



Pain and Pleasure at the Icefall Brook GMC, 2004

Between eyelids that resist every attempt to open and the cloudy vapors from the condensation laden exhalations of my own breath, I can barely discern that my wrist watch says 03:47, which would be in the am. My partner, Peter Amann grumbles, mostly incoherently, about the distance to the outhouse and the earliness of the hour. I have now been up for 11 minutes and can placate Peter with the fact the coffee has nearly brewed. A glimmer of sunshine noses out above the Lyell Icefield, a portent of what will be an awesome day.

The folks, still huddled and snoozing in their tents, are all participants at the ACC's annual GMC. We are hanging out in the Lyell high camp, spending only one night here is the normal gig. After putting the poor citizens of Week 1 through the torture of walking to and fro on the 7 kilometer white treadmill known as the Lyell Icefield, the GMC powers to be decided to set up a more conveniently located high camp. Practicality was the engine behind this decision, but ethereal realization was the result. The high camp was one of those truly cool places that one could spend time at. I know, this was my home for four nights during the summer of 2004.

In my usual pleasant and thoughtful manner and with incorrigible abandon I decide to roust the remainder of the participants. To me, of course, the obvious and most efficient manner in which to accomplish this goal is to throw egg-sized rocks at their tents. The resulting, resonating bang, which certainly is much louder inside the tent, is bound to wake the dead. Interestingly enough, a number of participants reiterated that they were nearly dead after being marched from base camp to the summit of Mt Christian, 11,000' and back to our present locale yesterday. They fail to remember that I climbed an extra 210' chasing an errant water bottle that had actually spent it's time safely nestled in the owner's pack. In my opinion (which is the only one that I see value in listening to), I should be the one grouching.

Today, Peter and I are going to take them to the summits of Ernest, Edward and Rudolph, all of them reaching over 11,000'. It isn't very often that one is able to bag 3, 11,000' summits in one day. I am suitably jazzed and do my best to impart that enthusiasm on the now fully grumbling participants. Apparently, some of them were not that receptive to my method of bringing them to life. Undeterred by their derisive comments, even ones about my mother, I carry on cooking breakfast and ply them with porridge, coffee and tea

As we enjoyed the sunset yesterday, we informed our entourage that we would allow them to relax and that we wouldn't be departing until exactly 04:30 am. I thought this quite generous, an opinion that wasn't shared. In any case we departed at exactly 04:33 am. I let everybody know that we were embarking on a long day, but with regular breaks and a good pace, all would be well. After a short, 2 hour, non-stop jaunt we found ourselves at the base of an imposing slope which leads to the Rudolph-Edward col. Much to my surprise, actually I guess I shouldn't be surprised and thank goodness I had my iPod on, for it had insulated me from a barrage of insults and complaints. It was hard to believe but some of the participants were unhappy with the pace. Incredulous, I



apologized and promised to turn my Ipod down for the remainder of the trip. That seemed to calm everybody and the 3 folks that had frantically tied into Peter's rope returned to mine.

We managed to ascend the steep, south slopes of the col and skittered our way up the NW snow/ice face of Rudolph. The views, of course, were spectacular. Other than some of the Scottish contingent, who managed to blunder into a few crevasses, ostensibly while searching their pockets for nickels, our descent down Rudolph and climb back up Edward proceeded without incident. The summit of Edward was truly serendipitous as we located the summit register which was filled with anniversary pins. We all took 1 each, well some folks actually took 2 or 3, but I won't name names. George used his pin to hold up his pants, I guess 2 days of death marching had decreased his pelvic diameter. He still wasn't talking to me. I had to presume that I had insulted him on day one. He had looked a bit tattered after charging up the initial 1800' climb from base camp. Whilst stumbling after his escaping water bottle, I merely noted that he looked like a wino chasing a rolling nickel. You can't please all of the people!!

After descending into the Edward-Ernest col, our party decided to re-organize, rather lift and separate. Peter lifted the spirits of his group by letting them journey directly back to high camp and avoid climbing Ernest. I immediately separated my group in case they would have time to be corrupted, see the wisdom of Peter's ways and abandon me. Reinvigorated, we charged to the summit of Ernest and enjoyed a leisurely, 8 minute snack. Our journey back to the high camp worked like clock work. Upon a post-trip debriefing it was discovered that my clan was too tired to complain. This is a trick I learned from my Mother, who would allow me to play on the freeway until I was either run over or was too exhausted to ramble on. In either case, she reckoned she was a winner.

We joined the other party, had an extended 34 minute lunch break. The determining factor for this interminably long lunch break was the fact that Peter and I had to buckle up the high camp. Funny, spirits were very high on what should have been a grueling, 3-4 hour plod back to base camp. Participants began to realize that every single one of them had accomplished an enormous amount in two short days. They might be a bit weary, but nobody could ever take away their achievements. Climbing 4, 11'000' peaks in two days is no mean feat. Mother Nature had been at her opulent best, affording us perfect weather and incredibly favorable traveling conditions. This is what the GMC is all about.

This is an abbreviated account of two days in my life as the manager of the Icefall Brook GMC. It is typical and as rewarding as it seems. I want to thank Bonnie Hamilton and Andrew Findlay for their very complimentary articles that were written as farewells to me last year. The reality is that I didn't really leave, just shortened my stay.

Turns out I need the GMC more than it needs me

Can't wait to see you at Moby Dick,

Brad Harrison

