

'Icy' excursion leaves many warm memories

By Lee Strong
Staff writer

Try scanning the wedding-announcement pages in most newspapers. You'll find the same honeymoon venues over and over again.

Cancun. Hawaii. The Caribbean. Those places bring to mind thoughts of long, white beaches; swaying palm trees; luxurious cruise ships; and warm, tropical nights.

But when Tammy and Chuck Wilmier think of their honeymoon, they can recall standing on 1,000 feet of ice; viewing blue, glacial lakes; and descending into a former rock quarry that was turned into a garden with flowers from around the world.

The couple honeymooned in the Canadian Rockies after their wedding on July 27, 1991. In addition to flying over mountains in a helicopter, their excursion featured travel by train, bus and ferry.

"It wasn't a romantic-type honey-

moon where you have all that time alone, but we figure we'd have the rest of (our lives) for that," recalled Tammy Wilmier.

The Wilmiers had considered the more "traditional" honeymoons, she said, but decided to try something different.

"Since we were two single people with their own incomes, we thought we could go on a cruise any time, but this was something we might never have a chance to do again," said Tammy, who grew up in Brockport attending Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish.

So the Wilmiers opted for a tour package that would take them from Seattle, Wash., into the Canadian Provinces of British Columbia and Alberta. The tour included stops at Mt. Robson — the highest mountain in the Canadian Rockies; the Athabasca Glacier; the desert region around Lillooet; and the Butchart Gardens.

When the Wilmiers first arrived in Seattle, they discovered that not only were they the only newlyweds on the trip, they were also the youngest people taking the tour.

"Everyone was 65 plus," Tammy said. "We were so much younger than them, they took an interest in us."



Charles and Tammy Wilmier stand before one of the 11 glacier walkers in the world, all of which are located on the Athabasca Glacier in Jasper National Park.

In fact, the first couple the Wilmiers met on the trip were celebrating their 50th anniversary. "They had saved their whole lives to do that," she recalled.

And because it was not common for newlyweds to take the tour, the Wilmiers received special treatment all along the route.

"Our tour guide would call ahead to the hotels and say they had a honeymoon couple," she said. "We would get suites with Jacuzzis. We'd get free champagne. They'd leave notes congratulating us."

Although the couple enjoyed the people they encountered, the country's beauty was what struck them.

"It was so much different than (western New York)," Tammy obser-

ved. "Here, we have hills, not mountains."

Further, lakes formed by glaciers and filled with runoff from the icy rivers "are just so blue that it's unimaginable," she said. "They're bluer than the sky."

Fans of the outdoors, the couple managed to get in skiing and white-water rafting along the way. They also walked on the Athabasca Glacier, which is part of the Columbia Icefield in Alberta.

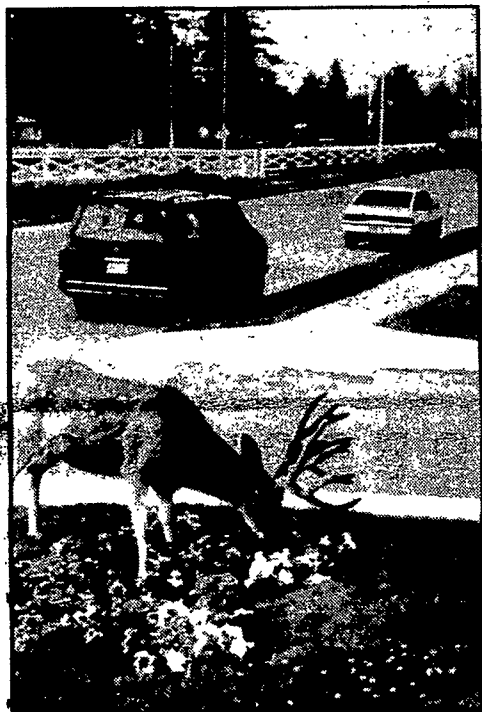
"It was interesting to think that (the glacier) was a 1,000 feet thick and it was 500,000 years old," Tammy said. "As long as we live, it will still be there."

Because of the diversity of the environment along the tour route, the couple had to adjust to many climatic changes, she observed.

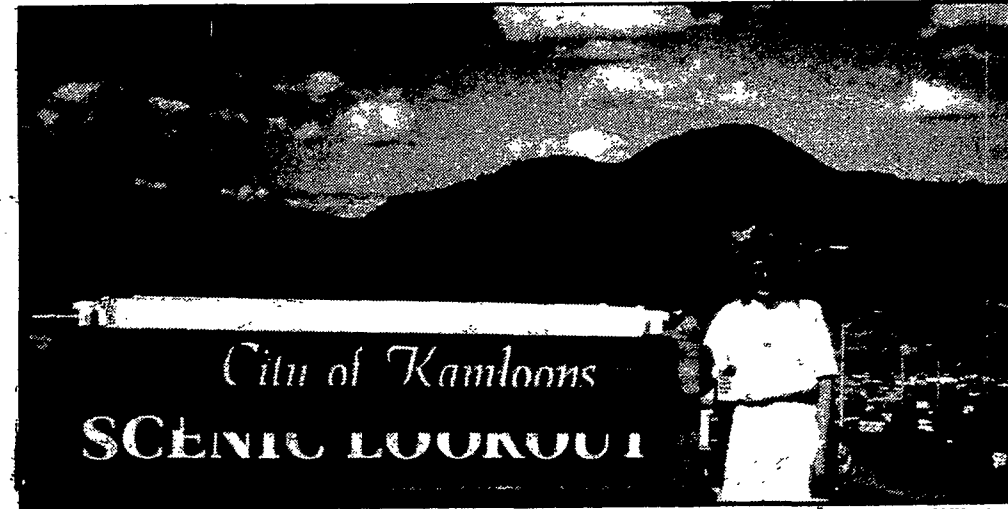
"We would go from being on a glacier where it was 0 degrees then up into the highlands where it was 100 degrees and dry like a desert," she said.

The tour ended Aug. 9, but the Wilmiers still have the pictures they took on the trip. Those snapshots come in handy for times when other people express surprise at the couple's honeymoon choice.

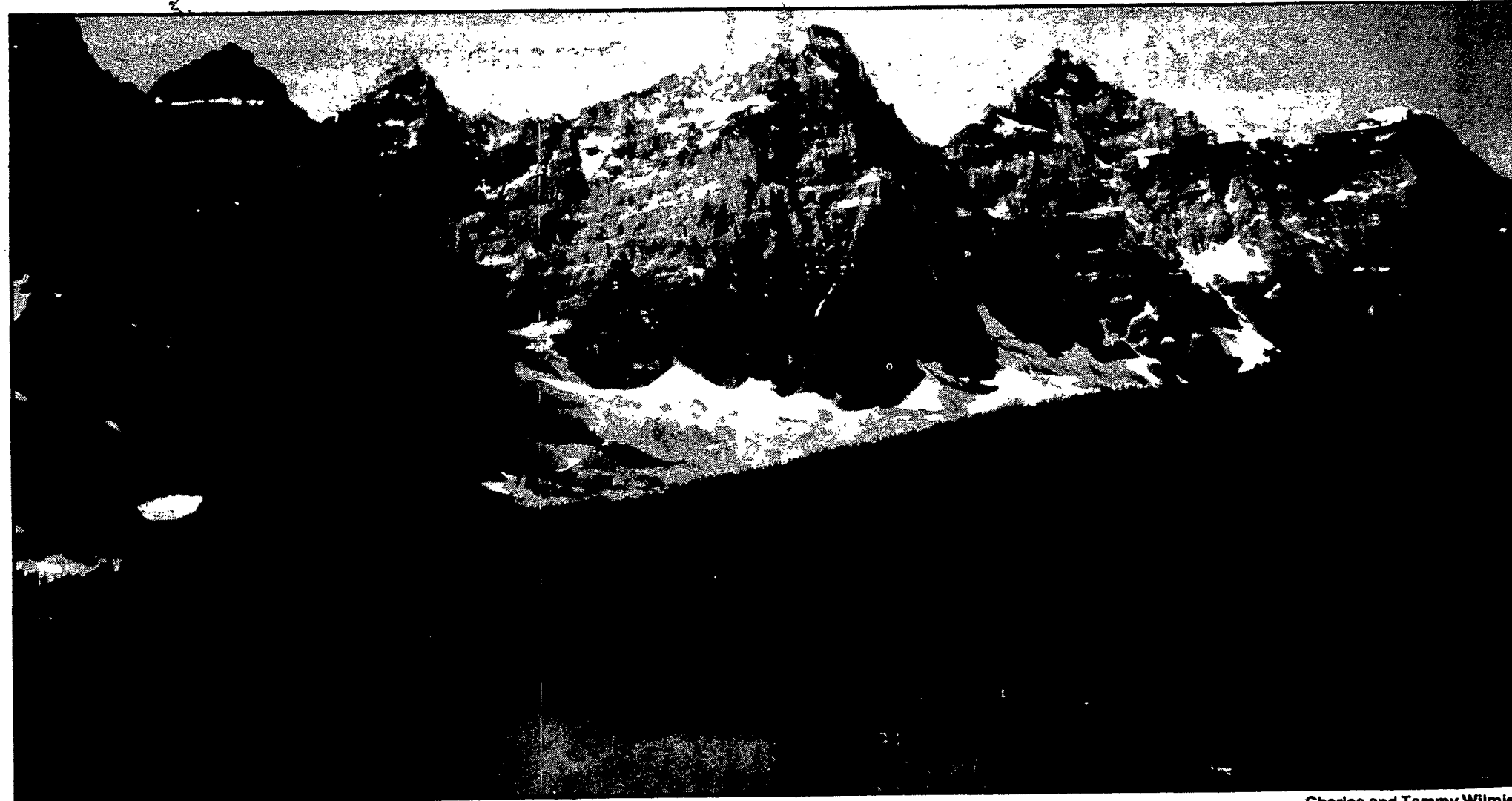
"They don't comprehend it until they see the pictures and see the beauty," she said. "It was just so beautiful."



Charles and Tammy Wilmier. A mule deer in Jasper National Park snacks on the scenery.



Charles and Tammy Wilmier. Tammy Wilmier stands at the entrance to Kamloops, British Columbia. Rumors about gold made this remote town famous.



Charles and Tammy Wilmier. Lake Moraine — located outside of Banff National Park in Alberta — boasts the Valley of the 10 Peaks, which appear on the back of the Canadian \$20 bill.

ig.
at:
S
S
S
most
We
will
book
e.
rue —
adding
guided
o help
dating
rooms.
kege
nings
ons
Arena