

October 25, 2017
(September Letter)

Dear Samantha,

As I was hanging out in the pharmacy I noticed the 2018 had a lovely photo of Black Tusk on the front cover. It made me think of two wonderful trips I had up to the peak: one with John and the other with his father (your great-grandfather). It also gave me an idea for this letter. You can see the peak in this photo.



My first trip was in 1970, with John (and Samwise). I don't remember too many of the details but I think that we hiked up and back all in one day. Perhaps he will remember more of the details.



The route up to the peak required a very steep 9-kilometre climb up a trail of switchbacks to a ridge bordering the alpine meadow (Taylor meadow). I don't have photos of my trip up that initial climb with John, but there are a few from my trip the following year (1971) with Jack. The climb up the trail was rather exhausting, but well worth it once over the ridge. It went much faster with John than with Jack, of course. You can see from the photo that Jack was carrying a sizable pack since we were camping – whereas with John it was a one-day trip so we didn't have to carry so much.



The meadow includes a lovely lake, beautiful vistas, and access to the central peak of black tusk itself. There is a small island in the lake that you can see in the photo. You can also see that the meadow is just about at the tree line since the trees are rather small and the higher elevations have none of them at all.



The ascent to the tusk required a scramble up a scree field to get to its base. The scree is composed of black, sharp pieces of rock that have tumbled from the core of an old volcano (a stratovolcano). You can see



a bit of it in the photo I took of John from down below a hill of scree and the one where Jack is looking down at the scree field.

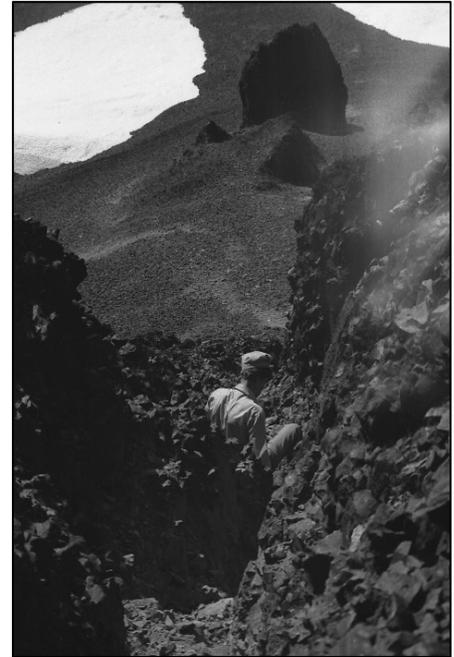
The final section is the most difficult since it required a 10 metre climb up an exposed chimney to the summit. I have included a photo of Jack going down the chimney.

The summit at the top of the chimney is actually one half of the summit since there is another section which is separated by a rather huge drop.



We didn't continue to the other side since it requires ropes and related equipment.

I like the photo of John sitting at the summit since it gives a good idea of the wonderful view from the top.



Although the climb to the summit was difficult, the return down was great fun. Both times I went there (July in 1970 and August in 1971) there were large patches of snow even though it was late summer. As you can see from the photos, these patches made for some exciting boot skiing. Even Samwise seemed to be having fun. I also like the one of Jack using his "senior stick" as a rudder while he slides down the slope. He was awarded that stick when he graduated from Winnipeg College. I'm not sure what happened to it, but I seem to recall it was lost sometime since then.



I'm not sure what stimulated John and I to organize the climb, but I remember being surprised the following year when Jack asked if I would be willing to go with him. We decided to make it an overnight trip since the demand is rather high to do it all in a day. We put together a couple of packs with tent, bedroll, food, and other camping equipment to make the trek. I remember how heavy the packs were – especially as we were making our way up those initial switchbacks. We took many rest periods along the way.

Our tent was a little pup tent with a fly that Fran and I had treated with wax and white gas. It was designed with extra space over the entrance so that we could use it to store equipment – and in this case, Samwise. As we went to sleep, we were glad that Samwise reluctantly seemed to accept our insistence that he sleep just outside the entrance since there was not very much room in the tent. Both Jack and I laughed when we awoke in the morning and found him nicely curled up between us – well-ensconced in the tent.

Love,
Bill