add to his food supply. It is believed that Brown's food would last him only until about the middle of September unless he shot some game. Brown intimated to Swanson that he would try and cross the big glacier before snow set in. The search party is equipped with snowshoes as they expect to find deep drifts. Brown, it is believed, may be marooned in a shack about twenty miles from the head of Pitt Lake.

Lost Six Years Ago - Brown was lost in the Pitt Lake country about six years ago, and a search party of police found him slowly progressing over a glacier. One of his toes had been

frost bitten and he had amputated it. He was warned then of the great risks...

The party that went in to search for old Volcanic Brown in 1928 was made of Herman Gardner, Constable Spud Murphy, Alvin Patterson, Caleb Gardner and Harry Corder to begin their search they started their journey by heading north from Pitt Lake and then climbing up to the headwaters of seven mile creek where they crossed the divide to Homestead Glacier until they arrived in a place called Porcupine valley from there they crossed the seven miles that make up Stave Glacier when they arrived at the place where the Stave Glacier ended and the Upper Stave River formed they found the remains of what was Volcanic Brown's camp. In the remains of his camp the party made a remarkable discovery and was once again to be more prove of lost mine. They found a glass jar containing eleven ounces of gold which had been hammered out of a vein. Volcanic Brown was never found his body believed to be frozen deep in one of the crevasses which make up the giant Stave Glacier.

Volcanic Brown does indeed have to be the Pitt Lake's most famous victim by far. He is very well known in the province of British Columbia because of his famous prospect in the Princeton area known as Copper Mountain.

I wanted to shout with excitement. I would at last be given the chance to go on my first real treasure hunt. I had to phone my friend Rick Johnson. When dinner was over I raced into my parents' bedroom and closed the door. It was the only phone with some privacy. I couldn't wait to tell him the great news.

"Hello?" a raspy voice answered.

"Yes, is Rick there?" I asked.

"Ricky! Come get the phone!"

"Hello?"

"Hey Rick, it's Daryl!"

"Hey, how's it going?"

"I have some good news. In the spring, my dad's going to take me to Pitt Lake."

"Pitt Lake? Where's that?"

"Gold is supposed to be hidden up behind Pitt Lake."

"That's cool! Can I come?"

"I don't think my dad will have a problem with that."

"Daryl, are you using the phone in my room again? I told you to stop doing that. Are you sitting on the bed too?" I could hear my mom from the hallway.

"Look, Rick, I have to go. I'll see you in class tomorrow."

"OK, bye."

Life was good and adventure was on its way, but it was to be a long wait until I could put foot in those mountains.

WINTER crawled by slowly as I waited for the first signs of spring. During that time I came across another piece of Pitt Lake information, casting new light on the legend of the lost mine. I found the text of newspaper articles of the period in Donald E. Waite's book 'Kwant'stan': Tales of the Golden Ears. It appeared that old man Slumach was not hanged in 1891 for the murder of an Indian maiden, but for shooting to death a half-breed named Louis Bee on Alouette Slough. Also in Waite's book were notes of an interview with Mrs. Amanda Charnley, a daughter of Peter Pierre, Slumach's spiritual guide during his last months. Mrs. Charnley told Waite that in his cell at New Westminster, condemned to die, Slumach had told her father the location of his gold.

I could not wait, and when March arrived I hounded my dad until he gave in to take Rick and me on that trip to Pitt Lake he had promised in the fall. On a cloudy weekend in March 1985 we launched the boat at the Fort Langley Marina and began our long journey down the Fraser River and up Pitt River. It was a great feeling to be in the open air, beginning a quest that would continue into my adult life. About two hours later we reached the entrance to Pitt Lake and I started snapping pictures of everything around me. I could feel the history of this great and beautiful place coming alive.



My father noticed that there was a channel towards the east side of the lake, but for some reason he decided not to follow it, a decision he soon regretted when the boat slammed into a sandbar and came to a very quick stop. The old man lit up in a blaze of profanity. We boys kept silent, not wanting to get in his way. “We’re going to have to go to the marina,” my dad said, pointing to the small marina that could be seen at the mouth of the lake.

He managed to get the boat off the sandbar and moving, but the prop was making quite a noise. Inspection at the wharf showed that the crash had ripped a wing off the prop. The trip seemed to be at an end before it had even started.

Rick and I walked out towards the end of the wharf past an old houseboat. Looking around I said, “You see across the river there? That’s where Slumach’s cabin used to be and I even think he is buried over there.”

“Are you boys up here looking for that damn lost gold mine?” The voice from behind us caught us off guard.

Surprised we turned around and were greeted by an old Indian man with a friendly smile.

“Why don’t you come inside my boat here and I will show you something,” he said. Rick and I followed him into the houseboat, wanting to learn more from this stranger. Inside the man pointed to some topographic maps of the Pitt Lake area lying around.

“I know you want to know about the gold, he said, everyone does, but I think all them prospectors were searching in the wrong place. I don’t think that there is any gold up in the upper Pitt. The only gold I have ever heard off coming out of the Pitt Lake country is over here up behind the head of Debeck Creek.”

Rick and I stared at him in awe and for the first time in my life I really felt like I was living in a movie. I already saw myself finding more information in support of this kind man’s theory that there was gold in the Debeck Creek area, launching an expedition into that area and finding that gold.

As we sat there with our eyes fixed at the maps, I heard my father calling us in the distance.

“We have to go,” I said to the mysterious man.

“Okay,” he said, “but remember Debeck Creek. What’s your name, son?”

“Daryl—and this is Rick,” I replied.

“Nice to meet you.”

And with that we left him and his houseboat behind.

When we caught up with my father I could tell by the look on his face that the news was bad.

“I’m afraid we have to go back, the prop is shot.”

It wasn’t so bad because after meeting the mysterious stranger I had learned something new, and Pitt Lake and its mysterious gold was now growing ever larger inside me.



# Sampling Debeck Creek

MY IMAGINATION was on fire. We did not go further than the entrance to the lake, but after returning from that first trip to Pitt Lake I was daydreaming all the time about gold waiting to be found in the Pitt Lake mountains and the day I would unearth this treasure.

I hassled my father to take Rick and me to Debeck Creek as soon as weather allowed it. This time we launched the boat at the Lower Pitt marina near to the place where Slumach killed Louis Bee. It started raining as we headed up the Pitt River and into the lake. This time we missed the sandbar, and we cruised up the lake avoiding several deadheads on the way.

Following the advice of the Indian man whom we met at the marina, I had looked through the newspaper articles for any mention of Debeck Creek and found one hinting that there could be something interesting there. The article from 1952 showed a skull and a map with a circle around the area where a *Vancouver Province* news team had staked what they were told was the location of the fabulous Lost Creek mine. I drew a similar circle on my topographic map and saw that the circle overlapped the Debeck Creek area. There was little else to go by, but I was so inexperienced I thought that I could get some samples on a one-day trip to support what the old Indian had said about gold in this area. I had no idea yet what it takes in that terrain to even get close to a place where gold could possibly be found or how much work it is to find even a trace of the yellow metal.

As we cruised up the lake and passed Goose Island, I was amazed by the ruggedness and vastness of the mountains. As we came closer to the mouth of Debeck Creek, the wind was blowing from the top of the lake and the boat started to pound on the waves, sending showers of water cascading over the top of the boat.

"I don't know how long we can spend up here today," my father said. "It's really rough and it's only getting rougher."

With time I would learn how often the weather would get in the way of a search just at a crucial

moment. It really makes you wonder if what they say about a curse on this place is true.

For brief moments I could see the top of the lake and the mountains behind it. There so many prospectors died searching for the mine, but I did not give that much thought, as I my mind was

on surveying Debeck Creek. We slowly pulled the boat up towards the mouth of the creek, but it didn't look as if there was any place to land the boat. The beach that was supposed to be there was covered by water and all kind of driftwood was floating around and no small pieces either. As we tried to get onto shore large stumps and logs pounded against the side of the boat as the waves thrashed us around.

I watched my father guiding the boat through the driftwood towards a large hollow tree that had fallen onto its side into the water.

"We can't get the boat to shore, but I'll get the ropes ready and tie it to one of the branches of the tree once we get close," he said.

Rick and I were ready to snag a branch with the rope as we closed in on the hollow tree.

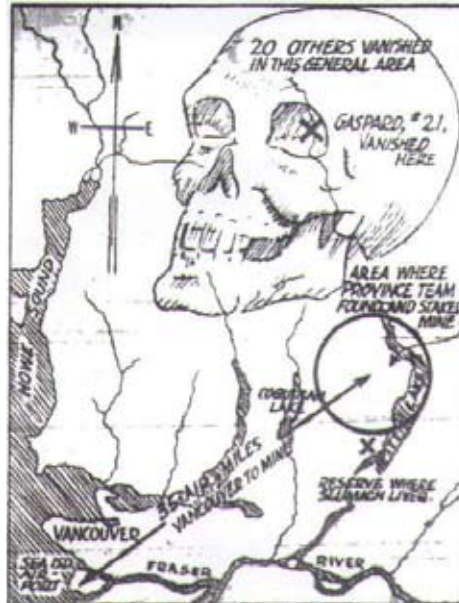
"Got it!" I yelled up to my father, who came running over and tied one of his expert knots that secured the boat to the tree.

"I have to stay with the boat," he said, "you two can climb over the tree to shore and do some exploring, but we can't stay long. Do what you have to do and be back in no longer than half an hour. It's getting rougher and we have to get out of here soon."

Rick and I both nodded our heads in agreement, picked up our packs and scrambled up the slippery log onto shore. The rain was pouring down on us as we entered the forest and headed towards the creek roaring in the distance. Just before we got to the stream's edge we hit what looked like an old trail that followed along the shore of the creek.

"Let's follow it," I said to Rick, and we headed up the trail winding its way up the side of the water.

As we walked up the trail, it started turning into a little creek. We splashed our way through the water, and it went deeper and deeper into the forest. The natural cover above us was as low as a tunnel.



Bill Ryan, *Province*, 23 April 1952.



The twisting branches stopped the rain, but often we almost had to bend over as we walked. The path soon made a sharp turn to the left, taking us right to the edge of Debeck Creek. The water's roar was so loud we could not hear each other talk.

We walked up the stream until I spotted an area that looked as if we could pan there. I had avidly been studying the *Gold Panner's Manual* by Garnet Basque, and it helped me pick an area where maybe we could find a little colour.

"Rick, let's try panning over here," I said pointing to the water.

He came over and we took the two black gold pans we had bought from the army surplus store a couple of days earlier. We panned and panned until our backs were aching, but found not a trace of colour. I picked up some interesting looking rocks with quartz in them from the creek to take back with me.

"Isn't it time to go back?" Rick asked as the rain once again poured down on us and a wind started blowing through the valley.

"Let's just go up a little further and try panning again," I said, so very badly wanting to find a trace of colour.

We made our way along the side of the stream and up and around a large logjam. I was about to put my pan in the water when Rick tapped me on the shoulder and pointed ahead. In the distance I saw a tent leaning on the creek's edge and the backs of two people rummaging around their camp.

"What are they doing up here?" I said to Rick.

"Do you think they are looking for gold?"

"Why else would anyone be camping up here on a day like this?"

"Let's see if we can get closer."

Using logs as cover we tried to get a better look at these strange campers. Suddenly a dog that we had not seen started to bark very loudly.

"They have a dog!" Rick sounded scared as he crouched lower behind a log.

One of the men started calling. "What is it boy? You smell something? What's the problem?" He patted the dog on the head and started walking in our direction.

He quickly spotted us.

"Hello," I said raising my hand in a peaceful way.

"Who the hell are you? Get out of here! Get'm, boy!" he yelled.

His dog came running towards us as soon as he gave the order. We turned around and started running down the creek as fast as we could in the direction of the boat. I was so scared I never looked back, but the dog kept barking as we splashed through the water trying not to slip on boulders and fall into the cascading creek.

Within minutes we found the opening in the forest and ducked inside. The dog was making its way over the boulders in the creek and the man was close behind. Rick and I splashed through the water and ran through the forest and back to the place where my dad would be waiting for us. When we broke out of the forest, he was not there. He was motoring back and forth among the driftwood with the boat thrashing in the waves that had picked up since we left.

"Dad!" I yelled, hearing the bark of the dog closing in. He could see but not hear us as he navigated through the driftwood. Dad pointed to us to climb out onto the fallen tree where we had left the boat and he moved the boat through the rolling waves towards us. The dog broke out of the forest and seeing us standing on the log made its way to us, barking madly.

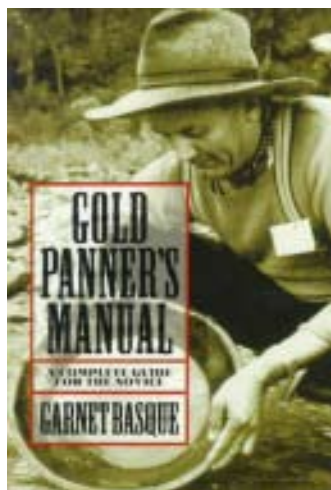
My father brought the boat alongside; the waves smashing the boat against the old tree. We prepared to jump in the front of the boat. Rick was ahead of me and jumped first. The dog was now right at my heels. My dad handed Rick a paddle to pass on to me to keep the growling animal away. The boat bounced up and down and when the time was right, I jumped in the boat and my dad started pulling away. We saw the man come out of the forest and the dog made a daring leap and landed in the front of the boat. Face to face with the animal Dad grabbed the paddle out of my hands and hit the dog. Loosing its footing and it fell into the water.

Dad put the throttle on full reverse and as we backed away from the shore Rick and I collapsed on the boat's seats, stunned.

"What was that all about?" my dad demanded to know as the waves pounded the boat and we were cruising back down the lake.

"You wouldn't believe it! There was two men camping up there and they spotted us and sent their dog after us!" Rick explained. My dad shook his head but never asked more. He clearly did not enjoy that Sunday's outing.

Of course the samples I gathered were not more than granite and quartz.



# Mystery letter

DURING the following years the Pitt Lake took a backseat, but there is nothing in daily life comparable to the thrills of adventure I had felt. There was no adventure in high school and nothing that I wanted to know. I was so bored that sometimes I would skip school and go to the library and read my own favourite books such as those by Robert Marx on sunken treasure that would spawn future adventures for me in far away lands such as Central America.

But Pitt Lake found its way back into my life one afternoon when I came home from school lost in my doldrums.

"Daryl, a letter came for you today," my mom said to me as I walked into the house.

"Where is it?"

"The one on the counter in front of you!"

I picked up the small envelope with no return address. I opened it and to my surprise found myself staring at a map of Pitt Lake with all kinds of locations marked on it. On the side of the map was some very old looking handwriting that was hard to read.

"Well did you open it?" my mom asked.

"Yes. It's some weird map of Pitt Lake." My mom had a look at the strange document not saying much as I went to my room to have a closer look and also to read the strange text written on the side of the map.

The first thing I did after I looked at the map was to take it to my friend Rob Causley.

"Look what I got in the mail today, man" I said showing Rob the map. "Isn't that the closest thing to a treasure map you have ever seen or what?"

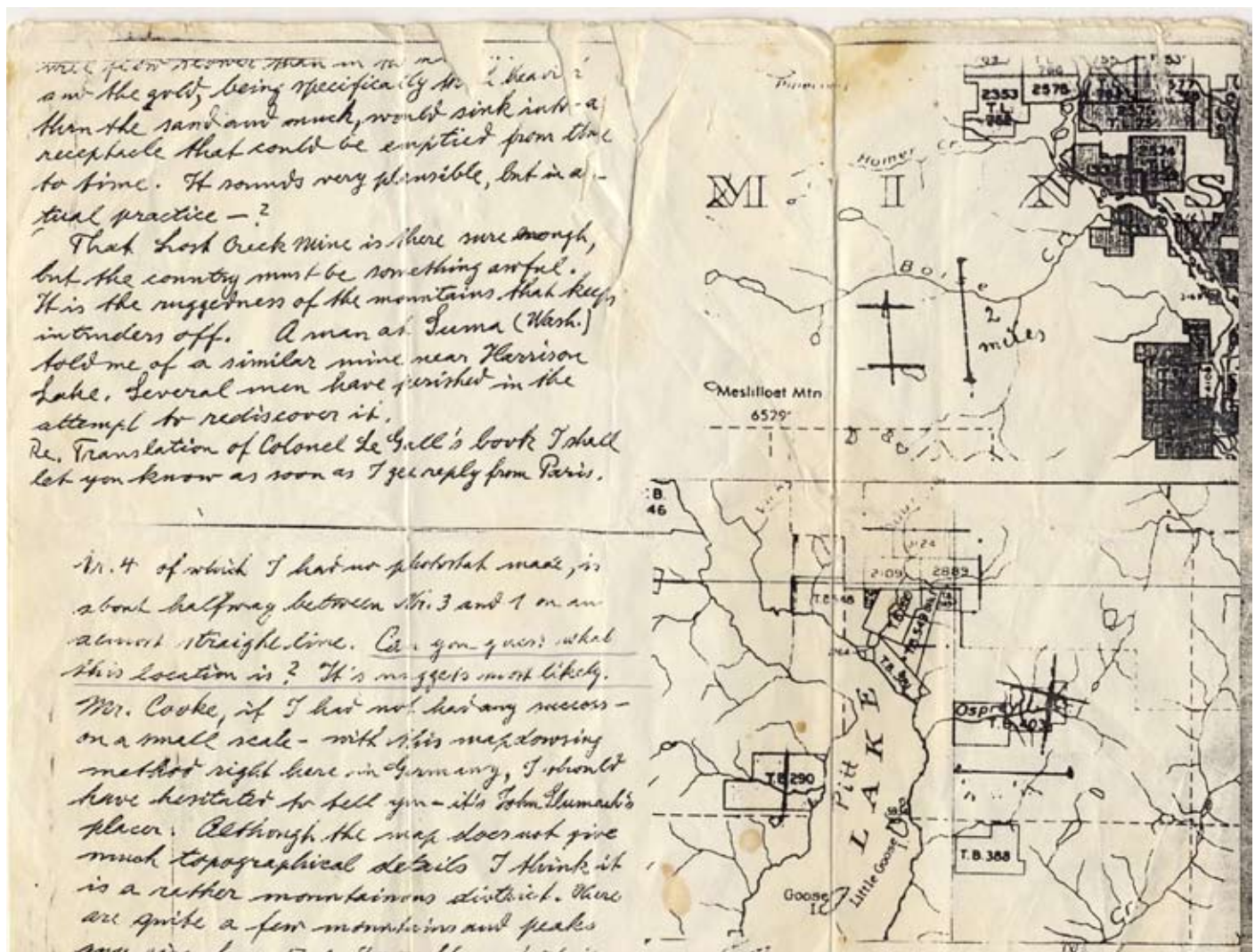
Rob looked at the map with curiosity.

"Where did you get this anyway?"

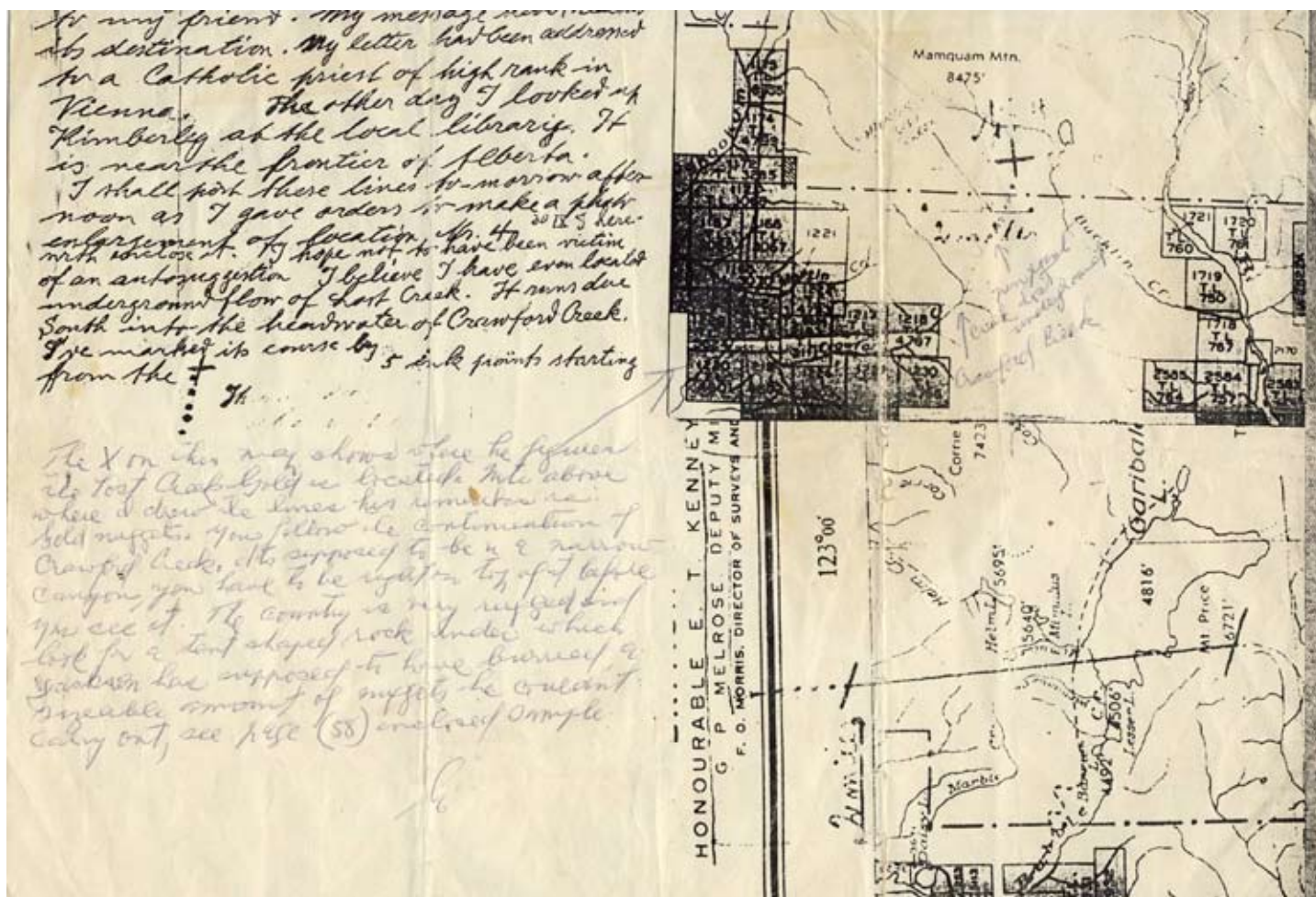
"It came in the mail today with no return address. It just showed up on my doorstep.

"Look at the site here," I said, pointing at the X marked near Crawford Creek, "that's where the guy thinks the Lost Mine of Pitt Lake is. I don't know if it's true, but it's interesting. We should take a trip in there this summer."

"Sure I am up for that!" Rob agreed







#### Transcript of the part referring to the Lost Creek:

... That Lost Creek Mine is there sure enough, but the country must be something awful. It is the ruggedness of the mountains that keeps intruders off. A man in Suma [sic] (Wash.) told me of a similar mine near Harrison Lake. Several men have perished searching in the attempt to rediscover it. Re. translation of Colonel Le Galls book Tahall let you know as soon as I get reply from Paris.

Nr. 4 of which I had no photostat made. is about half-way between Nr. 3 and 1 and on an almost straight line. Can you guess what this location is? It's nuggets most likely. Mr. Cooke, if I had not had any success with this map dowsing method right here in Germany, I would have hesitated to tell you—it's John Slumach's placer. Although the map does not give much topographic detail I think it is a rather mountainous district. Here are quite a few mountains and peaks and size from 5 to 8000 feet and it is

-----unreadable sentence-----

to my friend. My message never reached its destination. My letter had been addressed to a Catholic priest of high rank in Vienna. The other day I looked up Kimberley at the local library in. It is near the frontier in Alberta. I shall post these lines tomorrow afternoon

as I gave orders to make a photo enlargement of location Nr. 4. 30 IX [30 September] I herewith enclose it. I hope not to have been victim of an autosuggestion. I believe I have even located underground flow of Lost Creek. It runs due south into the headwaters of Crawford Creek. I have marked its course by 5 ink points starting from the +.

#### Notes by Mr. Cooke referring to the map fragment in the centre above (Mamquam Mountain).

The X on this may show where he [the unknown writer of the letter] figures the Lost Creek Gold is located. Note above where I drew the lines his remarks re gold nuggets.\*) You follow the continuation of Crawford Creek. It's supposed to be in a narrow canyon. You have to be right on top of it before you see it. The country is very rugged and look for a tent shaped rock under which Jackson has supposed to have buried a sizeable amount of nuggets he couldn't carry out, see page (58) enclosed sample.\*\*)

\*) Mr. Cooke refers to the underlined sentence in the letter (left)

\*\*) Page 58 of Donald Waite's *The Fraser Valley Story* shows an image of a tent-shaped rock.

# Scuzzy Creek Exercise

IN HIS BOOK *The Fraser* Bruce Hutchinson mentions a cave near China Bar where a group of miners found cover from Indians during the Fraser River Gold Rush. A cave in the Fraser Canyon would be an interesting place to hunt for treasure caches. In the book the cave is just mentioned in one sentence and I was sure no one had ever searched for it.

China Bar is still difficult to get to. It is reached by driving to Boston Bar and crossing over the Fraser to North Bend. From there logging roads reach deep into the mountains to an area called Scuzzy Creek. A walk up an old logging area running alongside the creek gets you to a point where you have to scale down the side of a mountain. Once down the mountain you follow the railroad tracks to the mouth of Scuzzy Creek and go up into the hills. Rob and I tried this on a hot July afternoon in 1989, hoping that with a little luck, we would stumble upon Hutchison's cave.

I had managed to get my hands on some claim charts of Scuzzy Creek, and its lower half was covered with claims. "Where others have found gold, you can find gold," was a lesson preached in most prospecting circles. Therefore Rob and I also planned to do a little prospecting, or should I say, claim jumping in the Scuzzy Creek area.

At Scuzzy Creek we parked the truck in a clearing and made our way up the ancient logging road. It took us a good hour or more to reach the end of the crumbling road to where we would make our descent down the side of the mountain. The mountainside was extremely steep and dry. Just before reaching the railway tracks, Rob and I stopped at a small stream. When we finished drinking we crossed the stream and hiked up to the top of a small ridge. I was sweating so much that my glasses slid off my nose. When I bent down to pick them up I noticed I was standing in the foundation of an old cabin, perhaps from a prospector who, with hundreds of others during the gold rush, envisioned himself finding his dreams. I called Rob who ran over and we looked around. I thought about something I had read in Karl Von Mueller's book *The Treasure Hunter's Manual* 7. Many a good cache, Von Mueller suggested, is to be found among the ruins of a crumbling cabin. That was an exciting thought, since I doubted that anyone had ever searched here with a metal detector. I planned to return to do that, but when I came back two years later I could not even find the spot where we found the ruins of that old prospector's cabin.

Once we had made our way down to the railway tracks, we decided to pan in some small creeks on the way, but all we found were fine specks of colour that you could hardly see with the human eye. We gave that up and followed what looked like an ancient prospector's trail down the

railway tracks. As we made our way into the most rugged part of the Fraser Canyon I could see the highway off in the distance across the Fraser River and Hell's Gate. When we got down to the train tracks, I noticed a train bridge ahead of us where Scuzzy Creek flows into the Fraser. At the mouth of the creek was China Bar.

As we walked towards the train bridge the heat became unbearable. I looked around for a place where we could hike down to the banks of the Fraser, but the cliffs looked way too dangerous. Rob wanted to look for a way down to Scuzzy Creek from the other side of the bridge and slowly started making his way across. I decided to follow him when suddenly I saw him turning around and yelling and I before I figured out what he was trying to tell me I could hear the blast of a locomotive horn.

I was standing in the middle of the bridge and could see where the track circled around the corner, but I couldn't see the train. I turned around in a panic and started walking back quickly. In the corner of my eye I could see the train coming around the corner. I started to run but I almost tripped and fell over because I had to jump from tie to tie on the railway tracks. My heart was now in my throat. I thought about jumping off the bridge down into the gorge, because the train was coming down on me fast. I glanced down at my feet trying not to trip.

The train was now honking at me in a series of panicky blasts, as it slowly got closer to grinding me into a pulp of mashed flesh and blood. All I could do was hope that I'd make it to the other side of the bridge in time. I felt that the train would now be soon on the bridge but my eyes were down at my feet. I had a vision of my mother tucking me into bed and whispering into my ear, *only five days to Christmas, Daryl*, she said in her calming voice.

I didn't dare look back at the train as I jumped from tie to tie. I could feel it rumbling under my feet; now breathing down my neck. Three ties to go...two...and one. I decided to jump for it and flung myself through the air with my eyes closed. I could hear one last blast from the train as my body flew through the air. I hit the ground with a thud and opening my eyes I watched the train beside me flying down the tracks. I lay there just listening to the sounds of the rumbling train and staring up at the deep blue sky that never looked so beautiful.

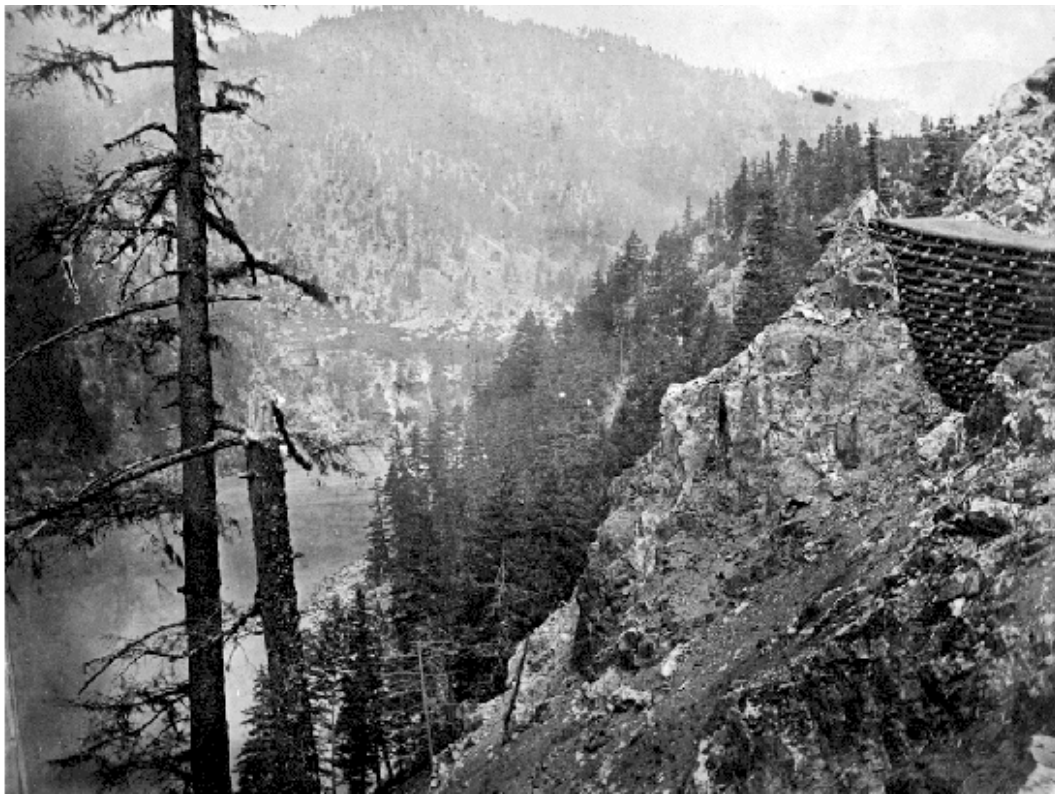
My sky gazing was interrupted by Rob's face looking down at me as I lay on the ground.

"Friesen, I thought you were gone," he said in a calm voice.

"So did I," I grumbled with intense relief.

Little did we know this was just beginning of the excitement of the day.





"Did you see any way to get down over there?" I asked slowly starting to remember why we had come here in the first place.

"No, it's all cliff," Rob explained. "Man it's hot," he grumbled as he wiped the sweat off his forehead.

"Maybe we can get down from here."

There was a small crack in the rock cliff next to the train bridge that we had not seen before. We squeezed our bodies through the crack and reached a tiny rock room. From there we climbed up one of the small rock faces onto a cliff where we found ourselves staring into the rugged beauty of Scuzzy Creek gorge. The creek found its way over the rocks spraying tiny drops of misty water up onto the cliff, cooling and refreshing our hot bodies.

Within minutes we were standing at the creek's edge. I plunged my head into the icy creek gorging myself in its refreshing touch. We took a moment to relax, enjoying the coolness of the water, away from the intense heat. Fully refreshed, I scanned the area for any gold panning opportunities while Rob walked up the creek to where a large waterfall was thundering. As I dipped my pan in the water, I glanced over at Rob to see what he was up to. He was trying to scale a steep rock cliff right next to the waterfall. I didn't find anything in my pan and decided to follow him. Perhaps I could find a better spot upstream.

The rock cliff looked much harder to scale then it really was. Within a couple of minutes, I was sitting with Rob on top of the bluff. From there we made our way upstream. I figured that we would follow the creek back to the truck with no problems. The canyon became more rugged as we made our way deeper into it. If we wanted to go any far-

ther we had to hike across the raging creek because it was getting much too steep on our side, so that's what we did. The water's grip was extremely strong. I was afraid I would lose my balance as I made my way across. The creek's current would carry me downstream and plunge me off the giant waterfall, sending me to the grave much earlier than I planned.

On the other side we walked along a small ridge that slowly started to take us away from the creek. I wanted to stay as close to the creek as possible because it was so hot and I liked to have water within easy reach. Also, I was here to look for gold. Any thought of stumbling upon Hutchinson's cave that we had come to look for had pretty well left our minds.

The narrow ridge continued for a good quarter of a mile until it slowly turned into an impassable rock face. We could backtrack but the reason we crossed the creek was that we couldn't get through on the other side. We noticed that the other side of the creek now looked much easier to follow upstream, but how would we get down there? We were about a 100 feet above the creek.

Rob walked over to the edge of the cliff, looked down, and suggested we jump. I walked over and had a look down.

"It looks deep enough," I said looking at the icy water below. "Besides if we go back we will have to climb up the mountain again and who feels like doing that?"

From up here the water look very clear and extremely cold. Rob looked at me from the corner of his eye as we both tried to sum up the courage to jump.

"After you," I said.

Rob was the only friend I have who would be the first to do anything crazy. If it had been with anyone else, I would have had to jump and then, after reaching the other side, I would have to beg to whoever it was to go for it. Not Rob, no sir, he gave me one last look and flung himself off the cliff and into the icy stream.

Have you ever had the pleasure of watching someone jump into a freezing water? The look of shock on Rob's face as he hit the water and then bolted to the other side as fast as he could, made a priceless Kodak moment. The downside is that you know that you will have to go through the same torture. After Rob made it to the other side, it was my turn. I stood there for a moment, closed my eyes and flung myself off the cliff. The seconds before I hit the water were the most painful as I was waiting for the grip of the icy water. When I hit the water, I screamed. Then I looked over at Rob who was standing on a rock bluff with a gleam in his eyes. I couldn't believe what he did. He jumped into the icy creek, climbed back up the rock bluff to where we had been standing before, and jumped off again just for the sheer thrill of adventure.

We continued on our way up the creek. The canyon opened up into a grand picture of ruggedness with a huge waterfall thundering off in the distance. The beauty of it all blocked out my gold lust. We waded through water up to our necks crossing once again to the other side of the creek. There was no way that we could follow the creek any further. The waterfall we faced was just too large to get around it and the only way we could continue would be to hike off into the mountains. We made our way up the rugged mountainside, each step taking us farther away from the refreshing power of the water. Once we were out of the reach of the creek the heat started penetrating our bodies. It was now close to the hottest part of the day.

The farther we climbed, the steeper the mountainside became and I was now starting to worry. I made my first mistake when I looked down just to see how far I would fall. My heart jumped into my throat as I gazed down on what looked like a good 500 feet to the canyon bottom. I looked up ahead and I could see Rob struggling on above me. I wondered if he was feeling any fear. I noticed that Rob came to a complete stop, but I couldn't understand why until I caught up with him—he was trapped under an overhanging cliff. If we wanted to continue upward we would have to find some way to get around the obstacle, but it looked impossible. We could always climb back down, but looking down the mountainside, it seemed just too steep to pull it off safely.

For the first time I felt my fear turn into panic. I looked over at Rob desperately looking for some way around the overhang. We had to do something quick or give up and die from heatstroke. Slowly my mouth was drying up. Suddenly it came to me that if I put my back to the cliff maybe I could get around to the other side of the overhang.

I started very slowly as there was not much of a ledge to walk on. I pushed my back as hard as I could against the cliff carefully ducking my head under the overhang. Rob was watching me and slowly started to follow me.

On the other side I looked around in a panic for anything to hold onto and to push myself up. My thirst was going to find a way. I noticed a tiny ledge to put my foot on and if it would hold long enough there was a way I could climb up the side of the overhang and slowly claw my way up.

"I think I found a way," I yelled to Rob who was still manoeuvring himself across the tiny ledge.

I sucked in a deep breath and lifted my leg up onto the rock ledge. I closed my eyes as I pushed the rock ledge with my one foot, praying that it would hold. So far so good, so I put my back against the overhanging cliff and took my other foot off the ledge and placed it on top the rock. I was now wedged between the overhang and the rock, but I noticed a small stream of dirt falling down underneath the rock that held my life. I sat frozen for a moment because I was so scared. I looked down and saw Rob's worried face about three feet below me.

"You can do it, Friesen," he said in a shaky voice.

If I was going to make it past the overhang I would have to turn around as fast as I could and grab onto the top of the overhang without thinking about it. I reached up into the air and grabbed onto a tiny branch that dangled within my reach, and held onto it while I removed my feet from the rock. I dangled from the branch in air for about a half a second and then flung myself onto the side of the overhang.

I looked desperately for something to grab onto. I could feel my hands bleeding and my fingernails snapping as my fingers dug into rock. But I pulled myself up onto top the overhang where I lay down just listening to my heart beating against my chest.

Rob had now braced himself between my faithful rock and the overhanging cliff. As I watched him struggle I had visions of him falling down and I was scared. I couldn't imagine what would be worse, falling myself or hearing Rob's scream as his body tore apart, bashing against the cliffs as he bounced down the mountainside.

"Reach up for the branch!" I yelled at him as he was looking for a way to get on top of the cliff. "Here grab my hand."

I put myself on my stomach and he grabbed my hand. I tried pulling him up but his legs were scraping against the overhang as he struggled to find a foothold.

"Please don't drop me, man!" he cried.

At last his foot caught hold of something and with a gasp he pushed himself up falling right on top of me.

"If we had anyone else with us we would be dead right now," said Rob after a long silence.

With that behind us we were feeling the heat again.

"I'm really getting thirsty," I said my mouth parched, "we'd better find a way back down to the creek."

We continued hiking up the mountainside but found ourselves faced with another problem. We were walking on top of a large rock bluff and it would not allow us to reach the creek down below. I was getting so thirsty that I was thinking about jumping off the cliff into the creek. We followed the rock bluff for another mile or so when Rob, who was walking in front of me, stopped and said, "We have to find another way."

Looking around I spotted a road some five miles up the mountainside. "We could hike up to that logging road," I said pointing towards the top of the mountain.

"I think we can make it," Rob said, and off we went towards the top of the mountain.

As we hiked north towards the logging road tree branches started tearing our skin and another rock bluff stopped our path.

"This is just great!" Rob cried out in frustration.

"Let's go back down, we can't get around that—it's huge!"

We went back the way we came and found ourselves once again standing on top of the rock cliff.

"I have to stop for a minute," I said.

We sat down on a rock and rested, taking in our situation.

"What time is it?"

"Three o' clock."

"Well, look at it this way, if we don't get back home by nine, somebody will come looking for us. We'll be dead by then," Rob grumbled.

With that pleasant thought in mind we got up and walked on top of the rock cliff. I was getting really thirsty by now. My legs were just moving by themselves as my mind was filled with visions of cold drinks. Rob was trudging away in the distance. When I wasn't thinking about cold water, I was watching him, worrying that he was going to stop.

"You see anything yet?" I yelled hoping he would say he found a stream or something.

"Ah maybe!" he yelled. I didn't know how I kept myself walking. I was exhausted and my mind was drifting far away. I had visions of my cat sleeping on the stairs at home. How I would kill to be there right now with an ice cold Coke in my hand.

"You see anything yet?"

"I don't know," he responded.

*Something has to happen soon or I don't know what I'll do,* I thought. I had to stop just for a second and I sat down on the edge of the cliff looking down towards the creek far below. *I could make it,* I thought, *I could survive the fall no problem.* I told myself this over and over trying to get the courage to jump. Part of my body knew that if I did jump I was dead, but the thirsty desperate side wanted to jump so badly.

"Friesen!" Rob called, but I didn't hear him, as I was too busy fighting the urge to jump.

"Friesen!" I heard it now, but it sounded like an echo.

"I think I found a way down," he said snapping me out of my daze.

"Really?" I said in excitement and I followed him. When I heard his scream of happiness I ran over to him. Rob stood on what looked like an ancient dried up creekbed.

"This will take us back down to the creek," he said, making his way down.

I could hear the creek thundering below, but the forest blocked it from sight. I moved as fast as I could, and saw Rob rushing through the branches up ahead. When I arrived a few seconds later, I just dropped to the ground plunging my head into the water. I kept drinking and drinking filling my body with the water's refreshing power. When we both had our fill we just sat down by the edge of the creek.

"That was close," I said to Rob who was sitting and playing in the dirt.

"Yeah."

We realized that our adventure was not over. We still had to cross the creek and hike back up the other side of the mountain to the logging road. The creek was a raging torrent as we slowly started to wade across. The water was up to our chests and its power was awesome. We made safely to the other side. As we started to climb the mountain, I noticed that I was feeling sick to my stomach. Within a couple of minutes, I had to stop, and before I knew it, I spit out the water that I had just gulped in.

We just kept on hiking up the mountainside, and within minutes we were standing on the logging road. I had never been so happy to see a flat surface in my life. As the two of us slowly walked down the road we both knew that we were really lucky to be alive.

We could see the truck off in the distance and I was so happy to see it, I felt like kissing it. As we drove up the dusty logging road looking back at the valley, I was overcome by a sense that we had been saved by what I will never know, and I couldn't shake the feeling the entire drive back home.

Both of us were still dying of thirst.



REUNITED FROM PHAEDR REVEL

# Lost Creek

THE NEXT adventure after surviving the China Bar brought me into a place deep in the heart of the Stave Lake mountains, where we found a place that became a sanctuary for me in the time I was growing up. This was a place where I could go to escape from the world and get in touch with my inner self.

Once again Rob was my partner on that great discovery. We were looking for yet another cave, this one mentioned in Charles A. Miller's book *The Golden Mountains*.

I had brought with me topographic maps of the area, on which I recorded the general location of where I thought the cave would be according to the description in Miller's book, viz. on the west side of Norrish Creek on the spot where the creek turns east. I left Rob the task of navigating us up the winding logging road, while I kept my eyes on the road and listened for the sound of approaching logging trucks. Rob said that we were to keep going until we came to the fourth bridge that crossed Norrish Creek. There we could park the truck and hike up the river to the location I had circled on the map, and if all went well, the cave would be right there.

After about a half an hour of driving we came to the fourth bridge, parked, and headed down to the canyon floor to begin our search. The water of the creek was thundering down. We tried to walk up the river by jumping from rock to rock, but we gave up because the river was too high. If we wanted to continue we would have to get our feet wet—no big deal. The water in the creek was icy cold as we slowly hiked upstream. The sunrays were dancing through the clear water. As we walked up the creek the sound of the water was growing louder and louder, and as we rounded a bend we came face to face with a beautiful giant waterfall.

Cutting through an ancient ledge of rock, the waterfall cascaded down into a large dark green pool. The water was so clear you could see the bottom. With all its splendour the waterfall was an obstacle, keeping us from reaching the cave. We had to hike around the waterfall climbing through the bush to get farther upstream. The branches poked at us as we were climbing, but soon we were standing above the mighty fall.

I slipped and fell over, and when I landed on the ground I thought it sounded hollow. I called out for Rob who was looking down at the waterfall. He came over to where I was knocking on the ground.

"Listen," I said, "does that sound hollow to you? Well?"

"Ya, I'd say so, and there's only one way to find out."

And with that Rob and I started digging with our hands.

Within minutes we were through the dirt and staring at five large man-made pieces of wood.

"Do you have a knife?"

Rob pulled out his knife and started chipping away at the wood.

"This is going to take forever, I have a better idea, stand up."

Rob knew what I was thinking and we both jumped up and down on the boards. Within seconds the wood snapped in half and we found ourselves in a five-foot hole.

"You okay?"

"Yes, at least we know it's hollow now."

Rob got up and crawled out of the hole and I was about to follow, but when I started to push myself up, I felt my hand touching something made of metal.

"I think I found something," I cried out.

"What is it?" Rob asked from above.

I picked up the object and scraped the dirt off it.

"It's an axe head."

"Damn, I was hoping it was a large piece of gold."

"Did you bring a flashlight?"

I poked my head out of the hole to see what he was doing.

"Friesen come here!"

I climbed out of the hole and ran over to where he was standing.

"What is it?"

"Look," he said pointing to a pile of ancient beams, which were sticking out of the ground.

"I would say we have found ourselves some sort of old camp," Rob said with a happy smile.

We dug around a bit more and unearthed more axe heads, some broken old bottles, and a gold pan. We decided to return the following weekend with some digging equipment, and as it was getting late, we decided to call it a day and head back to the truck.

As we were driving down the logging road, Rob started mumbling to himself as he studied the map we had used to guide us up here.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Ah man! I don't believe this!"

"What?"

"We were not even close to Norrish Creek. It's way over here! We took the wrong road off the freeway. The river we hiked up is called Lost Creek!" said Rob with a smile.

Charles A. Miller's cave would have to wait rediscovery, but thanks to our mistake we had made our own discovery. We returned to the site several times, excavating and pulling out all kinds of artifacts from what at one time had been probably a logging or perhaps a mining camp. The summer of 1989 came to a close and we returned to high school for our final year.

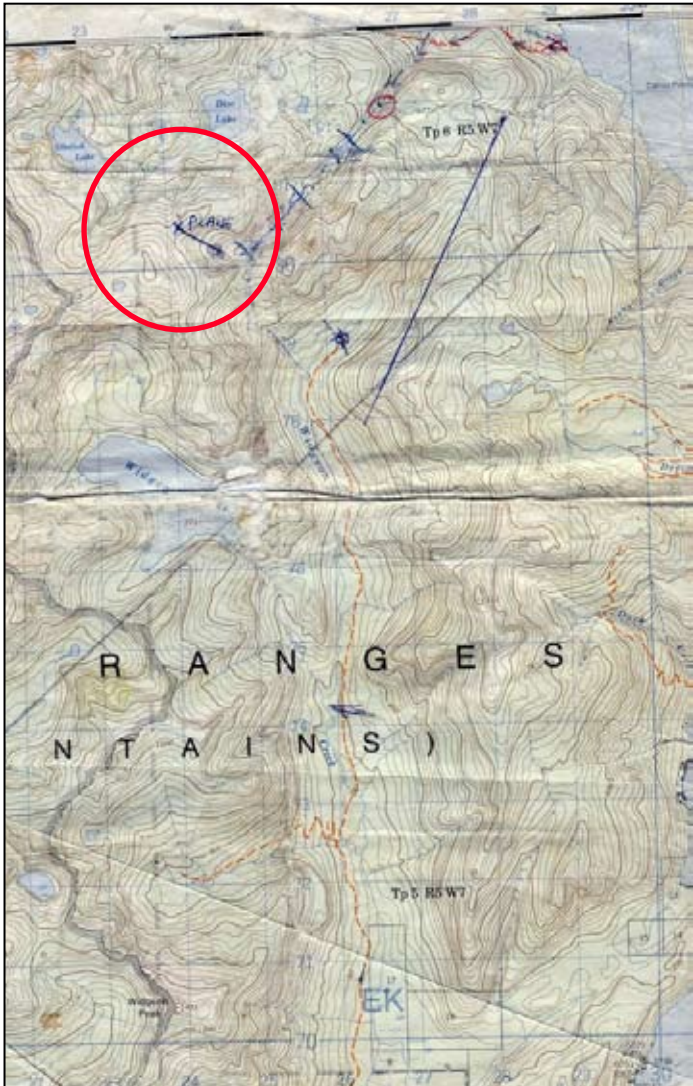




It was not the old campsite that made this place so special for me when I was growing up. It was that beautiful waterfall and the great pool below it where I would spend many hours swimming and exploring all through the summers that followed



# Mike Boileau and the Mitchell Bomber



"And where's the B-25?" I asked looking at the map. "It's right here," he said pointing at a mountain just above Spindle Canyon. He then took a pen from his pocket and placed an X on the spot.

I RETURNED to my Pitt Lake explorations in the spring of 1990 and called a few people mentioned in the newspaper articles to hear their stories about the lost mine first hand. One of the first people I contacted was Mike Boileau, very intrigued as I was by his story about the wreck of an airplane he found in the Pitt Lake area while searching for the gold.

Originally Boileau had found only a few pieces of metal from the wreck that were later identified as pieces of a B-25 bomber. Mitchell B-25 bombers were used after the war to haul military cargo throughout Canada and one went missing on its approach to Vancouver. It reportedly carried a valuable load—eight hundred thousand dollars in cash to pay the Armed Forces personnel on the West Coast and eight thousand dollars in gold bullion.

Boileau decided to go back into the canyon and try to find the aircraft, and who wouldn't with that kind of money at stake. Had he found the wreck? This could be the king of all treasure leads.

"Hello?" answered a deep voice.

"Is this Mike Boileau there?" I asked nervously.

"Ya, this is him."

"You don't know me, but I just read an article about your involvement with Pitt Lake in an old newspaper."

"Ya, what about it?"

"It said that you found a crashed B-25 bomber."

"Yes, that's true," he said in a blunt "get to the point" tone.

"Would you be willing to tell me where it is?" I asked expecting him to hang up. There was a small silence in the conversation as I sat there with my fingers crossed. I could almost hear Boileau thinking.

"I tell you what," he said breaking the silence, "do you have a map?"

"Yes," I answered anxiously.

"Why don't you call me back tomorrow around six in the evening and we will arrange a meeting."

"Okay, sure," I said trying to bottle the excitement that was now pumping through my veins.

"Great. Talk to you later," he said and hung up.

That was beautiful. I felt like I was standing on the threshold of a great adventure. I called Mike Boileau and agreed when and where to meet. I brought along two of the guys I had been hanging around with that year in school, Kurt Lytle and Jim Steinberg.

Kurt was a really nice guy. He wanted to be a stunt man and I tell you, he was just crazy. He used to crawl out on the canopy of my truck when I was flying down a logging road at 100 miles an hour. The weird thing is that I was never worried that he would fall off. I knew that Kurt had what it took.

Jim Steinberg was a different story. He was a self-proclaimed anarchist who listened to the Sex Pistols all the time and cursed at the world.

When we arrived at Boileau's house he was standing outside waiting for us.

"Which one of you did I talk to on the phone?" he asked.

"It was him," Kurt said pointing at me.

"I do hope you brought a map," Boileau asked, glaring at me.

I ran back to my truck and grabbed a topographic map.

"This is the canyon right here," Boileau said pointing at Spindle Canyon on the map.

"And where's the B-25?" I asked looking at the map.

"It's right here," he said pointing at a mountain just above Spindle Canyon. He then took a pen from his pocket and placed an X on the spot.

"I know you flew in by helicopter," I said, "but do you think it's at all possible to hike into this canyon?"

Mike looked at us, cracked a mocking grin, and said, "not a chance."

"Why?" Jim asked, speaking for the first time.

"Listen to me," he said, "it can't be done, you wouldn't believe what it's like in there, and the boulders are the size of my house. The only way in is by helicopter."

"Ya, but Jackson and Slumach did hike in there if this is the location of Lost Creek Mine."

"Look at yourselves," Boileau said with a hint of impatience in his voice. "You're weak and civilized. You have meat on your bones, no muscles, and you're totally out of shape. We all had our days." He was getting more and more excited as he talked. "Men like Jackson and Slumach were tough. They lived off the land. We get uncomfortable when we don't have a shower once a day!" He pointed at his house, "We spend all our time living in little cardboard houses! You see what I am saying?" He grinned.

"I wrote down the stuff that happened to me when I was up there," Boileau explained. "Hold on a sec, I'll go get it." He disappeared into the house and returned with a tiny manuscript that I recognized immediately. "This is it," he said, giving it to me.

"I have this already," I said.

"What?" He sounded shocked. "That's impossible, it has never left my filing cabinet."

"A friend of mine got it from a library a long time ago," I explained.

"That's strange," Boileau grumbled, scratching his head curiously, "but not all that surprising."

"Why's that?" Jim asked.

"Spindle's a strange place," Boileau explained, "it really makes me wonder, I mean the whole time I was involved in that canyon, things didn't feel right. When I was up in that canyon, I sometimes even felt like I was being watched. Not only that, but all the people I knew who were ever involved with Spindle are now dead."

"So are you saying you believe in the curse?" Kurt asked.

"I don't know," Boileau said.

"Do you think that there is really any gold in that plane?" I asked.

"I don't know. There could be."

"I can't believe you never looked."

"We had nothing to open the fuselage with and besides, I never wanted to go back to Spindle again. I'll tell you something else that's interesting: when my partner and I were exploring the wreckage, we came across a plaque that said 'RCAF crash, please do not report' and it had the date on it, October 1, 1953."

"Then obviously the plane was found by the government," Kurt said disappointed.

"Actually no," Boileau said, "I found out from a friend of mine, an ex-air force officer, that sometimes when an airplane is carrying a valuable cargo they put plaques on board like the one we found."

"Why?" Jim asked.

"To kill curiosity of people who might stumble upon the plane's ruins before the government to keep them from snooping around. There just may be gold still inside there."

"What about the canyon? The article said that you were making a deal with several mining companies trying to sell your share of the property. What happened with that?" I asked.

"First of all, let me tell you that the press exaggerated the story completely," Boileau explained.

"What do you mean?" I asked curiously.

"Well, they were in search of the great adventure story, and they wanted a real life Indiana Jones," Boileau said with a grin. "I'll tell you what really happened. I made a deal with two fellows but the bastards conned me."

"Did you ever have any assays done on Spindle Canyon?" I asked.

"Of course, I took plenty of samples into the assayer's office in Vancouver and believe me, the results were excellent. I never saw an assayer so excited. Of course they wanted to know where I got them from."

"You never told them?" I said.

"Of course not."

"What were the results of the reports?"

"I believe they were something like one ounce of gold per ton of rock."

"That doesn't sound very great," Kurt said mockingly.

"Shows what you guys know about mining these days," Boileau said, "By today's standards, it's excellent."

"I guess so," Jim said speaking up from his long silence.

"Before I forget I have something else I want to show you guys," Boileau said. "Meet me around the back." We got up and started walking around to the back of the house.

"I can't believe this," I said, "he's telling us everything."

"I have a theory about this," Kurt said.



"What's that," I asked curiously looking around to see if Boileau was in sight.

"I'll tell you later," Kurt said pointing towards the house where Boileau was mumbling something to his wife. He looked like he was carrying a gun in his hand.

"You like it?" he said as he walked towards us.

"Like what?"

"My cabin," he said pointing to a tiny cabin that I thought was a tool shed. "It's a model of one I had as a kid. Come let's go inside."

We followed Boileau inside the tiny cabin, which contained a table and an ancient looking bunk bed where Jim sat down making himself at home.

"What's that?" Kurt said pointing at the gun in Boileau's hand.

"Ah, I almost forgot. This interesting artifact is an old flare gun I found at the B-25, but there's something really interesting about it. Take a look at the insignia on the side," he said handing me the gun.

"It says US army issue, so what?" I said.

"Why would a Canadian bomber be carrying US equipment?" Boileau said.

"My guess is that it was a Canadian bomber owned by the US. That's why neither the Canadian army nor I could find any records of it. The reason I am telling you this is when you do your research I suggest you get in touch with the Americans. I tell you sometimes I wish I could go back there."

"Why don't you?" I asked.

"Look at you guys compared to me. I am old. I have a family to look after now. No, I can't go back. You'll understand when you get older. Now you see what you can find. It's your turn—go there and get yourselves killed."

Boileau got up, almost looking sad. Maybe he thought he told us too much or maybe he wished he was young again and could still do this kind of thing or maybe he wasn't telling us something, something that was really important.

"Call me if you have any more questions," he said, as we walked back towards the front yard.

"Thanks very much," I said getting into my truck and watching Boileau disappear into his house.

There was silence in the truck as I drove into the warm spring night. I was very excited about the new information and was convinced that there was gold in Boileau's little forgotten canyon.

Kurt broke the silence. "I will do whatever it takes to get in there," he said sounding sincere.

"Same goes with me," Jim said.

Both would forget about Mike Boileau and his gold canyon, but not me. I had to get into the canyon at any price, and I knew that there was something inside Spindle.

When I got home I raced into the dark house trying to be careful not to wake my sleeping parents and brother. In

my room and pulled an old strongbox from under my bed. There I kept an old tape that had been mailed to me after one of those magical trips to Pitt Lake. Mrs. Smittberg, a lady who owned a cabin on the shore of Pitt Lake right next to the mouth of Debeck Creek had made the tape.

On the tape was a story about a group of prospectors who had broken into her cabin to find shelter after their boat sank in Pitt Lake. When the Smittbergs journeyed up to the cabin in summer they found that these prospectors had broken into their cabin for food. They had left a note saying they were sorry and would be back once they had finished exploring up behind Debeck Creek. What interested me most was that Mrs. Smittberg found a map in the cabin which an X marking a small canyon just north of Widgeon Lake: Spindle Canyon.

I was ready to do anything to get inside the canyon and I knew that since I would never be able to afford a helicopter I would have to get there on foot. But I needed to have my father take me up to Debeck Creek again.

"You are not going to believe what I learned about Pitt Lake yesterday, Dad!"

"Are you still searching for that lost gold mine? There's nothing up there but granite."

"I think you are wrong, Dad."

I tried to show him the map of Pitt Lake where Mike Boileau had marked Spindle Canyon and the location of the Mitchell B-25 bomber.

"Dad, Mike Boileau says..."

"Wait a minute, Mike who?" he asked.

"Boileau, the guy I met last night. He thinks that the location of the lost gold mine is inside this canyon here," I said pointing to Spindle on my map. "But what's really interesting is that Spindle Canyon matches with the same area where the *Province* newspaper was searching for the gold and the area mentioned on the tape I was given by that Mrs. Smittberg. Do you remember that, Dad?"

"Yes I do, but you know what you should do, son, you should try sticking to the things that really matter. Keep your head out of the clouds and stick to the meat and potatoes. There is no gold in those mountains. If there was, someone would have found it a long time ago."

Still he took me up Pitt Lake again later that summer. I guess he did it because no matter how crazy I may have been, he loved me for who I was and that made him the greatest father in the world.

# Spindle Creek: The Big Rock

THE SUMMER of 1990 was slowly coming to a close when my father agreed to take me up to Debeck Creek. We would hike up the old trail that ran along the stream to reach Spindle Creek, leading into the canyon. There, I was sure, the lost mine of Pitt Lake was waiting for me to find. Brian had agreed to come along on this trip as well as another friend of mine, Eric, a brilliant, sarcastic, funny, and intelligent guy. They had nothing better to do, they said, and agreed to come along with us for what I was hoping would be my day of glory.

My father had exchanged his larger boat for a smaller one, and the small, heavily loaded boat chucked slowly up the lake. I hadn't been up to Pitt Lake for at least six years and all my childhood yearnings for treasure and adventure rushed back as the mountains grew taller and more powerful. It was a long journey to reach Debeck Creek, but finally, as we came around the corner at Goose Island, I saw the creek flowing into the lake ahead of us at some distance.

"There it is," I said, pointing up the lake towards the creek.

"If it was much farther I was going to turn back this boat. It can't take this much weight. Look how low we are to the water."

Dad was right. I had been too lost in thought to notice that the water was almost coming into the boat. It hadn't bothered me at all but Brian looked frightened—he couldn't swim.

Debeck Creek was exactly as I remembered it. We navigated the boat through the driftwood onto shore and pulled it on land. For a few minutes my father stood staring at the water with a worried look.

"If it gets any rougher we will have to leave. Look at those whitecaps. I should have never come up here," he said, sounding very concerned and regretful, but I ignored him. I didn't want anything to stop me from getting into Spindle. After we unloaded the boat, I quickly went in search of the trail up to Spindle Creek shown on the map and found it.

"We should camp here," Eric said, standing at the beginning of the trail.

"You know something, I think you are right," I said, patting him on the shoulder with a grin and then running back down to the boat to help bring up the supplies.

My father was an amazing cook over a campfire and made us steaks and potatoes done inside the fire in tin foil. We all sat there around our little campfire chewing on our steaks and laughing under the stars. There were many jokes at my expense about Slumach's curse and how he was going to get me and about tent-shaped rocks and all things related to the lost gold mine.

After dinner I walked down to the beach alone. The sun was dipping below the mountains and the last rays of light were shining down on the now calm water of the lake. I became all at once filled with doubts about the venture ahead. There were footsteps on the gravel behind me and I expected to see my father when I turned around, but it was Brian. He knew me well and standing beside me probably sensed my anxiety.

"So Friesen, is tomorrow your make-it-or-break-it day?" he asked.

"I don't know," I answered.

I knew that if it all went well, this trip would answer my questions about Pitt Lake but somehow deep down I felt something about this trip was wrong and that I was crazy for even trying. For Brian this expedition was not more than a hiking trip. He couldn't understand why I was so excited about some flaky lost mine.

"Do you ever have doubts about yourself, Brian?"

"Doubt is my best friend, Friesen. Come on—don't worry so much. Look around you, this place is really beautiful."

I watched the sun finally set behind the mountains and the stars glistening in the night sky. I pushed my thoughts about old Slumach and his gold aside and enjoyed the beauty of this place.

Bright and early the next morning after enjoying another one of my father's great meals, we sat around the campfire once again studying the topographic map and planning the journey ahead.

"Are you sure this entrance is the right trail?" Eric asked pointing to the map. "When I was down at the creek last night getting water, I saw a different trail running along the side."

"Well, was it bigger than this one?"

"No, it's a little smaller."

"Then it's probably the wrong one."

"But how do you know that?"

"Because only large trails are shown on the maps, trust me. I have a lot of experience with these things and the trail we are camped on is larger than the one by the river. It makes sense that it's the one which leads up to Spindle Creek." I explained growing angry with Eric.

"Look, why don't we check it out anyway," my dad said, "it can't hurt, and if it's the wrong one we will come back to this one."

So the decision was made. I was out-voted. We all put on our backpacks and headed off towards the trail that was right beside Debeck Creek even though I knew it was wrong. Not much was said as we started to ascend the trail farther and farther away from the lake and up into the mountains. As we walked I thought back to the time when Rick Johnson and I visited this place and were chased

out by crazy prospectors and was overcome by a sense of destiny.

After about two hours of hiking we were about 600 feet above Debeck Creek. The trail was growing very narrow and came to a complete stop and so did our little expedition. I couldn't see up ahead and was confused by the sudden halt in our progress.

"What's the problem?" I asked.

"It looks like the trail stopped, nothing ahead of us but mountain," my father replied.

"See Eric, what did I tell ya? Man, we were on the right trail."

"For once I can say I agree with Friesen, airhead," Brian said, cursing Eric. "This is not the right trail."

"People make mistakes, alright?" Eric said, shrugging his shoulder.

"Look there is no point fighting about it," my father said. "We'll just cut through the forest back to the proper trail."

He started making his way into the thick and rugged forest. We all followed. I had a warm fuzzy feeling inside me because if they had listened to me in the first place we would not be having this little setback, and they all knew it. The four of us trudged through the thick forest, crawling over fallen logs, snagging ourselves on branches and being cut by devil's club. It was tough, and it was slowly wearing us down.

"Where's that trail anyway?" Brian cursed.

My father took the opportunity to laugh at me pointing to a tent-shaped rock sticking out of the ground.

"Look Daryl, a tent-shaped rock."

They all laughed and it kind of hurt me, but I laughed with them, for the first time realizing that neither my father nor my two friends believed that there was anything worth looking for in these mountains.

Several minutes later we broke through the forest and onto the trail.

"Now if we follow this back down we would end up exactly where the camp is," I said, but no one answered.

We continued our trek up the trail. At some point the trail became so overgrown with small pine trees that it could hardly be recognized. Branches ripped our clothes and tugged at our backpacks and there was some talk about turning back, but, once we cleared the small pine forest, the trail appeared again and we could hear a large river cascading off in the distance.

"We're almost there!" I called excited. "Spindle Creek is the first to cross this trail."

We walked on for about a half an hour more, but as we got closer to the creek there was evidence that we were not the first visitors to this mysterious region. The first thing that I noticed was a rotten old wooden sign that had been hammered to a tree. The rest of the group walked up behind me.

"What the hell is this?" Eric asked.

There was writing on the sign that we could barely make out. *Property of Mike. Touch my camp and you will be shot 1962*, it said. My first thoughts were of Mike Boileau, but he was not searching for the mine in 1962. Scattered around us were all kinds of clothes, a couple of wooden benches, rusting cans of food, flour bags, and other items decaying beyond recognition. As we all rummaged through the remnants of the camp it was Brian who found the most interesting item.

"Hey Friesen, take a look at this," he said pulling an old leather pouch out from under some rags. He poured the contents of the pouch out onto the old bench and for a second my heart skipped a beat, but it was not gold that fell out of the pouch but two large pieces of quartz, hammered straight out of the rock or maybe a gold vein.

My father picked up a piece and held it in his hands. "Interesting," he said, "most damn quartz I have ever seen in this country."

"What if it was quartz from a gold vein? The two are often found together," I said.

"It could be, but I doubt it." And with that he handed the quartz to me and walked down to the river. I held the quartz in my hand for a few seconds and looked at the camp. Obviously this had been an old prospector's camp. There had to be gold in this country and I was now even more determined to prove it. We walked down to the creek cascading down from the mountains and sat down next to it for a rest.

"Now what?" Eric asked looking at me.

"Well, we're at Spindle Creek, so now we have to follow this water into the canyon."

I could feel that all were growing tired. It had been a rough hike straight up the side of a mountain to get to this point and what was ahead of us looked even worse. Ahead was a very steep and rugged hike up the creek bed to get deeper into the canyon and it looked rough.

"I'm getting too old for this," my father said.

"But we have to go just a little further," I said as I started to make my way into the river and up the mountainside. I climbed through the creek, trying not to fall as I went stepping over large rocks and fallen branches. I looked back and the others were following behind. After about ten minutes of climbing the river, it started to flatten out and the hiking became easier for a few minutes. I could see the others trudging their way up the mountain.

"It gets flatter up here!" I called, trying to raise the sinking spirits of the group.

As I kept hiking, the creek bed started to become even more treacherous than before. The terrain had flattened out, but there were slippery logs to cross, and jagged rocks sticking out of the river made hiking slow. You couldn't climb on shore because there was nothing but rock cliffs reaching up into the air, and there was no stable footing anywhere. I tried climbing over a large log-jam that

blocked the creek. The others were catching up as I climbed on top of one of the large logs.

"Slow down or you are going to get hurt," my father cried from behind and as he did, I slipped. The log gave way with a snap and I tumbled into the river. My head went under and the creek's raging current dragged over the rocks. I was scared, but managed to pull myself out of the icy water. When the others caught up to me stood there in the creek dripping from head to toe with cold water. I looked at my father and I knew he was getting tired and worried, but I had to press on just a little farther hoping to get inside the canyon before we turned back. This was going to be my only chance for a long time.

As we continued to hike the creek, it narrowed and the water was now almost up to our waists and it was flowing very fast. We could no longer walk in it. If we tried we would be swept downstream. We managed to find a place where we could finally climb on the creek bank but it was really hard going. We were forced to go through a small forest of devil's club cutting one of my hands and ripping a sleeve of my jacket. The others were not having a good time either. I could hear my dad cursing, and there were mumbles from both Eric and Brian, but I couldn't make out what they said over the rushing sounds of the water. I continued up-creek hoping to see something that justified all of this, but there was nothing. Only huge rocks scattered all over and thundering water.

The canyon started to grow even narrower as I splashed through the icy river, which was no longer as deep. The boulders next to the river were the size of small houses. It was beautiful and rugged at the same time. I felt as if I was one of the first people to walk here in a very long time. After walking on for a few more minutes and around one more corner I saw it right in front of me: the end of this trip. A massive boulder was sitting in the middle of the river wedged between the cliffs towering beside it. The boulder had blocked the entrance to the canyon. There was no way we could continue. As the others caught up with me I heard my dad shout, "And this is where we stop."

I knew it was all over, but I didn't want to give up and I



"My father took a picture of the three of us."

Eric Woodward, Daryl Friesen, and Brian Renvall at Spindle Creek.

yelled back over the sounds of the roaring river, "but we can get over that!"

"Maybe, but like I said before, I am too old for this, enough is enough, and my back is killing me. I can't do this stuff anymore."

He was standing there in the river sweat dripping down his forehead, doing more than most fathers would do. Still, I was angry that we could not continue. I sat down on a log next to the river and looked at my map in frustration.

Eric sat down beside me, and I mumbled to him, "we can get over that."

I looked over at the rock.

"What can you do? He's the boss," Eric explained. "It was a good hike though, Friesen. Maybe next year." He patted me on the back.

"Yeah maybe," I said feeling very defeated.

Eric and I got up and went over to where Brian was sitting on a rock in the river looking tired. My father took a picture of the three of us.

On the return hike I dragged behind feeling beat. I followed the rest of the expedition out of those mountains beckoning me to go deeper into them. I so badly wanted to get into that canyon and I knew it would take at least until the next year before I could return here. I was on my way back into the real world with no gold in my pocket. Life would be so much easier if only I could keep my head out of the clouds and stick to the meat and potatoes—but I couldn't.



# Stuart Brown

I TOOK a trip to the local library where I came across Donald Waite's book *The Fraser Valley Story*, which contained some exciting information I had never read before. The book mentioned a man named Stuart Brown who came forward with the extraordinary claim that he had found the lost mine of Pitt Lake within the boundaries of Garibaldi Park in the summer of 1973. When Brown made his discovery he knew that he could not stake the location as it was in a Provincial Park. He chose to try and interest the government to help him protect the location and to grant him permission to take samples out to prove his point and to stake the site.

Brown wrote letter after letter to the government and, after several years, getting nowhere with the government, he contacted Teck Corporation, a mining company. They offered him \$16,000 for revealing the location of his find but he declined their offer, as he did not consider that enough. Stuart kept a secret many people would kill for and was not sure what to do next. He tried to find individuals who could assist him by confirming the presence of the bonanza, and one of those he chose for that purpose had been Don Waite.

At that time Waite ran a photography business in Maple Ridge and was listed in the phone book. When I called him, he immediately invited me over. First thing he did after I came in was handing me a topographic map with a line drawn on it pointing to an area on the west side of Terrarosa glacier.

"This is a map that I used when I hiked the area where Brown believed the mine was," he said "but it doesn't mean much, so don't get too excited."

He wondered why Brown would have gone through the trouble of writing letter after letter to government officials year after year, trying to convince them to mine in a park.

"He says in his letters that the gold is just there for the picking. Most people would have just taken it all. Wouldn't you if you were standing up to your ankles in gold nuggets?"

"Probably," I answered, "how did you meet Brown?"

"He called me up out of the blue and said that he had read my book and wanted to show me the location and that maybe I would publish the truth in my next book. I think all Brown was looking for was fame."

"Do you have any more of the letters that Brown wrote to the government?" I asked.

"Sure."

"Is there any way I could get copies?"

"It will cost ya," he said. "Just kidding. Follow me."

He took out a large book — his entire file on the lost mine — and started to copy all of the Stuart Brown's letters and other information. I will forever be grateful to him for sharing all that with me.

Stuart Brown had agreed to guide Don and his partner Vic Loffler to the location of the mine to prove his story and clear his name. They left Maple Ridge in Stuart Brown's beaten up old van traveling past Vancouver, up the Squamish Highway to Pemberton. From there they took the road that runs to the head of Harrison Lake. Near the head of Harrison they drove up the Fire Lake logging road as far as they could before setting out on foot. But when they reached Fire Lake, Don's boots had given out, he had blisters on his feet, and they had to turn back.

Plans were made for a second attempt, but this time it would be done by helicopter. So a few days later they headed for the location by air. But something made Stuart Brown change his mind. No longer did he want to share his secret with Don and he refused to point out the location from the air. When they got back on the ground Stuart and Don went their separate ways. Don, determined, looked for the mine once more, this time with his partner Vic Loffler but without Stuart Brown.

When I met him, Don told me that he had come to the conclusion that Stuart Brown's bonanza was an illusion and that Brown had refused to point out its location simply because he couldn't — he had never seen it in his life.

After talking with Stuart Brown by telephone myself I became more convinced that he was a man of his word.

*Transcript of my telephone conversation with Stuart Brown in the winter 2000/2001.*

— When was the last time you went up there?

— Oh, it would be about 1980.

— Did you ever find gold?

— Yeah

— How much gold did you find?

— Considerable.

— Would you ever go back again?

— Not at my age.

— Would you ever talk to anyone about where you went?

— Well I am a little leery about it all.

— Why is that?

— Well I would be endangering people's lives and no one in his right mind would ever go in there.

— Why is that?  
 — Because of the terrain.  
 — Is it anywhere near Stave Glacier?  
 — Well, that's a matter of distance.  
 — Is it east of Stave Glacier?  
 — Yes, generally.  
 — Is it near Terrarosa Glacier?  
 — Yes.  
 — Is it the northern Terrarosa Glacier or the southern Terrarosa Glacier?  
 — I wouldn't help you a bit by saying anything on that.  
 — Why is that?  
 — You have to know the country.  
 — I guess you would not be able to show the area on a map would you?  
 — I would want some pretty detailed assurances about it. I am getting too old now to get involved.  
 — You are the only person on record who claims to know where it is and is still alive.  
 — That's right, no there is one other person who knows.  
 — What's the name?  
 — That I would not be able to give out.  
 — Still alive?  
 — Yup.  
 — Was he your partner?  
 — Well he was sort of. He went in with me once but not all the way.  
 — Do you think others know where it is besides you?  
 — I am quite certain, no.  
 — No?  
 — Right  
 — Can you get to it by going through Fire Lake?  
 — Well, you can get to it going anyway. It's you might say circuitous route. I don't think there is much use in me discussing this.  
 — Why is that?  
 — What good would it do. I am only endangering your life since it's not going to lead to anything. If someone accidentally found it so be it. That would be up to them.  
 — Can you get to it through the Upper Pitt River?

713 Norberry Cres.  
 Ottawa, K1V 6N3,  
 September 24, 1974.

Honorable Leo T. Nimsick,  
 Minister of Mines & Petroleum Resources,  
 Parliament Buildings,  
 Victoria, B. C.

Honorable Sir,

As a former resident and active forest survey officer in British Columbia I came to know many areas of your province very well. During forest survey work I became interested in minerals and for several years carried a prospectors licence.

My work in Ottawa has continued to involve me in survey work in all provinces but it was not until this summer that I was able to take time to investigate properly certain locations in which I had previously been interested. To be brief, I have come up with some extremely startling results which have shaken me thoroughly.

There is one problem. The particular spot of extreme interest is within the confines of one of your provincial parks and prospecting, removal of samples, and mine development is therefore against the law.

I do not wish in any way to flout the laws of the province so am writing to you. My request is that I be able to bring out loose surface samples to you and then have the situation discussed with your cabinet. For emphasis I would estimate that there is over twenty billion dollars involved, much of it loose on the surface. Appearances indicate much more, even to hundreds of billions and this could make the Klondike and Cariboo appear like peanuts.

Please above all else keep this confidential for several reasons. If news breaks hordes of people will be in there and you will lose control. Moreover, I could have removed \$100,000 easily in one trip (50 lbs. = 800 oz. pure) with little risk of being caught. If I could, so could others and few would honor the law as outlined (see underlined above). Please communicate with me only through my home address. My office mail is pre-opened by staff before reaching my desk and I would prefer the whole situation remain confidential between us until I can produce samples to prove my find. Things can in this way then proceed in a legal manner.

Regardless of the above the news will make headlines when it breaks, and it will! When the news media gets it things will go wild. I am only human and the fame of such an event is too much to pass up!

Can you get me a permit to bring out loose samples? If so, will you?

Sincerely  
 G. Stuart Brown

A letter written by Stuart Brown in September 1974.

— Well you can get to it a dozen ways, You can get to it by going how they first went in.  
 — How did they first go in?  
 — Well they went in many ways  
 — Is it closer to the Upper Pitt or the Upper Stave?  
 — Offhand I would say Stave.  
 — Thank you Mr. Brown.

# Spindle Creek: What Rock?

I FIRST met Shawn Gryba back in grade nine when he used to tease me about my interest in lost treasure. He hummed the theme of the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* whenever he saw me. One day I had enough of that, so I went for his throat and tried to strangle him. He tackled me to the ground. Then I chased him across the field, and when I got close enough I launched myself through the air towards him, but I missed, falling face first on the muddy field.

I kind of disliked him since, but he was a friend of Joe Ogilvie, a wonderful chap. One afternoon the three of us got together at Shawn's house, just down the street from where I lived. We listened to music and talked about what we wanted to do with the rest of our lives.

"So tell me, Daryl, what do you want to be anyway?" Shawn asked.

"A treasure hunter."

"A what?" Shawn said breaking out in a fit of laughter.

"Now, what's so funny? At least I know what I want to do. What about you?"

"I don't have a clue, but man, I can't believe you are still into that stuff."

"More than ever. Back when you used to bug me in grade nine I didn't have a clue what I was doing, but at least now I do. It's kind of a long story."

"Oh come on, Friesen, tell him," Joe said.

I went on to tell Shawn about Mike Boileau, the B-25 bomber, and the general history of the lost mine of Pitt Lake. Shawn looked puzzled, but he never laughed and seemed interested, which was strange considering what had happened in the past.

I did not see Shawn for some time after, but one evening, when I came home from work, I got call from Shawn inviting me over to his house for a drink. He asked me if I could bring along all the Pitt Lake papers I had gathered over the years. We sat up in his bedroom until late that night with topographic maps spread out on the floor, discussing Slumach's gold. I could see it working its magic on him.

"Where do you think it is?" Shawn asked.

"Well, I have two locations in mind. One is easy to get to and the second is very difficult."

"Let's start with the first one!"

"Well, one of the possible locations of the mine is in this canyon right here," and pointed at Spindle, on the map.

"And the B-25 bomber?"

"It's right here," I said, showing the X that Mike had planted on the map.

"How do you think you can get there?"

"Well, there are two ways, one is to fly in by helicopter which I know I will never be able to afford and the other is

to hike in just like Slumach and Jackson did. We could take a boat or a seaplane and then hike the old trail that runs along the side of Debeck Creek as I did last summer with Eric and Brian, but then there is still the problem of the rock."

"What rock?"

"This one."

I showed Shawn the picture of Eric, Brian, and me and told him the story of the large boulder blocking the entrance to Spindle Canyon.

"In reality it's much bigger than on this picture."

"We can get over that," Shawn said, already sold, "what about that second location?"

"That's going to be a lot tougher. The known search area for the lost mine is here. The main areas of interest are here, Corbold Creek, and there, Terrarosa, and possibly also the Misty Lake area where Volcanic Brown is said to have been looking for platinum and the lost mine."

We came to the conclusion that first we would focus our attention on getting into Spindle Canyon. The best way would be to charter a seaplane to drop us off at the mouth of Debeck Creek and from there we would hike the same route that I had taken almost a year earlier on my first trip up Spindle Creek.

Using a seaplane meant that we needed a partner to share the cost of the trip.

"I think it should be Eric Woodward," I suggested one night to Shawn.

"Eric? No way!" Shawn yelled and grabbed the bridge of his nose.

"He went up there with Brian and me and my old man last summer. I think he would be a perfect choice." Our other choice is Brian Renvall," I added.

"No thanks."

"He probably wouldn't go anyway. I think once was enough for him. Besides, he thinks the gold is a joke, and that gets on my nerves. If you must know the truth, I've asked Eric already if he wanted to go. Maybe some of his army training will come in handy"

"What?" Shawn said sounding shocked.

"Yeah, he joined the army reserves in the fall."

"Eric Woodward in the army!" Shawn laughed.

The next day Shawn and I went down to the small airport outside Fort Langley on the Fraser River and made arrangements for the trip back into Spindle for the following weekend.

On the morning of the trip, Eric came roaring into my driveway in his huge beat-up old, ugly-green Nova. I jumped in and we went off to pick up Shawn. Eric was all done up in his army fatigues looking as if he was ready to

take on the world. When we got to Shawn's, he was waiting at the end of his driveway. He jumped in the back and off we went to Fort Langley.

"I hope it doesn't rain," I said looking out the window and up into the sky where you could see a thick mess of dark clouds rolling in from the west.

"Little rain won't kill anyone," Eric said as we drove down the last stretch of road before arriving at the seaplane airport.

We unpacked all our gear and made our way into the office of the seaplane airport.

"We are here to catch our flight," Shawn said to the skinny middle-aged man wearing a John Deer cap sitting behind the desk.

"Are you now!" the man said, "I will be your pilot. The name's Dave by the way. Where are you three going again?"

"Into the Upper Pitt."

"Well, if you gentlemen will follow me."

Down at the wharf a blue and white Beaver was waiting to take us into the Pitt. We loaded all of our packs into the plane and Shawn jumped in the front seat first as Eric and I stuffed ourselves in the back.

"Gryba, you bastard!" Eric said, "I get the front on the way back."

Shawn grinned as the pilot jumped inside and fired up the engines. The plane rattled quickly to life.

"Everyone got his seatbelts on?" Dave yelled over the roar of the engine, "Good. Here we go!"

We pulled away from the wharf and started cruising up the Fraser getting ready for takeoff. Within about three minutes we were in the air, flying high over Maple Ridge and heading into the Pitt Lake country. I noticed that the thick clouds were coming closer and there were raindrops on the windshield.

"So where you boys want me to put this baby down?" Dave's voice crackled over the headphones.

"Keep going, I'll let you know when we are almost at the head of the lake," I said.

As I looked around I noticed on the east side of the lake the famous mountain shaped like an Indian head. An old legend tells that if you look down in the valley south of the Indians nose you will find gold.

We flew up the lake for what seemed to be only a couple of minutes when I saw the mouth of Debeck Creek off in the distance.

"Land there," I said pointing down to the lake below.

Dave turned the plane hard to the right, made a turn at the head of the lake and in next to no time we were bouncing on the green waters of Pitt Lake. There was a good breeze blowing in from the Upper Pitt. Dave slowed the plane down, pulled up to a wharf belonging to one of the cabins, and shut the engines off.

"OK boys, this is it. When did you want me to pick you up anyway?"

"On Tuesday about 2:00 in the afternoon."

"Sounds good," Dave said.

We climbed out of the plane, grabbed our packs and watched Dave pull away from the wharf and head off back to civilization leaving us in the silence of the mountains.

"Where to now, Friesen?" Shawn asked.

"We have to head over and cross Debeck Creek."

"Don't we have to climb up some trail?" Eric asked.

"Yeah, it's an old survey trail, but it's on the other side of the water."

"What are we waiting for?" Shawn said as we got on our way to the stream, climbing over the driftwood on the beach. Shawn was the first to arrive at the edge of the creek. At this time of year, it was a raging torrent.

"We have to cross that?" Eric gasped as he stood on the edge of the water. "I'm not a fish!"

"We don't have a choice, the trail up to Spindle is on the other side!" I yelled over the roar of the creek.

"Why the hell didn't you get the pilot to drop us off on the other side!" Eric screamed back.

"Where could he have landed? There is no place to pull up to the beach!"

"Look, you two! Shut up! We can cross it if we go farther up," Shawn shouted, trudging up Debeck Creek to a place where the water looked a little shallower and the current a little less strong. He started to take off his hiking boots to make the crossing to the other side.

"Listen, I don't know about you two, but I won't walk in wet boots for three days," Shawn said as he tied the laces together, and draped the boots over his neck. Then he walked into the foaming water of Debeck Creek. Eric unlaced his boots without saying a word. I was sure that I would fall, backpack and all if I tried walking on bare feet over slippery rocks in a raging stream and decided I could handle wet feet for three days.

As I started walking out into the creek I had noticed little drops of rain starting to land and soon the rain came pouring down. So much for keeping gear dry, I thought. In front of me I watched Shawn slipping and falling into the creek. He quickly pulled himself up by grabbing onto a large slippery boulder before the creek could carry him downstream.

"Let's keep moving," Shawn said as I caught up with him. He turned and continued walking across the wild stream.

"But what about Eric?" I yelled to Shawn as I shot a glance over towards the creek banks where I had last seen Eric taking his army boots off. There was no sign of him, but when I looked a little farther downstream I saw Eric standing up to his chest in water in the middle of Debeck Creek, dressed in his underwear, backpack strapped on his back, and boots dangling around his shoulders. He had a look of panic on his face.

"Eric!" I yelled over the rain and rapids, no response. I tried again.



"Friesen!" he yelled back just before toppling over sideways. His head disappeared from sight under the wild water of the creek. I quickly took off my pack, placed it on top of the rock in front of me and ran through the creek to where he had fallen, but before I could get there he had pulled himself out of the creek and was standing up again.

"My boots!" Eric said to me as we watched his only pair of hiking boots float down the creek.

I ran down the creek towards where his boots were racing down the creek. Not paying attention to where I stepped, I hit a deep pool just as I was closing in on Eric's sacred boots. Fortunately the boots stopped as the current slowed down, as it does in deeper parts of the creek, and I was able to grab one of them before I sunk to the bottom of Debeck Creek.

I pulled my soggy self out, slung Eric's boots on top of my shoulders and sloshed my way through the creek to where he was standing. I helped him make it to shore and then went back into Debeck Creek to fetch my backpack. When I got to shore I sat down on the ground and smoked a cigarette. Thank the gods I had wrapped them in tin foil in my pouch or I would have been in a really bad mood.

"So, where is this trail you were talking about Friesen," Shawn said.

"Through the forest," I said as I was taking a drag of smoke.

After Eric got himself together with his pants on and his boots laced up, we all headed into the forest on the trail that would lead us to the entrance to Spindle Canyon.

We walked through the lush green forest in silence. It was a quiet and mysterious place and all I could hear were the sounds of sticks breaking under my feet as tiny drops of water fell from the trees around us. The rain was now coming down heavily as we broke through the forest and onto the old gravel trail that went up the mountain. Shawn took the lead, followed by Eric and then me.

"So how far is it from here?" Shawn asked.

"It should only take us an hour or more."

We hiked up the mountain, and not more than fifteen minutes later I started to notice that my backpack was getting heavier and heavier. The year before I didn't hump a backpack up this trail and it had been much easier. After we rounded one corner, the trail went almost straight up and the weight of my backpack was making each step a chore. *One foot in front of the other*, I told myself. It felt like climbing Everest. Eric and Shawn were far ahead of me.

My foot caught the wet side of a rock in the middle of the trail and I slipped falling over sideways and hitting the rocky, muddy trail with a thud. I lay on the ground for several minutes listening to my heart pounding against my chest and my lungs gasping for breath. *Why had I ever started smoking*, I thought as I lay there, looking up into the gray sky above as the rain poured down.

"Friesen!" I heard Eric yell from off in the distance.

"What?" I managed to answer.

"Where the hell are you?"

"I will be there in a minute."

I pulled my muddy, cold, and tired self back up onto my feet and started to trudge back up the trail. When I rounded the next corner I caught sight of Eric and Shawn resting on a log.

"What happened?" Shawn asked.

"I fell. Don't worry about it. Let's move."

I gasped, still having not caught my breath. We walked for what seemed like hours around corners, uphill and downhill. My legs were now numb and I could barely walk under the weight of my backpack. Eric and Shawn were once again out of sight. Ahead I could hear Shawn whistling to scare off any bears that could have been in the area.

I looked at the trail in front of me and prayed that it would turn downward so I could catch my breath, but it never let up. Actually it was becoming worse. Not only was it even steeper, it was becoming less and less of a trail. The forest had closed in, the path was overgrown in some places, and branches pulled at my pack. The trail turned into a creek bed with a little stream running down its course. In some places it was so muddy that I slipped several times. I was now catching up again with Eric and Shawn and they were also having problems.

"I thought this was supposed to be a trail," Shawn said as a tree branch almost tripped him.

We kept on trudging and the trail was now changing into an evergreen miniature forest. The trees had swallowed up the trail. Tree branches slapped me in the face as I walked. Stepping into a muddy patch on the trail, I sank up to my knee in muck. As I tried freeing my leg, a strap on my backpack broke and the weight of my pack pulled me over. My leg came out of the mud as I landed in the mud. I lay there panting, totally out of breath and totally exhausted. I closed my eyes and wished that I had never heard of Slumach or his gold mine. I had come to these mountains to find gold, not to become aware of my shortcomings.

I heard Shawn yelling my name through the trees and managed to get on my feet again. I tied the broken strap of my backpack together just when Shawn broke through the trees.

"There you are, Friesen, what happened to you, man?"

"I don't really want to talk about it, I slipped. Is the trail getting any better up ahead?"

"Yeah. "

"Good."

Panting like the out-of-shape urban dweller I had become, I remembered Mike Boileau's warning. Men like Jackson were tough—not like us with all this meat on our bones, he had said when we met.

I started fighting my way back through the trees and up the trail. Shawn was right, the trees thinned out as I hiked

on and pretty soon I was standing on an open trail, but I could barely make another step.

When Eric saw me he shook his head in disgust. I was muddy from head to toe, my jacket was ripped and my pack was halfway off my shoulder. I followed both up the trail until my backpack strap fell off and I slipped and fell sideways on the trail once again. This time it happened in front of my friends who did not show any sympathy.

"Can't get up the mountain, need your mother to help you? Can't you do it on your own?"

I wanted to kill Shawn and quickly rose to my feet, but he just smiled and started walking back up the trail. Indeed, I was not in shape for this kind of adventure and if I hadn't taken up smoking it wouldn't have been so bad.

I hiked on until I could see an opening in the trees off in the distance and heard the sound of a creek rushing. We were there! It was over! Thank God this time we would get into the canyon, find the gold, and I'd never have to hike up this trail again! I was so happy to be there that I was not even mad at Shawn. We all dropped our packs and walked down to the edge of the creek.

Shawn and Eric had stopped at the ruins of the old prospector's camp.

"What is this place?" Shawn asked.

"It's that old prospector's camp. I told you about it. Don't you listen?"

Sitting down on a rock next to the creek I fished a smoke and a map out of my pouch. Spreading the map out on one of the nice big rocks I started to explain the course ahead.

"From here we head into the canyon. We will leave our gear here and make our way inside with day packs, it will make things easier."

"I'm not leaving my gear here," Eric said, "at least if something happens inside I will have my gear with me. I looked over at Shawn to see what his decision would be.

"Friesen, he has a point," Shawn agreed.

"That's crazy, Eric, don't you remember how rugged it is in there? It will make hiking next to impossible. We can make way more progress without our gear."

"What are we going to do if we get so far in and need to stay overnight? Come back and get our gear? Friesen, you lose."

Shawn nodded his head in agreement. So, we would hump all gear into the canyon.

We set up camp for the night. Lighting a fire in the rain was difficult. We each cooked our own small dinners with our small portable camp stoves and sat around the campfire in the rain as the darkness had now closed in on us. There was not much talk as it had been a long hard day and tomorrow could well be even harder.

"You know I bet this stupid mine doesn't even exist," Shawn commented as he poked a stick in the fire playing with the coals.

I ignored him. I was in no shape to defend my personal

Pitt Lake dogma. I was cold, tired and beat.

"I'm going to sleep."

I walked over to the tent and took off my wet clothes. Then I got inside and buried myself in my sleeping bag. I heard the crackling of the campfire and Shawn and Eric talking, but soon I drifted off into sleep.

When I woke up the next morning I was so stiff and sore I could barely move. Shawn and Eric were already up and making breakfast when I finally managed to crawl out of the tent.

"It lives," Eric said as he stood shaving next to a tree where he had attached a mirror.

"I am sore," I bitched as I got out of the tent. "Hey, the rain has stopped! I see you have cooking duty this morning?" I sat down on a log next to the morning fire.

"Your turn tomorrow man," Shawn smiled as he finished cooking the pancakes.

"Hey Eric, if you can pull yourself away from shaving, breakfast is ready."

We sat around the fire laughing and filling our faces with pancakes and having a really good time. But after breakfast it was all business as we took down the camp, packed our gear, and prepared for what I hoped would be the final assault on Spindle Canyon.

"I still think it's a mistake to take all gear inside there," I said as we all marched down to the creek to begin the hike. No one answered me.

We started to climb straight up through the cold and wild Spindle Creek. As we climbed, Shawn took the lead, followed by Eric and then me. The last time I did this was in late August when the water was much lower and I didn't have a pack on my back.

It wasn't long before all of us had soaking wet feet. I quickly walked passed Shawn and Eric who were still trying desperately to keep dry. I just splashed through the creek, no longer caring about how wet I was. When I got to the top of the hill I had to wade up to my waist through a pool of icy water. The rain had also returned and within minutes it was pouring down on us. I could not help wondering if this whole adventure was worth it.

The terrain had levelled quickly, making walking a little easier. I guess Mother Nature was trying to show mercy, but some of the rocks were so slippery you couldn't even stand on them, and the rain had made the old jumping from rock to rock routine far too dangerous. You couldn't go near the banks of the creek either. There were the walls, those unforgettable rock cliffs that grew larger and larger, the farther we penetrated the canyon.

"Friesen, wait!" Shawn's voice echoed up the canyon. Eric and Shawn came stumbling up the hill towards me. Shawn was soaking wet from head to toe.

"What happened?"

"I fell in a huge pool of water and everything in my pack is wet."

"There's not much farther to go until we reach the boulder," I said. "We have to keep going. I am going to get into the canyon."

The three of us kept trudging through the water until we finally came to a place where we could climb out of it onto some logs that had lodged themselves between the rocks and the giant granite cliffs. Here the water was so deep that to continue up the creek would have meant swimming. I walked over the logs slipping and sliding, almost falling over several times under the weight of my pack. When I got across the logs, I actually found myself walking on dry land. I continued my trek and it was not long before the narrow sandy bar I was walking on turned into a small forest of devil's club.

I looked at the pile of thorny branches that lay ahead. I remembered this section of devils club from the last trip, but then they seemed not so large. I walked out into the creek to try and climb around the thorny obstacle, but the current was too strong. As soon as I stepped into the water and tried to walk, my feet were swept out from under me and Spindle Creek was starting to carry me downstream. My pack pulled me under the icy water. Fortunately the pack got caught on a rock and I was able to pull myself to my feet and stand up in the river again.

I noticed Eric and Shawn on the sandbar in front of the devils club obstacle. Eric was standing next to the creek wondering if he should try the river method.

"Eric, forget it man," I yelled over the roaring river, "it's too strong."

I quickly caught up with them and entered the devil's club.

"We have no choice, this or go home busted."

I gathered as much strength as I could to make my assault. As I worked my way through the devil's club, it tore at my pack, my jacket and my clothes, tearing a hole in my soggy pants. I heard the rip, but kept charging my way through. I got stuck when a large sharp thorny piece managed to get caught between my back and my pack. I didn't notice until it was too late. The thorns stuck into my skin on my back and I screamed in pain, but kept walking until my foot got caught between two rocks and I slipped and fell. I was able to crawl on the rocks below trying my best to steer around the devil's club.

Crawling instead of walking allowed me to avoid the large branches or tripping over a rock and falling on my face. I lay on the ground on the other side watching the rain coming down. Eric and Shawn were now fumbling their way through the thorny devil's club, cursing as they progressed. It took them twice as long to make it to the other side as I did and when they did, I could tell by the looks on their faces they were twice as tired.

"How much farther, Friesen?" Shawn asked.

"Just up ahead and we should see the boulder."

We continued our journey up the canyon, but the cliffs

had grown very tall and we were once again forced into walking through the river. My feet were so cold, and I knew all of my clothes were soaked, including my sleeping bag and the rest of the gear that Eric insisted on us bringing into the canyon.

All three of us slogged through the river slipping on rocks both big and small. We rounded one last corner in the canyon and there it was, the giant boulder resting in the middle of the canyon. This was where I had stopped with my father the last time I was here. Shawn and Eric climbed out of the river onto a large rock to have a rest.

"Good idea bringing the gear, Eric," I said to him as I took a soggy cigarette out of my pouch and tried to light it.

"Bum a fag," Shawn said looking at the rock. "You're right, Friesen, it's huge compared to that picture you showed me."

"I don't know if we can cross it," Eric said.

"We have to try!" I yelled. I got up, leaving my pack on the rock where we were resting, took a step back into the river and started walking towards the boulder.

Not paying attention I stepped in a section of the river that was so deep I sunk into its cold grip over my head. When I opened my eyes I was under water. I quickly pulled myself to the surface and up onto a rock in the river. I was now shaking with cold and I knew deep down inside that we were not destined to find any gold on this trip because there was no way we were getting inside. The river was just too large and it was now pouring rain.

"I don't think there is a way around this pool!" Eric yelled as he tried to walk out into it himself.

It was not long before the combination of the rain and the icy river and all my wet clothes made me start to shake.

"You okay, Friesen?" Shawn asked.

"Yeah, just cold, man." I was not OK. I was tired and starting to feel doubts about my quest to find the lost mine and the gold of the Pitt Lake mountains.

"I think we have to go back," Eric suggested and there was really no argument from Shawn and me.

"The water was not even close to being this high the last time we were here, hey Eric?"

"It was a trickle compared to this."

We sat there moments, looking off into the distance at the boulder with water cascading down around it and it was at that moment that I knew this place had beaten me for a second time. Maybe there just was no way into that canyon on foot from this side.

"I have to take a closer look at that rock," Shawn said.

He walked upstream towards the pool where I had sunk and tried to find a way around. He jumped onto one of the boulders near the canyon walls, slipped and toppled into the water. I ran toward him as he pulled himself out.

"We will come back," he said, "and next time we will not hump our gear in."

"I don't know about you two, but I am going back," Eric

said, turning and walking back down the canyon.

I swear I could hear the boulder laughing at us, telling us that we didn't have what it took to get inside Spindle Canyon.

The walk down was easier, but I was so tired and cold that I felt numb all over. At the old prospector's camp we did our best to light a campfire in the rain to warm up and decide what we would do next.

"So what are we going to do up here for two more days besides freeze to death?" Eric grumbled as he tried to warm his cold bones over a smouldering fire.

"I don't think we should stay," I said. "All of my gear is soaked and I don't have a sleeping bag to keep warm in. I don't know about you guys, but I think we should head back down and try and bum a ride down the lake with one of the cabin owners."

"Sounds like a plan to me," Shawn said poking a stick into the fire.

We sat around the campfire warming ourselves for a good hour before grabbing our soggy packs and walking back down the trail that almost killed me on the way in. The walk down was hard on the knees, but I didn't care. I was starting not to care about anything other than the warmth of civilization. It took us only about two hours to reach Pitt Lake.

The wind had picked up and waves had giant white caps and were crashing onto the beach. Where would we find a ride out of here on a day like this?

"Let's head over to the first cabin near the wharf where the plane dropped us off. There's a light on inside; maybe they can help us. Guard my pack."

Before I could even get to the cabin I had to cross through Debeck Creek once again. I must have looked quite the sight as I walked up and started banging on the cabin door. I was soaking wet and covered in dirt. My shirt and pants were ripped, and the devil's club had left scratches all over my face.

A bald-headed, potbellied man with a beer in his hand opened the door.

"What happened to you?" he asked as he walked out onto the porch.

"I have been hiking with a couple of friends up behind Debeck Creek."

"Ah, looking for that damn Slumach's gold mine I bet," he said smiling.

"No we were just hiking," I said, "but the weather has kind of ruined it for us and I was wondering if you could help us find a ride back down the lake."

"Sorry, I don't know about that. This weather makes travelling on the lake a little scary, but I tell you what. A friend of mine is supposed to be arriving in about an hour or so with some fresh supplies. Maybe he could be convinced to take you back down with him."

"That's if he has not had too much of the sauce!" a

female voice yelled from inside the cabin.

"Yeah right," the man said smiling. "My name's Ed by the way."

"I am Daryl," I said shaking his hand.

"Look Daryl, why don't you and your friends come back in an hour? Chuck should be here by then. I'm sure he will not have a problem taking you back with him."

"Great! Thanks for the help."

"No problem," he said returning to the warm comfort of his cabin as I trudged back through the rain to tell Shawn and Eric the good news.

They had already crossed Debeck Creek and were sitting down in the pouring rain looking very wet and very miserable.

"Good news. We will be out of here in an hour," I said sitting down on the log with them and lighting a soggy cigarette.

We all sat in the rain lost in our own thoughts when the sounds of a boat could be heard out on the Pitt. Shawn stood up to have a better look and there was a jet boat bouncing across the waves heading towards the wharf in front of the cabin where I had just been.

"That's it, that's the ride."

"Are you sure, man?" Shawn said. "This guy is driving like he is totally insane."

We got up and walked over towards the cabin. I watched Ed come out of the cabin and walk down to the wharf to greet the boat. The boat was roaring towards the wharf at a very hazardous speed. Ed was waving his hands in the air at the boat trying to get him to slow down before he smashed into the wharf.

"Tanya, he is on the sauce!" Ed yelled to the woman in the cabin.

The boat slowed down just before crashing into the wharf. It bounced off the wharf with waves crashing around it, and its captain tossed Ed the bowline. Shawn, Eric, and I walked up to the wharf backpacks in our hands.

"Holy shit, Chuck!" Ed yelled. "You gotta slow down man or you're gonna get yourself killed."

"No worries, Ed my man," Chuck said as he staggered out of his boat and onto the wharf.

"I'm not going down the lake with that guy," Eric protested as we all watched Chuck's performance.

"Well, then you can stay here and freeze, I'm getting out of here."

"Who the hell are these guys?" Chuck said walking over to us in a drunken stagger.

"Yeah well, Chuck I was kind of wondering if you would be willing to take them back down the lake with ya, they are stranded hikers."

"Hikers eh, I bet they're up here looking for gold."

"So Chuck you brought the supplies?" Ed asked.

"It's all there in the back of the boat."

"Hey, is Tanya up here with ya?"



"Yeah, she's inside smoking a fat one."

Ed started to unload the supplies from the boat with great difficulty because waves kept slamming the boat against the wharf.

"All right," Chuck slurred as he staggered over to the cabin.

"Hey you guys, want to help me with this?" Ed yelled from the boat.

We all drop our packs and helped Ed to unload the supplies.

Just as we finished, Chuck staggered from the cabin with a beer in one hand and a gorgeous brunette in the other.

"Hey Eddy," he yelled, this here is sure one fine lass you have!" He said grabbed at the woman's breasts.

"Yeah, and she's mine, if you touch her again I will kill you."

"Eddy, no need to get angry," Chuck slurred, "I just wish I didn't have to leave so soon."

"Okay, hikers," Chuck said, finally acknowledging our sad and soggy existence, "get in the boat."

We all jumped into the boat, followed by Chuck, who climbed into the driver's seat.

"Friesen, check it out this thing. It has a damn stereo on board." Shawn said pointing to the CD player in the front of the boat.

"That's right, she does, and it's top of the line too," Chuck explained. "You guys like Steve Ray Vaughn?"

"He sucks," Eric mumbled.

"Sucks ah? What do you know GI Joe?" he said to Eric who was dressed in all camouflage clothing. "Hey Ed, give us a hand with the top. This rain is going soak these boys on the way back if we don't get her down."

Ed came over and helped put the top down on the boat, and for the first time that day we were out of the rain. Ed also untied the boat and waved us goodbye as we pulled onto the lake at a slow pace.

"OK, now it's time for some Jack," Chuck said reaching under his seat and pulling out a large half finished bottle of Jack Daniels whiskey. He took the cap off and took a huge swig, smiling as he finished.

"You boys look like you could use a shot. Go on it'll warm you up inside," he said handing the bottle to Shawn, who took a large swig and started hacking like crazy. Chuck found this to his amusement and started laughing like mad.

"What's the matter never had a drink before ladies?"

Shawn passed the bottle to me and I took a swig, and did it burn as it went down! Pretty soon I too was hacking. I passed the bottle along to Eric, but he declined.

"Okay boys, hang on now," Chuck said, turning on the stereo full blast and pushing the throttle down as far as it would go. We rocketed out into the middle of the lake bouncing across the waves. I had never been filled with such an adrenalin rush as we raced down the lake swigging

from the whiskey bottle as we went. A few minutes ago we had all been cold and wet and miserable. Now we were thrust back into the sacred realm of adventure and the world took on a fresh look as we watched our crazy driver blow by other boats on the lake.

When we rounded Cozen Point and we started cruising over towards Goose Island, Chuck nearly crashed into an old man who was trying to have a relaxing day fishing. We were so close to him, our waves splashed his small boat. You could see the look of terror written across his face. Chuck should have been the poster child for irresponsible boating, but his recklessness made this boat ride one that we would not forget. All three of us had nothing but smiles across our faces and Chuck laughed his evil laugh pretty much the entire way down the lake. He also managed to finish pretty much the entire bottle of whiskey before slowing down for the final journey into the marina on Grant Narrows where he dropped us off.

We all climbed out the boat as he pulled up to the dock. Shawn and Eric passed the backpacks to me from inside. A beam of sun had broken through the clouds and the rain had stopped. I couldn't believe it. Now that the trip was over the sun came out!

"Well, I should be going," Chuck slurred, "nice to meet you guys and don't worry, next time you will find the gold." He blasted back up the lake.

"How did he know we were up there searching for gold?" Shawn mumbled. "Friesen did you open your big mouth?"

"No man, I never said a thing."

We managed to secure a ride from one of the other boaters and rode in the back of a pickup into Maple Ridge. From there we called my parents who came and picked us all up and took us back into Langley. When I got home I had a hot shower and a warm meal.



Devil's club thicket.

# Frozen in Fear at Glacier Lake

I STARTED to feel depressed that the Pitt Lake Mountains had beaten me once again. I thought Shawn and Eric would for sure never want to go back inside. I sat in my room staring at my maps when my phone rang.

"Hello?" I said in a depressed voice.

"Friesen," the voice echoed from the phone. It was Shawn.

"When are you coming over? We have to discuss when we are going back."

"What?" I answered in disbelief, "are you really interested in going back?"

"Of course! That was a great adventure man. Come on over bring your maps, all of them."

"Sure. I'll be there in about twenty minutes." I gathered all my information together and left my room. My parents were in the living room watching TV as I made my way down the hall, maps in hand.

"Where are you going?" my mom said,

"Don't you want to stay and watch Jeopardy?"

"Ah, not tonight mom, I have some things to do over at Shawn's."

"I hope you are not planning on going back into the Pitt," my father said from his lazy boy.

"Probably," I said as I walked towards the porch. I put my shoes on and ran to my truck to fire it up. I then blasted the stereo and raced out of the driveway and over to Shawn's.

"Friesen," Shawn said, greeting me at the door. "Let's go upstairs, shall we?"

We went into his room and I tossed my maps and other papers on the floor as I had done so many times before.

"Would you like some Long Island Ice Tea?" Shawn said pouring me a glass.

"Of course." I took the glass.

"Now let's get down to business. I was thinking we should try and get into your other location and forget about Spindle until later on this summer."

"I don't know, man, maybe we should stay focused on Spindle if we are going to make any progress," I said.

"Tell me more about the Upper Stave?"

"The second location is within the main search area for the lost mine of Pitt Lake which would be here," I said unfolding one of the maps and pointing to the Upper Stave River area near Stave Glacier. "This is the area where Volcanic Brown was found and this, over here, is where I believe the mine to be, somewhere in the area of Terrarosa Glacier."

"Why do you say that?" Shawn asked.

"Well, during the winter I tracked down Don Waite who wrote two books about the lost mine. His research is significant because of two things: one is the talks he had with

Peter Pierre's granddaughter Amanda Charnley, and the other his communications with a man called Stuart Brown.

"Who is Peter Pierre?"

"Peter Pierre was an Indian medicine man who was with Slumach in his cell before he was hanged and it was there that Slumach told Peter Pierre about his discovery of gold in the Pitt Lake mountains.

"Last winter I also made contact with a prospector named Bill Cull, whom Don Waite also mentions in his book. Bill Cull claimed to have found the Jackson tent-shaped rock somewhere in the Upper Stave. When I met him I was trying to get the location of the tent-shaped rock from him but he would not tell me. I tried to get him to point out the location on my topographic map, but he told me that in his days they did not use maps. He just did not want to give out the location of the rock."

I pointed to one of the rivers flowing into the Upper Stave from the east. "He also told me something else very interesting, that this river right here is milky white like it's highly mineralized," I said. Now, Stuart Brown says that the gold is located at a place where two rivers come together from an iceflow. This river here matches that description and it comes out of Terrarosa glacier. It's also just below Terrarosa Lake.

"Some say that the Glacier Lake as we see it called on the maps is not the same Glacier Lake mentioned by Amanda Charnley in Don Waite's book. It is thought that Mrs. Charnley's Glacier Lake, close to where Slumach found his gold, is in fact Terrarosa Lake. Mrs. Charnley told Don that Slumach's gold is in the third canyon near Glacier Lake and that the prospectors whom Slumach had met coming down Patterson Creek told him that they had crossed Glacier Lake on foot, so it must have been frozen solid as Terrarosa Lake would be. One of these canyons inside of here could be third canyon and the location of the lost mine. "

"But was that the area where Don Waite focused his search as he has an air photo of it on the front of his book?"

"Yes, Don was looking for a canyon that matched the Jackson letter in the area somewhere to the east of Terrarosa Lake, but he never got down into the Stave area. He never reached this canyon here," I said, pointing to the stream flowing into the large lake at the foot of Stave Glacier from the east. "I don't think anyone has been inside of here."

"Was this the stream they called Patterson Creek?"

"There is no creek with that name on any of the modern maps. The name could have been changed around the same time they started calling the Homestead Glacier the Terrarosa Glacier. I think that what Mrs. Charnley called

Glacier Lake is what is now called Terrarosa Lake and that the gold may be more to the west of the glacier and closer to the Upper Stave. Now all we have to do is reach the Stave."

"What about Fire Lake? Stuart Brown took Don Waite to Fire Lake. How important was that?"

"Well, Stuart Brown thought that you could get to the location in a number of ways. The way that looks the longest on a map is the easiest to get in. He may have been crossing over from Fire Lake to the western edges of the Terrarosa Glacier."

"So we should try going in the same way!"

"Well, I sort of already tried that."

"What!"

"On a weekend last fall I made a trip to the beginning of the Fire Lake logging road and drove it up as far as I could go—it's rough and steep. I got as far as where it crosses over Fire Creek, and the bridge had all been washed out. I would suggest we head to Glacier Lake and try and hike in through here where it's flat. From here we can try and reach Terrasosa Creek and hike over into the Upper Stave. The longest way in is the easiest."

"Yeah, and by the looks of the this map the area just South of Glacier lake is all flat and grassy a favourite hang-out for bears. I don't know, Friesen."

"Bears are a risk anywhere we go in this part of the world. We will just have to be prepared to meet one. You have bear spray don't you?"

"Yes, but it's just too bad we don't have access to a gun. I would feel much better about it."

WE—SHAWN, ERIC AND I—couldn't have asked for a nicer day when we left Langley for the rugged mountains behind Glacier Lake. The sun beamed down us as we drove down the Number One highway towards Vancouver and then on to Squamish. We had the Rolling Stones blasting on the stereo and not a care in the world other than getting into those mountains and finding that gold mine. Life couldn't have felt better than that.

"So when are you headed off for boot camp?" Shawn asked Eric as we drove past the Horseshoe Bay ferry terminal and onto the Sea to Sky highway.

Eric was dressed in his army fatigues.

"I'm leaving for training in two weeks. Can you turn down the music? I don't want to go deaf."

Shawn looked at me and rolled his eyes.

"So Friesen, tell me something, what are you going to tell your boss if we do ever find any gold?" Shawn asked.

"I'm gonna walk into his office, put a gold nugget on his desk, and watch his mouth drop open."

My truck felt as if it was floating as I drove through the mountains that make up the edges of Garibaldi Park. Nothing in the whole world was wrong, and how could

it be in a place as beautiful as this? The two-hour drive to Pemberton felt like minutes. We stopped at the Petro-Can, filled up with gas, and got some extra supplies before heading towards Lillooet Lake and our turn off into the mountains.

Just north of Lillooet Lake we passed an Indian reserve in the grassy meadows with majestic mountains towering behind it. The road took us down along the side of Lillooet Lake for a short time before heading straight up into the mountains. Our turnoff was a dirt road that would take us all the way to Glacier Lake. As we drove deeper into the mountains you could see the small Indian reserve called Skookumchuck hugging the Lillooet River far below. We also passed through what looked like a small modern subdivision—a bizarre sight in the middle of the mountains. Several Native residents waved at us we drove by them in a cloud of dust.

After about an hour we arrived at the Glacier Lake turnoff, marked by an ancient wooden sign hanging on a tree near the side of the road. I turned and headed up an ancient logging road that was obviously not used very often. It was very rough, and the truck was taking an awful pounding as I drove through giant potholes and over sharp rocks. I cursed as I went through a large pothole bottoming out my truck.

"Just take it easy," Shawn said as we slowly headed towards the edges of Garibaldi Park. Behind yet another switch back we came to a gaping trench cut in the middle of the road. I slammed on my brakes to avoid crashing into it.

"Don't know if we can make it," I said in frustration.

"Come on, Friesen, have some guts," Eric said, "Do you want to turn back again?"

"No, not really," I said. I slowly backed up my truck and then gunned into gear heading for the trench and hoping my tough little Mazda could handle it. I closed my eyes as I hit the trench. The truck's bottom slammed on the ground and we bounced up into the air and onto the other side where the truck stalled. I panicked.

"Great, what if she doesn't start," I said, but she came rumbling to life again.

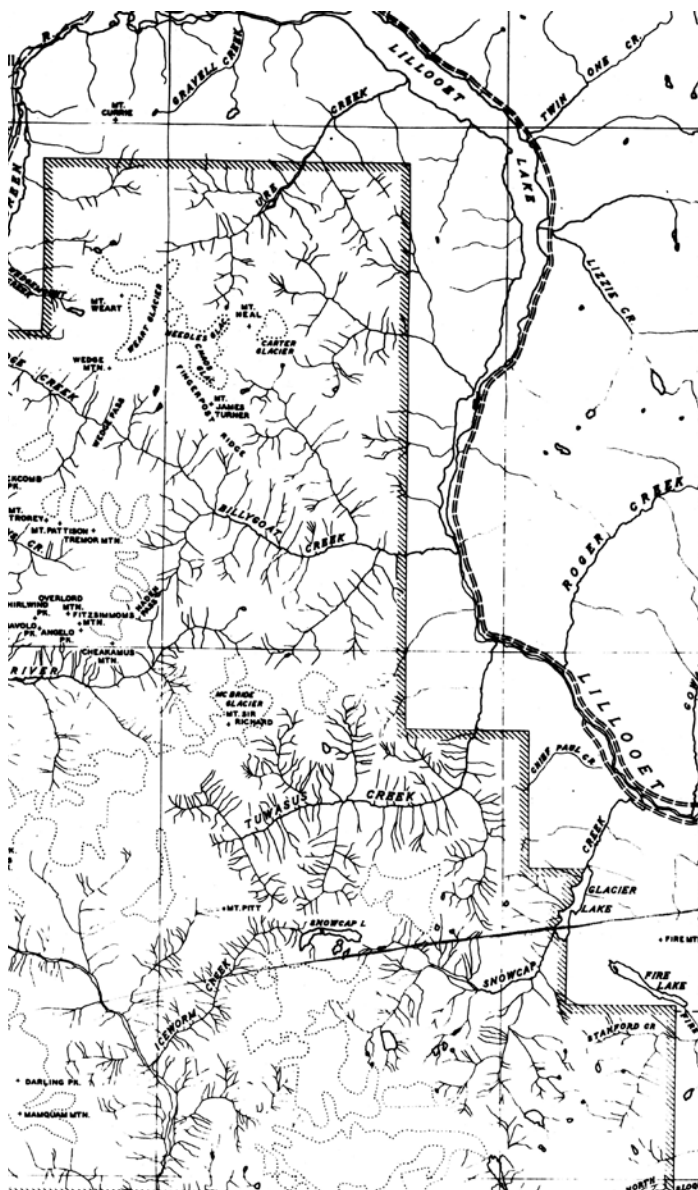
We let out a cheer and we continued our crawl farther up the mountain. At one place the road was covered with large sharp rocks and I could not avoid hitting some.

We finally got to a place where the road flattened out and you could see the green waters of Glacier Lake glistening far below. What a beautiful place it was. On the opposite side was giant waterfall cascading down the cliffs into the tranquil waters of the lake below. We stopped the truck and piled out to have a better look, and that was when we first spotted a big problem—one of my tires was leaking.

"You have a spare, right?" Eric grumbled.

"Look in the back."

"According to the map we are nearing the end of the road



before we head off into the bush. There I will change it. It still has lots of air left.”

We all got back in the truck and headed down the road crossing over more large sharp rocks. Within ten minutes of driving along the lake the road ran out near the edges of the Garibaldi Park. We walked down to the edge of the lake. Clouds rolling in from the west were pushed against the face of the enormous mountains, peaks jutting through the clouds into the blue sky above. The wind was gusting down through the valley, forming whitecaps on the lake.

“Well, that’s enough nature for me,” Eric said, “lets move.”

He walked back to the truck and took his gear from the back and began putting on his pack. I admired his determination—I was feeling scared but started putting on my gear as well. When we where ready to go I locked the truck and took one last look at her before heading into the mountains in search of gold once again.

Eric was in the lead followed by Shawn and then me, the smoker, always falling behind. We walked down a rocky

slope towards where, according to the map book I was using, there was a trail on the north side of Snowcap Creek which flows into Glacier Lake. We would follow Snowcap Creek through the meadow to where it forks. From there we would follow the southern fork all to where the creek would fork a second time. From that point we planned to follow the creek to where it forks a third time. Then we would take the western fork, down into the upper Stave area.

“I see the entrance to the trail,” Eric said from up in front.

Shawn and I ran over as fast as we could to where he was standing. You could clearly see the entrance to the trail that ran deep into the heart of Garibaldi. We quickly crossed over to the other side of Snowcap Creek and followed the creek south going deep into the mountains towards the mighty Stave Glacier.

We hiked for the rest of the day, and the canyon was starting to close in on us. As the trail grew steeper my pack was starting to slow me down a little. We turned off at the Terrarosa Creek and came into much more rugged terrain, very steep and narrow. I noticed several rusty rocks in the river that looked like float from up above. My heart skipped a beat and my hope of actually finding the gold was soaring. We broke one of these rocks open and were excited to find that it that contained small traces of free gold mixed in with lots of pyrite.

We kept on climbing until it was nearly pitch black in the canyon.

“We have to set up camp,” I suggested to my fellow prospectors and we took out the flashlights and set up camp on a small sandbar that was sheltered between two large boulders.

Eric and I scrambled to find wood in the dark and we built a small campfire next to the creek. We were in awe of our surroundings as we sat around the campfire in mountain darkness and made ourselves dinner. I could not believe that I had at last managed to get this deep into the heartland of lost mine country.

Suddenly our joy and our freedom were interrupted by the sounds of a large snap of a tree branch coming from somewhere in the forest behind us up on the mountain-side.

“What was that?” Eric said concerned, chewing on his army ration.

“I don’t know if I really want to know,” I said seeing images of a large grizzly bear ripping us to pieces, “One of largest grizzlies in the world was found near Glacier Lake.”

“Who wants to go up there to check it out?” Shawn asked just as a second louder and closer sounding snap was heard echoing from the forest.

None of us said a thing. We just sat there frozen in fear.

“It’s probably just a small animal,” Eric thought but he changed his mind when a growl came from the forest.





"That's clearly not a small animal—well I'm going to see what it is." Shawn picked up a large stick and started to walk towards the dark forest in front of him. Eric and I slowly followed as I stood with the flashlight behind Shawn.

"Friesen shine it over there," Shawn said as we walked towards a small entrance in the forest. The creek dipped down into a gulley and as we started walking into it there was another loud snap this time coming from behind us.

"What was that?" Shawn said looking around behind him.

"Sorry that was just me," Eric explained.

We walked farther and farther into the darkness of the forest, but there was nothing around us except trees and everything looked all right in the world. Then there was a flash of something moving quickly through the flashlight beam.

Eric gulped. "What the hell was that?"

"That's a good question," Shawn replied, "It kind of looked like a cat."

"You mean a cougar?" I said.

"Well, I meant a cat, but yes, it could be cougar."

"Forget this if I'm going to get eaten alive by a cougar. What I am going to do is sit at a campfire," Eric said heading back to camp.

Shawn and I came to the conclusion that Eric had the right idea and followed. We sat around the campfire in

silence waiting for any sound that came from the forest. After fifteen minutes passed and nothing happened and just when things started to get back to normal, we all heard a strange noise coming from upriver.

"That was a growl," Eric said with panic in his voice.

I shone the flashlight into the darkness, and that's when we all saw it: a set of eyes staring at us from up above on the rocky cliffs. My hand went for the only weapon I had: my hunting knife, and Shawn had the poker he was using for the fire clutched in his hand. Then, without hesitation, the cougar leaped down from his rocky perch straight at us. Eric dived behind a large rock next to the river and I tried to run across the river but slipped. I was pulling myself out of the icy river when I saw Shawn over at the campfire striking at the cougar with the poker. I picked up a rock and chucked it at the cougar as hard as I could. The rock hit the cougar on the side and he dashed across the river and back up the rocky cliffs.

"Gryba, you alright?" I yelled over the roar of the water."

"Let's get out of here, Friesen," he yelled, "where is Eric?"

Eric was hiding behind a large rock near Shawn with his large army knife in his hand. Thunder echoed through the rugged canyon and the entire sky lit up. The flashes of lighting were just enough to show two cougars sitting high up on the cliff watching us. The cougar had not run away but had returned with reinforcement. We quickly packed our gear as the cougars stared at us from their rocky perch.

"Why are they not moving in?" Eric said.

We started hiking back down the river in darkness. It started to rain which made the rugged creek bed very slippery. I looked up and shone my flashlight towards where the cougars had been watching but they had now vanished. Then there was a snap from the forest above us.

"No, they are not following us!" Shawn said as we all hiked down as fast as we could. Now the wind started to blow, driving rain into our faces. My glasses fogged up and I could not see. I took them off as they were not helping me anymore. Then there was a loud crash up ahead. We heard Eric yell as he slipped and twisted his ankle falling into the creek, dropping his flashlight into the water.

"Help me!"

Shawn and I ran and found him lying next to the river holding his ankle.

"Are you alright?" Eric asked.

We tried to help him to his feet, but he could not stand.

"Look, we will have to stay here. I can't move!" Eric said.

"Let's just hope this storm has scared the cougars off and that they don't move in for the kill," said Shawn.

I tried to find some wood for a fire to warm us up, but it was hopeless. The three of us sat on a sandbar behind a large boulder for shelter against the wind. None of us slept, but the cougars did not come back, and as dawn broke we were already on our way towards the truck. Eric had managed to make himself a crutch and was able to walk slowly, limping his way back down Terrarosa Creek to Snowcap Creek which we followed back towards Glacier Lake through wind and rain.

We made it back to Glacier Lake and were very happy to get inside the truck, cold and very wet and tired. No one said a thing as we started rolling back down the harrowing road. It was Shawn who noticed that one of my front tires was leaking air as well.

"Friesen," he said pointing to the rapidly leaking tire.

"This is just great, we are screwed now," I said.

"Why not just change them?"

"I would if I had two spare tires, but I only have one. We have to go back."

It would be a long drive back to Pemberton and it was going to be a race against the leaking air of my tire. Once again the gods that guard Slumach's gold had won.

"We have to get out of here right now," I said as I started driving down the Glacier Lake road as fast as possible, not caring about all the bumps along the way.

When I got back to the deep trench in the road I didn't even slow down. I hit it at full speed managing to get my truck into the air and off all four wheels. It was quite a rush, but we had no time to think about it as we hit the main road. I was going over 140 km down the gravel road. The back of my truck was swerving as I hit the corners.

Eric was in the back, with Shawn looking down at the tire as I drove. Every corner became more dangerous as the tire started to get flatter.

"How is it now?" I would ask my two frightened passengers.

"Its got a half left!" Shawn yelled back.

The road just would not end and we almost crashed into a large logging truck coming up a hill, swerving out of his way as he blasted us with his horn. When we drove beside the Lillooet River, the tire was almost totally flat and I nearly lost control when I tore around a corner. We would have gone over a cliff and into Lillooet River. When closing in on the first bridge crossing the Lillooet River there was no air left in the front tire and the road had ripped it to shreds. We were not going anywhere.



All at once a white van emerged from nowhere and pulled up behind us. Two Natives, a man and a woman, got out of their van and walked towards where we had skidded to a halt on the side of the road.

"I see you are one more victim of the road. We have a jack and want to help you,"

"Thank you so much for your help but I don't have a spare," I said.

"My father has a Mazda much like this one he said and it has a spare. But I will need your rim," he said.

I took off the rim and gave it to him. He said something to the woman in his native tongue and they walked back to their van and drove away. The three of us sat next to the truck on the side of the road and wondered about the strange turn of events.

"Who were those people?" Shawn asked.

"I have no idea," I answered as I took out a cigarette.

Just as I finished my smoke the white van appeared again and the man jumped out. He had a tire on my rim. I could not believe it! We had the truck fixed and running in no time.

"I see you have gold pans, what are you doing up there, looking for Slumach's gold? Keep looking, you'll find it," the man said, tapping me on my shoulder. He returned to his van and drove off down the road.

Thank God for the kindness of strangers.

# Spindle Creek – A shimmer of hope

I HAD soon forgotten about our bad luck at Glacier Lake and my mind returned to Spindle Canyon, where I felt my fortune was still waiting to be found. Would I be ready for the challenges of the canyon this time? Failure would not be an option. I was going to be ready for it and Shawn and I would get inside that canyon no matter what.

I could hardly sleep the night before, but towards morning I had drifted into a light sleep. The ringing of the phone next to my head woke me up.

"Hello?" I grumbled.

"Friesen, good, you're awake. Are you ready man?"

Shawn's voice cracked through the phone.

"All packed and ready to roll."

"Good. See you at eleven."

I got up and made my way to the shower noticing it was only nine thirty.

My mom was vacuuming like mad in the hallway.

"Hey Mom, you're still going to drive us to the Fort Langley airport, right?" I shouted over the sounds of her vacuum.

"Do you have everything ready?"

"Yes, I am all packed," I said making my way into the bathroom for a shower.

We found Shawn waiting at the end of his driveway, backpack in hand. He tossed it into the Suburban and we were on our way.

"Hello Mrs. Friesen," he greeted my mother.

"Hello Shawn, are you all ready?"

"Yes."

"Do you two know what you are doing?" she asked with concern in her voice.

"Yes, we will be fine, Mom."

"You know your father thinks this is really dangerous."

"I know Mom, but we will be alright. It's not as bad as Dad thinks."

After a twenty-minute drive we pulled once again into the seaplane airport on River Road just outside of Fort Langley. Shawn and I quickly got our packs out of the car. Swan headed for the seaplane office, a little brown building next to the Fraser River.

"Don't forget to pick us up in on Thursday at three o'clock, okay?"

"Be careful," was all my mom said.

I watched her drive out of the parking lot and I turned as Shawn came running out of the building.

"Our plane is waiting for us at the dock down by the river," he said, sounding very excited. "Come let's go."

"Do we have to pay them or what?" I asked.

"No we don't have to worry about it until we get back."

Packs in hand we ran to the river where a red and white Beaver was waiting. The pilot was doing a last minute me-

chanical check up of the aircraft.

"Hello," I said.

"Howdy, you must be the two boys heading into the Pitt Lake country?"

"That's us. I'm Daryl."

"And I'm Shawn."

"Nice to meet you, Daryl and Shawn. I am Dave, and this old bird should be ready to go in a few minutes. She's open, so climb on board and I'll be back in a minute. Just need to get a couple of headsets."

"I am sitting in front," Shawn said.

"No man, I'm in the front. I have to show the guy where to land. You can have the front on the way back."

"Alright, Friesen, you win this time, but I'm sitting in the front on the way back, man."

We tossed our packs in the back of the plane on the empty seat next to Shawn and waited for the pilot to return.

"Are you nervous?"

"A little. You better make it up that hill this time, Friesen."

"Look man, don't worry about it. I'll be fine." I could feel myself getting angry.

The pilot returned, jumping into the aircraft.

"Here you go, boys, a headset each. You can plug yours into the back of the seat," the pilot said to Shawn. "Alright boys let's fire this baby up."

I watched excited as the propeller started spinning and the plane slowly rumbled to life. We taxied out onto the Fraser and were soon flying over Maple Ridge, heading towards the Pitt.

"So what are you boys doing up in the Pitt Lake country?" Dave asked.

"Just hiking."

"Seems like a lot of trouble to fly in somewhere just to go hiking. You're not looking for that lost gold mine, are ya?" he asked.

"What lost gold mine?" Shawn and I answered at the same time.

"You never heard of it? This old Indian fellow named Slumach, sometime in the late 1800s, found it. It's said to be worth millions. My brother's been up there looking for it a couple of times, but he never found anything. Anyway, here we're coming in over the Pitt."

I looked out the window as the plane passed over the second marina at Grand Narrows where Chuck had dropped us off the last time. We were soon passing over Goose Island in the middle of the lake and were quickly closing in on Debeck Creek.

"Where do you want me to put this baby down? We're nearing the end of the lake."

"Right over there," I answered pointing down to Debeck Creek.





Dave did a circle when he got near the end of the lake and took the plane down over the water. The plane hit the water and it bounced along the whitecaps, slowing down as we approached the mouth of Debeck Creek.

"I'll drop you off on that wharf over there," Dave said pointing to the wharf that belonged to Ed as we knew from our last trip in with Eric. The plane pulled up to the dock and Dave cut the engines. We grabbed our packs and got out.

"Alright, you boys be careful and don't forget to save some of that gold for me that I know you are looking for. When will I see you?"

"Thursday at 3:00."

"I'll be here."

Dave closed the door of the plane and headed back out onto the lake for takeoff. We stood there watching the plane taxi away and then take off, leaving us in the wilds with nothing but adventures ahead of us. There was no sign of Ed anywhere. If we'd bumped into him again he would know for sure that we were not here for just a hiking trip.

We strapped on our backpacks and left the wharf heading for the mouth of Debeck Creek to cross it once again.

"Doesn't look nearly as bad as it did in June," Shawn said walking out into the river without hesitation. I quickly followed. Crossing was no challenge, now that the river was shallow and spring runoff was long over. However, when we got to the other side I knew that my personal challenge was beginning.

"You ready for this?" Shawn asked me as we started walking into the forest towards the trail that almost killed me the last time we were here.

"I was born ready for this," I said to Shawn trying to show him my confidence, but inside I was still worried that I would collapse on the trail. I was in no better shape than the last time, but I was determined from my first steps up the trail to make it to the top.

The hiking was easy at first as the trail slowly made its way up the mountainside. Shawn was up ahead whistling for bears as I walked closely behind. As we progressed up the trail, it got steeper and rockier very quickly. After we rounded the first corner I was already out of breath and the backpack felt heavier with each step. The muscles in my legs were burning, straining under the weight, but there was no way I was going to give in to fatigue this time. The trail went up and up as we hiked on, and soon we had



reached the part where it was like walking through a miniature forest. The branches ripped our skin and got stuck in the backpack. I watched Shawn as he almost toppled over a couple of times in front of me.

"It's thick in here this time," he yelled.

I never said anything. I was so out of breath that talking was an effort.

"You okay, Friesen?" he yelled over the trees when I didn't get an answer.

"I'm fine."

My foot caught the back of one of the trees and I fell over, landing on my side with a thud. The weight of my backpack made it difficult to stand up, but I managed to get back on my feet quickly.

"Friesen," Shawn called from up ahead one more time.

"I'm coming man!" I yelled as I broke through the forest of little trees.

"What happened?" he asked, out of breath himself.

"I fell, but don't worry about it. Let's keep moving."

We kept going along the trail that relentlessly climbed upward. I paid no attention to the progress Shawn was making, but I could hear him whistling in the distance. All I could think of was how good I would feel when I reached the top. My ears finally caught the sounds of running water in the distance and I knew it was Spindle Creek where we would make camp for the night. When I saw the old sign that marked the location of some unknown prospector's camp, I tossed my pack on the ground. I broke through the trees, fell to my knees and put my face into the creek. I can't remember when cold water ever tasted better.

"We did it, Friesen! It's good to see you didn't break this time."

"Thanks man, you don't know how hard that was. I thought I was going to lose it in those trees."

"I almost lost it there too, but it doesn't mean anything now we're here." Shawn said standing on the rocks next to the river.

"We should make camp, I'm starving." Shawn said walking back into the forest to where our packs were.

Once camp was set up and dinner was made, we started a fire and then went back to the river's edge once again to watch the sun dip behind the mountains. As it did I took out some cigarettes I had brought for the trip and lit one up.

"Can I bum a fag?" Shawn asked.

"Sure," I said handing him one, "you know you are going to get addicted."

"Not a chance."

"That's what I thought."

"Friesen, you get addicted to everything."

"Yeah, yeah, I know."

"Is it ever good not to have Eric on this trip. Why did you listen to him last time about taking our packs into the canyon?"

"Friesen, man, if you had a choice and we're in the mountains who would you listen to: Mr. Army, who is a prick but has it all together, or Mr. Unfit? Who would you follow?"

"Good point, I was a little unprepared last time. But we made it this time and it still feels kind of strange that I am here with you of all people remembering what happened back in high school. I wanted to kill you back in grade nine, both you and Causley. I never would have dreamed you would be up here looking for this crazy lost mine with me. You used to rag on me about lost treasure all the time. I can remember when you and

Causley called me up in the middle of the night whistling the *Indiana Jones* theme into the phone.

"Hey it was Rob Causley's idea, not mine," Shawn explained with a grin on his face as wide as the Grand Canyon.

"When you sung the *Indiana Jones* theme at school when we were all sitting in the back of the school eating our lunches that day, man I lost it," I said.

"You know what's good about you, Friesen?" Shawn said, trying not to laugh remembering the incidence. "No matter how hard you fall you always get right back up man."

The stars are magical in the mountains with no city lights blocking them. We spent a couple more hours talking before going to sleep to get a good night's sleep for the



adventure that was ahead of us.

I found myself waking up and feeling fresh when the first rays of the sun hit our small camp the next morning. Shawn was already outside making a fire. I got out of the tent and walked into the cool morning air of the mountains.

"What are you making if you don't mind me asking?"

"It's a little treat to start the day out, sausage and powdered eggs. Today's the day, eh Friesen?"

"I hope so."

"Yeah, I wouldn't want to go through all this without some kind of reward."

We sat down around the fire, and after we were done eating our grub we wasted no time in preparing our packs and prospecting equipment for the trek ahead of us—our final assault on Spindle Canyon.

Then we walked down to the water and began our hike up into the rocky canyon. We moved silently over boulders and logs as I had done twice before. I felt comfortable because I knew where to step and where not. We crossed through the devil's club but this time it was no challenge as we both knew what to expect. Around the final bend in the river the canyon widened into a giant hallway with the cliffs towering hundreds of feet up on both sides and the enormous boulder resting in the middle of the river blocking the entrance to our gold canyon.

We walked towards the boulder and came to the spot where I almost sunk in the river on the last trip. Now there was no more than a puddle and we splashed through it without a second thought. The boulder blocking the canyon became larger and larger with every step. Getting around it looked tougher than we had imagined. A large waterfall was cascading down and around the boulder, but there was no way you could climb up—it was too slippery.

"Maybe there is no way around this thing!" Shawn yelled over the thundering of the water.

"Don't say that! There has to be a way. There's no way I am turning back without getting inside this time."

We started frantically looking for a way around the

boulder, which was almost becoming a mythical guard to Spindle Canyon. On the rocky cliffs on the east side of the boulder I spotted a tiny crumbling rock ledge about 80 feet above the canyon floor that followed along the cliff wall for a few feet ending just before the top of the boulder.

"Shawn over here. Take a look at this. Think we can walk along there and jump to the top the rock?"

"We won't know until we try, will we?"

I started to scale up the cliff towards the rocky ledge

above. As I climbed I was desperately searching for handholds. Several almost broke under my weight and I had flashes of my China Bar experience with Rob Causley as I climbed. I put my foot on an outcropping to brace myself for the next part of the ascent and it broke. I lost my balance and tumbled past Shawn, landing in a deep pool below the cliff with a splash. I crawled out of the pool with only a few cuts and scrapes. Shawn was standing over me with worry written all over his face.

"You all right, Friesen?"

"Yes, I am lucky I didn't break my neck. Thank God for deep pools of water. But I don't think I can try that I again, there has to be a different way."

"I think I have a plan. I will try and make the climb and once I get on top of the boulder I will tie our rope and you can climb up."

Shawn wrapped the rope around his chest, ready to give it a try.

"Be careful up there, man."

Shawn gave me a thumbs up and started climbing the cliff face towards the little rocky ledge. I followed his progress standing knee-deep in the water below him. As he kept climbing, several pieces of debris fell down the cliff face splashing into the water in front of me. Shawn carefully placed his foot on the same overhang where I had placed mine before.

"That's where I lost it."

He was so focused on what he was doing he probably didn't hear me. He placed his hand on the ledge.

"We're gonna make it, Friesen," he yelled, pulling himself



up onto the rocky ledge high above the river gorge.

Carefully he started walking across the ledge towards the top of the giant boulder, placing one foot in front of the other with extreme caution. The ledge started to break out from under him as he came closer to the end, and when he was ready to jump to the boulder the entire ledge collapsed. Rocks splashed into the water below as Shawn flew through the air and landed on top of the boulder on both feet. He started jumping up and down like a prize-fighter. It was a great moment for both of us.

Shawn looked around for a place to tie the rope and found a jagged rock sticking out of the river behind the boulder. He secured the rope to the rock and lowered it down to me.

"OK, I'm going to try and pull you up."

I grasped the rope near where the waterfall cascaded down and Shawn started pulling on the rope. I looked for a foothold as I was swinging in the waterfall. With water splashing on my face it was very hard to see anything. Still, I found a hold and pushed myself up as Shawn was pulling. Again I dangled in the air. If I were to fall I would land on the sharp rocks below. My hands were burning but I managed to find the strength to climb the rope. Shawn was still pulling and pulling. The water from above was blinding me, so I closed my eyes and focused on climbing. When I opened my eyes I was looking at Shawn standing on the boulder holding the rope with one hand and hanging onto a rock with the other one. When he saw that I was safe he dropped the rope and I landed on the rock with a thump. Never did I feel so alive.

"That was one for the history books," I said as I lay flat on the boulder.

"Let's not sit here talking about it. Let's go find ourselves some gold," Shawn said stating to walk upstream.

The sides of the canyon grew even steeper and the creek bed was littered with sharp boulders. We scrambled upstream for several hours finding our way over and around boulders, walking through the water and slipping on rocks, hoping to find the end of the canyon, but the stream just

kept going on.

At one point, when I was walking on top of a landslide that flowed down into the river a part of it came loose, causing a huge boulder to tumble down the cliff towards Shawn who walked at the bottom of the slide.

"Gryba!" I yelled to him, and he quickly jumped out of the way just in time as the rock crashed into the water beside him.

His look showed that we shared fear for this canyon, but we kept hiking along. The creek bed was getting narrower

and narrower, and in parts we walked through the river up to our waists, but that was refreshing because the sun was blazing down. We were both starting to grow tired when we saw a huge waterfall off in the distance. As we came closer we knew we were not going any farther into the canyon.

"There has to be a way around it," Shawn said trying to climb the cliffs next to the falls, but it was futile.

It was too slippery and there was no place for us to hang on to. We sat down on a large boulder next to the river in frustration knowing that the mountains had beaten us again. I took out a smoke and started puffing.

"Can I have a drag, Friesen?" Shawn asked. I handed him the smoke.

We sat there not speaking for several minutes just

listening to the roar of the water cascading down.

"Look, we can't give up. If there is any gold in this canyon, we should at least be able to find some trace of it here," I said, getting up and picking up my pan and shovel and walking over to the waterfall.

"What are you going to do, Friesen?"

"If we can get to some of the gravel underneath the fall close to bedrock, maybe we can find something. Look, I know it's a long shot but do you want to go back empty handed?" Without saying a word Shawn rose to his feet and grabbed his gold pan, ready to give it a try.

I walked out into the cold water, shovel in hand and with the water up to my waist and standing underneath



the roaring fall, I plunged the shovel in the water trying to get to the gravel lying underneath the freezing water. I came quickly to the conclusion that prospecting is some of the hardest work imaginable. I dug through the layer of overburden but it was slow work, and when I removed the shovel from underwater the dirt would slide off and back into the hole I was digging.

Tossing my shovel down, I grabbed my knife and started digging by hand, removing rock and gravel until my hands started to get numb in icy water. Finally hitting bedrock I began putting gravel into Shawn's pan. He started to wash the gravel as I kept on digging, trying to get as much gravel as I could to the surface before the river washed it off my shovel. After a great deal of pain and effort I managed to fill up my gold pan.

"Do you see anything yet?" I called over to Shawn who was kneeling down between two rocks washing his pan on the side of the river.

"Not a thing," he said reaching the bottom of his gold pan.

"Your turn to dig, Gryba!"

I walked out of the cold water, threw my shovel on the ground and picked up my gold pan. Shawn went into the water and took my place under the roaring waterfall. I started working on the contents of my gold pan watching the water swirling slowly around, removing the lighter rocks. I was hoping that colours would appear, but there was nothing but a trace of black sand.

"Gryba, keep digging, man, we may be on to something, I found black sand."

"What is black sand?" he yelled back to me from the waterfall where he was digging like a madman.

"A sign of gold," I yelled to him as I felt a shimmer of hope.

Shawn threw down his shovel when he had finished filling his pan and went to work. I grabbed the shovel and once again walked back into the river and started hauling

up more gravel. After five minutes there was a roar from Shawn as he stared into his gold pan.

"Friesen, have a look at this!" He yelled.

I quickly ran over and stared into his pan. In a thin layer of black sand were some very small pieces of flour gold, so small in fact you almost needed a microscope to see them, but they were there. and was it ever nice to see them.

"It's sure not much, but it's something." Shawn wasted no time in getting up to take his turn at digging out more gravel.



I went to work on my gold pan with mad passion, ignoring the pain in my back. Nothing mattered in the whole world but the content of my gold pan, but it was getting late in the day and the sun was now vanishing from the canyon. When I got to the bottom of what I thought would be my last pan, I couldn't believe what I saw. Resting within the black sand at the bottom of my gold pan was one very small piece of gold about the size of the end of my fingernail. I screamed in ecstasy as I brought it out of the water. Here was a sign that there could be something in this canyon after all.

"What is it?" Shawn yelled tossing his shovel down coming over to have a look. When he saw what it was, we danced around like madmen, happy having at last found a trace of colour. All the boaters and

fishermen on Pitt Lake could have heard our screams. Possessed we continued our search. We searched pan after pan for a bigger piece of gold, but found only some more black sand, and this time it did not even have any specs. That did not discourage us. The tiny gold flake we had found had to come from higher up the creek and we knew we would be returning to this place and that it had to be by helicopter.

So, we decided to call it a day and get out of the canyon before nightfall. We gathered up all our prospecting equipment and our daypacks and took a couple of pictures of the area before we turned back to walk back down Spindle Creek, happy the search had been successful, that we had come as far as we could, and that we had found a sign.



# Spindle Canyon: An amazing place!

WE MADE arrangements with Prism helicopters in Pitt Meadows to head back to Spindle Canyon, this time landing in the upper part of the valley where Shawn and I were sure the gold was waiting to be found. We would fly in on Saturday at eight in the morning and would be picked up Sunday at six at night, giving us enough time to determine if there was any gold inside. This would be our final assault on this canyon for the year, because it was now late August.

That Saturday morning, Shawn and I rolled into the Prism helicopter parking lot only two minutes before the helicopter was scheduled to take off for our final assault on Spindle Canyon.

"Hello," I said greeting this very attractive secretary.

"You must be the two boys headed into the mountains. The helicopter is just refuelling. You can go to it out back where your pilot is waiting."

Shawn and I had never been in a helicopter before and we felt like a couple of nervous kids.

"You the boys heading into the Pitt Lake country I gather? That's dangerous country and I hope you know what you're doing," the pilot said.

"Well, we have been there before," I bragged with confidence.

"You wouldn't be looking for Slum's gold or whatever that Indian is called. How many of you guys have I flown into those mountains!"

"No," Shawn and I said at the same time, and the pilot knew we were lying.

"Well, if you are, I hope you don't find it because if you do I'll be out of business." He smiled.

"Anyway my name is Frank, and this is Henry. He will be coming along for the ride. You two can get inside and Henry here will load your bags. Whoever is showing me where to land gets the front."

I jumped in the front of the chopper and sat there with my heart racing with excitement. Henry loaded the bags in the back and sat down beside Shawn.

"Put on your headphones, she's going to be loud," the pilot said.

He started the helicopter's engines, and the blades above us came twirling into life. The pilot asked the control tower for instructions over the crackling headphones and he was given the clear.

"Roger, roger," he said as the helicopter lifted straight up into the sky.

Within minutes of takeoff we were flying up and over the lower Pitt River watching, all the cars driving by on the Lougheed Highway looking like little ants.

"Okay, now I need some help from you gentlemen. Which way are we headed?"



"Ah, take her over towards Widgeon Lake," I said, "and when we get there I will tell you where to go."

"Roger that," the pilot said turning the helicopter to the west. As we came closer to Widgeon Lake I felt the little kid in me coming back to life, full of wonder and excitement. Within minutes we were cruising over Widgeon Lake, mountains towering all around it and guarding it.

"So where to next?" the pilot asked.

"Ah...head north over that ridge," I said pointing towards a huge rock cliff to the east of us. The pilot turned sharply in that direction. As we approached the top of the ridge I could see Spindle Canyon below us.

"Down there," I pointed to the short rocky gorge.

"You want to be put down in there? You must be crazier than I am."

The pilot took the helicopter down into the chasm looking for a place to land.

"Not very much flat land in there," he said turning the helicopter in sharply as we flew over Spindle Lake.

Where Shawn and I had tried so hard to hike in I noticed a massive waterfall where the waters from Spindle Lake cascaded over a 1,000-foot cliff. We could never have come in from that side no matter how hard we would have tried.

"I'm going have to put her down here," the pilot said stopping the chopper in mid air and taking it down and putting one strut on a large rock.

"This is it, out you go and good luck."

Shawn jumped out onto the boulder first. When he opened the door there was a blast of dust as the helicopter blades turned up the dry dirt of the canyon into a small sand storm. I quickly followed and then Henry, the pilot's assistant, handed us our backpacks from inside the helicopter

"Okay, boys, be careful, and we will see you on Sunday at six," the pilot yelled slamming the door of the helicopter closed.

The pilot lifted the helicopter out of the valley, the sound of its engines echoing against the giant rock cliffs on both sides of the canyon. We were left in the silence of this mysterious place and looking at a sea of giant boulders surrounded by towering cliffs that reached high up into the blue sky.

"Let's head over to Spindle Lake and make camp there," Shawn suggested breaking the silence. We shouldered our packs and started walking through the sea of rocks climbing over and under large rocks in the hot sunshine. We reached the small lake in less than forty minutes. After setting up camp for the night it was time to get down to business and try and find gold in this place once and for all.

"Where should we start looking?" Shawn said looking out over hundreds of rocks in the distance.

"Let's do a complete search of the canyon. You take the east side and I will take the west side. We can cover more ground that way. Just keep your eyes open for rusty rocks."

So we split up, quickly losing sight of each other among the giant boulders. My eyes were everywhere looking for any sign of rust alteration in the rocks or quartz—anything that could signal gold. I was also in search of anything that would match the description of the gold's location given in the Jackson letter—the tent-shaped rock in particular, but there were many tent shape rocks in this canyon.

I came to a place where I could hear the creek running underneath the boulders and entering a small cavern before vanishing underground. I was reminded of what Jackson had written in his letter to Shotwell describing the lost gold canyon: *"... and what struck me as singular; it appeared to have no outlet for the creek that flowed at the bottom. Afterwards I found that the creek entered a ----- and was lost."*

As I walked down to the small creek I noticed traces of black sand looking like little black snakes slithering across

the sandy bars on both sides of the creek. I took out my gold pan and shovel and began a search of the gravel, digging down as deep as I could, trying to reach the bedrock and the gravels below. When I reached bedrock I started to feel for cracks, and when I found one I scraped all the gravel out of it with my knife and started to fill my pan.

At the bottom of my first pan I had expected to see large pieces of gold smiling at me, but there was nothing, so I kept working, searching pan after pan and still finding nothing. I heard a loud cry. Shawn was shouting my name from further up the canyon. I climbed up on one of the large boulders to have a look and saw him standing and waving a piece of metal in the air.

"Look at this!" his voice trembling with the excitement that comes from discovery, "It's a piece of the B-25 bomber. Let's go for the bomber now!"

"No, we have to search the canyon first," I said, being totally under the spell of gold.

We walked back through the sea of boulders and reached a place on the east side near the far end of the canyon where the sun, blocked by the high walls, never shone. Here we found, in a huge ice flow a cavern that was large enough to crawl into, a small stream flowing out of it.

"Well I suppose there is only one thing to do," Shawn said taking a flashlight from his daypack.

"After you," I said and Shawn ducked down and crawled into the small entrance. Within a few minutes we were standing upright inside an icy cavern. The roof above us was as bright blue as the ocean in the tropics. We felt transported into a different world and kept following the ice passage now leading us away from the stream. There was the sound of a small waterfall cascading in the distance and we went on, but suddenly the tunnel stopped and it seemed we had reached a dead end.

"Now what?" Shawn said shining his flashlight around the ice room.

"Over there," I said pointing to a small crack in the rocks on the right side. I went down on my knees and squeezed through it, crawling in the direction of the river until I came out right next to the edge of the creek. The ceiling overhead was still completely made of ice, but we were now standing right next to the walls of the canyon.

"Well, will you look at that," Shawn said shining his flashlight around the room illuminating several large quartz veins in the canyon wall. I splashed through the tiny stream to have a look. Shawn took out his rock hammer and began chipping away at the quartz, taking small pieces of shiny clean quartz out of the rock wall. On a small sand-bar I noticed laces of black sand just like the ones I saw before on a small bars

"We have to search here; I found sands like this farther down."

I took out my gold pan and shovel and started to work the gravel. The two of us dug with mad purpose. We were

just like the prospectors of the olden days, possessed with gold fever as we filled and refilled our pans searching every inch of ground hoping to find our reward at the bottom of each pan.

We worked for most of the day, stopping only when our backs became too sore from the relentless panning. At one point I collapsed on the ground and leaned against the rock wall, and the tiny cavern was suddenly filled with the sound of rock sliding on rock. The wall I was resting against had moved a little to the right. I froze as I realized what had happened. This wall was not the solid rock wall of the canyon, but one of those giant boulders.

"Let's get out of here, Shawn, I don't think it's safe in here. Don't forget the quartz." I picked up the pieces of white quartz and rock we had chipped off.

The hike back to the camp was not one of victory, but one of doubt that continued to trouble us as we went through the duties of building a fire and making dinner. The sun went down behind the mountains engulfing the canyon in an eerie darkness as we sat at the campfire, wondering if we had come here for nothing.

"I don't know if we are going to find anything inside here, Friesen."

"There has to be gold somewhere here or we would never have found any downstream. This has to be its source."

"Maybe you are right, but it could be buried under the rocks, lost forever."

"You may have a point."

A small breeze started to blow up and down the canyon making a whistling noise that almost sounded like laughter.

"I'm going inside," Shawn said walking over to the little blue tent, and I quickly joined him as the wind now started howling.

"I hope a storm doesn't blow in or we will never get out of here," Shawn said crawling into his sleeping bag for the night.

I stayed up for a while, had a cigarette, and looked up in the sky and did not see any stars. Then I crawled back into the tent and into my sleeping bag and closed my eyes, hoping that the morning would bring us some success. I slowly started falling into sleep when there was a loud smashing sound farther up the valley.

"What the hell was that?" I said bolting up in the darkness of the tent and grabbing my knife.

"I don't want to know. I really hope it's not a bear. It's probably a rock falling down from the cliffs. Don't worry about it, we need to get some sleep if we are going to find that gold tomorrow, Friesen."

For hours I tried to get to sleep, but the howling wind kept me awake for half the night. When finally I drifted off it was into the realm of a dark dream.

*I found myself carrying a large backpack somewhere on the far edges of Stave Glacier lost in the wonder of this sacred*

*area that I had found myself. This was my destiny. There were no more conflicts with the world. My soul was at peace. Suddenly the ground I was walking on underneath gave away and I found myself falling deep down into one of the glacier's many crevices landing deep inside the heart of Stave Glacier with a loud painful thud that broke both of my legs. I couldn't move. I was trapped and I screamed the loud desperate scream of someone who knows to be only minutes away from death. I took my lighter out of my pocket and when I flicked it and it came to life I found myself staring into the frozen dead eyes of that old prospector Volcanic Brown.*

When I woke up inside the darkness of the tent, I couldn't get the frozen eyes of Volcanic Brown's face out of my troubled mind. The wind was still howling outside, and in my sleeping bag I was afraid for the very first time of the darkness of the Pitt Lake mountains waiting for all of us who go there in search of her mother lode.

I got up as soon as daylight returned to the mountains and, with the dream still fresh in my mind, prepared breakfast. Clouds were now rolling in and it looked as if rain was coming. When Shawn came out of the tent, breakfast was waiting.



Daryl in Spindle Canyon.





"You're awake!" Shawn commented as he crawled out of the tent. "I think we should head past the ice caves today and try to see if we can locate the source of the river. Maybe there we'll have more luck."

"Maybe we can go for the bomber as well," Shawn added. "If we don't locate any gold at the source."

After we finished breakfast we got our gear together and made our way back through the boulders towards the far end of the canyon. The breeze had started to pick up again. I could feel small drops of rain on my head and I knew this was not a good sign.

"Weather looks bad. I hope the helicopter can get back in here," Shawn said, sounding very concerned.

I kept thinking about my dream the night before and knew it was an omen. It was saying that Shawn and I were headed for failure. But I pushed it out of my mind when we reached the end of the canyon and saw large rusty stains on rocks and the cliff near the stream. Once again I was a believer as I took out my pick and smashed a piece of the rust-coloured rock, breaking off a small piece to have a look inside.

"Shawn, look at this," I said pointing to the small shiny pieces of iron pyrite in the sample. "It's a good sign," I said, "we have to keep looking."

I took a sample of the rock as we made our way to the far end of the canyon where the stream was flowing out of a crack in the rock. The edges of the river were covered with

sandy bars that were loaded with black sand, more than I had seen in the entire canyon.

I forgot about my dream as I once again started searching the gravel for any sign of gold. We started to dig down to bedrock scraping the gravel from the cracks, panning one pan after another. We panned and panned and found nothing. We kept working into the afternoon, breaking our backs for any trace of gold, but there was still nothing, not even the smallest of traces.

Finally Shawn snapped after working so hard for so little reward. He tossed his gold pan on the ground and sat down at the side of the creek.

"There is no gold in this place! Even if it is here, it's buried under all these rocks. We will never find it!" he yelled, running his hands through his hair in the deepest of bad moods.

I put my gold pan down and joined him because I knew deep inside that he was probably right.

"Hey Slumach," I cried, "you win, again!" My voice echoed through the canyon before it faded away.

"Friesen, let's forget about the gold and try and reach the B-25. At least we know that it's there, man. We have to find something on this damn trip. We can't return with nothing."

"Let's go for it," I agreed putting the agony of the search for gold behind me and taking out my beat-up topographic map with the X revealing the location of the B-25 Bomber.



"According to the map the plane was resting on a small ridge just west of the lip of the canyon and north of where our piece of the bomber had been found. All we have to do is climb the cliff at the back of the canyon."

We had to climb the rock wall in front of us to reach it.

"I hope we can get up there. It looks slippery."

"We have to, Friesen."

I soon followed. As we climbed I almost slipped several times. Around half way up the cliff Shawn grabbed a rocky outcrop that broke loose, causing a small avalanche of rocks that went bouncing down the cliff, missing my head by inches. We made it to the top of the cliff with a sense of relief and started walking along the ridge of the canyon in the direction of the bomber's final resting place. The view from the ridge of Spindle Canyon was breathtaking. You could see Widgeon Lake off in the distance and beyond all the way to Maple Ridge. We had reached the top of the world chasing the treasures of Pitt Lake.

The hike along the ridge to the location of the crashed airplane took us a good hour. My legs felt like rubber again and our confidence in finding the wreck was slipping away. We stopped at the next boulder for a rest.

"We should be on top of it. Let's just go over that small ridge up ahead," I said panting.

We forced our tired bodies to try just a little harder and longer, and as we came up over the small ridge we were finally rewarded.

"Is that what I think it is?" Shawn said as he looked off in the distance at what only could be a beat old engine from an old airplane.

We both ran towards it with renewed energy, climbing over the granite cliffs towards the wreckage. It was unreal to see the ruins of the B25 bomber that I had dreamed about finding for the past year. The wreckage of the plane was scattered across the mountaintop. Pieces of metal, large and small were everywhere. We walked slowly through the wreckage. A light rain came down on us and a gentle wind blew over the mountain. Lying around were pieces of parachutes, a few old shoes, a small Vaseline tin, and some documents, including what looked like old charts. The paper fell apart on touch.

I was getting so lost in thought that I'd forgotten about the Nazi gold rumoured to be on board the bomber.

"Gryba," I called, "have you seen the fuselage?"

He was looking through the ruins at a distance. As I walked towards him around the first engine I kicked a piece of metal that spun around on the granite rock at my feet. It was the military plaque, the "known crash do not report" sign mentioned by Boileau when we met him. It had been put there by the military after they found the wreck.

I called Shawn and showed him the metal plaque. I told him that someone had told Boileau that planes carrying a

valuable cargo used to carry this kind of plaque to discourage treasure hunters in case they crashed.

"Come on, Friesen, do you really believe that?"

"I would like to but I don't. Now lets find the fuselage and see what's there."

The fuselage was still buried under a ton of snow and there was no way to reach it to see if there was anything still inside. Down I fell to my knees in front of the ruined aircraft looking at the bent metal in front of me.

"You know, it's really very sad, but I don't have anything with me to cut it open and see if there is any gold inside."

"Friesen, who cares," Shawn said with a big smile on his face, "we made it here, the bomber is real, the dream was true. Look at it this way, it was a great challenge and it's the best adventure I have ever had."

"Plus, we still have the sample from the canyon and we know there is gold in there," I added.

"I've been thinking about that canyon. If there is anything it is buried under so much rock that it would have to be a very rich find to make it worth it."

"Well, we will not know anything until we have the sample assayed," I replied.

"Sure would be nice to find a gold bar in this wreck!"

I took out my mining pick and smashed the old fuselage. It just made lots of noise, the sounds of my hammering echoing through the mountains. I kept at it for several minutes, wanting so badly to get to the bottom of the B25 bomber riddle and to fly out of here with a gold bar in my backpack.

"You are not making any progress," Shawn commented, looking at me hammering away.

"I know but I have to try,"

I pounded away, hitting the bomber even harder.

"You are right, this is not the way to open this thing. I should have been better prepared."

"Don't be upset, Friesen. You were right, the bomber was real and we reached it. It is not going anywhere and we can come back next year."

"This place is amazing!"

Shawn was looking down into Spindle Canyon. The rain had stopped and the vast canyon and the huge mountains to the north were in full sight. Just the view from this place was a breath of inspiration.

An intense feeling of happiness and accomplishment washed over me. This was a day of real success even if we were not walking out of here with a bag full of nuggets or a bar of gold...this time.

Chasing myths was definitely not the passion of everyone, but Shawn seemed genuinely interested to think about a next time.

"Will you still want to go in search of gold with me after we get back?"

"That's a promise, Friesen," Shawn said, shaking my hand.

4-59

~~SECRET~~

9 Jul 53

HISTORICAL RECORD OF RCAF STATION SASKATOON

1 Dec 52 - 30 May 53

- 1 On 2 Dec 52, the first of the six family row type houses was taken over and airmen in the greatest need of accommodation were moved into it. These houses had been promised at the rate of one every ten days until warm weather at which time they would be completed more rapidly.
- 2 On 5 Dec the Unit Supply building No. 55 was taken over from the contractor. The Supply Section commenced their move on 6 Dec and this continued progressively until completed on 23 Dec.
- 3 F/L JPAA Frechette, the RC Chaplain from Gimli, reported on Temporary Duty on 9 Dec to provide religious welfare for R.C. personnel here. He was subsequently transferred to this Station on 4 Feb 53.
- 4 G/C RS Turnbull attended the Commanding Officers' Conference at Group Headquarters on 15 Dec. He departed on 14 Dec and returned on 16 Dec.
- 5 The Christmas and New Year's seasonal festivities commenced on 20 Dec with the childrens' party. Five hundred and sixty-three children attended. Section parties were held on the afternoon of 23 Dec 53. Christmas and New Year's dinners were well received and airmen were served in the traditional manner by the Officers and Senior NCOs.
- 6 The water and sewage pumphouses were taken over from the contractor on 29 Dec, and on 30 Dec the water and sewage distribution systems were taken over at which time a cutover was made to these services.
- 7 There were no important visitors during the month.
- 8 F/L AJ Hall (Supply) was promoted to rank of F/L on 1 Jan 53.
- 9 The most important incident during the month was the loss of Mitchell a/c 5246 on a routine training flight to Vancouver on 29 Jan 53. The aircraft carried an instructor, F/O J McIntosh, two AFS students, P/O MD Hill and P/O ED Thygesen, and two crewmen, LAC KG McGinness and ACl IM DeWitt. First advice to the Station was over the hourly news broadcast from a local radio station. A search by RCAF Station Vancouver was commenced at once, but to date the aircraft and personnel aboard, have not been found.
- 10 The Station Commander proceeded on a week's leave on 19 Jan, and during his absence, W/C DC Skene assumed command of the Station.
- 11 Visitors during the month were:

G/C MG Doyle	-	AFHQ/ASR	on	13 Jan
A/C DR Bradshaw	-	AFHQ/DGT	on	13 Jan
W/C DL Forbes	-	14 Trg Gp/SPSO	on	19 Jan
S/L EA Kirkwood	-	AFHQ/DPA	on	23 Jan
W/C CM Matheson	-			