



# Mt. Bridgeland Rescue

Jasper National Park Warden Service 1987



This is a photographic record and a short summary of a mountain rescue that took place in August 1987. Of all the rescues I was involved with, this one really stood out for me. It had a bit of everything; bad weather, a remote area, tough climbing, heli-slinging, awesome teamwork and a very desperate, cold climbing party.

The Jasper Warden Service received a call concerning an overdue climbing party from the Edmonton Chapter of Alpine of Canada Club on a remote mountain bordering Mt Robson Provincial Park. It turned out the group leader took a fall just below the summit, breaking his leg. The group were stranded and hypothermic with minimal bivouac gear.

The rescue party was made up of Wardens; Gerry Israelson, Darro Stinson, Pat Sheehan, Rick Ralf, Greg Horn, John Niddrie and Yellowhead Helicopter rescue pilot Todd McCready.

For me, it started late one evening with a tap on my window at Decoigne Warden Station. It was my neighbor, Greg Horne telling me the news and for me to be ready at first light. Needless to say I didn't get much sleep that night.

The day before a cold storm front moved in that brought snow at higher elevations and the forecast was calling for more. Todd was able to fly us and our equipment to a staging area near the mountain base. The summit was obscured by thick storm clouds so two climbing teams were organized; (Gerry, myself & Darro, Rick) and we were slung onto the mountain as high as Todd could get us. Pat and Greg managed base and one would be ready to sling if the weather broke.

It was difficult climbing with our heavy rescue packs combined with deep snow and verglas conditions (ice covered rock), especially on the exposed summit ridge. But by late morning we reached the party.

After assessing everyone, the leg splinted, we got the tent pitched and the party settled in with bags and hot tea. It wasn't long after, we got a bit of a weather window, so we moved fast. Pat was able to sling in to help with the evacuation. One of the girls was pretty freaked out and not wanting to witness her ride down, pulled her balaclava completely over her head covering her eyes. I took off the plastic bags covering her socked feet just before she was flown off, as I was worried they could fly off. There was no way getting her boots back on her swollen feet. She was quite the sight in the air. (See slide #10).

It's always a relief for everyone to get home safe and sound. Afterwards, the traditional beers and wind down at the Astoria Hotel was called for. It was really fortunate Gerry had climbed the mountain (6th recorded ascent) a year or two before and with his knowledge we were able to immediately get on the mountain with a solid game plan and not have to wait out the weather. Getting to know as much of the Park as possible (not just the tourist routes) was important role for the Public Safety program, and it truly paid off this time.

It was such a great group of solid people to work with and train with. The comradery and friendship we had within the whole Jasper Warden Service was amazing and experiences like this even made it more so.







































