



JANUARY 1994

A Publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc.

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Box 102037, Anchorage, Alaska 99510

## JANUARY MEETING

Wednesday

January 19, 7:30

Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets

Downtown Anchorage

**Slide Show:** Willy Hersman will show slides of climbing Mt. Steele in the Yukon.

### HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

- Jan 29 Ice Climbing Practice  
Location depends on conditions. Class: Fifth Class.  
Leader: Dave Hart 243-0975
- 29-30 Lane Hut  
Skis and climbing skins needed. Ski 6 miles to Lane hut, in the Fern mine area. Limited capacity. Ski surrounding hills. Class A.  
Leader: Dave Logan 243-4887
- Feb 5 Telemark Class  
One-day class will be held at Hatcher Pass. Bring skis, climbing skins, shovel and avalanche beacon. Class A.  
Leader: Dave Pahlke 243-5234

- Feb 12-13 Snow Shelter Class and Climb  
Learn to make snow shelters on Saturday. Optional climb of Railroad Peak on Sunday. Skis or snowshoes, shovel, snow saw, winter overnight gear including bivi bag (if you have one), but no tents! Class A for the class. Class C for the climb. Avalanche beacon, probe & ice axe for the climb. Skookum Valley.  
Leaders: Willy Hersman, Maxine Franklin 373-4734

### TRIP REPORTS

Desperately Seeking Ice

by Art Weiner

**S**unday morning, December 19th, began with about ten of us hunkered down in the Huffman Carr's parking lot wondering why we ever got out of bed. The



wind was blowing at about 40 knots, a preview of what was waiting for us on the Seward Highway, and during the previous week, the daily temperatures had increased to the 40's.

The ice climbing season had begun this fall with ice forming up in the usual places along the highway, fed by late rains and abundant ground water. Unfortunately, the unusually warm December weather reversed the trend, turning ice to melt water. Consequently, our group decided to journey down to Portage where we hoped to climb Five Fingers. We probably had more ice in our freezers. We did encounter a good bit of ice on the highway which, in combination with the strong wind, made for an interesting ride.

So, we turned back toward town and checked out a few areas closer to home. The Scales, Easy Money, and Plastered still had enough ice for us to climb; others such as Roadside Attraction hadn't formed up enough for a climb by anyone in our group. We did see a couple of climbers on Roadside late in the day who undoubtedly have terrific medical and life insurance, or who are very skilled.

A small group of us, including Denise, Curt, Darrin, Bob and me, decided to climb and were later joined by Dave who had just come down from the solstice over-nighter on Flattop. The others returned back to town to partake in more rational endeavors such as breakfast, football and driveway maintenance. We set up a top rope on bolted slings and took turns on what was probably the best piece of ice on the highway, Grade III, Easy Money. Spring-like conditions and very plastic ice was soon the norm as the sun came around.

Ice climbing along the Seward Highway, although wonderfully stimulating and easily accessible, is not without some unique properties. The most noticeable is the sound. Incessant traffic totally drowns any communication between climber and belayer. You often hear the climber asking the belayer to take up some *slack* and he thinks he is asking to get something out of his *pack*. Another bit of entertainment is the cacophony of epithets delivered from the cabs of pickup trucks, usually hauling snowmachines at warp speed. I have, on occasion, been tempted to drop the rope and hurl an ice screw at one of these motorized maggots, but they aren't worth the price of a screw, or the risk to or wrath of the climber.

The most dangerous aspect of climbing on the highway is the risk to the belayer of being wiped out by an inattentive driver. It is kind of like the sheep jams in the summer. What would truly be hilarious would be to climb in a sheep suit, thereby satisfying all of the tourists' needs for a great photo opportunity. The down side would be the constant blinding flash of camera strobes that even now occur with some frequency. Leading a steep pitch is

difficult enough without trying to manipulate hardware using Braille technique.

Hopefully, normal winter temperatures will return. If not, we may be rock climbing in January.

## Winter Solstice Flattop Sleepout

by Dave Hart

**S**olstice came early this winter. Not according to the calander, of course; but it sure snuck up on me. I imagine it has something to do with the fact Anchorage is still experiencing weather reminiscent of October or November.

MCA's semi-annual solstice sleepout occurred Saturday night, December 18. Bob Charles, Mel Brennan, Josh Sonkiss and I met at the Glen Alps parking lot at dusk. After waiting around for any last minute stragglers, we left the parking lot under partly cloudy skies with a temperature hovering just below freezing. Fortunately, there was only a hint of the 50+ mph winds that were scouring the hillside only hours before.

The already broken trail ended at the saddle between Blueberry Hill and Flattop. Earlier in the day, the Alaska Mountain Rescue Group had packed this trail during their litter transporting exercise from this saddle, known as The Tunnel, to and from Blueberry Hill. The lights of Anchorage provided plenty of light for hiking and an hour and a half after leaving our cars, we were searching for potential tent sites on the summit.

Josh and Mel set up their tent in the smaller of the two snow-filled summit rock rings, while I scouted for my place to call home. Bob was only up for the evening, and had a quick snack before he was to head down. Josh, Mel and I had plans to go on the following day's MCA ice climbing excursion down at Portage. Mel had doubts (well founded, as it turned out) as to whether we could all get to Huffman Carrs by 8:30 the next morning. She opted for the sure bet and headed back down with Bob, leaving Josh and I to share their tent. This was definitely an improvement for me as opposed to my awaiting bivy bag!

About this time, the last overnight participant showed up. Tom Sheppard quickly set up his tent as it began to snow and the wind picked up.

As Mel suspected, our arriving by 8:30 at Huffman Carrs was not even close to coming true. Early Sunday, Josh and I decided that the night's winds and 8 inches of snow could load some of the slopes and make an early morning descent in the dark more dangerous than one in

light. Or, maybe it was that our 6:00 am wake up alarm was much too early. Most likely a combination of the two delayed our descent until 10:45 Sunday morning. Tom, Josh and I picked our way back to the parking lot via a non-standard, but avalanche free, route and were at our cars by noon.



## RULES FOR BORROWING MCA LIBRARY BOOKS/GEAR

MCA - December 28, 1993

- o **Current MCA membership card required.** No exceptions, due to liability!
- o To check out a book: attach MCA card to book check out card and give to AMH.
- o Library books have a **three week due date.** Please note that **some material may not be checked out.** This includes all books with a **white spot** on the outside lower binding of the book. All AAJ's, AJ's, periodicals and bound backissues of Scree are not allowed to be checked out, even if the white dot is missing.
- o To borrow gear: fill out a rental slip, attach your MCA card and give to AMH.
- o **All borrowed gear should be limited to four (4) days, although it should be returned as soon as possible after your trip** so that others may use the gear.
- o Please clean gear before returning it to AMH. No dirt, mud, etc.
- o **Know how to use the gear you are borrowing, especially avalanche beacons!!!** Check beacon batteries before and after each use. Please replace weak batteries with fresh ones.
- o Please understand that this gear is not meant for the exclusive use of any one person. If you find yourself borrowing the same item every weekend, please consider purchasing one for yourself.
- o While you're checking out/returning MCA gear, please understand that AMH is operating a business. They are doing us a great favor by allowing our gear to be stored in their shop. **If it is really busy, AMH employees should not be expected to help adjust crampons, give instruction in the use of beacons, etc.**

**They are more than happy to help with things like that if they're not busy, but understand that you may have to do these things yourself.**

- o AMH will return your MCA membership card when all of the items you checked out have been returned.
- o **Show AMH your appreciation** by both being patient when checking out/returning gear, and by patronizing their shop with your outdoor purchases!

Questions? Contact::

MCA Gear Committee Chair - Dave Logan:  
265-1187 (days) or 243-4887 (eves)

MCA President - Dave Hart: 263-4361 (days)  
or 243-0975 (eves)



### Climbing Notes

by Tim Kelley

#### Peak Names in the Mt. Alyeska Area - the 'Berry Peaks'

The source of this information is a letter in Vin Hoeman's correspondence in the Vin Hoeman Library. On October 28, 1968 Vin wrote a response letter to O.E. Darling of Seward concerning MCA 'tentative' names for peaks that can be seen from the Seward Highway. Note the adjective 'tentative' - these names are not official USGS names, but are locally recognized names. In this letter Vin Hoeman cites the names for peaks east of Mt. Alyeska to the Twentymile River and south to Blueberry Hill. A list of the peak elevations, names and locations follows:

4710 Highbush Peak      2 3/4 mi SE of Mt. Alyeska      Sew D-6 T10N R3E Sec 19

4470 Mount Kinnikinnick      4 mi NE of Blueberry Hill      Sew D-6 T10N R3E Sec 22

4352 Nagoon Mountain      3 1/2 mi E of Mt. Alyeska      Sew D-6 T10N R3E Sec 17

4075 Lingon Peak      3 mi ESE of Mt. Alyeska      Sew D-6 T10N R3E Sec 17

3255 Bramble Knoll      2 1/2 mi W of Blueberry Hill      Sew D-6 T10N R3E Sec 2

Hoeman listed the general name of this area as the 'Berry Peaks,' due to the wild berry naming



theme. Winner Pass was referred to as 'Berry Pass.' This pass separates the Berry Peaks from the rest of the Western Chugach.

Two items in Hoeman's list have conflicts with names that are popularly used today. Hoeman refers to 4435-foot June Peak (in reference to the Juneberry), which is currently called Mt. Alyeska's true summit. He also refers to 3920-foot Berg Peak, at the head of Kern Creek as Current Peak (I assume that he meant to spell this as 'Currant').

### North End Bird Ridge Climbing History

The first recorded ascent of Peak 4960 was on July 2, 1979. The peak was ascended by Mark Fouts and Scott Jeffryes, not Brian Okonek as earlier reported. They called this mountain Bird's Eye Peak.

#### Board Meeting

January 16, 7:00 p.m. at Dave Hart's house.  
All are welcome to attend. Call Dave for directions (243-0975).

### MCA Register Update Program

Tim Kelley

Throughout the history of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska it has been a tradition to support summit registers on local mountains. The purpose of these registers is to collect and preserve local mountaineering history.

Whether registers should be placed on mountain summits in the first place has been questioned. A few people think that registers, and the cairns that house them, are unsightly mountain top litter. Others appreciate the historical, safety and social aspects of the tradition.

At the last MCA board meeting a decision was made to intensify the upkeep of, and data collection from summit registers. This decision was based on a relatively new concern - preservation of access rights to the mountains. Lately, direct access to the popular Rabbit Creek valley near Anchorage was lost. Other accesses may be next.

Quantifying the mountain climbing activity in Chugach valleys, and extrapolating the trail usage in the approach valleys is needed. This type of data may help in public hearing and court action to prove traditional access to our mountains. This data might also be used to direct public trail projects to the areas that are the most heavily used.

It is not enough to just keep a register on top of a mountain and occasionally archive the contents in the Hoeman Library. This is the procedure that has been used in the past. Data from these registers must be periodically collected and placed in a database. Once in a database, mountain access usage over time, and projected into the future, can be analyzed.

The steps proposed to be taken in the current MCA Register Update Program are as follows:

1. Identify local peaks where the MCA will maintain registers
2. Obtain new canisters and log books
3. Devise a procedure to enable any MCA member to place or maintain a register
4. Implement a pilot program for a mountain usage database, focusing on the local peaks

Though the Register Update Program has a defined mission, there are still many details to be worked out. Anyone with ideas, concerns or opinions - get in touch with me or Willy Hersman (numbers are on the back of Scree). Or talk to us at a future general meeting. In the meantime, remember to respect summit registers and sign them. You will be helping to preserve your right of public access to the mountains we all love!