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SCREE

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## MEETING, MONDAY FEBRUARY 6

At this meeting the question of the day of the Mountaineering Club Meeting will be voted on. The fourth Tuesday of the month is available at Willow Park Recreation Hall in addition to the usual first Monday. Interested persons should come on February 6th to exercise their franchise. However, members may give a written proxy to someone else.

The meeting will conclude with a symposium on The Foot: Its Gear and Accessories. There will be a panel consisting of Hans Metz, Rock Climbing; Johnny Johnston, Cold Weather; Keith Hart, Glacier; Norman Fichler, General Footwear; and Dr. George Michman, the Care of the Foot. Comments from the floor will be encouraged since this discussion aims at promoting a diversity of opinions with the hope of helping individuals to decide what is personally most suitable. Chuck Metzger will bring a display of footwear from Gary King's with prices to show what is available in Anchorage.

## FROM THE BOARD:

The MCA Board has decided on two rules: (1) Used equipment shall not be offered to the Club for sale. However, the Club welcomes gifts of equipment. (2) No trip, even a hike, may go without a rope.

## CLIMBING SCHEDULE:

Pioneer Peak - February 4 & 5: if the weather holds as it is now. Norm Fichler, leading. (BR 8-7951)

Suicide Peaks from Rabbit Creek - March 4 & 5: Leader, Paul Crews (Home: BR 4-4731 or Bus.: BR 6-3455) Leave Sat. on skis (climbers necessary). Camp at head of Rabbit Creek. Will attempt both Suicide Peaks Sunday. Ice axes, good boots and some climbing experience required. Nice gentle ski run home.

## HIKING AND CROSS COUNTRY PROGRAM:

Arctic Valley to Indian - February 11 & 12: via the Ship Creek Old Mail Trail, Indian Pass, and down to Indian on the Portage Road. Gene Horning leading. (BR 8-9395) Note: lack of snow this winter may prevent this trip so please contact Gene Horning.

Independence Mine - February 18 & 19: Leave Sat.; return Sunday. This will be an outing for skis or snowshoes - personal choice. It will be necessary to make reservations with Dave Duncan (BR 4-9953) since the accommodations at the mine are limited. Overnight - sleeping bags (your own) \$3 per person; bed with linen \$5. Breakfast \$1.75; a good dinner for \$2.75.

NOTE: The Ed. apologizes to the authors of articles which have been deferred to a later number of Scree because of lack of space in this issue.

Attempt on Peak Behind O'Malley Road - December 26, 1960

by Jon Gardey

Present: Jon Gardey, Gene Vescott, Buck Wilson, the latter 2 from the University of Alaska Alpine Club.

Anxious to wander about in the hills but with only 5 hours and 28 minutes of above the horizon sun at our disposal, we were forced to restrict our endeavours to summits below 15,234', this being the limit for 5 hours and 28 minutes. The first attempt began on the Peak Behind O'Malley Road but with a drive in the direction of Portage Pass with the intention of ascending Byron Glacier and environs. After slithering down the Seward Highway in the rain and viewing the Black Hole of Upper Turnagain Arm, an about face was executed and we ground back to the bottom of the road leading to Clarke's place. The goal had been changed to "TFB OR" and this would be my third attempt on this illustrious protuberance. The first took place on Christmas of last year and ended on a gendarme leading to the top. The second took place last September and resulted in an unintentional climb of the Peak Behind the Peak Behind O'Malley Road, which summit by the way, is higher than you know what.

Anyway to continue ...we slogged up the road, turned off to the power line, thence a point presumed to be opposite the peak. We crossed the valley, grinding our shins on the breakable crust, and came out on the exposed rocks of the lower slopes. Another hour so of uphill scrambling brought us to the ridge. An enlightening view told us that

once again we were to fail. The Peak in question was about a mile distant over a series of gendarmes, towers, snow ridges and what have you, and obviously was not going to be climbed by this intrepid group, at least not today.

The time was now 1 p.m. and the sun was scheduled to give up about 2:40 p.m. Incidently, during the latter part of this reconnaissance ...note the subtle change in terminology ...an east wind of some force was directing annoying particles of snow against us. I, due to doubt to my meteorological experience was selected to choose a lunch site, which I did. A large rock offered an obvious spot a few yards ahead. We sat down and promptly a blast of wind came through a small crack in the rock, roared out past us, gathered reinforcements from the slopes below, and came back loaded with snow, which then completely enveloped us in a swirling cloud. Lunch was hurried along, spiced with comments about meteorologists, and we started out again. A small summit on the ridge was for the purposes of this expedition declared, by acclamation, the real summit, and a glissading descent of the slopes was made into the darkening valley below. Our descent of the road was considerably facilitated by the use of an agreeable Renault Dauphine.

Eagle River Mail Trail - January 14, 15, 16 & 17 by Joe Pichler

Mountaineers Try Mail Road Trek Over Hills - This little newspaper article in the Anchorage Times doesn't say much. However, what is hidden and written behind these few lines, people will never realize. This little group of brave mountaineers went through many hardships and put forth a tremendous effort to get over the Mail Road.

People say: "Why are you doing this? What makes you go over these mountains and through this wilderness? Why are you putting yourself in danger and why this senseless effort and hardship?" These are ancient questions we often ask ourselves and are as old as mankind. And yet, there is an answer. It's the love of nature in men. We are not dominated by nature, it's that strong feeling in men to conquer nature.

The days of the sourdoughs in Alaska are a thing in the past. Forgotten are the days when no modern way of transportation was in existence. The trails these early pioneers went over, are gone. Jungles of bushes and wilderness are growing over the highways of yesterday. The roadhouses and shelters of these forgotten days are in ruins. We sit in our modern homes and read in books of the time long, long ago and it seems to us so unrealistic, as if it never existed. And yet, it is so close to us. There are still a few people living with us today, who traveled these highways of yesterday. This group of young mountaineers who followed their route today, know and found out what hardships our forefathers had when they traveled the trails through the Alaskan wilderness. Only these people who felt for themselves, saw for themselves what a tremendous task it was to travel over roadless mountains and tundra, through endless still valleys without seeing any other humans for days, only then, the real admiration and deep respect came over them for our old sourdoughs and pioneers of yesteryear.

At 5:30 a.m., January 14, 1961, members of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska and the Alaska Rescue Group left my Tudor Road home and went to the home of Tony Bockstahler at Eagle River. From here we went with Tony's Jeep pickup as far as we could go on the Homestead Road. We went about 13-14 miles and intended to go on another mile or two, but the road became so glaciated up, that our four-wheel car with chains began to slip sideways. This was the end of our transportation. We had in mind to transport our heavy gear in an akja which we intended to slide behind us. Before we even had a start with it, we found out it was impossible to maneuver it through the bushes and over the hills, so we left it near the Jeep and shouldered our packs. We all had more or less heavy packs, mine weighed 56 lbs. and this was entirely too heavy for a trip like this. From the beginning the going was good - for the next two miles we were still on the Homestead Road and it went downhill most of the time. We finally hit the trail and soon lost it again. The snow conditions were poor. It was not enough for the snowshoes and too much without them. We managed to go without snowshoes through the entire Eagle River Valley. Since we were unable to follow the old trail meant that we had to fight the bushes. The weather was in our favor. The sun was shining and hit the mountaintops high over us. The temperature was a little above zero but not a trace of wind. If it hadn't been for the bushwhacking, it would have been real good going. During the forenoon hours we were on and off the trail. Sometimes we saw it very plainly and the old blazemarks on the trees told us that we were right. Sometimes our way went along the river and frozen beaverponds, then over knolls and hummocks and again through bushes. Our general direction was the narrow pass between Organ Mountain. At noon we couldn't travel any longer on the north side of the river and went along the riverbed itself. Lunch-time we built a fire and cooked some tea. Soon we were on our way again. The going in the riverbed was good, however, the many open places in the ice told us to be extremely careful. We could not afford wet feet in subzero weather. After we passed the narrows between the mountains, the riverbed became real wide and we went mostly along sandbars covered with thin snow. The sun never reached us on the valley floor and soon we saw it disappearing behind the mountains. Ahead of us was the end of the valley and Eagle River Glacier, to our right, behind an outcrop of a ridge from Organ Mountain was the mouth of Raven Creek, but it was still too far away to reach before night. The Alpenglow high above us told us, time for camping was close. With the beginning of the night we made camp on the right side of the river in a thick grove of spruce trees. Soon the campfire was burning and the tents were up. Hot tea and a meal was most welcome to everybody. The

temperature was five below as we crawled into our sleeping bags. So ended our first day on the trail.

I had an early start in mind for the next morning. However, daylight comes late between the dark spruce trees and on the bottom of the sunless valley floor. Finally 20 minutes after nine we were on our way again. After rounding a bend in the river, we came into territory which was very familiar to me. This was our old hunting grounds. In the days when sheep and goat hunting was still permitted in this area, it was one of the best but also one of the most difficult to get to. High up near the cliffs is where Norman, my son, shot a goat which is now looking down at me from our living room wall as a trophy. On the edge of that ravine near that basin is where I killed one. On the other side is where we encountered a bear. How different everything looks in the wintertime. I expected to see a lot of game since the hunting of sheep and goat in this area has been closed for the last years, but not one single animal did we spot on our entire trip.

About an hour later and two miles away from our night camp, we reached the mouth of Raven Creek. Everybody was in good shape and spirit. There were eight of us, aged 16 to 61. Norman Dillman was the youngest but long ago he proved to be a man. His pack weighed almost as much as he did. Then there were our girls, Gwyn Wilson and Elinore Schuck. Both had the courage to make this hazardous trip with us. There was Jon Gardey and Bob Bailey, experienced climbers and veterans of many difficult and dangerous trips, and Tony Bockstahler and Howard Schuck. Howard had an extra heavy load. He helped to pack part of his wife's pack. I was the oldest in the group and was the leader on this trip.

As we approached Raven Creek, I remembered not far to our right, in a grove of aspen and spruce were the remains of the old Eagle River roadhouse, a monument of old Alaska. Jon and Bob were ahead of us at the time and were looking for the beginning of the trail. I noticed that they went too far and called their attention to this. While they kept going, I went with the rest of the group to our right into the trees. I missed the old roadhouse and I remembered right behind it the trail started up the slope. We heard the others hollering and we answered them. I asked if they had found the trail and they replied that they were heading for it. I changed my course and this was wrong. We went much too far and came behind some ridges which we later had to climb. It was a steep climb and with our heavy loads was a tremendous job. We not only wasted valuable energy but also time. An Army helicopter came over us. We waved but they failed to see us. Then the copter flew to the end of the valley over the glacier and came back. When they came over the treetops, Jon and Bob on top of the ridge saw that they were chasing some moose. I was wondering if they would spot us in case we needed them in an emergency. We were in the open at the same time and some of us had on red parkas and packsacks. We waved our arms as the copter flew by but there was no sign that they had spotted us.

As we finally came up on the ridge, Jon and Bob were out of sight. We followed their tracks for a while but the tracks still went up while the trail was below us. After we had some lunch, the snow got deeper and for the first time we had to put our snowshoes on. As Jon's and Bob's tracks still went up, we left them and went straight up the valley. After a while we heard them hollering on the ridge above us and soon we spotted them up on a knoll. At the same time, we clearly saw the trail below us. After some bushwhacking, we came to it. Like any other old trail, we couldn't follow it for long. It soon petered out into a jungle of bushes which we weren't able to penetrate. Up and down and around islands of alder thickets went our way. And then we saw Jon and Bob ahead of us. At that point, the valley was a steep narrow canyon. Its cliffs were falling off right below us. Ahead of us, the valley broadened out and the going in the creekbed seemed to be good. After some more bushwhacking, sliding and climbing, we all got safely to the bottom. It had gotten late and again we saw that beautiful Alpenglow - where the last "SONNENSTRAHLEN" were glowing on top of the mountains. We headed for an island of aspen trees, where our camp for the second night would be. The place wasn't nearly as good as our first camp, but we had no choice. By the glow of a campfire we set up our tents and soon we had something warm in our muzzards. The temperature was below zero, the stars were out and a cold wind came down from the pass as we climbed into our sleeping bags for the second night in the wilderness.

When dawn came grey and cold. It was still dark as I lit the campfire. This should be our last night, but I knew we would never be able to make it on time. We were more than a day behind already. No matter how hard we tried, it seemed to me that we were always too late hitting the trail. Bob and I were leading the way up the creek bed. For the first two miles we made good time. As we approached an unnamed glacier high up in a hanging valley, the creek bed became once more a canyon. Soon there was nothing but cliffs in front of us. It looked like we had come into a box canyon, but actually the creek forced its way between two narrow cliffs, just wide enough to let a man go through. Below us was a deep pool of open water, which made it still more difficult for us. Bob and I went through hoping the anchor ice next to the cliff would hold us. Then we had to go on our hands and knees. It was like going into a cave. Bob, ahead of me, came to another obstacle - a 30 foot drop blocked our way together. We had to retreat. By that time the rest of our party came up. So we had to find a way out of this canyon. A steep bushy slope was our choice. Jon was leading us up and had to take our snowshoes off and the snow was waist deep. It certainly was hard going. We all were glad to get this behind us. For a while we traveled along a shelf and made

good time but not for long. The scenery around us was wild, romantic - to our right another unnamed glacier, to the left before us was Raven Glacier and straight ahead high up was Crow Pass. No sign of game anywhere, still and lonesomeness ahead of us - such a forsaken country. An icy wind cut our faces as we marched on into the unknown. From where we were in danger of avalanches and this situation lasted for 32 hours. We had to pass one slide field after another, and there was no way to dodge them. Tons and tons of snow and rock came down here at a previous time. At one point low over the creek bed, the snowbank showed a deep crack after Bob and I crossed it. We knew what would happen if that snowbank let go, so we all hurried on. Higher and higher we went. No longer did we fight the bushes. This was real alpine country. We all needed rest, but there was no time. We wanted to make the other side of the pass and it was getting late already. There was no time for food. Besides the merciless cold wind wouldn't let us sit down anyhow. I tried to eat something while I was climbing, but I couldn't swallow it. My mouth was like cotton. More than anything else, we needed something to drink. In spite of ice and snow, it was like being in a desert. Eating snow seemed to make us thirstier. The day came to an end, and the darkness settled in the mountains as we finally reached the top of the pass. To our left was Raven Glacier. Behind it was the mountain we climbed a few years ago with the Club and Paul Crews as leader. There was that steep ice wall we went up, and here is the slope we rappelled down. I was in familiar country once more. Jon Gerdey and Bob Bailey were at home here also. However, in the wintertime everything looks different. Where there was a lake, there isn't one now; where there was supposed to be a creek, there wasn't one now; the trail which was so easy to climb in the summertime was not there now. Everything was buried under deep snow even that hut up here which I had in mind to use as shelter for the night was not here. On the way down on the Girdwood side, it was no longer cold. A rather warm wind came up from the valley. Jon on skis ahead of us slide in a wide circle down the slope of James Mountain. It got almost dark as we maneuvered down that steep slope. In the twilight everything melted into a milky mass. We were no longer able to see the steepness below us. I had a sensation of it being flat country, but the skidding and sliding told me different. Jon and Bob ahead of us came to an extremely icy slope and decided to call a halt for the night. A small buttress, reaching out over the canyon below us, and the least likely spot for an avalanche to come down on top of us became our last camp. It was too dangerous to go any further in the darkness. It didn't take us very long that night and our tents were up. The gas stoves were going and at last we got food and drink into us. For a long time I couldn't sleep. The high steep snowwalls in back of us worried me. The wind died down and it got warm. This was avalanche country and avalanche weather, but there was no other way for us but to camp right where we were because we just couldn't go on any further in the darkness.

The day late and seven miles to go, we started our fourth day. I knew we were in for bad weather. Snow was falling thick and the tops of the mountains were hidden in low grey clouds as we started our descent down the steep slope. Jon on skis was leading us when he came on the which was too dangerous. We had to go further down near a sheer drop. I went ahead and since we had soft snow, there was nothing to worry about. The going was good, and we got safely down to the mine.

It was still early in the morning but Bob had to be on his job by noon. I was wondering how he could possibly make it in time. During the day, on our way out, I saw what a tremendous task this man put upon himself. The going and snow conditions were worse than we thought, and Bob had to break trail all by himself for seven miles and in record time. For Jon on skis it was easy. There was no trouble for him to traverse these steep icy slopes and everything went downhill. For the rest of us the end of this hazardous trip was still far away. Constant harassment of dangerous snowslides was still with us. We had to get out of there as quickly as possible. Our girls took it marvelously. As tired as they were, they did not complain or grumble. Gwyn was a real trouper. She and John Dillman were ahead of the way down. Tony Bockstahler had the first benefit from his skis on our entire trip. He slid with ease ahead of us. Poor Eleanor had trouble with her mukluks. They are just not the right footgear for a trip like this. Howard had the same trouble. Mukluks on snowshoes are alright for flat country, but there is not enough support in them to traverse a steep mountain. On extremely difficult places, I waited for them to cross. On snowshoes myself, I was not able to help them in anyway, except to give them moral support. After we left the dangerous area, I left the Schucks behind and joined John and Gwyn ahead of me. At two o'clock in the afternoon, we got to the cars. With this, another chapter in the book of my memories is written,

BERG FREI!