

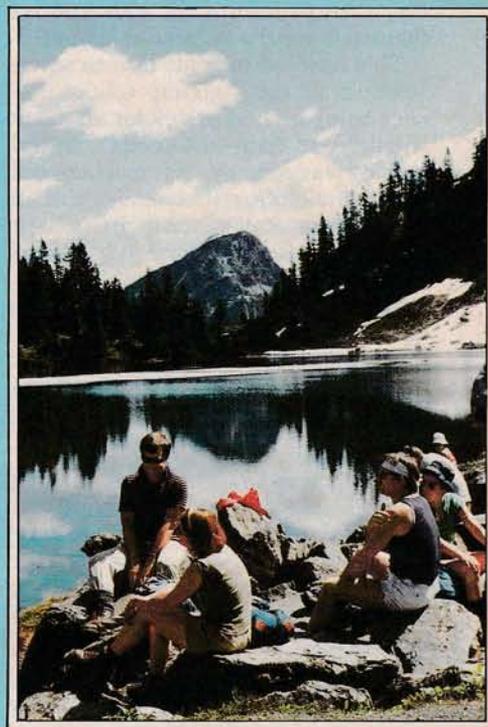
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Oh! Those North Shore Hikers

By Shari Meakin



Ice-capped mountains backdrop a thick carpet of summer flowers on a North Shore Hiker trip to Tricouni Meadows



Suntans and jokes are part of a day trip to Washington's Twin Lakes

IT WAS A SUNNY August morning in 1959 and most Vancouverites were lazing over a mid-morning breakfast. But not North Shore Hiker Marian Hale.

"There we were, clinging to the rocks above the Capilano River," she recalls about her first hike to the West Lions. "It was higher up than I'd ever been at that time.

"We started at Harvey Creek and worked our way steeply, almost perpendicularly, up through the trees to the alpine meadows. It was a thirsty trail. We got to the base of the West Lions and Alfred Temmel (then club president) got to the very top. But for me, the base was higher than I'd ever been and the last 500 feet I could do without.

"Coming down, Ernie Addicott and I had this terrible rubber knee syndrome you get on steep hikes. We got the giggles about that. In the early days there was a lot of camaraderie on those trips. It was a small club, very personal."

The club that Marian Hale remembers with such fondness and is still a

member of, is the North Shore Hikers, (NSH). She was present as Secretary when the club was formed November 28, 1958 and she will probably be present when the club celebrates its 25th anniversary this October 28 at the Stanley Park Pavilion.

Since its founding, the club has swelled from 16 to 1000 members, increased its slim dollar dues to five and increased the number of hikes from one every other week to five or six every Sunday. It has branched out to cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and winter camping as well as biking. It has diversified so much that Member-at-Large Wally Griffiths suggested the constitution be amended to include "all self-propelled outdoor activities". One wag felt that hang gliders could infiltrate the club and appropriate club assets and so the motion was defeated. The focus of the club remains hiking and the family atmosphere it started off with is still there.

The club began as the North Shore Mountain Hiking Club. That name was immediately reduced: hikers were

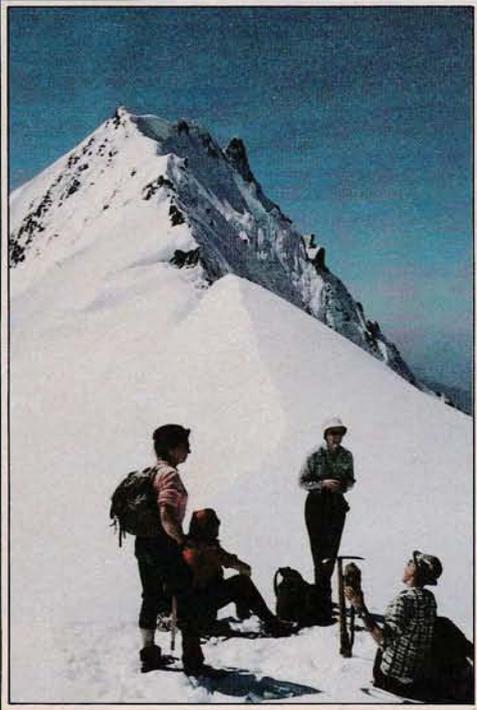
wanted, not just mountaineers. In the first year, members shouldered their packs up easy routes such as Mount Gardner, Hollyburn and Seymour and then graduated to more difficult ones like the Lions. Over the years, club members have tramped to the top of Golden Ears, trekked through the Tantalus Range and photographed Yellow Aster Buttes. But many of the trails hiked today didn't exist 25 years ago.

"At the first general meeting, the group listed off six or eight hikes and said they'd done it all. They didn't know of any other trails," says Bill Hughes, a member for 24 years and the only NSH honored with a lifetime membership.

Hughes, Lehn Jorgensen, Hank Stirland and others began the route-finding and trail clearing that has become one of the NSH trademarks.

"We wouldn't have half the trails in the Lower Mainland without the North Shore Hikers," says Louis

On November 28, 1958, sixteen hikers formed the nucleus of the club. This October, with more than 1000 members, NSH celebrate their twenty-fifth anniversary



Garibaldi ascent: a sharp ridge leads to Atwell Peak, photo by Bob Harris

Irwin, club representative to the Federation of Mountain Climbers of B.C. (FMCBC).

Apart from pruning new growth on paths and a concern to leave only footprints after hikes, the club is not radically involved in environmental issues. This is surprising considering it is one of the biggest outdoor clubs in B.C. Members do make a mandatory \$2 donation from the \$5 NSH fee toward the FMCBC, a group which often acts as a conservation lobbying group. The club's orientation is primarily recreational.

Individuals within the club are ardently concerned about the country they live and hike in. Ken Woodsworth, president of the club in 1976, is now co-ordinator of the FMCBC. Paul Binkert, well-known for chainsawing numerous new trails, has campaigned privately against noise pollution: he dressed as "Chicken Man" and rated a photo in the *Van-*



Snowshoers stop for a snack at Mt Seymour's Dog Mountain hut, photo by Bob Harris

cover Sun. David Thompson was a NSH member when he and Roger Freeman wrote the guidebook *Exploring the Stein Valley*.

Guidebooks are the special preserve of UBC instructor and NSH David Macaree and his wife Mary. With a little help from their friends in the club — including BC OUTDOORS Hiking Editor Bob Harris — they produced both *103 Hikes in Southwestern B.C.* and *109 Walks in B.C.'s Lower Mainland*. The former is not only informative but has been a lifesaver for lost hikers: Rolf Lueneburg burnt the book to keep his wife and daughters warm when the family were benighted on Goat Mountain a few years ago.

The Lueneburg family should have gone with the club: the NSH don't lose people. Trip co-ordinators are conscientious and careful. They make "reccis" before their hikes to check out the route and to re-mark it if necessary. On hike day, they assign an "end-person" so that the group is book-ended by experienced people and nobody can get lost. People still manage to wander off or get "temporarily

misaid" as President Mary Mitchell puts it. On one hike this writer recently attended, a carload of hikers ignored driving instructions, whizzed off on the freeway and were never seen again.

The accusation of being lost or even misaid is one that veteran hiker Halvor Lunden scorns. "We weren't lost for one minute," he hotly declares about the night he and Frank Bennett spent out on Eagle Ridge two years ago. The two were trail clearing, had no watch and were caught when darkness swooped down and stranded them. They walked out separately the next day, unhurt but embarrassed about the over-protective concern shown by the RCMP. Next time they'll take a watch.

Only once has tragedy struck on a NSH trip. On a blistering July day in 1977, Jonathon Safir collapsed of heat exhaustion during a trip to Canyon Ridge in the Baker area. An hour of artificial resuscitation failed to revive the 33-year-old man and he died amid the hills that he had enjoyed hiking.

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Six weeks later, some of the NSH took Jonathon's parents on a sad pilgrimage to the site. It is a gesture Otto Safir still remembers with gratitude. His son's lost camera was recovered and in it were tiger lily pictures that Otto still has.

Tragedy is balanced by the brighter memory of other trips. One was led by Frank Foster on August 15, 1965 to the Great Barrier, that copper colored rock wall that stops the lakes behind from swooping down the valley. Along with the 31 regulars who turned up there were 17 Japanese sailors, stranded in Vancouver by a fire on board their ship.

"They were told to come in working clothes," Halvor Lunden remembers. "A lot of the men were officers, so working clothes meant dark suits, white shirts and ties. They also wore beautifully polished shoes."

"I can remember the poor devils hobbling down the road, wincing," says Frank Foster.

Ignoring their feet, the polite Japanese smiled, chatted and offered to carry the women's packs. The women were delighted. The trip was extended into the Black Tusk meadows where the happy visitors were loaded with goggles and ice axes before having their pictures snapped in the best of Japanese traditions. The day, needless to say, was a great success.

Other trips are remarkable for the sheer number of feet that pound up the trail. On Sumas Mountain, Heinz Wolff reported that there were "68 legs — 32 people and one dog". Another easy hike led by Ans Hirschsprung had a record 70 people present. "It was a horror story," Ans exclaims of that day when group management skills were needed more than wilderness or route-finding abilities. But these hikes are topped by the public hikes co-sponsored by the NSH: over 412 people struggled up the trail to Petgil Lake on September 27, 1970.

There were only 14 booted enthusiasts on the first NSH trek to Nepal last February. They pioneered new routes never traveled by North American groups. They crested two 12,000-foot (3,658 m) passes even though they were bogged down once by a swirling blizzard that piled snow to knee level. They also had to cope when the Sherpa leader absconded with group funds. That incident only served to weld the group into a more cohesive unit. Group leader Ans Hirschsprung, a Dutchwoman who has trekked in Nepal five times, still considers it the best of her trips. "The first cook always addressed me as 'sir'!" she chuckles. It was a close, intimate group and the members share many memories.

One NSH trip is especially memorable to Wally and Eddi Griffiths. "On a backpack trip to Mt Seymour, our tents got flooded in a sudden overnight downpour," they say about their first meeting. "We had to share accommodation with many others." Their acquaintance was undampened by the rain and they were married December 9, 1978. The location? The top of the Stawamus Chief. The ceremony was conducted after a light snowfall had iced the mountain, and sun shone on the champagne celebration.

One hiker didn't need bootlaces for her first club trips. "Although this hiker is only three months old, she has been coming on hikes regularly for the last 12 months," trip co-ordinator Heinz Wolff reported. Amira Tawashy's mother Wendy had hiked up to the day before Amira's birth and then started again only two weeks later. And Amira may only be a year-and-a-half old now, but she already has her own vibram-soled boots.

Other children have grown up in the club. Those shy, gangling 12- and 14-year-olds have become unstoppable engines plowing up mountains. Peter Ravensburg, 24, got a strong foundation with the NSH before going on to more severe mountaineering. He has climbed all the local peaks, "Baker about a dozen times," McKinley twice and Robson once. He was also in the party that attempted 25,000 foot (7,620 m) Mount Gongga in China.

Women are not far behind the men. One petite woman accompanied eight regulars of the "strenuous" group on a special day trip where the elevation gain was over 10,000 feet (3,050 m). The group raced up to the Black Tusk meadows, along Panorama Ridge, over Gention to Castle Towers and back again. "Helen trotted down the trail like a fox. You never saw there was any strain on her. She was equal to or better than the rest of us," Halvor Lunden says chivalrously.

Chauvinism is not one of the complaints that members voice. There is, however, one problem.

"We have a tendency to go too fast," says Jean Munroe, a 10-year-veteran. "We gallop along and never stop to look at the chocolate lilies."

The club has assets that offset this difficulty. The North Shore Hikers provides a nucleus of people who have similar interests. Neophytes are introduced to the wilderness by people who not only know the trail but can find miner's lettuce to munch or point out the peaks from Brunswick's summit. But the club is more than that.

"It's become a way of life," says Izzy Pecknold.

Others in the club would agree with her. 