

Monthly Meeting:
Wednesday, January 18 at 6:30 p.m.

Program: Tucker Chenoweth presents
Alaska Range Traverses -- Connecting
the Landscape.

“In the mountains we forget
to count the days.”

--Japanese Proverb

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

January 2012
Volume 55 Number 1



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Peters Creek Trail Times Two
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Peak of the Month: Hearth Mountain

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

www.mtnclubak.org

"To maintain, promote and perpetuate the association of persons who are interested in promoting, sponsoring, improving, stimulating and contributing to the exercise of skill and safety in the Art and Science of Mountaineering"

Join us for our club meetings the third Wednesday of the month at the BP Energy Center, 900 East Benson Boulevard, Anchorage, Alaska
www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC_map_06-04-03.pdf

Cover Photo: Stu Grenier on the summit of Mount Susitna. Flat Horn Lake is on the left and Figure Eight Lake and the Susitna River estuary are on the right. Fire Island is also visible. The peak register is visible by Stu's left knee. Photo by Trevor Scott.

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January Program

Tucker Chenoweth presents Alaska Range Traverses -- Connecting the Landscape.

Article Submission

Text and photography submissions for the Scree can be sent as attachments to mcascre@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 25th of the month to appear in the Scree. Do not submit material in the body of the email. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. If you have a blog, website, video or photo links, send us the link. Cover photo selections are based on portraits of human endeavor in the outdoors.

Membership Renewal

Annual memberships expired at the end of December. You can renew your membership at an MCA meeting or go online to download a membership application.
<http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=members.form>

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

January 14-16: Ice Climbing at Caribou Creek. Set up camp about 3.5 miles in and climb, climb, climb. Winter camping experience required. Beginning to more advanced ice climbers welcome. Contact Dave Lynch for more information, or sign up at the December meeting.

January 15, 10:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Backcountry Skiing Training

Learn the tricks of the trade for traveling on skis in the backcountry (setting the uphill track, kick turns, removing skins with skis still on, etc.) and the theory of ski technique. Must be able to link turns. Advanced beginners and better are welcome. Telemark, alpine touring/randonnee, and mountaineering (Silveretta bindings) skis are

welcome. Clinic will be held at Arctic Valley Ski Area (inbounds). This clinic will count toward the Basic Mountaineering School merit program. Clinic is limited to the first eight people and any sign-ups after that will be wait listed. Cost of the clinic is the price of a Nordic Ski Club member lift ticket (\$20) plus \$15! Lead Instructor: Galen Flint. To sign up, please contact Jayme Mack at jaymelynnemack@gmail.com or 907-382-0212. Payment is available via Pay Pal, money order, or personal check. Registration forms, money orders and checks must be mailed to: Training Coordinator, 6694 Delong Landings Circle, Anchorage, AK 99502. For questions about the clinic, contact Galen Flint at galenflint@gmail.com or 650-207-0810.

January 19, 5:30 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.
Trip Leader Training
Kaladi Brothers Downtown

The following trips are being led by Greg Bragiel. For more information, contact Greg at unknownhiker@alaska.net.

February 18-19: Resurrection River reconnaissance ski tour.

February 25-March 4 or 5: Seward to Hope ski tour.

March 2- April 1: Lane to Dnigi Huts tour.

April 15-22: Eklutna Traverse (mandatory training session on April 7).

Don't forget to check the Meetup site and the Facebook page for last minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

On-line? – click me



For best viewing of the Scree on a monitor using Adobe Reader, click on 'View' and 'Full Screen.'



Craig Peterson at the crux. Photo by Marcin Ksok.

The Royal Tower's Gargoyle Buttress

By Marcin Ksok

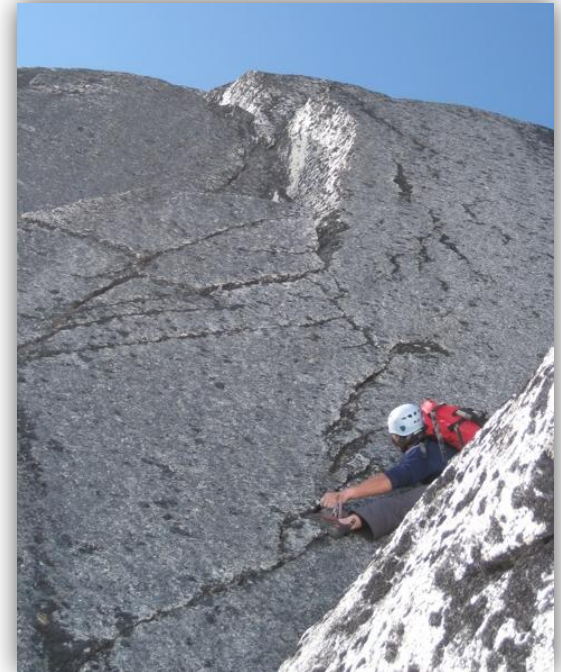
"This thing is steep and loose." **"Want a belay?"**
 "I don't have gear anyways."

"A 5.4? Feels hard in big boots." Moat, bergschrund, steep, loose snow, at least I am on belay. Awkward steep crack in mountaineering boots. **"How did you solo this thing?"**

"I had to." **"Single piece for the anchor? A little thin."** "My thought, also." Off he goes. I am glad the first roped pitch is not mine, the hardest on route, right off the beginning. "This thing is hard, whoops, bad form to fall."
"Whatever, it's bad form not to try and back off; you don't see me up there. Good job for making it over."

Now my turn, second anchor not much better, we start fixing them on the way up just so as not to run out of material on the way down, we both have a feeling that the anchors are not going to get better. **"No placements here dude, and it is wet and slick."** Oh well, I have to keep going, first moves are always difficult mentally, but as you go you gain confidence with every positive one. Shortly every challenge on the rock makes you stronger and better. Pitch three ended in

snow, wet, and cold. Fourth is Craig Peterson's, a run-out slab, I luck out again, short break at a belay, he makes easy work of it. I follow, come to the blank section of the wall, no protection for 40 feet until the two-piton anchor. "Don't lean too much on these." **"I wouldn't dare."** My show again, confident now. First, a vertical short section, no pro, then an angling slab with spot for a nut, and onto a vertical crack. Fidget with a backup piece, fall here would be bad. Can't sink it, can't sink it. What I am doing? That is not a way I climb, just go up; go up. Hand over hand, good feet, place a piece. Keep going; feels good, really good, perfect rock. Ledge and more crack, out onto a slab, rack getting lighter. Rope getting shorter, into a dihedral, two moves, crack runs out, wet. Backtrack onto the face, run it out on one piece. "Three feet." Anchor, stretch it out, pull, clip in, full rope of great rock. "Another thin anchor; we are not going to make it to the top."



Marcin Ksok – needing a #5 nut. Photo by Craig Peterson.



Craig Peterson enjoying the exposure.
Photo by Marcin Ksok.

“We’ll go as far as it is safe.” Both in agreement on this one. It was supposed to be an established route. I would not rap on these old cords and I am not known to be overly cautious of anchors. Things back off, some snow, wet in climbing shoes, loose terrain, and tight belay station. Me again, up some easy stuff, no pro needed. Craig heads into more delightful cracks, makes great work of it. I am excited just to follow him. Easy ground to “crazy flakes” and yes, they are, huge and awkward; can’t protect them, large fins, steep, have to get above them. Realization sinks in that this move has to be made, but no pro; I’ll get wedged in the foot-wide slot in case of a fall, oh well, this is climbing. Smear on grippy moss, undercling a roof, onto the anchor. **“Look at this thing; I pulled out half the anchor just by looking at it.”** “We are out of gear, and still need to build two stations. It’s over; this was our last pitch.” **“It’s a shame, the next one looks awesome, maybe one more?”** We both knew that it was not to be; pitch nine was the last one for us. The perfect right-facing corner with a flake in the right face was staring down on us and we will not experience it. Not on this June 2011 trip.

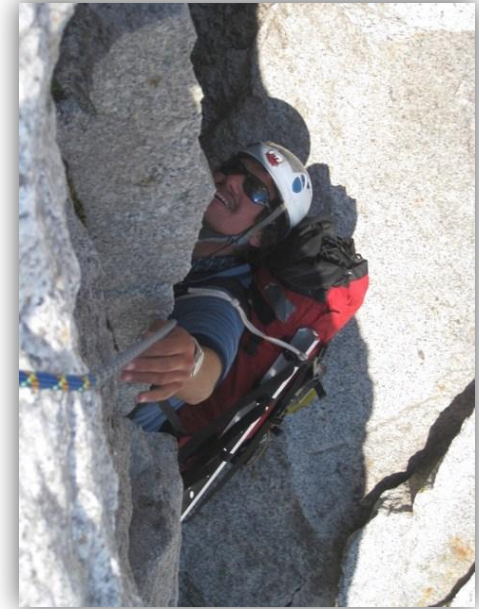
“Let’s back this up and go then. How much cord do we have?” We tallied up the gear, personal anchors, etc. We had enough, as long as no obstacles arose. “The rope is stuck.” **“No way, not now.”** “Well, we just do what we have to, I’ll re-climb it; it’s easy terrain.” It was not the only problem we encountered on the way down; rappelling over the fourth pitch did not go as promised, the guidebook put the distance at 180 feet, it is about 240 or so – too long for a single rappel. Craig learned that the hard way, running back and forth along a vertical wall trying to get to a good stance. He succeeded; the rest went smooth, rappel after rappel, retracing our route.

At the top of first pitch, we took our time getting down, talked about what we just did, now since the mind is relaxed it is easy to enjoy the route we just tried to accomplish. It was still early because we cut the trip short due to circumstances out of our control. We have been backing up anchors along many routes in Little Switzerland, at the same time forging a climbing partnership.

We ran out of cord. We ran out of whiskey. We even ran out of toilet paper, but we never ran out of good attitude. Many other routes lie ahead of us I hope. This was definitely a worthy one. I don’t remember the weather, the views or anything besides the fine climbing. It was really worth it.



Left to right: Marcin Ksok and Craig Peterson.



Marcin Ksok on the first pitch.
Photo by Craig Peterson.



Craig Peterson high on route.
Photo by Marcin Ksok.



Photographer John Recktenwald, with Amy Murphy and Rick Hagen.

Peters Creek Trail – Times Two

By Amy Murphy

On November 14th, John Recktenwald and Rick Hagen joined me to do a reconnaissance of the snow conditions for a ski trip I was leading up the Peters Creek Trail the following weekend. After arriving at the trailhead, we were delighted to find much-better snow conditions than anticipated, along with clear skies. We happily discovered the snow conditions improved the farther back we went, becoming deeper and more powdery.

We skied back to the old homestead area and stopped for a break to eat, drink, and take a few photos while enjoying the sunshine and scenery. From there we headed up the Four Mile Creek drainage to see how far we could go, enjoying the

untracked powder snow. We didn't get very far before downed trees halted our progress, so we turned around and skied back to the trailhead, enjoying the long, fast, downhill sections of the trail.

On November 19th, the day of the MCA ski trip, it was -15° at my house when I woke up and -13° when we arrived at the meeting place. In the warm coffee shop there was some debate about whether or not to cancel the trip due to the cold temperatures. Of the three women and three men who originally planned to ski, two of the men backed out due to the cold temperatures, but, I'm proud to announce, none of the women backed out! Trip participants were Vicky Lytle,

Sage Cohen, hard-core Charlie Sink (aka Buttercup), who caught some razzing throughout the day since he was the only male, and myself.

When we got to the trailhead the temperature had warmed up to a balmy 8 degrees below 0. What a heat wave! We quickly got ready and set off up the trail, once again enjoying clear skies with some sun, way off in the distance. The goal was to ski to the five-mile marker up the main Peters Creek Valley. At the Four Mile Creek junction, we turned right and broke trail through fresh snow as we headed down to the creek crossing.

We took turns breaking trail and we even allowed Charlie (Buttercup) the honor of going first the last mile or so. He admirably showed off his strength and impressive trail-breaking skills, so we magnanimously allowed him to stay up front as long as he wanted. We didn't want to deprive him of this opportunity to display his talents to three appreciative females who enjoyed watching

the masterful, competent way his skis cut through the virgin snow. Oooohhh la la!

By watching him lead for so long, we were able to glean ideas on how to hone our own trail-breaking skills. I think he "enjoyed" being up front in order to make it harder for all three of us to tease him at once as he was reluctant to give up the front position. Hopefully he'll "volunteer" to show off his masterful competence again on future ski trips; all day if he chooses. If he doesn't, we'll have to threaten him with constant teasing again!

We stopped for a brief lunch at the five-mile marker, but didn't tarry long as the temperature had dropped even lower once we got to the creek crossing and went farther up the valley. Once we quit moving we quickly got cold, so Vicky and I performed some calisthenics on our skis to stay warm – without falling! After eating we skied back to the trailhead, moving faster since we had a packed trail. We took very few breaks throughout the day due to the cold temperatures, but enjoyed clear skies, powder snow, great camaraderie and delicious chocolate that Vicky shared. Once again we enjoyed the long, fast downhill sections of this trail as we returned to the trailhead. We were sure thankful to get into our cars and turn on the heaters!



Amy Murphy on the Four Mile Creek trail, which needs some clearing. Photo by John Recktenwald.



Front to back: Trevor Scott, Dan Byrnes, and Stu Grenier, preparing to launch, at the confluence of Willow Creek and Susitna River.

Mount Susitna - September 2011

By Stu Grenier

I felt the itch to get back up on Deghelishla, "little mountain" as the Dena'ina used to call it, in September so I sent out recruitment notes on the MCA and Knik Canoers & Kayakers listservs and the associated Facebook pages. I timed the trip to coincide with my friend, Dan Byrnes' one week off so he could take part. Dan was keener on doing the paddle from Willow to Anchorage by way of the Susitna River than summiting, but I was glad he came along. The one other paddle climber to come along was Trevor Scott from Indian, a Choate-and-Bragiel-trained Eagle Scout who is an experienced one-time member of the

Dartmouth Rowing Team, but new to sea kayaking. We launched from where Willow Creek meets the Susitna River with Dan in his single and Trevor up front in my double. Dan was planning on getting back to town in about five days, while Trevor and I had food and time for about twice that.

It was hunting season and the boat traffic on the Susitna did not make for a wilderness experience. The air boats were the big offenders making people grab and hold their ears tight even when they were hundreds of yards away. After camping one night on a sand bar, we got to our base camp south of Susitna Station where we could

easily access the confluence of Alexander and Pierce Creeks, because that is where we start up for the summit ridge. This route is mentioned in the third edition of [Shem Pete's Alaska](#) as the way the Dena'ina climbed it. I have published previous trip accounts of it in the *Scree* (See July 2005, September 2006, March 2008, December 2009, and February 2010 *Screes*).

We brought a packraft along to get across Alexander Creek rather than swim or try to hitch a ride across from a passing skiff, but when we got to the crossing spot at the confluence of Pierce and Alexander Creeks we realized we had forgot the paddle. No worry, we just paddled across with our hands until Trevor grabbed a couple of pieces of cotton wood bark and used them as what I called "hand paddles." It worked great. Dan was prepared to come back alone since he was on a tighter schedule so brought his dry suit so he could swim across Alexander Creek after using the packraft to get his pack across.

We took the trail that a few others and I have been working on over the years and made high

camp within a couple hundred yards of where the February 2009 MCA team (see December 2009 *Scree*) camped near the top of the knoll on the large bench at about 800 feet. I was last up there in January of 2010 with Rog Clifford and Yuriko Yano (February 2010 *Scree*). We had done a lot of alder work, but now I noticed that if you cut the alders it makes more light for the devil's club to grow so they choked our trail. This forced us to spend time snipping the prickly beast with a pair of loppers from the now-sunnier alderless trail. Following the trail was still a struggle because of the devil's club.

At high camp Trevor showed his knack for thinking outside of the box by pitching the tarp in a very functional and unique way by rapping it around and above the lower level limbs of a large spruce tree. We pitched the bug net under the tarp and tied off on the limbs that were under the tarp. It worked fine. I moved away from using traditional tents below tree line in bear country after a not-so-bright self-induced bear incident (May 2007 *Scree*). By using tarps with bug nets, you have up to 360-degree visibility if you want it. I bring a .44 if bears are not likely to be hibernating.

We set the stove up about 100 yards away from the sleeping area, and after dinner and breakfast



Dan with Mount Susitna dead ahead, near the confluence of the Yentna and Susitna Rivers.



Trevor's unique way of pitching the tarp on one large spruce.

the next morning, left the food bags high up a tree near where we cooked where only Trevor with his extra height could easily get it.

On summit day Dan left camp early on his own attempt. I was hoping to have everyone on the ridge and hopefully the summit at the same time. Trevor and I got a move on a few hours after Dan and proceeded toward the place where Granite Creek starts to get canyoned out and there are a few cottonwoods. Trevor zoomed to the top of a birch tree every now and then to try to find a way around the alder thickets. From Granite Creek we crossed and worked our way through the alders clearing a trail with the loppers. The first person lopping and the second person tossing all the while doing bear calls. We marked it with tape and finally broke out into a series of unconnected clearings before reaching the distinct rock outcropping that is only a small alder-filled gully away from the base of the east summit ridge. From this spot Trevor basically slowed down to my slow, but constant, pace by picking berries. It was a bit windy, but the fall colors at berry line and the yellows of the Susitna Valley below made for something approaching perfection.

About 20 minutes away from the summit I suggested Trevor go for it so he could enjoy his first Mount Susitna summit unaccompanied for a while. He immediately ran to the summit. I got there in my own time and we took the usual pictures and pulled the register from its natural hole just feet from the summit. It was pretty windy, but not so bad that we couldn't sit around for 15 minutes or so.

I had placed this register canister (September 2006 *Scree*) after leaving a photo canister previously. I was surprised to see that there were four pages of writing from about 10 different groups. I photographed all the pages for later study and to see who had been signing in. As I read the entries, it was clear that the fly boys had been enjoying the register. Helicopters and supper cubs were the preferred mode of transport. In winter the register can is buried under ice since it is kept in a natural hollow under a large rock, so only summer entries are possible. There was one non-English entry that I thought might be from non-motorized folks. I wrote that an MCA team with eight folks had summited in February of 2009 and then Trevor and I signed in. I thought of the folks I have sat with on that summit and one who I interviewed who had climbed to the summit when he was a kid in 1943 with his male relatives. But that is another story from another time that I will share with you at a later date.

Our descent was relaxed and easy due to our trail work and GPS way points. Trevor checked out the small lake up there for a swim. When we got back to high camp, we found that Dan had pulled his tarp and headed down as planned. We correctly assumed he did not make the summit since we did not see him. We also found that our food cache was gone. Trevor and I had left it up a birch tree, but

now the bags were just gone. We circled around looking for them and then it occurred to me that maybe we didn't want to find them. Somewhere around there could have been a bear sitting on top of our food bags. That night as we lay under the tarp I could hear jaws crunching a cream cheese container off in the alders downhill from where we cached it. It was his. He had outwitted us. I should have used a line to dangle it between two trees. They certainly don't miss much. Luckily we had carried way more food up on summit day than we needed, so had plenty to eat. It occurred to me later that the reason we couldn't find the bags was they may have been buried – a telltale sign that we were dealing with a browny not a blacky. The .44 was getting smaller by the minute.

The next morning we pulled camp and headed down. We were not sure how far Dan was ahead of us, but I was concerned that we might have problems with our main food cache at base camp. If the bears got the high-camp cache in just nine



Trevor Scott on the summit, view to the northwest.



Alexanderites: Nancy and Joe with Trevor and Stu. Photo by Mike Mason.

hours, what could they do with the cache at base camp in three days? At least that one is hung well up a tree with a pulley. We found where Dan had camped and he had left the packraft nicely rolled at the creek. We crossed and then decided to go straight for base camp rather than walk up Alexander Creek and then head straight for it, which was our route in. Just as we got to camp we caught up with Dan who seemed surprised that we had caught him so quickly. With just three hours of light left, Dan launched to make time toward Anchorage with dust devils dancing on the sandy islands in the river and weather closing in. I was bushed and wished him luck just before I crawled under a bug net hung under a tarp for an early night's sleep. Trevor got a fire going by the river. As I lay listening to the weather radio, a small-craft advisory was issued. Rain and wind buffeted the tarp. I was glad Dan was so experienced in the inlet, so I did not worry about him. Trevor and I made plans to head for Alexander Village to hang with friends while the small-craft advisory stood.

The next morning we phoned our plans to folks at home and Alexander from a bear baiting tree stand near where we camped. We hit the right turn to get to Alexander Creek through what is called Five Fingers. Sand bars, log jams, and low water make it only one finger. It probably should be renamed The Bird. We picked our way along this fork of the Susitna with a few backpaddles and groundings as we felt our way through the shallow gray water to where the Susitna River and Alexander Creek meet. By late afternoon with gusting winds, our yellow kayak was in the brown waters of Alexander Creek and up ahead on the east bank we could see a gathering of folks with a haul of moose meat. A floatplane attempted to land, but returned to Lake Hood due to the gusting winds. As we got closer I could recognize friends in the group and I knew we had made the connection that opens the door to making Alexander a comfortable place to get out of the weather. Fall colors were near their peak and Alexander was looking more than beautiful.

After a very pleasant evening dinner with seven and a night in the bunkhouse, we all shared stories of climbing the mountain and moose hunts. Trevor and I gathered with Nancy around the computer to look at Google Earth maps of the mouth of the Susitna. From Alexander it is a pretty straightforward shot out to the inlet, which I have done before, but I still was gathering information from Nancy about local place names and historic slough conditions. With the small-craft advisory still in effect, we made plans to kayak down to the Susitna estuary and camp, then hit the tide right to get out of the estuary and its vast expanses of quicksand and across to the east side of the Susitna so we could bounce along the Susitna Flats all the way back to Anchorage as weather, light, and tide allowed.

Everything went according to plan and we saw the usual belugas and seals in and around the estuary. With a subtle lurch of the kayak more noticeable to someone on the rudder, I asked Trevor if he felt it when the river current handed

us over to the ocean tide. Skirting sand bars and shallows especially in the Little Susitna River estuary, we made Berber Slough just east of the Little Susitna. The tide had long since turned against us, but we still made headway by staying close to shore where the current isn't so strong. Using the slough we were able to get back to high and dry land with grass by climbing up a 15-foot mud slope exposed by the outgoing tide. Near this slough we met up with some duck hunters who directed us to an abandoned duck shack for the night. We also checked out an old Snowbird-Hut-like structure that had been blown off its stand. The next morning we paddled straight across to Point Woronzof, making the trip almost exactly one week long. Dan had made it out a few days earlier making it home with plenty of time to catch his flight to work. He later told me he had to drag his kayak half a mile once to get to water so he could ride the tide in and at night had to occasionally walk in circles around his high and dry kayak to keep warm between tides.



High and dry out of Berber Slough east of the Little Susitna River. The tide has receded far from the high, dry ground, so we had to use sloughs to get back to high ground and to launch before high tide.

In years past I have flown over this country in route to the Tordrillo Mountains or fishing adventures farther west. I suspected as I looked down from the plane that I was missing a big part of the experience of going into this country. Could it be that the meaning in our adventures in these parts or anywhere can be found not only on the highest points, but in the river currents and alder thickets, or even the deep dark brown eyes of a black bear or the words and expressions of someone who has lived in the shadow of Mount Susitna since the 1930s? It is the totality of the event wherein the beauty lies. To see things in all seasons. To feel the shift of the current on your paddle from river to ocean, to taste fresh moose meat, the yellows, reds, and summit views, to share time with those who live by Bush Time. I can't imagine not going back to this mountain. I'm always looking for someone with the right mindset and time to return.



The Chugach Mountains in the background, the symbol of home with Berber Slough.



Susitna Flats: an experience in itself.

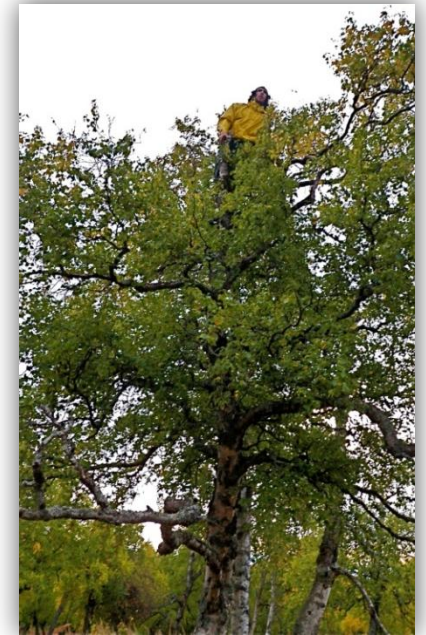
Photos by Stu Grenier, unless otherwise noted.



Yellow Bird getting ready to go to sea again.



Where the old Snowbird Hut landed after it blew out of the Talkeetna Mountains.



Trevor Scott, scouting out a route through the alders on summit day.



Summit views of the Garrison Glacier.

Mount Emmerich, aka “The Cathedrals”

By Ben Still

Paddling across the Chilkat River in our packrafts, Mike Miller and I are starting another adventure into the mountains on this cloudy summer day. The objective is to climb up Mount Emmerich, an awesome granite peak often called the Cathedrals by locals of Haines, Alaska, for

the series of piercing spires surrounding the highest tower of Mount Emmerich. Fred Beckey, Jack Tackle, and Craig Zaspel made the first ascent of this 6,800-foot high peak back in 1976. Although a very impressive sight from Haines, not many climbers venture into the thick, dense forest to climb this peak.

Mike and I make quick work of the paddle across the Chilkat River and stash all of our pack rafting gear a short distance into the woods. From here we follow a dry channel of the Kicking Horse River for two miles with short sections of alder thrashing until we reach the base of the peak. From here we ascend up the steep, mossy forest floor with a surprisingly mellow bushwhack. Cresting up over a steep rise with my hands dug firmly in the moss, I spot a black bear 200 feet in front of us with two tiny cubs. The sow quickly alerts to our presence making a biting sound as her two cubs begin running towards us. Luckily, they realize they are heading in the wrong direction and the sow and cubs take off up the mountain.

The going is easy on the moss-covered ground until we reach 1,800 feet in elevation and the terrain slacks off and thick wet brush greets us. Mike and I both knew the brush was coming, but were hoping we would get off easy for once. After several hours of crashing through the thick terrain, we emerge into the alpine and follow alpine meadows up through the mountain hemlock to the top of Point 3232 where a stunning panorama of beautiful green alpine heather meets the rock spires of the cathedrals and the summit of Mount Emmerich rises into the sky. Below us a little farther along the ridge a family of goats is sitting watching us intently. We traverse into a beautiful alpine bowl and set up camp next to a small snowmelt stream. We thought about climbing higher today, but decided camping on heather is pretty nice compared to rock or snow. After a nice, relaxing evening in the sun and a Mountain House dinner, we hit the sack ready to wake up at 4 a.m.

The alarm goes off and we peek out the tent to find the clouds have enveloped us in a white, damp fog. We hope for the best, eat a quick breakfast, and start up the mountain. Once in the back of the bowl we crampon up and climb up a steep snow gully to gain a 4,300-foot high pass. From this point the route gets a little trickier. We have to descend into a large glacial bowl, navigating around large crevasses and staying clear of some large icefalls, which seems difficult in the fog. We wait for a while hoping to see signs of the sun, but none come. I decide to see if we can climb up Peak 4850 to the east of the pass. From below, the peak looked easy enough to scramble up. We climb up through loose boulders, carefully navigating the terrain. All of a sudden we see blue sky and break out above the clouds with a sea of mountains visible in every direction. We scramble up the last bit of Peak 4850, negotiating some interestingly loose blocks of granite and stand on top looking at our objective towering above us to the south. We



Packraft after crossing the Chilkat River.

tentatively call the peak The Crypt, keeping up with the cathedral theme.

We scramble back into the clouds and down to the pass. From here we navigate down to the snow-covered glacier, rope up, and slowly try to keep our bearings in the near-whiteout conditions. We hear a large crack and obviously a serac is crashing down somewhere, but we have no idea if it is directly above us or off in the distance. It happens to be the latter, but we quicken our pace to get back out of the clouds as quickly as possible. We begin ascending the far side, hoping we are not directly under any hangers. After kicking steps up the steep slope for only 10 minutes we emerge back into the sunny blue skies directly on route.

We navigate around several large crevasses and lightly tread across some thin snow bridges. We slog up the snow slopes, looking forward to an interesting summit pyramid, which has rejected several of our friends multiple times. We take a break at 5,700 feet, eating a quick lunch and looking at the last 500 feet of steep snow below the formidable rock wall leading to the top. The final pitches of snow are very soft in the late

morning sun and we create some minor wet snow slides traversing up to the base of the rock.

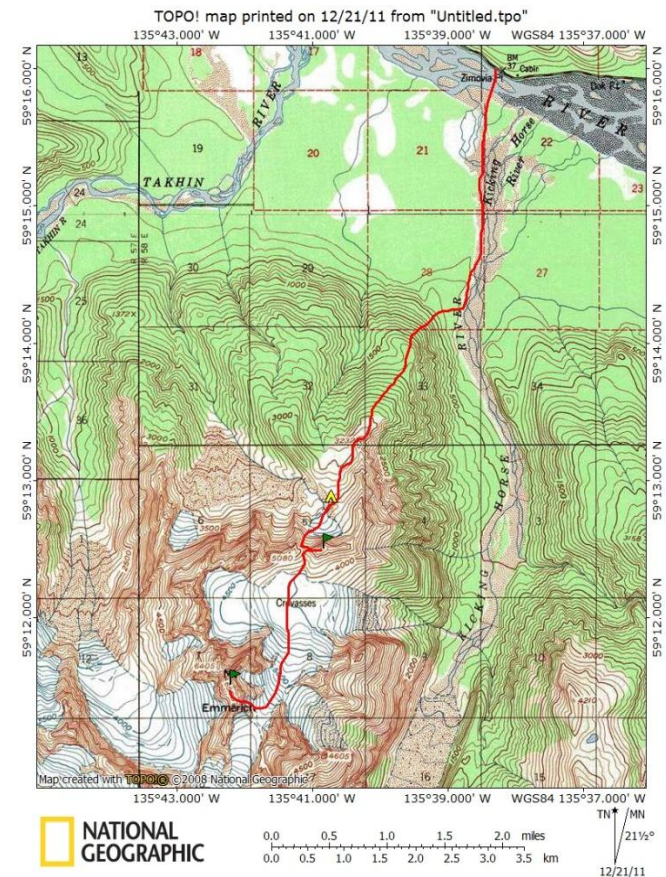
I break out the rack of cams and nuts, excited to be leaving the snow gear behind. I lead up the first pitch of rock, zigzagging around looking for the easiest way, following some really nice cracks. At the top of the pitch, I find an old anchor of two pitons and some rotting webbing looped through them. Mike leads up the second pitch, finding easy climbing, but lots of loose boulders waiting to crush your partner. The third and fourth pitches are pretty much fourth class, but with many loose rocks and we have a hard time not sending something down. The fifth and final pitch follows the ridge crest and is very fun exposed climbing, which is mostly fourth class with the occasional fifth class move with lots of air on both sides. Once on the summit I loop the summit block with some webbing and belay Mike up. We exchange a high five and take in the awesome views. So many jagged rugged peaks jut up in all directions. The clouds have broken up below us, revealing Haines off in the distance. We are able to see the icefield that connects to Glacier Bay to the west and the Juneau Icefield is to the east with the Ferebee Icefield off to our north. What an awesome arrangement of glaciers and peaks.

After an hour of soaking in the sun and picking out more and more peaks to climb, we begin the descent. We take a more direct line down reconnecting with our route after two rappels at the top of pitch two. Two more rappels bring us back to our packs and the top of the snow. We put away the rock gear and retie our prussik on the rope and begin the long slog back to camp. Without the fog and with a set of tracks to follow, the descent is easy and we are back at camp pretty early. If we were really motivated, we could get out tonight, but sitting up in the alpine in the sun wins out and we make dinner and lounge around in the waning sunlight.

We get out of the tent around 7 a.m. to find cloudy conditions above. These clouds look like

rain is coming. We break down camp and lift our heavy packs on to our backs. Heading back down through the brush is easier, but still a lot of work. We make it back to our packrafts without any trouble and cross the Chilkat River. We hitchhike back to our friend Will's house and have a few beers to celebrate the awesome climb. Rain quickly sets back in and we are on the ferry heading back to Juneau.

Mike Miller and I climbed Mount Emmerich July 17 through 19, 2010, and followed up the original Beckey route finding snow to 50° and 5.5 rock climbing. The Crypt is a fourth-class scramble.





Hearth Mountain from North Resurrection Peak. Photo by Harold Faust.

Peak of the Month: Hearth Mountain

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Kenai Mountains

Borough: Kenai Peninsula Borough

Drainage: Fireside Glacier

Latitude/Longitude: 60° 13' 54" North, 149° 11' 12" West

Elevation: 6182 feet

Prominence: 3532 feet from Isthmus Peak (6532)

Adjacent Peaks: Peak 5840 in the Fireside Glacier and Hearth Glacier drainages, Peak 5555 in the Billiken Glacier and Hearth Glacier drainages, Peak 5250 in the Fireside Glacier drainage, and North Godwin (5503)

Distinctness: 1232 feet from either Peak 5840 or Peak 5555

USGS Map: Seward (A-6)

First Recorded Ascent: March 24, 1989, by William G. Hersman, Rick Maron, Mike Miller, and Todd Miner

Route of First Recorded Ascent: Northeast ridge from the Fireside Glacier

Access Point: Seward Highway west of the South Fork of the Snow River

By my count Hearth Mountain is the 19th highest of the 35 peaks in the Kenai Mountains with summit elevations over 6,000 feet and the 16th most prominent peak in the Kenai Mountains. It is the highest peak in the South Fork of the Snow River drainage. There is no higher peak within 7 miles of its summit. Vin Hoeman and the MCA's Geographic Names Committee first proposed the name Hearth Mountain in the 1960s in line with several other features with fireplace-themed names in the Snow River area.

For more than a decade after Hoeman's death in April 1969, Hearth Mountain stood sentinel in quiet anonymity. Then Harold Faust, Tom Gillespie, and Brent Mahan attempted to climb it in the early 1980s, but poor weather and insufficient time caused them to turn back short of the summit in each instance. Greg Higgins drew attention to the peak with his mention of the name in the August 1986 *Scree*. Todd Miner again mentioned the peak in the March 1989 *Scree*.

Starting from the Seward Highway west of the South Fork of the Snow River on March 23, 1989, Willy Hersman, Rick Maron, Mike Miller, and Todd Miner ascended Fireside Creek to attempt the mountain. Their approach involved hauling all of their gear up a grade II frozen waterfall to establish a camp at the 2,000-foot level of the Fireside Glacier. The next day they skied to 5,200 feet on the northeast ridge. From that point they kicked steps to the summit where they left a small register in the rocks.

On April 9, 2008, Harold Faust, Tom Gillespie, Dano Michaud, and George Peck set out up the South Fork of the Snow River. For three days they traveled up the river toward the Nellie Juan Lake drainage and then ascended the Billiken Glacier. Starting from a camp at 5,300 feet on the morning of April 12, they climbed up the southeast aspect of the mountain for its second ascent. They didn't find the register from the 1989 party, so they left one of their own in a Nalgene bottle. Their descent took them down the Hearth Glacier to the North Fork of the Snow River and back to the Seward Highway, returning five days after they had departed.

Willy's trip report entitled "Hearth Mountain" appeared in the April 1989 *Scree*. Harold's trip report entitled "Hearth Mountain Traverse – April 2008" appeared in the April 2011 *Scree*.



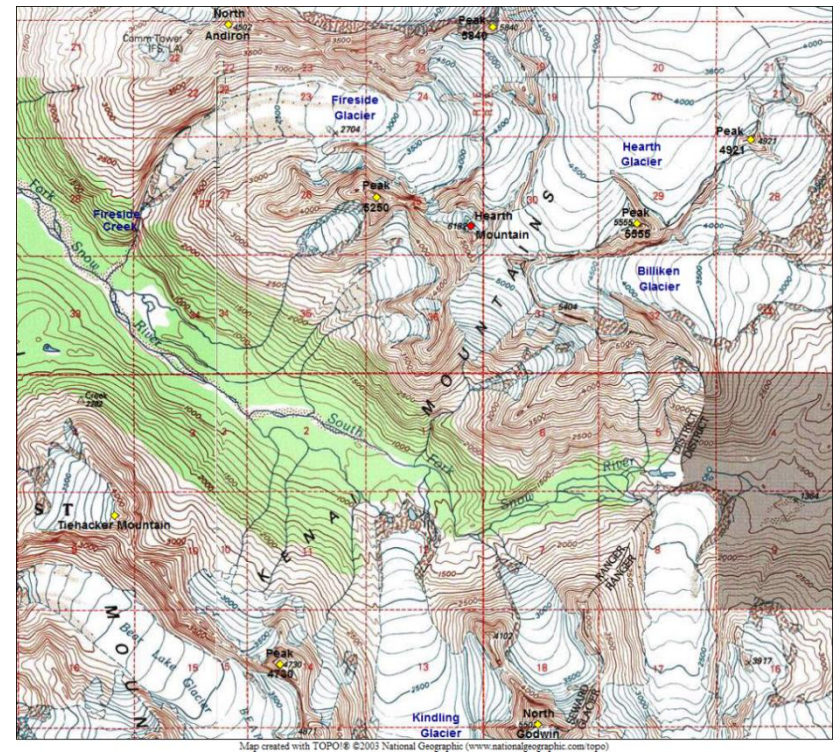
Hearth Mountain from Boulder Lake.
Photo by Harold Faust.



Paradise Peak and Hearth Mountain from the southwest. Photo by Dano Michaud.



Hearth Mountain from the Seward Highway. Photo by Harold Faust.



Map created with TOPO!® ©2003 National Geographic (www.nationalgeographic.com/topo)

MCA General Meeting Minutes: November 16, 2011

- (1) Treasurer: Exceeded expenses but also revenues for ice climbing festival. Forecast to break even vs budget of -\$4K.
- (2) Geographic Names: Naming of Murphy Ridge above Gold Cord Mine in Hatcher Pass open to comment. Rat Island to revert to historic name.
- (3) Parks Advisory: Anchorage considering requesting state funding to purchase Wallace property with access to Blacktail Rocks in Chugach State Park.
- (4) Calendar: On sale now. Special thanks to Carrie Wang, also Brian Aho, for help with layout.
- (5) Hiking and Climbing: Trip leader training held with high interest. Another to be scheduled in January.
- (6) Huts: Review of usage problems, particularly at Mint Hut. Plan to install urine diverter next summer. Lease requires removal of all waste, including human. Mention of board meeting discussion to limit luxuries (insulation, heaters, ...) to prevent huts from becoming hangout destinations. Located snowmachiner interested in helping with Dnigi maintenance.
- (7) Recognition of board and committee members for the past year. Members presented with coffee cards.
- (8) Slide Show Presentation by Tim Silvers: Climbing Mount Rainier via the Emmons-Winthrop route.

--Next general meeting: Christmas pizza-potluck, Wednesday, December 7 @ BP Energy Center, 6:30 PM

---Mark Smith, Secretary

Peak of the Month Correction

In the December Peak-of-the-Month column, I wrote that Mark Fouts and Charlie Hammond climbed Peak 5345 in the Friday Creek drainage of the Chugach Mountains in mid-August 1976 and that Richard Baranow repeated their ascent in August 2003. After the December *Scree* was

published, Mark Fouts emailed me to inform me that Charlie Hammond and he attempted Peak 5345, but traversed the ridge to the south of the summit. Richard Baranow subsequently told me that he attempted Peak 5345, but did not climb the final pitch to the summit because he was traveling solo and didn't have the necessary protection. Richard also mentioned that his ascent of Mount Cronus was not during the 2003 expedition that I mentioned in the *Scree*, but on an earlier trip.

----Steve Gruhn

Share Your Story

The Anchorage Museum is organizing a series of exhibitions for 2012 featuring Denali and mountaineering in Alaska. One of the exhibitions, titled ***The High One: Reaching the Top***, will look at climbing Denali through gear, artifacts, photos, film and interactive activities, while exploring how and why people climb. We are collecting stories for use on object labels and text panels.

- Did you summit or attempt to summit Mount McKinley?
- What was the most memorable, the best, the worst, the funniest or most upsetting moment of your climb?
- Did you experience gear malfunction or were you grateful for well-chosen equipment?
- What does it feel like to be at high altitude?
- What does Denali mean to you?

We are particularly looking for stories that could illustrate exhibit objects: backpacks, stoves, camp food, medical kits, cameras, clothing, tools etc. Please send your story or a creative entry (poetry, sketches, high altitude cooking recipes and dinner menus, etc.) to Jenya Anichenko janichenko@anchagemuseum.org by January 15, 2012. For questions please call 929-9270.

By submitting your stories you are granting the Anchorage Museum to use your credited quotes in the exhibition materials and marketing.

2012 Alaska Ice Climbing Festival

Just like ice, our 2012 Alaska Ice Climbing Festival is solidifying.... If you haven't heard, Will Gadd is

coming to this year's Alaska Ice Fest! (Thanks to Black Diamond and years of us badgering him....)

We have confirmed the Beartooth Theater for the auction, door prizes and a MUST SEE slideshow, 20 Trips in 60 Minutes by Will Gadd, at 8 p.m. Thursday, February 16th. The next afternoon, Friday the 17th, we'll have mini-skillbuilders, Chris Lindsey on DJ, a killer mixed-climbing competition, pizza, beer, etc. at the Alaska Rock Gym (thanks, Siri and Mike!). Ice Climbing clinics and equipment demonstrations will be held Saturday, February 18th in various locations, taught by Ascending Path guides and guest instructors. This year's Alaska Ice Festival is gonna be great with the Beartooth and Alaska Rock Gym as our basecamps. So save the dates, spread the word, and start training for dry-tooling up the wave wall!!

Also, we are in the very early stages of formalizing the Ice Access Coalition. This grass roots organization will be the recipient of proceeds (after festival expenses) as follows:

- 50% of the proceeds from the Ice Fest go to the Ice Access Coalition; and
- 50% to perpetuating future Alaska Ice Climbing Festivals.

Ice Access Coalition is an Alaskan grassroots organization dedicated to gaining and preserving access for future generations of climbers in Alaska. Emphasis is on land management relations, conservation easements, and access easements, working in conjunction with the national nonprofit, The Access Fund.

Tom Devine remains dedicated to funding the Festival, Jayme Mack is feverishly working on the festival as well as getting the new Website up (www.akicefest.com), and Molly Liston is helping run the Festival this year as well as coordinating ICE ACCESS as it grows. Stay tuned for press releases, website updates and Facebook notifications.

Thank you all for your sponsorship support and your strong volunteer effort and over the years! We hope to see your smiling face again this season at the 4th Annual Alaska Ice Fest.

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

2012 PROPOSED BUDGET

* Last Updated 11/3/2011

		Proposed for 2012	Current for 2011	Approved for 2011	Final for 2010
REVENUE					
Membership Dues	<i>received during calendar year</i>	\$8,000.00	\$6,533.70	\$7,000.00	7,830.00
Scree subscriptions		\$250.00	\$219.00	\$250.00	310.00
Training	<i>ice climbing, crevasse rescue, other</i>	\$10,500.00	\$10,840.63	\$8,000.00	11,858.00
Photo Calendar		\$3,000.00	\$1,738.00	\$3,000.00	3,165.00
MCA Products: T-Shirts, Patches, Etc.		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	260.00
Donations		\$0.00	\$30.00	\$0.00	0.00
Other--Interest on Accounts		\$150.00	\$86.11	\$200.00	190.54
Other-MCA Products for 50th Anniversary		\$0.00	\$0.00		0.00
Other		\$0.00	\$0.00		5.00
TOTAL REVENUE		\$21,900.00	\$19,447.44	\$18,450.00	23,618.54
EXPENSE					
Training	<i>campsite, access fees, instructors, trip leads</i>	\$7,000.00	\$7,148.64	\$6,000.00	5,800.74
Scree	<i>postage, mailing, printing</i>	\$2,300.00	\$1,991.04	\$2,300.00	2,265.98
General Meeting	<i>rent, refreshments, entertainment</i>	\$2,000.00	\$1,312.70	\$2,000.00	1,504.00
Administrative	<i>supplies, PO box, web site, ads, travel, misc</i>	\$2,200.00	\$701.05	\$1,000.00	495.58
Hut Construction & Maint.	<i>materials, supplies, hut equipment, lease fe</i>	\$4,000.00	\$3,514.35	\$4,000.00	323.93
Insurance	<i>reincorporation fees, insurance</i>	\$1,500.00	\$0.00	\$3,000.00	0.00
Club Equipment	<i>climbing gear, misc equipment</i>	\$500.00	\$409.46	\$1,000.00	34.86
Library	<i>new books, periodicals, Scree binding</i>	\$1,000.00	\$195.00	\$600.00	0.00
Other:	<i>miscellaneous expenses</i>	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	0.00
Photo Calendar		\$2,600.00	\$0.00	\$2,600.00	2,610.00
MCA Products: T-Shirts, Patches, Etc.		\$0.00	\$262.26	\$0.00	0.00
Other-MCA 50th Anniversary Party, Products		\$0.00	\$0.00	\$600.00	0.00
Other - Awards		\$400.00	\$592.00	\$0.00	1,037.99
TOTAL EXPENSE		\$23,500.00	\$16,126.50	\$23,100.00	14,073.08
DUE TO (FROM) RESERVE (To Balance)		(1,600.00)	3,320.94	(4,650.00)	9,545.46
CASH BALANCE - All Accounts					
Beginning Balance - January 1, 2011			\$29,913.59		
Increase (decrease) during 2011			\$3,320.94		
Current Balance for 2011			\$33,234.53		
Checking - Credit Union 1			\$11,251.63		
Money Mkt and CDs - Credit Union 1 (.75 - 1.89%)			\$20,367.78		
Savings - Credit Union 1 (.7%)			\$413.65		
18-month CD - in trust for hut lease - Northrim Bank (1.25%)			\$1,151.47		
Petty Cash			\$50.00		
TOTAL ALL ACCOUNTS			\$33,234.53		
Ending Balance - November 3, 2011					

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Tim Silvers	250-3374	Board member	Greg Encelewski	360-0274
Vice-President	Galen Flint	650-207-0810	Board member	Brian Aho	223-4758
Secretary	Mark Smith	868-3155	Board member	Vicky Lytle	351-8246
Treasurer	Randy Plant	243-1438	Board member	John Recktenwald	346-2589
			Board member	Jim Sellers	360-2560

Annual membership dues: Single \$15, Family \$20

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address at right. If you want a membership card, please fill out a club waiver and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter or have questions about your membership, contact the Club Membership Committee at membership@mtnclubak.org.

The 'Scree' is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be emailed to MCAScree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 25th of the month to appear in the next month's Scree.

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be in electronic format and pre-paid. Ads can be emailed to vicepresident@mtnclubak.org.

Missing your MCA membership card? Stop by the monthly meeting to pick one up or send a self-addressed stamped envelope and we'll mail it to you.

Mailing list/database entry: Yukiko Hayano and Randy Plant - 243-1438
Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vicky Lytle - hcc@mtnclubak.org
Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008
Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127
Scree Editor: MCAScree@gmail.com Steve Gruhn (344-1219) assisted by Amy Murphy (338-3979)
Web: www.mtnclubak.org (change your address here)

Mailing list service: MCAK@yahoogroups.com

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