

Newspapers and Magazines 1900s

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CURSE OF THE LOST MINE BY JON FERRY — THIRD IN A SERIES

GOLD HUNT BIZARRE—BUT SERIOUS

The hunt for Slumach's cursed gold mine mixed moments of sheer exhaustion with moments of the utterly bizarre.

The wild Pitt Lake scenery and crazy chatter of the Province-CKVU team sometimes seemed straight out of the movie comedy: Monty Python And The Holy Grail.

For prospector Gary McIsaac, however, gold-searching was always a deadly serious business. "Searching for gold requires a lot of guts and ambition. Most people don't have it today. They are more interested in sitting back and reading about it than actually doing it."

Inspired by McIsaac's hyperactive "dowsing bug," we head south out of camp and clamber up the ladder of boulders. This time the sunny weather makes the 220-metre (728-foot) climb easier. Even the squeaky marmots are in top voice.

Heaving ourselves painfully through the underbrush, we surface on flat ground as precious as any gold nugget.

It is 1:30 p.m. and 1280 metres (4199 feet) high. Expedition leader Dale Robins, the CKVU reporter, decides to use the portable phone. "Vancouver this is Hotel 488067," he announces. "Hello newsroom, this is Robins on a mountain top."

McIsaac's dowsing bug is pointing east along the latest ridge, which ends in a steep rock climb. Robins leads the way and, as he reaches the 1372-metre (4501-foot) summit, lets out a delighted whoop. It's a throat-stopping sight. We are in the land of the gods. In the heavens ahead are the parapets of a celestial castle, including 1431-metre (4695-foot) Widgeon peak.

We are standing beside a cairn that McIsaac says must be "a sign of the search for Slumach's gold."

A few metres away is a length of rotted propylene rope tied to a bush at a cliff's edge. Beyond the cliff is a sheer, 900-metre (2952-foot) drop to a wasteland of a valley below. Down in the valley is a circle of huge boulders, at least 50 metres (164-feet) in diameter. McIsaac's dowsing bug swings wildly towards this Stonehenge-like creation.

We clearly have to wait until tomorrow to get there by another route. "You could go down," Dan Cook quips. "But that first step would be a son-of-a-bitch."

Before heading back we place a message in the cairn. It reads

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“September 28, 1983. Seven crazed hiker-adventurers hot on the trail of Slumach’s lost gold mine arrived here after a gruelling, three hour hike. God Bless You. Raiders of the Lost Mine.”

Monty Python fans will appreciate the messages postscript:
“PS—What’s the last line of the Parrot sketch?”