



PALMERSTON NORTH TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB INC.

P.O. BOX 1217, PALMERSTON NORTH

Newsletter - October 1998

*****THIS ISSUE*****

NEWS:

**Interclub competition results, a few words from the President,
and the first on this summer's extended club trips**

TRIP REPORTS:

**Mokai-Wakelings epic,
Whakapapa climbing, Longview**

CLUB NIGHTS

OCTOBER 8	"River Rafting & Tramping in Tasmania"	John Phillips
OCTOBER 29	"DoC at Mount Bruce"	Doug Mende
NOVEMBER 5	Committee meeting	
NOVEMBER 12	"Garden of Eden, and more . . ."	Gary Goldsworthy
NOVEMBER 26	"Navigation evening"	Laurence Gatehouse

Club nights are held for all club members and visitors on the second and last Thursday of each month at the **Society of Friends Hall, 227 College Street, Palmerston North**. All club nights commence at 7:45 pm, winter or summer. The PNTMC Committee meets on the first Thursday of each month.

At the club night: Please sign your name in the visitors book. There is a door fee of 50c which includes supper.

UP AND COMING TRIPS & EVENTS

Trip Grades

Grades of trips can depend on many factors, most especially the weather and state of the track. As a guide, a reasonably proficient trumper would be expected to cover the graded trips in about the following times:

Easy (E): 3-4 hrs

Medium (M): 5-6 hrs

Fit (F): about 8 hrs

Fitness Essential (FE): >8 hrs

(T) refers to technical trips requiring special skills and/or gear.

Beginners should start with Easy Grade trips.

Oct 8 Thursday trampers
Harrey & Christine Allardice 323-4390

Oct 8 Club night: "River Rafting & Tramping in Tasmania" John Phillips

John will show some slides & tell a few tales about a 13-day rafting trip down the Franklin River through the Southwest Tasmanian wilderness, and some tramping ventures, including Freycinet National Park and the Central Plateau.

Oct 11 Titahi rockclimbing All
Zoe Hart 353 0774

Depart 8am (unless it's raining). This excellent coastal spot near Porirua gives a range of easier grade climbs, mostly single pitch. A helmet is recommended in case of falling rocks & falling cars. Try out leading or climb on top-rope.

Oct 11 Top Maropea Hut M
Neil Campbell 359-5048

Depart 7am for the eastern Ruahines behind Tikokino. After a short stretch of farmland you follow a great track through forest, climbing up to Sunrise Hut on the bushline. Time for a break then up and over the Ruahine Range via Armstrong Saddle, dropping down to Top Maropea Hut in the headwaters of the Maropea catchment. After lunch you will trace your steps back, mostly downhill, to the carpark.

Oct 15 Thursday trampers
Keith Domett 04 562-7322

Oct 17 Wharite leatherwood M

Derek Sharp 326-8178

Come on now all you masochists - a little leatherwood never hurt anybody! (has it?) Derek is departing 8am for this challenge, with the aim of getting north to the 1015-metre peak at the end of the track marked on the Topomap (a track that doesn't exist!). Bring stout jeans and any other potentially useful (ie. protective) clothing, such as workshirt, shin-pads, etc.

Oct 18 TNP1 Tama Peak M
Peter Wiles 358-6894

Depart 6am. Peter's usual walk from Whakapapa into the Tama Lakes - however, venturing a little further to Tama Peak to the east for some views.

Note: Peter may be out of town for a period before this trip, so you can register by putting your name down on the trip sheet at a club night, or leave a message with Warren or Terry.

Oct 22 Thursday trampers
Anne Green 06 3745208

LABOUR WEEKEND

Oct 24-26 TNP2 Tongariro Circuit M/F
Warren Wheeler 356 1998

Leave 7am Saturday with breakfast en route. The circuit will start at the park HQ at Whakapapa and one way or another end up at the same place. First day is an easy 5 hours walk through open tussock and alpine flora to Waihohonu Hut, crossing from west to east with great views of Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe and passing Tama Lakes. The circuit continues Sunday with a 6-7 hour walk through a volcanic moonscape, north to Oturere Hut then turning west to cross Oturere Crater & climb out and up to the Emerald Lakes; then down to Ketetahi Hut via the Blue Lake and, for the adventurous, the sulphur lagoon in the Te Mari Craters. On Monday we will climb back up and cross North Crater to the summit of Tongariro and down the long ridge to Mangatepopo Hut. Completing the circuit involves a 3 hour stroll back to Whakapapa or, for the weary, catching the pick-up bus.

day Mitre Flats M
Dave Larsen 329-8054

Depart 7-30am. This is planned for the Sunday of Labour weekend, but may be changed if the

weather forecast isn't good. A 3-hour walk through beech forest along the Waingawa River and across the swingbridge to the palatious Mitre Flats Hut. Return the same way.

Oct 29 Thursday trampers
Pam Dransfield 357-0008

Oct 29 Club Night: "DoC at Mount Bruce" Doug Mende

Doug is Visitor services Manager at Mount Bruce National Wildlife Centre. He has a strong background in natural history & has lectured in environmental science. The talk will focus on how little many people know about the environment they walk in (you will be given a test) and how more interesting your walk would be if you did.

31-Nov TNP3 Ngauruhoe summit F
Alan Bee 354-9180

Casual start Saturday morning 7.30 - 8.00 ish. A photo opportunist's volcanic retreat with camp on Ngauruhoe's summit - weather permitting. A bit of a wander around in South crater maybe on to Tongariro then hike up Ngauruhoe to set up camp for the evening. Wine and port compulsory, gourmet delights to be supplied by participants (not the trip leader). No garish or tatty apparel to be worn that would destroy a world beating photo opportunity. Team leader will take a commission on all photos that become commercially sought after. No fees will be paid to any models (posers) but if as a result of this weekend posers (models) become commercially sought after, trip leader will take a commission on any subsequent income. Back Sunday at a time to be decided by photographers and posers.

[Unless posers toss said leader out the window en route - Ed.]

Nov 1 Kahuterawa M or E
Terry Crippen 356-3588

This stream and bush area, called Hardings Park, is part of the PN City Council Water reserve but is outside the current collection area (the Tiritea catchment). There are a number of possibilities depending on whether we get permission or not: a crossing from the Pahiatua side? or a loop via the stream? or a loop via some farm land. An exploratory trip, so keep in touch on this one.

Nov 5 Thursday trampers
Carolyn Brodie 358-6576

Nov 5 Committee meeting

Nov 7-8 Longview Ruahine crossing F
Dave Henwood 326-8892

Exact route depends on weather, fitness/aspirations of party members, and also who leads the trip as Dave may be unavailable. Options are: Medium Fit - depart Palmy at 8ish on Saturday morning, tramp from Kashmir Road to Longview Hut, then south along the ridge dropping to Leon Kinvig hut for the night. Sunday, out over Toka to meet the Sunday day-trippers. Fit option - Leave Palmy at 7:00 on Saturday, tramp from Mill Road to Daphne Hut via the Tukituki river, then up the long spur to the divide and south over Otumore and Pohangina Saddle to Longview for the night. Sunday, back over the saddle and south along the Ngamoko range to Toka to meet the Sunday party.

Nov 8 Toka tops M
Sarah Todd 357-0612

Depart 8am. A good loop track above the bushline in the western Ruahines. A grunt up Shorts track then along the Ngamoko Range to Toka, returning via Knights track.

Nov 12 Thursday trampers
Rosemary & Ken Hall 356-8538

Nov 12 Club night: "Garden of Eden, and more . . ." with Gary Goldsworthy

Gary is an experienced trumper & mountaineer from the Hutt Valley Tramping Club, who will be talking about a myriad of wild places in the South Island. Gary's destinations include the Olivine Range, Adams Wilderness, Hooker Wilderness, Ivory Lake, etc. He will also have some ski-touring pics from the Godley & Volta Glaciers, and Tasman Saddle, and maybe some mountain bike photos from Wilmot Pass/Percy Saddle in Fiordland. Looks like a great night!

Nov 14-15 Waitaewaewae M
Peter Burgess 354-3533

Depart 8am. A relaxing 4-5 hour tramp in from Otaki Forks to the luxurious Waitewaewae Hut on the Otaki River. Features a historic old railway line used for logging and the remains of an old steam engine. Once there we can either laze around at the hut or go for a wander further up the Otaki (depending on river conditions and enthusiasm). As mentioned the hut is very plush, but there is also ample camping across the river. Return by the same route.

Nov 15 Diggers Roundabout E/M
 Mick Leyland 358-3183
 Depart 8am. Mick's annual pilgrimage to this hut in the southwest Ruahines. Some off-track stuff, so a chance to test the navigation skills a little.

Nov 19 Thursday trampers
 Jill Spenser 329-8738

Nov 21-22 Syme Hut-Wilkies Pools M
 Harley Betts 355-4737
 Depart 9am Saturday for Dawson Falls carpark. This is a no-rush climb with no land speed records intended! Starting off in luxuriant kamahi rainforest at Dawson Falls, the track climbs through a well defined succession of mountain totara forest, leatherwood, tussock and finishes well above the bushline at Syme Hut in plenty of time to celebrate the sunset with a bottle of red. Option of a pre-dawn amble up to the summit on Sunday, depending on interest & conditions, before heading back down. Wilkies Pools are a short distance from Dawson Falls and are well worth the detour for a (raise voice three octaves) "refreshing" dip, so bring your togs - there is a prize for the swimmer who can correctly guess the water temperature!

Nov 22 Herepai Hut E/M
 Neil Campbell 359-5048
 Depart 8am for Putara road end in the eastern Tararuas. Head across the swing bridges and up the track to Herepai Hut. If it is a nice day we will go a bit higher for an excellent view and lunch before returning to the road end.

Nov 26 Thursday trampers
 Dave Warnock 357-4140

**Nov 26 Club night: "Navigation evening"
 with Laurence Gatehouse**

A chance to get out and about round the Esplanade on a warm late Spring evening. Laurence and others will go through some compass basics in the hall then we will all go out for some simple navigation practice in the Esplanade, avoiding roses in the rose garden and hopefully not getting lost in the patches of bush. Then back to the hall for a cuppa and a bikkie. Good practice for the navigation days coming up. Wear some suitable shoes and bring a compass if you have one - the club will have extra ones if you don't have one.

Trip leaders:

Please discuss with the trips co-ordinator (Terry Crippen 356-3588, or Liz Flint 356-7654), as soon as possible, if there is any doubt that you will be unable to run your trip as scheduled. This is so that alternatives can be arranged, put in the newsletter, or passed on at club night.

Trip participants:

If you are interested in going on a trip, please advise the leader **at least three days** in advance. Trips often leave from the Foodtown carpark in Fergusson Street unless the leader arranges otherwise. A charge for transport will be collected on the day of the trip, the amount depending on the distance travelled and vehicles used. Leaders should be able to give an estimate in advance. For general information on the scheduled or alternative tramps please contact one of the trip co-ordinators Terry Crippen (356-3588) or Liz Flint (356-7654).

***** OVERDUE TRIPS *****

Enquiries to: Mick Leyland (358-3183), Liz Flint (356-7654), or Laurence Gatehouse (356-5805)

NOTICES

FROM THE PRESIDENTS PC

Greetings everyone, or as they say in Scandinavia, "Hej". Yes I'm back after taking the opportunity offered by ex-Club member Kristina Mattsson (the Swedish cucumber guru previously at Massey). We spent a week in a rented canoe,

paddling some 200km down a Swedish stream, lake and canal to Linköping (where the Saab fighter planes and cars are made) and camping where we pleased, more or less. Another two weeks was spent in Norway where we hiked around in the Trollheimen and Dovrefjell areas

leaving Skellerup footprints in the odd muddy bits and learning to say "hej" to the sheep in the alpine meadows.

Huts or "hytte" in Norway are more like lodges and Youth Hostels and are a luxurious way of camping - at a price! Interestingly the hytte are owned and run by local or national Touring Associations, primarily for ski-touring. Light-weight travelling is the idea with food available or 3 course meals served for the 30 or so people at some of the places; and the 4-6 person bunk rooms come complete with duvets - all you really need is your toothbrush and your credit card!

I wonder how long it will be before there are (more) such places in New Zealand - I found that they added to the whole special-ness of the wilderness experience rather than detracting from it. They certainly made one appreciate very directly the value of being there!

It's been good to be back in New Zealand (yeah, right) and making up for not being here by going on the Whakapapa Climbing Trip (excellent, thrilling, beautiful - where were you?), the Ngauruhoe Trip (no ice for my new crampons but awesome sunny weather and a great glissade and scoria slide down the western side), and the Longview-Awatere Stream Trip (hello hills, hello streams).

Its good to be back with friends and catch up on all the "goss". Great to share the thrill of recent travels to the northern climes with other club members like Marie Limpus, fresh from summer in the mountains of Canada and Alaska. Its marvellous to see Mick Leyland is back on the trails again so soon after his heart operation (really shows the advantage of being fit before hospitalisation). And simply splendid to see that the club survived without me - thanks to the committee and Vice-President Terry Crippen.

Ah, yes its good to be back into it, and now that the days are an hour longer we can enjoy even more tramping. I include in my definition of "tramping" not only the walk but the other stuff as well. Sharing good company. Good recipes. Great swimming holes. Beautiful sunrises. Howling gales that rip the doors off DoC loos. Helping cross a stream. Swapping sandwiches. Comparing gear performance. Trusting in your own and your climbing partner's skills while exposed to the risk of damage and death. Honing outdoor skills. Attending instruction courses in

Snowcraft, First Aid, Risk Management, and cooking(!). Giving time to instruct, encourage and share your own skills. And knowledge. Of discovering natures secrets. And secret places. Taking fine photos. And applauding winning shots at the Annual Club (and now Interclub) Photo Competitions. Of being part of the team at the Interclub Quiz. Or part of the audience supporting them. Trying to keep up with the answers. Trying to keep up. And getting up. To leading trips.

Yes its that time of year again. The pre-Christmas Rush. Already. And time to start thinking about getting a trip or two on next year's trip calendar January-June 1999. Amazing, but this is only your second to last chance of leading an end-of-millennium trip. Ever. Like, Wow!

Time for tea.

Happy tramping folx, I look forward to seeing you out there.

Meanwhile, that's all from me,
Warren Wheeler PNTMC

FROM THE EDITOR

All kinds of articles, whether trip reports, interesting information & anecdotes, book reviews, or even a product review, are welcome for inclusion in this newsletter. If it is a small article, hand-written is okay (deliver to John Phillips, 87 Victoria Avenue) but if handwriting is all you can do, don't let it put you off even large articles.

If you *do* have access to a computer, it does make my job a bit easier if larger articles are on disc. However, more and more people are e-mailing articles to me. If you have the facilities at home or at work, this is a very quick & convenient way to do it.

Please note that my e-mail address is now:

john.phillips@mwrc.govt.nz

I use Microsoft Word Version 7.0. If you use any other software, give me a ring on 357-9009 (work) or 358-1874 (home) and I may be able to indicate whether it is compatible or not. If in doubt, try sending any files as an ".RTF" (Rich Text Format) file, which can sometimes be easily converted from one software format to another, or the safest bet is to just cut-and-paste your text directly into your e-mail message.

I can also scan photos for inclusion in the newsletter. If you get photos printed off soon after your trip, please consider submitting them as they add a great deal of interest to your trip report.

Please note the deadline for anything to go in each month's issue is the FIRST THURSDAY of the month.

THE JANUARY-JUNE 1999 EVENTS CARD

Terry C, Liz F, & Lawrence G

The next events card is underway. It will come out with the December - January Newsletter. It's now the time for you to suggest where you want Club trips to be going to, and what Club evenings you want, for the first half of 1999. If some of you prospective leaders haven't been contacted yet give Terry Crippen (356-3588) or Liz Flint (356-7654) a call before they phone you, for those great trips you want to lead. What about some trips to the top of the South Island? For suggestions for Thursday night speakers and activities, Laurence Gatehouse (356-5805) is now waiting for your ideas.

EXTENDED TRIPS THIS SUMMER

The club is running three scheduled extended (longer) trips this summer holiday period.

1. Late Dec - early New Year: Kaimanawa - Kaweka Crossing (Medium-Fit grade) Mick Leyland 358-3183 leader. More details next newsletter, or ring Mick.

2. Early to mid Jan: Murchison & Tasman Valleys, Mt Cook National Park (Note: changed place & date from what was on events card) Fit & Technical grade. Terry Crippen 356-3588 leader. This is a combination of about 9 days trans-alpine tramping/climbing, and then a few more days of further climbing if people want. Although along similar lines as the club trips to Arthurs Pass of the last 3 summers, this time it's to the Mt Cook National Park; much of the time will be spent on glaciers, so glacier travel skills are required as well as the usual Fit + Technical grading (ie: Snowcraft III skills and experience, some rock climbing skills, and the ability to carry a 9 day pack, usually 8 hours a day, but with the odd 13 plus hour day.) The route will be up the Murchison over Tasman Saddle and down the Tasman. We will set up camp and use huts, attempting some climbs en-route. Cost will be

approx \$250 including transport down, all party food (breakfasts, dinners and brews), DoC and NZAC hut fees. A party of 4 would be the best. So that plans and transport can be organised, the closing date for applications is last club night in November (26th), with deposit of \$100.

3. Mid to late Jan: Rees Valley, Aspiring National Park (Fit & Technical Grade). Peter Wiles 358-6894 leader. More details next newsletter, or ring Peter.

INVITATION TO MUAC SLIDE SHOW

Massey University Alpine Club has invited PNTMC people to come along to their end-of-year slide show evening on 12th October (Monday) at 8pm in the Ag Hort Lecture Theatre (same place as the interclub photo/slide competition last month). Should be some good slides so come along for a great evening.

ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBER CHANGES

Wayne Beggs has a new address and phone no:

111 Jickell St, PN

Phone: 358-9518

Maree Limpus has changed phone number to:

025 395 883

Katherine Farquhar has changed name to:

Katherine Lauchland-Farquhar

NEW CLUB MEMBER

We have a new club member this month:

Tanya Naylor

8 Manawaroa St, PN

Phone 354-3220

Welcome to the club Tanya.

TRAMPERS WANTED

Any bods interested in coming for a wander into the Seaward Kaikouras on Labour Weekend, contact Wayne (358-8043) or Warren (353-0224).

INTERCLUB QUIZ NIGHT by Tony Gates

The 1998 Interclub Quiz, hosted by MTSC, was held at the Pavilion on 22 September 1998. MTSC once again took the prized "Trevor Bissell Memorial Billy" with 44 points, but only after stiff competition from Mountain Equipment (41 points) and ourselves (40 points). MUAC gained 21 points. There were many laughs from the audience as well as the competitors, with some thought provoking questions, and more than a few mistakes and some embarrassing acting to do.

One answer that I recall came from a certain University team who shall remain nameless who described the easiest route to Waterfall Hut as starting at Kawhatau Base, then tramping past Kelly Knight Hut! And the question about when was the first ascent of Mt Cook. After all of the other teams got the wrong year and the correct date, we were left with a much more reasonable choice- it was Christmas day on 1895. And I must admit that some of our weather map interpretation was a little dicey, but fun nevertheless to comment on.

MUAC will be organising the 1999 Quiz, so be ready next time team, it will be an excellent evening's entertainment.

INTERCLUB PHOTO & SLIDE COMPETITION (21 September)

Results:

Print Film

"People & Places" - Peter Warlands (MTSC)

Grand Pinnacle

"Landscape" - Warren Wheeler (PNTMC)

Wharite

"Flora and Fauna" - Lee Davies (MUAC)

Brown Plant

"Action" - Lee Davies (MUAC)

Bridge swinging

"Alpine" - Steph Kerr (MUAC)

Crater lake panorama

Slide Films

"People & Places" - Peter Warlands (MTSC)

Summit rocks of Mt Cook

"Landscape" - Peter Warlands (MTSC)

Loch Lomond - Scotland

"Flora and Fauna" - Sherman Smith (MUAC)

Monarch Butterfly

"Action" - Scott McIntyre (MUAC)

Mid air jump - climbing Ruapehu

"Alpine" - Wayne Bennett (PNTMC)

Man at top of Mt Ruapehu

Thanks once again to your club for participating; we look forward to seeing you next year and not just in photo competitions either, I think it would be good to organise some more joint activities as well. (Unfortunately we're finishing up for the year, everyone has exams soon.)

Yours Sincerely,

Andrew Gow,

Social Representative for MUAC

(This new interclub event was suggested and hosted by Massey University Alpine Club - thanks MUAC)

TRIP REPORTS

MOKAI-WAKELINGS 15-16 August
A Good Thrashing-Kiwi Style by Ben Davis

"S--t! " I thought as the knock on my door sent me bolt upright. It was pitch black in the room so I tapped the indi-glow on my watch. "S--t!" I said, allowing my mouth to catch up with my thoughts. It was 5:00 am, an hour later than it was supposed to be. Neither one of the two alarms I had set the night before had gone off at 4:00 am; which was perfectly logical since, I later found out, they were both set to 4:00 PM.

Bill opened the door and informed me I had about five minutes to get ready and they would be back around to pick me up then. This was not a good way to kick things off with three men who would be guiding me through the New Zealand foothills on my first ever Tramp.

It had been a suggestion of Bill (Cohen), my host, that I try the experience as a way to get out of the house and see a little of the countryside. "It's

going to be difficult," he said. But, I'd been travelling for two months now and done my fair share of hiking along the way. I've also discovered that a true backpacker doesn't hesitate when presented with an opportunity to see new things--some turn out good and some not so good but, on the whole, you always come out ahead for having tried. So, I said yes, I'd like to go.

"Goodnight," Bill said as he closed his door and went back to sleep. I sighed with realisation that I had just provided Bill with a life-time of material with which to torture me by means of well placed sarcastic comments in reference to my inability get up on time for anything...ever. Oh well, at least I'd be safe for two days. That was the approximate length of my virgin tramp as scheduled by my guide, David Grant who was, as expected, knocking on the front door five minutes after being turned away by my sleepy-eyed and mildly peeved off host. "Hi," I said, "I'm Ben. I'm really sorry I'm late. I don't know why the

alarms didn't go off but, I'm sure it must have been Bill's fault." I explained.

A minute later we were in the car and I was being introduced to the other two members of our tramping squad, Duncan (David's son) and Tony Gates. We went through the usual get-to-know-ya stuff and then settled in for the hour-plus ride to the Kawhatau Base. The terrain, illuminated only by the faint pre-dawn light was already getting me excited as we neared the base.

Upon arrival, it became immediately clear that weather, to our misfortune, was not planning to cooperate. "I'm sure it will clear up," Tony said. "The forecast was clear for the weekend." So, I didn't let it concern me as we readied our packs, locked the car and started up the path leading to the Mokai Range.

"So what's the trail like?" I asked Duncan as the path headed up steeply. "Is it difficult?"

"Well," he smiled "lots of Ups and Downs."

Ups and Downs? , I thought. I was, after all, familiar with those two particular directions but it didn't really give me a sense of what I was getting into. I mean, in the past two months I've trekked through the foothills of Nepal, treaded through the Egyptian desert, mounted the sacred rock plateaux of central Australia but, this was different. Before, I had either been in the company of a guide who was being paid to go at my pace or fellow travelers that were in roughly the same physical condition as myself. My current companions, however, would make Zinzan Brooke feel lazy.

"Is it all like this?" I asked Duncan twenty minutes later through pained breaths as we labored up the muddy slope.

"Lot's of Ups and Downs" he repeated.

Uh-Huh, well where the hell are the Downs?!?

After about two hours, we emerged from the bush onto the plane where the grade mercifully began to flatten. The temperature, however, continued to plummet below freezing and without the shelter of the bush, the wind was also becoming a factor. We were guided only by compass and map as we tramped up the range hoping we didn't get off on the wrong ridge - a definite possibility as our visibility was 30 meters at best; a fact which depressed me greatly as I had hoped to take a large quantity of photos. I now sorely regretted the extra weight of the SLR Nikon and Tele-Zoom lens in my pack.

This was soon the least of my worries, however. The wind was howling like mad and the snow and hail it carried were like sandpaper across my face. Additionally, my hands and feet, which had been soaked through on the ascent, were now frozen solid. This, in combination with my empty stomach due to my inability to correctly operate an alarm clock, made it impossible to keep the pace of my traveling companions as they plowed ahead into the whiteout. Somebody always stayed within view making sure I didn't disappear altogether into the wilderness. But, for the most part, I spent the next hour moving on pure willpower and formulating a list of preferable ways to die than the one I was currently experiencing: *Hanging, electrocution, wood spike slowly driven into skull, front row seat at Spice Girls concert.*

The list went on--and so did I, realizing that the heat I created by moving was all that stood between me and hypothermia. "How ya doing," Tony asked, slowing down to allow me to catch up.

Shoot me, Shoot me, SHOOT ME!

"Oh I'm doing alright," I lied.

"Why don't you let one of us take your pack? We're a bit worried you might break down."

How about I carry my pack and you carry me!?!, I thought. And then some spark of pride from deep within my frozen body flared up. "No thanks," I replied "I'll try to pick up the pace a little." I did, however, accept his extra gloves as mine were solid ice and useless. In hindsight, I should have checked my pride at the car park-allowing him to take my pack might have allowed me to keep up and then the group wouldn't have had to stop so often, risking further exposure. But, I was getting tired of feeling sorry myself: I had a day to go on this tramp and I wasn't going to make it a complete loss. And so, I plowed ahead, still unable to keep pace with the rest but, fortunately, we hadn't much further to go. Soon we reached Rongotea, the highest point on the ridge, which started the downward leg toward Wakelings Hut.

Sheltered now from the wind and hail, my limbs began to function again. I was exhausted but I knew the worst was over. Tony and Duncan went ahead to start a fire while Dave hung back with me as I tried to descend the steep slope, spending a large percentage of that time on my butt. "How the hell do you stay on your feet?" I asked Dave. "Practice." He replied.

The only thing I'm practicing is some form of Kiwi Masochism, I thought, my knees and thighs burning.

Dave then said "take a look." The clouds had broken to reveal a stunning vista ahead of us through the trees, the first I'd actually been able to see since the start five hours earlier. It was a spectacular sight and seemed to wash away the fatigue in my body as we continued our descent to Wakelings Hut. This took about an hour or so and the fire was already going when we arrived.

The hut was cozy and in pretty good condition. I planted myself in front of the blaze while Dave and Tony went to work on the night's meal. Shortly thereafter, I opened my pack to see if I'd actually brought anything useful with me. "Do you have a cup for dinner, Ben?" Dave asked.

"No," I replied apologetically.

"How about a spoon?"

"Ummm, no"

"Torch?"

"Sorry"

"Dry socks or gloves?"

"Negative on that one too. But, I do have two cans of Coke-a-Cola! Thirsty?"

I suppose I have had a tendency to pack the luxuries and *then* pack the essentials (if I had any room left, that is). Oh well, I was new at this after all.

I slept like a corpse that night, waking only occasionally when Tony's snoring reached a fevered pitch. I was, however, well rested when the morning made it's entrance into the secluded hut. I even felt reasonably refreshed as I arose and thinking perhaps I might actually survive this after all - That thought was short lived though as I stretched and felt a sharp, intense, and unmistakable pain in my lower back. I knew what that meant.

About six months ago, I had been diagnosed with a defective disk in my lower back through a Magnetic Resonance Imager. This defect, when irritated, causes sudden and excruciating pain without warning or mercy. *Uh-oh*, I thought. This could be a real problem if it got worse. There wasn't much that could be done about it though: It was going to be a ten hour hike to get back out of the range, so I informed my companions of my condition, slammed 800 milligrams of Ibuprofen, and hoped for the best.

Duncan and I got a head start as Dave and Tony cleaned the hut and packed their belongings. The slope was steep and wet as we, once again, made our way up to the Mokai range, hoping the weather would be more forgiving than when we reached the top the previous day. Additionally, I was hoping that my body would hold up for the long day that lay ahead.

As the morning grew to a close, both of my wishes came to pass, at least so far. The weather on top of the range was still unpleasant, but lacked the fierce hostility of the day before. And my back and legs, thankfully, seemed to be doing just fine. In fact, I was able to keep up for the first time that weekend.

Upon reaching Rongotea once again, we had a decision to make. The weather was passable but visibility was still nonexistent and the danger existed that it could worsen anytime. Additionally, following the Mokai range back the way we had come the previous day would be much more difficult going in this direction. So, with safety being the primary concern, Dave, Tony, and Duncan decided to head down to Crow Hut. From there, we could either decide to stay an extra night, or attempt to reach the base. If we selected the latter, it would mean a second steep climb up to the Hikurangi Range followed by an equally steep descent down to the base. While I did long to complete the tramp today, it would come at a cost.

Crow Hut was a welcome sight and offered the same comfort of our previous shelter. Tony, having gone ahead, already had the fire going as I entered and tried to burn the water out of my soaked clothing. I hadn't done too badly in terms of keeping up so far but the thought of another steep ascent did not appeal to me to say the least. "I reckon we should stay," Tony said.

Thank you sweet Jesus!

"Well, I think we can make it. The weather looks to be clearing on top," Dave observed.

Be silent Satan!!!

"What do you think, Ben?"

I think you couldn't pry my butt off this bench with a crow bar.

"Ummmm, ok, let's do it." I replied. Me and my big mouth.

And so, we started the ascent onto the Hikurangi. As I had feared, my endurance began to wane early into the climb and this time, I didn't hesitate

when my companions offered to unload me of my pack. There wasn't all that much left in it anyway, but every little bit helped. With my lightened load, I continued the two hour climb without incident and didn't do too badly once the slope grew slightly more shallow.

The Hikurangi Range was pleasant and we even saw a hint of blue sky directly above us. I was beginning to think I might actually survive what may have been the most physically challenging endeavor of my life - challenging not so much because of the terrain but because of the non-renting pace of my companions of whom I had a whole new level of respect. If I'd learned anything this weekend, I learned the difference between a True Kiwi Trampler and a Yankee City-Boy Accountant. Any one of my companions could easily walk me into the ground (but, I bet I could get a bigger refund on my tax return).

In any case, we were soon descending from the range and to the sanctuary of David's Subaru. We had one more river to cross and one more "Grunt", as Tony called it, to climb and we would soon be there!

And soon we were. I was filled with elation as I slumped into the backseat of the car and relaxed for the ride home. Yep, nothing stood between me and a warm shower, a cup of steaming Milo, and another action packed episode of Baywatch! Except for one thing. "Did you check the tires?" Duncan asked his father upon hearing a suspicious cluck from the left rear quarter of the car. Dave pulled it over to the side as Tony leapt out to investigate.

"Damn," Tony exclaimed.

"Damn," Duncan echoed examining the flat tire.

Oh merciful god, take me now! I pleaded silently.

But, the problem was short-lived and the spare was soon applied. Within ten minutes, we were rolling forward once again not be halted again! that is with the small exception of a less than fortunate marsupial. "You see that, Ben?" Dave asked slowing the car.

"Yeah, that's a possum isn't it."

"Yes, although our possums are slightly different in New Zealand."

"I'll say. Kiwi possums don't seem to be afraid of cars," I said noting that the possum, while five feet in front of the idling car, showed no signs of moving out of the way.

"No, they don't," Dave said coldly as he pressed the accelerator purposefully unceremoniously joining the possum to the pavement.

Well, I suppose our trip wasn't without casualties after all, I noted as we pulled away from possum pancake. *Better him than me*, I thought as we continued home. I spent the trip back to Palmerston reviewing the previous two days in my mind. There had been several times when I simply wasn't sure if my body would allow me to continue. In any case, I felt I had certainly been pushed beyond my limits or what I had supposed them to be! and it felt good. It never would have happened without the guidance and steadfast encouragement of my guides who I thank sincerely. It's not everyday that we have an opportunity to see what we're really capable of and test those imaginary limits that we place on our own abilities. It's not like I climbed Everest or anything, but I had learned something about myself which should be the primary prerogative of any traveler. And although Krakauer probably won't be interested in the book rites to my little adventure, it's not an experience that I'll soon forget.

We were: Dave and Duncan Grant, Tony Gates, and Ben Davis.

WHAKAPAPA CLIMBING - PART 1

12-13 September by "Everyone"

We left at 6-ish on Friday night and surfed our way to the gumboot city for a taste of local delicacies. We then bounced our way to the Top of the Bruce, stopping along the way to be the last at the scene of a 2-day-old car crash. After closer inspection the wallets and radio were already gone.

10pm saw us hiking up to the NZAC Hut on a starry night, arriving about 11-30ish after much debating about Warren W's new crampons which didn't seem suited to flexible boots.

Saturday dawned bright and early (Terry was the innocent party this time) to an awesome sunny day, so we gobbled down a feed and left Wayne Bennett and Nigel Green to attend the Avalanche Awareness course, while Terry, Warren W, Nigel H and Warren S went to conquer the Pinnacles. After a great day's climbing, abseiling, scrambling and avoiding fallen rock and ice, we met Wayne B, Nigel G and others from the Avo

course in the cafeteria for a debriefing and soggy biscuit discussion.

After dinner we went off to Delta corner for a spot of night abseiling to keep the snow groomers entertained. What a blast!!! A 20-metre drop into darkness.

After retrieving the snow stake Terry threw over the cliff, we packed up for the night, awoke all others in the hut while slurping on Warren W's sweedish rose-hip soup and having to listen to Wayne's untimely eruptions.

Sunday was a beautiful dawn start with a crampon stroll up Pari ridge. Several ice climbs were conquered along the way, with one almost causing Wayne some grief. He quickly learnt that gravity has undesirable consequences when both ice axes are removed halfway up a cliff.

Terry had a crash course in modern technology and communications when, after hearing a ring from his shirt pocket, tried answering his camera. When he eventually found his newly acquired cellphone, he was unsure which button to push and so lost his first ever cellphone call.

Our journey continued up to Paretaitonga where we gazed at the panoramic view and dined. We bum-slid down to the crater's edge, then up past dome shelter heading toward the notch for brunch. The descent back to the NZAC Hut was very rapid thanks to Warren's PNCC refuse bags.

We farewelled Terry at the hut at 2pm, took the chairlift down and traveled back to PN faster than a speeding bullet thanks to Wayne's lead foot.

We were: Terry C, Warren W, Nigel H, Wayne Bennett and Warren S.

P.S. Warren W's crampons were okay for flexible boots, so you can stop wondering now.

WHAKAPAPA CLIMBING - PART 2

13-14 September by Terry Crippen

After the others had headed down by chairlift I settled into the hut, having it to myself for a while to wait for Peter to arrive straight from work. So a spot of spring cleaning and an afternoon read and snooze before a group of young keen lads from Otaki College arrived with lots of new gear for a weeks outdoor education. Peter D arrived

about 9 pm after a pleasant tramp up in the dark. After some instant pud for dessert and a cuppa, we decided on a alpine start, weather permitting. So to bed.

The alarm got us out of the pit at 5 am next morning and we had left the hut by 6 am. Good cramponing conditions up to Dome, a bit windy, but fine and clear. A quick side trip up onto Paretaitonga for views of the crater and the world before heading the couple of km across the flat summit plateau to the start of the south snow face of Te HeuHeu. By this stage the wind was quite strong, but at least it was blowing up our backsides rather than at our fronts.

Time to rope up for some pitches on the steep snow. The snow conditions were excellent for snow stakes. Oops, the wind caught the mitt and overmitt off one of my hands - as I had it hanging from the wrist loops. Off they went across the face and out of sight. Peter in his keenness, while still being belayed, traversed across just in case he could see and retrieve them. Fortunately they got caught on some sastrugi round the corner. Still out of reach though. So he belayed me across and I did another off route pitch to recover them. I needed them by this stage as the hands were getting very cold with the strong wind.

After that diversion, we proceeded with the help of the upward gusts of wind, to belay each other up toward the summit and the spin-drift. The clouds arrived to compliment the wind just as we arrived on the summit. So no place for lunch today. We headed down easier slopes till we were out of the cloud and wind for a warm lunch spot overlooking the rock/ski field. Back to hut for a brew, then a walk down to the Top of the Bruce - the ski lifts had stopped for the day. And back to Palmy and Feilding. A excellent day for us. (Peter Darragh and Terry Crippen)

LONGVIEW HUT

27 September by Neil Campbell

The three of us set out from Palmerston North at about 9am. By a bit before 11am we were on the track that leads up to Longview Hut. The weather was a combination of showers and sunshine with a reasonable amount of wind. After lunch at Longview we followed the river (Makaretu River N Branch) down to Awatere Hut. The track that leads from here back to the roadend gives some excellent views. We were back in Palmerston

North by about 5.30pm and that was after a food stop in Dannevirke.

Thanks to Sarah for leading a very pleasant trip. We were Sarah Stratton, Warren Wheeler and Neil Campbell.

A FEW WINNING SLIDES FROM THE CLUB PHOTO COMPETITION EARLIER THIS YEAR:

“French Pyrenees” (Terry Crippen) - 3rd place, *Overseas Scenic / Alpine*

“Wilkin River” (Terry Crippen) - 1st place, *NZ Scenic*

“Tarn, Spanish Pyrenees” (Terry Crippen) - 1st place, *Overseas Scenic / Alpine*

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