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Prospector winning 12-day fight for life

Prospector Bernard Rover, 71, Thursday was winning his 12-day fight after he crossed a glacier and 10 miles of wilderness in a daze after blacking out in his remote cabin.

He was reported in fairly good condition in hospital Thursday night after his recue that followed his desperate trek for help near Pitt Lake, 40 miles northeast of here [New Westeminster].

Mr. Rover was found Saturday by Mike Chizh of suburban Surrey and Bob Jilburn of Vancouver, who had set out for a week of prospecting as a vacation in one of the province's most rugged areas.

"All the odds were against him ever getting out," Mr. Chizh said, "I feel Providence had a big hand in the rescue."

A series of small campfires in the area led the pair to the old prospector.

"We found the old man lying under a tarp with his legs blown up like balloons. He was pretty much out of his mind, but after we got some food and tea into him he told us he had been prospecting at Thomas Lake for the past month.

"He said he had suffered a stroke five days ago in his camp and had set out for help, He couldn't remember anything else. He was down to a few hard-tack biscuits and a can of sandwich spread. He said he wouldn't have lasted another day without help."

After resting Sunday, the two men carried the prospector to a site where a helicopter could fly in. Mr. Chizh said their helicopter was not due to pick them up until Sunday, so they left him with a dry sleeping bag, food and a fire and walked through dense bush to a forestry camp at the head of the lake.

The Canadian Forces helicopter from Comox B.C. on Vancouver Island, arrived Thursday to complete the rescue.

"The old man was soaked when we got back to camp and couldn't get out of the bag," Mr. Chizh said, but they told us at the hospital that he was going to make it.

"We didn't get any prospecting in for ourselves, but finding him was much better than finding gold."