

# Do the Ice

By: Barbara Dickson

In my hand, I clasped what resembled an ordinary cup filled with water. Unassuming, boring H<sub>2</sub>O.

But gazing at my surroundings, I knew the cup held an extraordinary drinking experience. This wasn't tap water; it wasn't filtered water; it wasn't fancy bottled water from a European spring. No. I scooped this water from a trickling stream nestled in a crevice on the Athabasca Glacier, one of eight mammoth sheets of ice hanging amid the Alberta Rockies.

As I knelt on the ice, I brought the cup to my lips, tasting and recalling the freshest, purest snow I feasted on as a child (absent of acid rain and dogs, of course). I guzzled the liquid snow's coolness, savoured its reviving power, lingered in its winter wonderment. And quenched my thirst.

Deemed as one of the most pristine freshwater sources on our planet, the Athabasca Glacier in the Columbia Icefield claims a celebration of thousands: over 1,000 feet thick; over 1,000 years old; and clinging, thousands of feet above sea level, between rugged mountain peaks.

On this August day, the wind howled, the sun bounced off the snow and the temperatures demanded winter gear. And I hesitated when the tour guide beckoned us back to the snow coach. Beneath my feet, this ancient landform was living, moving and shifting. I felt connected.

The brochure had teased, "Do the Ice." My heart told me I wasn't done doing the ice. I longed to bottle the water, mixing in the surrounding peaks, the muffled silence of innumerable blankets of snow, and the icy turquoise gullies carved into

millennium-aged ice. What if I never drew water from this deep well of peace and tranquility again?

Quenching my physical senses still left a thirst in my soul wanting to tarry behind and drink much more than a cup of cold water. It was so difficult to climb aboard the ice bus and start the descent through carved moraine.



*What if I never drew water  
from this deep well of peace  
and tranquility again?*

However, dreams do come true, and I returned the next day. No snow coaches this time. This ice rendezvous was less formal.

My family and I started the hike up and away from the parking lot, headed for the toe of the glacier. From our viewpoint, the glacier looked like peaks of meringue sitting on a graham cracker crust. The comfortable climb was quickly replaced with huffing and puffing as we scaled glacier debris. Signs along the climb marked the

retreat of the glacier, receding 30 feet each year: 1986 it was here, 1996 it was there. Sweltering in our summer clothes in the parking lot, we scrambled into our parkas by the glacier's edge only a few hundred feet away.

I was "redoing the ice." I knew that once I stepped off the ice field this time, I wouldn't be back on this trip. We were headed home.

Staying as long as we could comfortably tolerate, we finally acknowledged that our stay was ending. Hesitant to leave our frozen old friend, but eager to warm up, we inched our way earthward.

Goodbye ice. Farewell exquisite pure water.

If only we could "do the ice" every day, drawing refreshment from a never-ending stream, drenching and flooding our being with life-restoring water. We would drink and drink.

We know the ice field experience, no matter how pure and pleasant, only fills us temporarily. We will long for water again. However, Jesus tells us in the Bible that "... the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14). A drink from God's cup filled with His grace and love will saturate our souls with His gift of eternal, living water. We need never thirst again. ☪