

ONE JOURNEY: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF MR. BOB

NOV. 2018

GROWING UP (SORTA) IN CALGARY

When I was in grade 7, we moved to Calgary. It was traumatic for me. I had a circle of friends I had known “forever”, i.e. for the few years we had been alive together. I did not know how to meet new people; it was simply a skill I had never had to develop. The strange thing is that I started to do much better in school. Some combination of being bored and having nothing to do, but school work; and having some good teachers. I ended up in the “top” class in Junior High, with all the brains. And I discovered I could go head to head with them. The other way I dealt with my 14 year old loneliness was to do what I loved most. Being outside; in the wind; under an Alberta sky. We lived in Thorncliffe which now is deep within the city, but was on the edge of the prairie in those days. Nose Hill was a fascinating complex of grassland and deep gulleys full of willow and aspen and gophers and owls and birds and, once in a while, a mule deer. I ran a little trapline there until the day I caught a weasel and cut its scent glade while skinning it. That smell does not come off. I got a couple of days off school as a result.

I got involved in scouting and had some great adventures at Camp Gardner and other places. I had an experience there that would circle around many, many years later. We were winter camping, sitting around a fire by the river and a big old, rough looking cowboy strolled into camp. He sat down and held us spell bound with stories of rounding up wild horses in the “Trench” on the other side of the mountains. He did not tell us his name, but tipped his hat to us and departed into the darkness. Years later I figured out that it had to have been Buster Tegart. I would get to know the Trench and the Tegart clan much later in life.

I also began skiing, sliding on old wooden boards down small slopes at the golf course down the road. But then I got lucky. The Herald Ski School. Comptons.

I don't remember much of my days in school, but remember as if it was yesterday, the time I spent fishing with dad. One trip in particular. Up the Elbow River there was a creek we called Ford Creek. It was a two hour hike from the end of the road. And no, I am not going to show you on Google where it is... It was a narrow, deep little muskeg creek, 6-8 ft deep that wiggled like a worm through a high elevation shrub meadow. You had to be very careful, for it was boggy ground and the fish could feel the vibrations from your footsteps. But the fish were huge.

glacier park hike

Stampede Ranch

Who knows what my life might have entailed, growing up as a city kid, but then fate intervened. My next door neighbor was Roy Dennison. He uncle owned a ranch down in the Eden Valley west of Longview. ([google shot](#)). It was a young person's dream come true. The Stampede was originally owned by Guy Weddick, one of the cowboy ranchers

that started the Calgary Stampede. Roy and Chick and I would leave home on Friday morning with our backpacks, telling our parents that we were going to hitch hike to the ranch after school. After school meaning any time after noon we could sneak out of school without being seen. We would take the bus downtown and then to the south end of town, step out and stick our thumbs out. It amazes me today, but that was a different era. We had to make our way, with our thumbs, through Midnapore, to Okotoks, Black Diamond and Longview, and then get a ride out the Eden Valley road, which was not a busy road in those days. In all the times we did that, we only got stuck once, and had to sleep in a hay stack at Longview. When we got to the ranch they would put us up in the old bunk house and then feed us a huge meal. It was far better than any movie. Dick, the old hard-bitten rancher, always telling jokes, Ruby, the matron on the house, tuss-tussing at Dick's every swear word. And the Major, the hired hand, who was shell-shocked from World War I, and had never spoke a word since 1918. But on summer evenings, after supper, he would leave the dinner table and go into the parlor and play complex concertos and long hair music of all kinds. Dick had been a cattle buyer and always had crazy friends coming by. And his banking strategies were something to behold. There were lots of folks that would come and go, it was a sort of informal dude ranch, and at the end of each visit, folks would stuff a bunch of cash in a glass pitcher at the entrance to the kitchen. When Dick or Ruby needed to go to town, they would just grab a handful of cash and head to the truck.

We pretended to help around the place, of course, but mostly they just let us loose in the hills. We would hike or ride out into the foothills and camp on Flat Creek, sleeping under the trees, listening to the river tumble along beside us. Or hike up to the meadows and beaver dams on Little Bull Creek and catch sacks of little cutthroat trout. Or climb into the hills where we could look east out onto the dusty plains, or west at the first range of the Rockies, Mt. Head, Holy Cross and the peaks of the Highwood Range.

Our bible was a book called *The Buffalo Head*, by R.M. Patterson, an early rancher and adventurer in the valley, who had lived in the place just across Flat Creek from the Stampede. He talked of wild valleys and huge mountains and glaciers up over the passes from the Highwood, into the Elk Valley in B.C.

<http://www.amazon.ca/The-Buffalo-Head-R-Patterson-ebook/dp/B00CDTXSA0>

Our other book, that lay in tatters in the old bunk house, was *Grass beyond the Mountains*, by Richard Hobson, about building up a ranch in the distant meadows in the west Chilcotin. We tended to get the stories mixed up. We used to dream of the Cadorna Valley, the Middle Fork of the White and the Palliser River, where Patterson hunted and talk about taking a herd of cows up and over the passes and into the meadows of the Middle Fork and building our own ranch in a distant mountain valley. Picture the three of us, lying on the porch of the bunk house at night, watching the stars and planning our future in the wilds of B.C. But then fate intervened again. While we were still in high school, Dick had a heart attack and had to sell the place. Reality landed on us with a thump.











My first look at mortality

In the final spring of university I and three others decided to ski up onto the Columbia Icefields for a week. We worked our way up to the third icefall and just onto the lip of the icecap. I was in the lead, whistling the theme song from the Great Escape, when suddenly, without a sound, I was in free fall. I hit the end of the rope hard, upside down. I learned later that I had pulled Laurie right to edge of the crevasse before he could get stopped with his ice axe. I had my pack over my head, my harness was holding me upside down and compressing my lungs, I could hardly breathe. The crevasse was about three feet wide, but slick. There was an internal snow bridge in the crevasse about 10 feet below me, so I got my skis off and dropped them onto the bridge. The second one hit, the bridge collapsed and both my skis went clattering down into the bowels of the glacier. I then got my pack off and jammed it across the crevasse. It fit perfectly. Pure luck. I then could stand on it. By this time Norm was shouting down at me, and I could take the pressure off the rope. I had some rope jumars, so I stepped into them and slowly made my way up. But not before I took a picture...





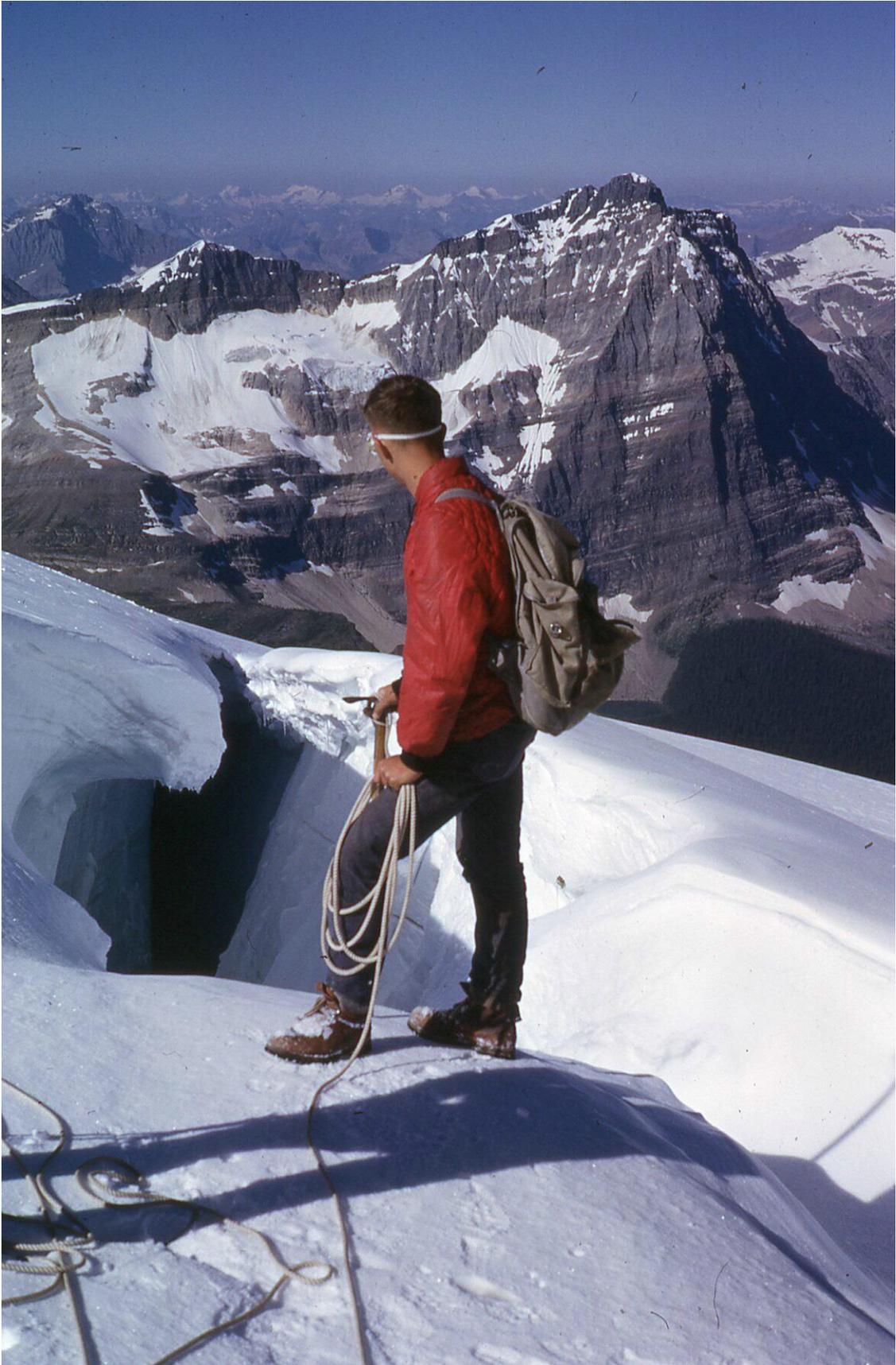
• MAY • 67



No you are not allowed to laugh at our young shiny faces, or our poor kid 1960's climbing equipment...









Ridiculous the gear we used in those days...

Real retro... check out the length of our skis



