



THE ROC CAIRN



— RENSSELAER OUTING CLUB, INC. — 15TH ST. LOUNGE, R. P. I., TROY, NEW YORK —

February 1981



BAFFIN ISLAND EXPEDITION - Spring 1980

On May 22, 1980 Dick Tucker, Eric Laurin and myself started up the Northway for the first part of our 3 + week expedition in the "land that Never Melts". We were to attempt crossing the Cumberland Peninsula from Broughton Island to the small Inuit community of Pangingtung - a total of approximately 150 miles. Along the way we were to attempt two first ascents and repeat numerous climbs successfully completed only once before. As we later found out, we were the second expedition in recent mountaineering history to successfully cross the Penny Ice Cap via the Coronation Glacier. For future expeditions, there are dozens of peaks and countless big walls yet to be touched by world class climbers.

Looking at the globe, Baffin Island is about 200 miles west of Greenland. It is a rather inaccessible arctic region, mainly because the sea ice is frozen ten months of the year. We drove to Montreal, took a small jet to Frobisher Bay and then transferred to an awaiting prop plane to fly the remaining leg to an isolated Inuit (Eskimo) community of Broughton Island. The settlement is situated off the north shore of Baffine Island. There, with some confusion over our anticipated itinerary, we attempted to hire two Inuit hunters to take us by snowmobile to Summit Lake. With a map before us, the broken conversation went like this:

"We would like to go to Summit Lake..." They conversed extensively in Inuit and finally pronounced:

"Summit Lake, we no go..." Right then and there we had to rearrange our itinerary for three weeks. Instead of a base camp operation, we decided to make the trek a continual, moving camp operation, across the island starting on the Coronation Glacier.

"Can we go up the Coronation..." we said, pointing to where the glacier met the sea.

"Ya, you can go..." they exclaimed.

Apparently, the Inuit people never had any intention of going inland. The coast and sea ice is where they travel and hunt for food, so inland regions are avoided out of practicality. Unfortunately that was not the impression we got over during several pre-trip long-distance phone conversations. Anyway, to continue the narration:

"We have a lot of equipment..."

"What?"

"A lot of gear..."

"What?"

"...A lot of STUFF!"

"...Ch, stuff.." Their English vocabulary was quite limited. They again conversed in Inuit and then with a wide grin, they proclaimed:

"Ya, Ya...we go...two skidoo... and a lot of stuff..."

We settled on \$150 to take the 3 of us and 330 pounds of gear forty miles to our starting point. Our final destination was Pangingtung, 150 miles away. As far as we could tell, the three of us were in an area the size of Connecticut with only one ranger. As we registered our expedition the ranger asked, "Would you be willing to assist in a mountain rescue operation?" We thought about that a bit then replied, "That depends on whether it's our own rescue..." No other climbers, and for that matter backpackers, were expected to arrive til late June.

So much for the introduction, onward with the trek. The first day

was spent shuffling our load (110 lb./person) around the 75 ft snout and through the maze of crevasses. With foresight, we decided to spend some time practicing crevasse rescue. Good thing, for over the course of the trip I fell in three times...Falling into a crevasse took away some of the daily routine that had eventually set in. Realizing soon enough that snow conditions turned bad during the "heat" of the mid-day sun, we became nocturnal. That is, we walked by night and slept during the day. Remember, though, we had 24 hour sunlight, so at night there was only less sun, not no sun!

The cold temperatures and wind did not bother us as much as the sun. We would not only have to put up with the direct hit, but also the 90% reflected from everywhere. Glacier goggles were the first thing I put on in the morning and the last thing I took off at night! Everything was white and reflective. Dick and Eric can go into detail about the effectiveness of various "sunscreens". With the scaled and blistered burns on my cheeks and ears, I got some long over-the-shoulder looks when we first got back to Montreal and New York. Fortunately, everything healed fast.

We spent 6 days walking up the Coronation Glacier carrying our 40 lb. packs and pulling 60+ lbs. on a sled. Because of possible crevasses, we were always on rope. That meant we were always 75' apart...we would eat lunch 75' apart, take breaks 75' apart, fix snowshoes 75' apart, go to the bathroom 75' apart. We would bend the rule and cook dinner and sleep off rope. But not after we carefully checked out our campsite. Our relationship with each other was excellent. We did get to know each other more than we had believed possible over the course of 21+ days. I think it is safe to say, we all thought like engineers. Though we did eat, sleep, work together, we also had quite a bit of time to appreciate, in our own way, the immense beauty and vastness of this mountainous arctic region. We averaged ten miles on "trek days". The "rest days" were spent doing something restful--climbing! A change of activity certainly lifted our spirits.

By the end of the first week we reached the Penny Ice Cap, which is where the last North American Glaciation started. The ice cap has some 800 square miles and is over a mile deep. The top surface is, of course, snow covered and very flat. It struck me as a snow desert. We came upon it during some of the worst storm weather and succeeded in crossing it with only compasses. (Incidentally, the magnetic declination was about 45 degrees). The crossing took two days...two days of "white out", where the falling snow blended in with the snow horizon and snow underfoot. Nothing was distinguishable but my two companions 75' away. There seemed to be only one dimension and that was time...really a neat sensation.

The storm finally cleared on the third day and we could make out through the clouds, cliffs in the distance. Figuring out exactly where we were took about half the day. I felt I knew where we were but so did Dick and Eric. It took a while to finally agree...Have you ever been at three places at once?

We headed down and travelled on the vast glacier floes scattered between the sharp and jagged mountains. Picture the mountains in Alaska. There was an eskimo legend which gave the six day account of how God created Earth. On the fifth day, among other things, He created Baffin Island with all the snow. On the sixth day He took all the ice that was left over from the rest of the world and dumped it on Baffin. On the seventh day, His day of rest, He threw rocks at it. I don't know how original this story was, but it sounded good when the ranger told it to us.

Dick and I got to do some rather serious climbing in this region.

We even got two first ascents. Numerous peaks were recognized only by longitude and latitude co-ordinates. It's an area to explore if you are good at naming peaks. We did on occasion stretch our imaginations and threw out names. Names. Trinity, Inukesluk, and Loki faired best. Everytime we hit a summit we would just sit and look (when it was clear) around and below us. There is something about sitting on top a mountain...the feeling is a 'high' that's hard to relate. One has to experience the climb and then take in the 360 degree summit panorama. Our photo slides truly depicted the alpine grandeur that we saw.

By the 14th day we reached the halfway point--Summit Lake. Within a month the lake would thaw for the brief Arctic summer, but now the winds howled fiercely here, gusting to 40-50 mph. We had several incredibly windy nights (actually days) sleeping in a flapping tent, which seemed inclined to just take-off. We made sure it was securely anchored, and went to the effort of building a snow wall around it. Summit Lake was the last site from which we would do any climbing. It was also the spot where we cached (or left behind) two gallons of fuel and burned all our plastic garbage, empty boxes, and 200 tomato plant wands. Because of the scarcity of snow in the Weasel River Valley, we packed our packs so that our load could be either carried in entirely or pulled on sleds entirely. We preferred the latter for packs weighed over 75 lbs. each!

By the end of the 16th day we had dropped to almost sea level and the season seemed to change abruptly to Spring. Tundra was creeping out and we were able to spot wildlife---arctic hare, ptarmigans (little birds) and Canadian Geese. The rabbits were really big and puffy white, and enjoyed the game of "hide and seek". They were not as afraid of us as their cousins in New York. Around this time we met our first person--Nancy Knight. She planned to backpack up to Paningtung Pass for the next five days, all by her lonesome. Hiking alone just didn't seem to bother her. The previous year, she had completed the whole Pacific Crest Trail from Canada to Mexico...quite a hiker! We exchanged stories and experiences for quite some time. She also had with her plenty of very much appreciated raisins and hard butterscotch candy. Later on, she was leave a box half-full with extra rations and candy. We looked forward to it as if it was Christmastime.

By the middle of the 3rd week, Eric and I, who are both rather thin to start with, were getting to be ravenously hungry. Our rations had been more or less adequate for the first 14 days. Then, I guess we had no more body fat reserves left and all that we consumed was being used up and then some. Dick, fortunately, had some extra pounds to work with so he wasn't so desperate. By the end of the trip I had lost 10-15 pounds...Any three week trek where you have to carry your own food, guarantees that you lose weight!

By the 19th day we arrived at the head Pangingtung Fiord... We had crossed the island! We celebrated by eating all our emergency rations and gorp. Our hiking had not ended though, because we had another 20 miles to Pang across frozen sea ice. Of course, the surface was flat but every once in a while we would come to some broad stretches of 6" deep surface water. Our sleds quickly became "boats" leaving a wake. The only problem was that they didn't float, so our gear got wet. Fortunately, we were able to finish it in two days.

The fiord itself was rather pretty -- both sides had vertical walls rising right from sea level. From the direction we had come we could look back and see the snow and glacier capped mountains. We didn't mind the wet boots too much.

We arrived at Paningtung at the end of the 21st day and found a bunkhouse to stay in. After washing up and buying food at a Hudson Bay Trading Post (where a head of lettuce was \$4.50 and oranges were \$1.20 each),

we dried our gear and I wrote 13 postcards. The flight the next day was cancelled due to high winds so we had an extra day around the settlement. I was able to see authentic soapstone carvings, loom weaving, and the Inuit art of printing on cloth. Everything was very interesting. Most of all, I enjoyed trying to talk to the Inuit and learn about how they live now and also about their traditional past. They were very friendly but not talkative so it was a bit difficult to sustain conversation. I did learn quite a bit and alot of it just wasn't what most people think about Eskimos. They are not a self-supportive people who hunt and fish, but rely on planes delivering food, clothing, and modern ways from the South. In that way it is a sad story, but fortunately, they continue to use their native language and live by their traditional values and beliefs.

The following 2-3 days were spent in Frobisher Bay, where we waited and waited, walked the settlement, then waited; slept on the terminal window sill, cooked on the floor and waited. Needless to say we got rather bored. As we were considered as stand-bys, one flight after another left without us. We were developing a paranoia about being stranded. Friday night when we finally flew out, I was wearing my down parka for the last time...the image of steeply-walled fiords with snow-capped mountains was with me for a long time.

-- Rimas Gylys

ROC NOTES

Spring is here? Atleast it seems like it. The rock climbing enthusiasts have already been out clinging to the sides of cliffs. Soon the kayakers and canoeists will follow their example and plunge down icy cold rivers to catch the spring run off. Such fun!

Also coming up soon is Election Day -- Tuesday, March 10. If you are not a patch member but qualify, speak to Greg about becoming one since only patch members can vote. It's your duty to ROC and country to vote.

If any of you are contemplating running for office, do so. There are competitions for only a couple of positions -- two candidates each for president and equipment chairman. The other candidates are uncontested. It is not too late to run. You can be nominated as late as voting time.

Don't forget the customary meeting at the Notty Pine after elections. All old and new officers are expected to attend.

Just a few other reminders. Wednesday (April 8) of GM week there will be a New England Style Square Dance at the C&CC. Support this ROC sponsored function. Further information is available at ROC meetings. Also coming up soon is the annual ROC Spring Banquet -- good times for all.

-- The Cairn Editor

SOME NEW MEMBERS (OR AT LEAST NEW TO THE DIRECTORY):

Adler, Larry '83	220 Nason 270-7541	
Aglia, Deborah '84	317 Nason 270-7567	101 St. Stephen La. W. Scotia NY 12302 518-399-5395
Binseel, Mary S.	284 10th St. 273-9566	540A Forney lp Ft. Belvoir, VA 22060 703-781-9499
Chidester, Richard '82	22 College Ave 274-1942	72 DuBois St. Darien, CT 203-655-9260
Chudziki, Mark	P.O. Box 157 or ESE Dept, 283-5183	JEC 270-6347
Coulombel, Christine	French House RSC 272-9216	
Davis, Douglas '84	325 Bray Hall	43 Cove Circle Marion, MA 02728 617-748-1482
Delmerico, Linda	20 Brickley Dr. Albany, NY 459-6376	
Desroches, Pete	12-5 Georgian Ter 274-5568	
Ducheneau, Tom	3 Cooper Av 271-8729	
Ellis, Dave	4C Russet Oaks Ballston Lake NY 12019 899-6449	
Freedman, Jeremy '80	15 Elmgrove Av 272-4991	14 Visgrove La. West Hartford CT 203-233-5740
French, Tim '83	128 12th St. 273-8495	26 Harper Dr. Pittsford, NY 14534 381-7445
Gallirio, Gin '83	202 Rouseau Kellogg Dr. 271-8967	126 Whalepond Rd. W. Long Branch, NJ 07764 201-222-9408
Griswold, Dave '83	202E Sharp Hall 270-7348	314 Ridgefield Rd. Endicott, NY 13760 607-754-6290

Hadly, Will '83	18 2nd St 273-5723	250 Guadaupe Ter Fremont, CA 94538 415-651-3737
Halstead, Judy	Box 157 Poestenkill, NY 283-5183	On Campus: 270-6358
Hauser, Kristin '84	201 Davison Hall 270-7614	14 Leopard Dr. Sandy Hook, CT 203-426-0388
Holloway, Constance '83	87 Albright 273-3070	24-351C Orchid Ct. EAFB Ak 907-753-6253
Hurwitz, Debbie '84	322 Nason Hall 270-7572	125 Glenmont Dr ? 716-342-7288
Knott, Jenifer '84	204 Davison Hall 270-7238	16 Raven Rd. Montvale, NJ 07645
Johnson, Mark '81	12 Bethwood Dr. Loudonville, NY 785-1961	Lebanon Springs NY 754-7815
Keeney, Rob '81	137 Hoosick St. 272-9857	95 Hartwell Av Littleton, MA 617-486-4579
Kunstmann, Debbie '83	209-B BARH 270-7145	4 Brown Dr. Pearl River, NY 10965 914-735-5680
Miller, Mark	Apt. 5-3 Nott Dr. 274-8135	
Morton, Henry	US Army ROTC INSTR GRP 270-6254/6255	
Myers, Mark '83	004 Voorhees 271-0335	Saranac Lake, NY 12981
Orsiew, Theodore '83	022 Voorhees 271-1952	3 Periwinkle Place Colonia, NJ 07067 201-388-7291
Peng, Samuel '83	Chi Phi 15th and Sage 272-9317 272-2416	6812 Tilden LA Rockville, MD 20852 301-881-7270
Petermann, Gregory '84	117 Hall Hall 272-1236	6 Bromley Dr. Hazlet, NJ 201-264-8814

Pusterhofer, John '84	227 Crockett Hall 271-1949	13463 Caves Rd. Chesterland, OH 44026 216-729-9727
Ribes, Julie '83	315 Warren Hall 270-7431	
Robertson, Andy '82	1117 Hutton St. 273-8911	Daniels Hill Rd. Keene NH 603-352-7006
Rowley, Dana	146 Second Ave North Troy 12182 235-4329	
Styro, Allen '81	15 Western Ave Watervlet, NY 12189 272-0999	
Tomlinson, Tom '84	219 Bray Hall 272-3536	630 Wheeler School Rd. Whiteford, MD 21160 836-1409
Uhlig, David '83	2100 Burdett Ave 273-9667	7398 Salina St. Pulaski, NY 315-298-4382
Willard, Jary '82	14 Colvin Cir. 272-7147	2610 Broad St. Bethal Park, PA 412-831-2929
Wilson, Mark '81	22 White III 272-1333	14 Mountain View IA. Vergennes VT 05491 802-877-2994
Wunderlich, Howard '83	407 Nugent Hall 270-7323	308 Parkwood St. Ronk. NY
Zawieja, David GRAD	2358 Burdett Ave Apt. 301B 274-4728	3123 E. Grange Ave Cudahy, WI 53110 469-8747
Zuck, Kenneth '84	328 Bray Hall	23 Trudy Lyn Rd. Holliston, MA 01746 617-424-5316

SOME NEW ADDRESSES FOR MEMBERS ALREADY IN THE DIRECTORY:

Elena Aranda	14-07 15th Street
Sandy Parmenter	284 10th Street Troy 273-9566
Dave Carpenter	271-6367

ADDITIONAL ADDITIONS

Stan Graziano
'81

416 North Hall
274-9012

100 Prospect Ct.
E. Longmeadow, MA
413-525-4804

Karen Pickwich

145 Pawling Ave.
274-5987

3733 Rosemont Blvd.
Louisville, KY
502-458-6369