

the SCREE



Mountaineering Club of Alaska

January 2016

Volume 59 Number 1

Contents

Soggy Feet, Big Land: Hiking through Bering Land Bridge
National Preserve

Moondance Peak

Uyuraq (6625), North Ridge

Mount Abbey

Chugach Ridge Hike Elicits Memories and Yields a Possible
Discovery

Arctic Valley Trail Clearing December 5-6, 2015

Peak of the Month: Mount Chetl

Monthly meeting: 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, January 19.

Max Neale will give a presentation on his ascent of the Cassin Ridge on Denali.

*"For my part, I know nothing with any certainty, but the sight of the stars makes
me dream."*

- Vincent Van Gogh

Reminder: Renew your membership.

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 meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 19, BP Energy Center, 1014 Energy Court, Anchorage, Alaska.

<http://www.alaskageology.org/graphics/meetingmap.gif>

For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit

<http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=members.form>.

Contents

Soggy Feet, Big Land: Hiking through Bering Land Bridge National Preserve
Moondance Peak
Uyuraq (6625), North Ridge
Mount Abbey
Chugach Ridge Hike Elicits Memories and Yields a Possible Discovery
Arctic Valley Trail Clearing December 5-6, 2015
Peak of the Month: Mount Chetl

Cover Photo

Tim Plotke on the summit of Uyuraq with the still-unclimbed summit of Talliktok in the background.
Photo by Zach Clanton

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 24th of each month to appear in the next issue of *the Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. Do not submit photos embedded in the text file. Send the photo files separately. 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. Please submit at least one vertically oriented photo for consideration for the cover. Please submit captions with photos.

Monthly Meeting: Tuesday, January 19, at 6:30 p.m.

Max Neale will give a presentation on his ascent of the Cassin Ridge on Denali.

Reminder: Renew your membership!

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

February 20-28: Seward to Hope backcountry ski tour (90 miles). Sign up at the January 19 MCA meeting. Trip leader Greg Bragiel.

February 27-28: Ice Climbing weekend at Eklutna Glacier. The MCA has booked the Serenity Falls Hut for the nights of Friday, February 26th, and Saturday, February 27th. All are welcome to come out and join the fun. Come to climb, fat bike, hike, ski tour, or just enjoy spending time at the hut. Bunks are first come, first served. Bring a tent and sleep outside if you like. You will need to arrange your own transportation (ski, hike, or bike) and bring your own gear. The hut is 12 miles from the trailhead. Orientation to the area will be provided. If you don't have a climbing partner, come anyway and we'll do our best to get you partnered up to climb. Send any questions to Cory Hinds at chinds100@gmail.com.

April 3-10: Eklutna Traverse ski mountaineering (31 miles) OR Bomber Traverse five huts ski tour (35 miles). Glacier Travel. We will go wherever the snow is. Trip leader Greg Bragiel. Participants must attend trip training March 26-27.

Online? Click me!



Check the Meetup site and Facebook for last minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

New Survey Yields New Elevations and Rankings for the Five Highest Peaks in the Brooks Range

In 2014 and 2015 Matt Nolan and Kit DesLauriers conducted surveys of the five highest peaks in the Brooks Range. Because two different summit elevations for Mount Isto have been reported on USGS maps, there has long been confusion as to which peak was the highest in the Brooks Range. The 1955 1:250,000 Demarcation Point USGS map reported Mount Isto's summit elevation as 9060 feet; the 1983 1:63,360 Demarcation Point (A-5) USGS map reported it was 8975 feet. Both the 1955 1:250,000 Mount Michelson USGS map and the 1956 1:63,360 Mount Michelson (B-2) USGS map indicated Mount Chamberlin's summit elevation was 9020 feet. Nolan developed a new photogrammetric and LIDAR technique to survey the summits and DesLauriers (with Andy Bardon and Don Carpenter as partners) carried a GPS receiver to the summits to confirm Nolan's technique. The findings were somewhat surprising. Mount Chamberlin, long considered to be either the highest or second highest peak in the Brooks Range, was determined to be the third highest. The recent survey reported the following elevations for the five highest summits in the Brooks Range: Mount Isto (8975 feet), Mount Hubley (8916 feet), Mount Chamberlin (8899 feet), Mount Michelson (8852 feet), and unofficially-named Mount Okpilak (8841 feet) in the East Okpilak Glacier drainage in the Romanzof Mountains. For additional information and photographs, visit <http://www.the-cryosphere-discuss.net/9/6871/2015/tcd-9-6871-2015.pdf>, <http://fairbanksfodar.com/fodar-updates-usgs-maps>, and <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/12/151216-anwr-highest-peak-mt-isto-fodar-remote-sensing/>.

- Steve Gruhn

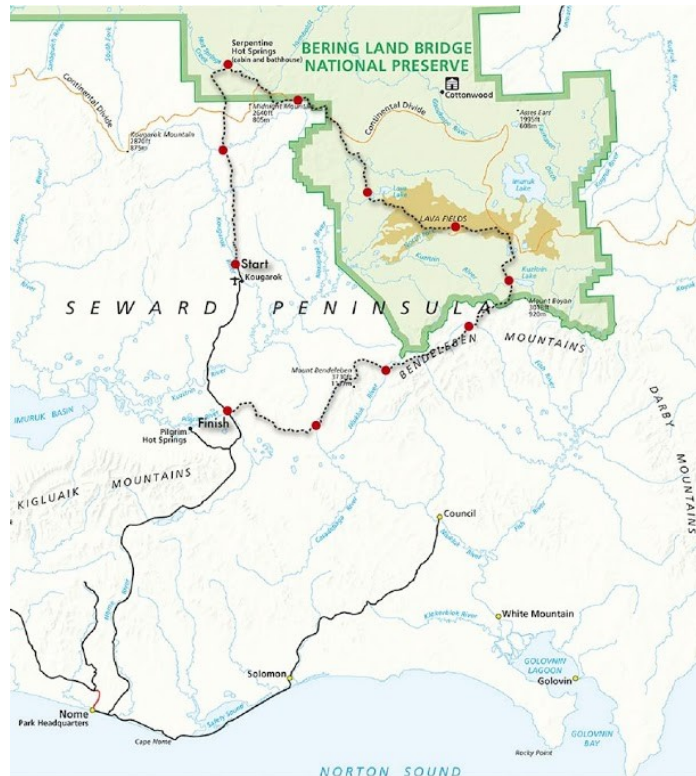
Fun Trivia by Dawn Talbott and Charlene Clark:

Answers on page 15.

1. What is the 5th highest mountain?
A. Makalu, Nepal B. Lhotse, Nepal C. Nanga Parbat, Pakistan D. Denali, Alaska
2. How high is the highest peak above sea level?
A. 20,322 feet B. 31,712 feet C. 29,035 feet D. 19,341 feet
3. What is the nickname of Mount Everest?
A. The Killer Mountain B. Sir George Mountain C. The Great Messner D. The Hillary Mountain
4. What is the longest mountain range in the world?
A. Himalayas B. Rocky Mountains C. Andes D. Alps
5. Which mountain is the highest volcano in the U.S. at 16,550 feet, is the head of the glacier- and icefield-covered mountain massif in Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park ?
A. Mount Blackburn B. Mount Wrangell C. Mount Sanford D. Mount Bona

Soggy Feet, Big Land: Hiking through Bering Land Bridge National Preserve

Text by Nick Treinen



Route map courtesy of Lupe Zaragoza, National Park Service

We entered Iyat in the mist, GPS broken, wandering, awestruck by the immense humanoid rock formations all around us. I left my pack at the base of one cluster of the towering granite tors and ran to the top of the hill, where down the valley the fog was lifting and I could finally see rising steam and the red-sided bunkhouse that marked our destination: Serpentine Hot Springs. Neil Liotta, a quarter-mile down the hill, followed the direction I indicated as I ran back to get my pack.

I had come up to the Seward Peninsula the two previous winters as a volunteer with the cross-country ski program Skiku/NANA Nordic. On my Ravn Air flights between Nome and Shishmaref, I'd fallen captive to the mountain ranges out the window of the Cessna Caravan, and resolved to return when the snow was gone. In August 2015 I was back in Nome with my adventure buddy Neil Liotta, sitting on a friend's kitchen floor sorting through the 50 pounds of food and wondering how many cans of bear spray were adequate. We set out from the end of the Kougarak Road on the evening of August 18th, ready for at least two weeks and around 170 miles of backpacking through caribou country, though the caribou have shared this particular chunk of land with *Homo sapiens* for at least 16,000 years. Our first waypoint was Iyat – or Serpentine in the white man's words – 35 miles from the end of the road.



Neil Liotta pondering the bust of Abraham Lincoln at Iyat.

Photo by Nick Treinen



Nick Treinen hiking across the lava toward "Mount Doom."

Photo by Neil Liotta



Imuruk Lava

Photo by Neil Liotta

Though Serpentine Hot Springs may be the crown jewel of the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve (BELA, in Park Service speak), it was only the first stop on our walkabout through the preserve. BELA is one of the least-visited units of our National Park System, and the reasons are clear: it's pretty dang hard to get there on anything but soggy feet. BELA's Ranger at the Nome office had been working there for four years and had only entered the preserve three times. The majority of visitors were locals from Shishmaref who snowmachined out to Iyat/Serpentine in the spring to hunt caribou and soak in the tub as they've been doing for 10,000 years (minus the snowmachine part). Once Neil and I left Serpentine, we were likely the only humans within the other 2.7 million acres.

We took a few days of rest and relaxation at the bunkhouse (minimum three soaks per day) and then followed Hot Springs Creek high up to where the water poured straight out of the mountainside and the scree slopes above were etched with generations of caribou tracks. Minutes later we hauled ourselves over the ridge and I had to sit down under the magnitude of what lay before us (*and the magnitude of my pack*). Straddling the Continental Divide, where each drop of rain makes its choice – Arctic or Pacific – we could see all the way north to Goodhope Bay, and far to our south, our destination, the Bendeleben Mountains. The Imuruk Lava Fields brooded like an ebony lagoon in between. If this was what the Beringians saw all those millennia ago, who, then, decided to stay and who pressed onward? Left alone, I might have sided with the Inupiaq and followed the wind back down the valley to boil my muktuk at Iyat. But Neil, ever the Clovis, turned to me half a minute later and motioned onward, over Peak 2592. The even-
Scree—January 2016

ing felt placid, reflective, and the weather matched the mood; we fell asleep under the stars. But in the morning the mood changed along with the weather and through the fog and rain we could hardly see the ground at our feet. Soaked to the core, we followed wolf tracks from the Divide down to the Noxapaga River, and farther on to Lava Lake.



Neil Liotta at camp on the Continental Divide

Photo by Nick Treinen

If my hiking partner and I are ever asked to curate the Lonely Planet Guide to the Imuruk Lava Fields, our contribution will be as follows: "Hikeability of the lava-flows ranges from very poor to excellent, with the average being better than tussocks." Imagine an asphalt highway, 20 miles long by 10 miles wide. Now, imagine that highway after World Wars III through VI have been fought on the surface. Jumbles of basaltic boulders 30 feet high with chasms 4 feet across interrupt any attempt at steady pro-

gress. Miniature ecosystems within the confines of pits and fissures blossomed with ferns, lichen, and alders. The shortest distance between two points was seldom a straight line.

We set a compass bearing off Lost Jim Cone, our “Mount Doom,” and navigated through that strange new world for 20 linear miles until we reached the caldera just as a wave of fog rolled in. Perhaps that was a warning that we had offended the weather gods; our relationship with those deities festered thereafter. The next morning, on the beautiful sandy shores of Kuzitrin Lake, we awoke to snow, our frequent companion over the next four days through the Bendeleben Mountains. Weather aside, the Bendeleben Mountains were glorious and the broad valleys had the best blueberries I’d ever found. Happily away from the lowland tussock, spurred on by the cold, Neil and I moved quickly.

The Bendelebens also provided a delightful navigational challenge, as there was absolutely zero publicly available information regarding hiking conditions or possible routes. It became an evening ritual to sit down after our instant mashed-potato dinner (or ramen, or rice and beans, or couscous, or pasta, or Pilot bread, or falafel), pull out the maps we had available (including the 1950 Bendeleben quadrangle, with large areas left blank), and plan our route for the next day. That improvised route took us from Kuzitrin Lake directly into the heart of the range, then westward alternating between river valleys (Boston Creek, over Peak 3433, Pargon River, Niukluk River, over Peak 3469, Libby River) and 2,000- to 3,000-

foot passes.

Our second-to-last day was a true test. We started in the Niukluk River valley and then hiked up onto a series of ridges completely enveloped in dense clouds. The wind picked up and began gusting upwards of 35 miles per hour, then was joined by blinding snow; I was literally eating the icicles that were building up on my hair. We continued for something like 10 miles over those ridges, our route taking us within 1 mile of the summit of Mount Bendeleben. At that juncture, a quick risk/reward evaluation led us to decide that the view from the top, with visibility hanging around 50 feet, was not quite worth that extra schlep.

Down, down out of the clouds we descended, until we could see the broad Libby River/Belt Creek divide that separated us from the last chunk of hills before the Kougarok Road. Yes, I was guilty of superstition when it came to weather, but I had never been one to attribute malicious agency to meteorological events, and yet watching dark storm clouds abruptly take a 90-degree turn and blast us with another dose of sleet certainly provoked me to challenge those beliefs. We were harangued by the weather all the way back to the road the next day, too.

But as we set our final camp alongside the Pilgrim River, the clouds drifted off and the next morning we awoke to the first bluebird sky of our trip and our first real look at Mount Bendeleben. Alas, our timing could have been better, but we walked down the Kougarok Road with our heads held high and had no regrets when, an hour later, the first vehicle of the day drove by and stopped to offer us a ride back to Nome.



Neil Liotta at the head of Serpentine Valley

Photo by Nick Treinen



Neil Liotta entering the Bendeleben Mountains.

Photo by Nick Treinen

Moondance Peak

Text and photos by Daniel Fortner

It was an alien world up there. I'd have sworn I was in Mordor, except Sam said no when I asked him to carry me piggyback up the final ridge. We were on an apparently unnamed peak in the Talkeetna Mountains, perhaps 25 miles from where we'd begun our trek. Steamy fog rose from the ridgeline as if from an angry volcano, and crumbling mudstone scree fell away at our sides in hellish shades of red and black.

It was July 1, four or five days after we'd left the banks of the Matanuska River and started north along Pinochle Creek. My co-leaders and I were guiding a small group of 16-year-olds on their first backcountry adventure, and a rest day had placed us on a vibrant patch of tundra beside modest Glass Creek. Above us was a pronounced pyramid of dark rock, the weathered remnant of high-thrusted trench sediments. I wasn't sure, but I thought I heard it calling quietly down to me while I slept at its base.

Indeed, the whole valley whispered with mystery. Low grass rolled out in endless waves from our campsite and lapped up silently at the surrounding peaks. The decades-old mining equipment still visible in parts of the watershed hinted at a time when hopeful young wanderers had first explored these slopes in search of riches. Later, while exploring in the midnight dusk beside a nearby hidden ravine, I would find a nameless rock-pile grave marked only by the hand-chiseled letters *RIP* on a chunk of talus; I tried to imagine the circumstances under which some young prospector had been forever entombed alongside this canyon – sickness? working injury? rockfall? – but I could only speculate.

The weather had been questionable when we rolled out of our tents the morning before our climb, but my students didn't require much persuading; Alaska had lit a fire under their boots. A few nights earlier, three of them had snuck away during a midnight latrine visit to make a bid for one of the peaks above our campsite. They might have summited if I hadn't found them and dragged them back down by their ears. This, they realized, was a second chance for glory.

Sam Booke, Ryan Hartman, Henry Broms, and I started up toward the 6610-foot summit along a well-traveled caribou trail before hitting a jagged ridgeline an hour from camp. It wasn't a



Moondance Peak, a provisionally named 6610-foot pyramid near the headwaters of Glass Creek

particularly technical climb, just third-class scrambling with a few exposed sections (don't tell my boss) between slatey gendarmes. It was genuinely wild territory, though; I couldn't be sure that some inspired young miner or backpacker hadn't beaten us to this summit many years before, but I liked to believe that ours were the first boots ever to have touched these ridges. The profoundly alluring possibility of being the first humans to see the world from this precise angle continued to pull us upward until, during a sudden and fortuitous break in the clouds, we topped out on the final summit spire.



Henry Broms approaching the first ridge, 500 feet above base camp.

From up there, entire previously hidden cirques became visible. We watched unidentifiable creatures scrambling below us next to high tarns, and we expectantly studied the pass we'd be crossing in the following days. Finally, feeling like Neil Armstrong on the moon, we built a small cairn at the summit before running back down the ridge, arms out at our sides like rising eagles, all the way to base camp. It had been an easy ascent; all in all, it took less than three hours, and we never had to place gear or even rope up. We'd experienced the elusive ecstasy, though, of exploring possibly uncharted ground, and in the following days we couldn't help but examine other nearby peaks with renewed longing.

Real mystery lingers still in the Talkeetna backcountry. I was disturbed, then, when I later saw a major mining operation mounting for an assault on the same valleys where our little team had found such silence and stillness. I passed along previously unobtrusive trails that recently had been machine-gouged for many miles to deep, muddy trenches, and I saw a small army of trucks, backhoes, and bulldozers preparing for battle. I don't know precisely what these crews have planned for Pinochle and Glass Creeks, but I worry for these precious little slices of frontierland.

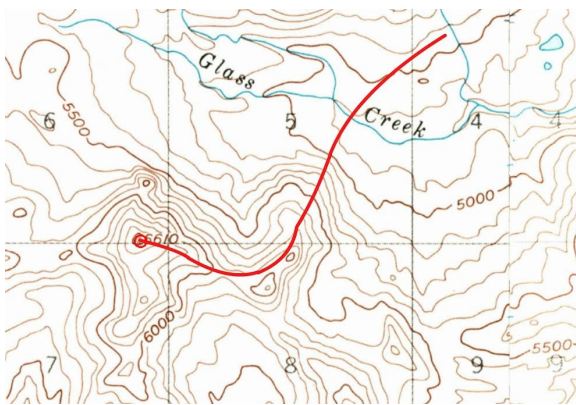
I'm reminded, though, when I consider the abandoned mid-century equipment deep in that same wilderness, that Alaska ultimately fought off the last major operation there. I dearly hope that those splendid mountains will manage another victory.



Henry Broms taking in the view from atop an early gendarme.



Henry Broms and Ryan Hartman (right) start out across an early ridgeline.



From left to right, Ryan Hartman, Henry Broms, and Sam Booke celebrate a possible first ascent. Glass Creek is visible in the background.

Uyuraq (6625), North Ridge

Text and photos by Zach Clanton



The two granite pyramids of the Talliktok cirque, with Uyuraq on the left and Talliktok on the right. The team made the first ascent of Uyuraq's north ridge (left skyline) and made multiple, unsuccessful attempts on the prominent west face of Talliktok.

This expedition had its beginnings in 2013, while I completed a 21-day snowboarding and climbing trip in the Tordrillo Mountains. During an initial reconnaissance flight and subsequent ground travel in this range, I became increasingly aware of its alpine rock-climbing potential as we walked past beautiful orange granite. It was incredible to me that these glaciated and craggy peaks, world renowned for heli-skiing, were relatively unexplored for rock climbing. I told myself I'd return for a closer look in summer.



The west face of Talliktok

It wasn't until June 2015 that I got the chance to do another recon flight; this time I had an eagle eye for accessing those big rock walls. Flying low and slow, we circled and soared around numerous pinnacles, close enough to the rock to feel like we were climbing. In doing so, we scoped an incredible amount of terrain; however, rapid snowmelt alongside crevasse-riddled landing zones and approaches discouraged us. We continued our flight, looking for a less glaciated area. Our search brought us into the neighboring Hidden Mountains, and what we found was absolutely stunning. Initially, we spotted a set of gorgeous granite pyramids – that upon further investigation proved to be unnamed, unclimbed, and completely unexplored.

The Hidden Mountains are small group of peaks located between the Tordrillo Mountains and the Revelation Mountains. They have only seen a handful of expeditions, mostly unsuccessful, and it was very apparent why: the rugged and remote nature of these peaks seemed to rattle any sort of serious effort. Fred Beckey once lined up a trip here that cost a fortune in flying logistics alone. This year, with summer temperatures a month advanced, a ski-plane-accessed base-camp-style expedition was out of the question. We had to find somewhere free of snow. These mystery peaks were perfect for the occasion.

After weeks of logistical nightmares, I finally figured out what it would take to approach these peaks. We launched our expedition from Nikiski, flying 70 miles across Cook Inlet and into the mountains. Our pilot Doug Brewer and I took off in a Super Cub, using that as a recon/shuttle aircraft, while my partners James Gustafson and Tim Plotke followed behind in a Beaver floatplane. With high winds and water in all directions near the shore of Ch'akajabena Lake, we struggled to find a landing zone appropriate for both the floatplane and the Super Cub, so Doug and I continued toward our objective, seeing how close we could land. After extensive searching and multiple bear sightings, the closest we could get was 12 miles from our destination. The terrain we had to travel looked like serious bush-bashing along the Another River, but we were very committed at that point.

From Ch'akajabena Lake, Doug shuttled in James, Tim, and the rest of our gear. It took us five days to travel those 12 miles. Incessant mosquitoes and alders blocked our path, and a machete was required to cut our way through the denser areas. Some days I would throw down my pack at the end of an exhausting 14-hour day and see that we had only gone 1.8 miles. Some bears were indifferent to our passing, but others showed signs of curiosity and aggressiveness. On one occasion our only option was to spray buckshot from our 12-gauge to deter them.

Eventually, we made it into the rocky cirque that we had begun calling Talliktok (an Inupiaq word for hidden). We made ourselves at home by pitching our Megamid on a flat rock. In the weeks that followed, we made the first ascent of Uyuraq (6625; meaning brother) via its north ridge (four pitches, 5.7) and made multiple attempts at a direct line up the west face of Talliktok (6850), climbing corner systems up to 5.10, which all ended in dangerously loose rock and very questionable belays. On "halfway" weather days – when we weren't tent-bound from the constant downpours – we had the chance to explore the extensive bouldering potential in the cirque. On our hike out, we were able to check out another untouched climbing venue we dubbed the Bear Slabs. After 24 days, we arrived back in civilization for glorious burgers and beers after the wildest adventure of our lives!

The peak we've called Talliktok is still out there lurking in the clouds of the Hidden Mountains awaiting its first ascent. Who will be up for it?



Tim Plotke starting up the 5.9 first pitch of our unfinished line on the west face of Talliktok on Day Six after our five-day approach.



Tim Plotke doing a headstand on the summit of Uyuraq



Tim Plotke hanging out in the Talliktok Jacuzzi on Day Twenty

Mount Abbey

Text and photos by Sam Zmolek



Katie Rockwood near the summit of Mount Abbey with Pistriakoff Peak in the background on the left



Southeast face of Mount Abbey

Mount Abbey sits in a cluster of three prominent peaks on the northwest side of the Shaishnikof River valley, near Captains Bay on Unalaska Island. The highest of the three is Pistriakoff Peak, at 2699 feet of elevation, and there are two neighboring peaks to the east that each stand around 2,550 feet high. These two peaks are connected by a 300-foot saddle, and appear as twins from various views, though the northeast peak seems to be a smidge higher. I had not attained either summit previously, and am not aware of any locals who have.

All three peaks in the cluster are intimidating with steep sides

and sketchy ridgelines, though the higher Pistriakoff actually has the easiest ascent route, a breathtaking climb along the east ridge. After climbing Pistriakoff in 2014, I set my sights on the two scarier little brothers to the northeast, and made two failed attempts to climb them in the winter and the spring.

The first failed climb was a solo effort in mid-winter, and I attempted the south ridge straight on. After reaching 2100 feet of elevation, I turned around due to safety concerns at the base of a steep, exposed, and ice-laden tooth along the ridge. I attempted to lead a party of three along the same route in the late spring of 2015, but we turned around before reaching the 1800-foot sub-summit along the route, due to intense winds and dubious snow conditions.

Finally in late summer, with my friend Katie Rockwood visiting, we decided to go for it on August 27th. We had a reasonable weather window and good summer conditions. We left in the afternoon and parked the car at the end of Captains Bay Road, before heading up the valley and wading across the Shaishnikof River. From there it was a straightforward bushwhack across the tall lowland grasses to reach the opposite side of the valley and begin the ascent.

We started up alongside the steep gully that divides Pistriakoff from its neighbors to the northeast, and continued ascending until we were below some cliff bands around 1400 feet. In past expeditions, I climbed past the cliff bands on the left, but I had

been a little nervous about the exposure and steepness of that route even when I did it, so we decided to strike out to the right and traverse a steep, grassy slope. This route ended up working very well, as we took a circuitous line that slowly rotated around the sub-summit while ascending at a reasonable gradient. The bonus of this route was the abundance of low-bush blueberries on the southeasterly aspects that we greedily devoured as we ascended. In fact, we were finding edible blueberries all the way to the summit, which was an unexpected perquisite indeed.

Once we were at the sub-summit, it was reckoning time as we reassessed our options. The south ridge that ascended directly from the sub-summit was looking about as menacing as it had in winter, with a deceiving grade that looked doable, but was lined with steep, exposed steps that appeared to be made of crumbly, unreliable rock. My plan had been to traverse the bottom of the steep southeast face, and then attempt to summit via the northeast ridge, a ridge that looked a little steeper than the south ridge, but didn't appear to have as many potentially ruinous obstacles.

We started across the face, but even as we started, we kept looking up at a narrowing green passage that seemed to lead all the way to the top, amidst the cliffs and crags above. As we walked, Katie and I continued discussing this option. As we got close to halfway across the first face, we both just looked at each other and figured, "may as well." Since the limited intelligence on the other route was that it wasn't going to be a sure thing even if we traversed the whole summit block, it seemed silly not to give this route a shot, even if it was not particularly inviting.

We started upward, zigzagging across a steepening, sparsely vegetated slope. As the incline increased and we were funneled into a narrower section between slide debris on our left and a cliffy couloir on the right, we found ourselves particularly grateful for the ground squirrel and lemming burrows, which made for the best footing under the circumstances. It was steep enough that an uncontrolled fall could have gotten nasty, and the rock underfoot was by no means excellent. I'll never forget Katie describing the subsequent descent as an exercise in self rescue.

As we reached the last hundred feet or so below the summit, there was a subtle ridge just above the rather terrifying ragdoll couloir that shot off to the right of our little chute, and this proved to be the best line. Soon we were through the worst, and riding a short, gentle celebratory ridge to the summit. With dramatic clouds to the west, we soaked in the wonderful views of the nearby peaks, Nateekin Valley, and all of Unalaska Bay. It was one of the hardest-earned pieces of real estate around, but very much worth the view and we stayed on top for a while in the August warmth.



Katie Rockwood on the summit of Mount Abbey

As we took pictures, we were surprised to find a piece of rebar embedded in the summit itself, indicating a previous human presence, possibly dating back to World War II. There were no cairns or other indicators of recent human activity, however. I wandered around the three potential approach ridges and decided that from what I could observe, we probably took the easiest way up the mountain, as all the ridgelines had some nasty cliff bands that would not have been easily passable, especially with the chossy rock.

Katie and I decided to refer to this peak as Mount Abbey, barring any local names that we were aware of, as an homage to Edward Abbey, one of our favorite wilderness writers. We breathed deep, and prepared for a descent that we were not looking forward to, though we ended up getting down and back just fine, and had a little time to pick more blueberries and catch some salmon in the Shaishnikof River on the way back to the car. It was a memorable day that would've made any grizzly bear proud.



Sam Zmolek (left) and Katie Rockwood on the summit of Mount Abbey with Unalaska Bay and Dutch Harbor in the background

Chugach Ridge Hike Elicits Memories and Yields a Possible Discovery

Text and photos by Frank E. Baker



The small spruce tree is among many above 2,500 feet on the mountain ridge north of Eklutna Valley. At right is Mount POW/MIA, center is East Twin Peak, and at left are the Pioneer Peaks.

Beneath the thin layer of snow, my Kahtoola spikes dug into the unfrozen ground as I climbed slowly upward through the woods toward the ridge directly above, or north, of Eklutna Lake Road. It was November 7th and the ridge was awash in midday sunshine – one of the main reasons I chose that location. Fully exposed to the south, the ridge received ample sunlight even during winter’s shortest days.

I left my car on a road pull off about Mile 4 and stayed mostly on a primitive trail as I angled up through the woods toward the ridge. The climbing wasn’t that difficult, especially with my trusty Kahtoola spikes (one of the best \$60 investments I’d ever made).

I heard ravens before I saw them as I emerged from the trees into a clearing. Then I noticed about six of them were following a mature bald eagle that was winging along the ridge crest in an easterly direction, toward Eklutna Lake. As I’d observed before, some of the ravens seemed to enjoy harassing the eagle in swooping and diving motions. The eagle was one of the largest I’d seen in recent years, but lacking the maneuvering ability of the smaller birds, it didn’t deviate from its course – seemingly ignoring the ravens’ taunting gyrations.

Climbing upward, I saw several more groups of ravens taking advantage of the ridge’s thermal uplift – about 25 of them in

the space of 30 minutes, all headed east.

I reached the ridge about an hour and 30 minutes after leaving my car, and was surprised by a brisk wind out of the southeast. I quickly put on another layer, then followed the top of the ridge due east to an elevation high point of about 2,750 feet. Along the top of the ridge I followed the fresh tracks of a coyote, also headed east.

To get out of the wind for a brief lunch, I dropped down into a hollow and ducked behind a small spruce tree. My goal for a rest stop on that hike was to find a spot in the sun that was out of the wind. That location worked on both scores.

Looking around at the smattering of spruce trees in the area – all above the normal timberline – it occurred to me that during hikes to that area going back about 40 years, I didn’t see many conifers up that high.

“I must be getting old,” I mused. “I thought that retreating glaciers are all that I’ve witnessed over the years. Now I’m seeing trees growing where they didn’t before.”

Most of the spruce trees were small, no more than 5 feet tall, but some appeared to be 8 to 10 feet in height. I later checked with the Alaska Division of Forestry office and indeed one of its researchers has been documenting the upward advance of the timberline in Southcentral Alaska.



Frank Baker on a ridge overlooking the Matanuska Valley and the Knik River

Looking back: Reflecting on past hikes to that location, I recalled a strange incident that occurred during a ptarmigan hunt. My shot only winged the bird and it disappeared over a steep section of the mountain on the Eklutna Valley side. I ran to the edge, accidentally fell onto my rear, and began sliding toward the bird, which was also sliding downhill and gaining speed. I was glissading uncomfortably fast when I finally overtook the bird to claim my quarry.

Most of my past hikes to the area, however, had been mainly to bask in the sun in the darker months during those winters that were relatively snow-free, and to take in the views – including the Matanuska and Susitna Valleys to the north.

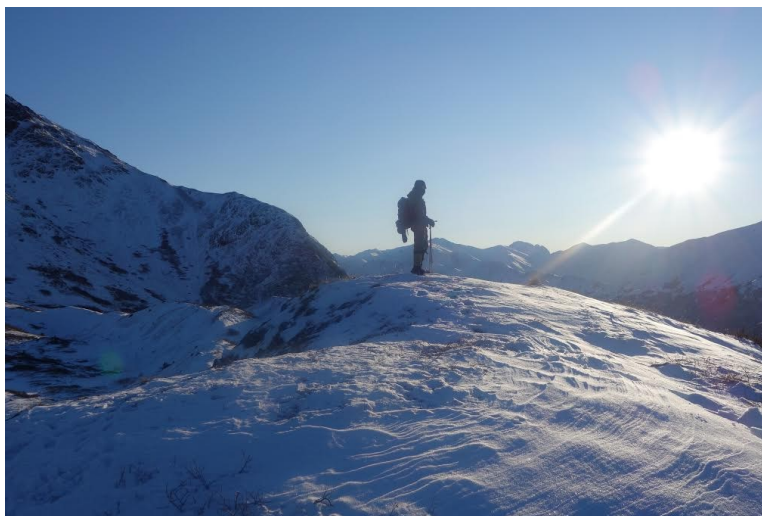
After lunch I hiked back up to the windy ridge and continued east, dropping down into a deep gully at the base of a mountain that led to Mount POW/MIA, farther east. In 1999 the moun-

tain was formally named by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, honoring U.S. servicemen who became prisoners of war or missing in action. A flag and memorial can be found at the mountain's 4,314-foot summit.

Deep in the gully, I was grateful to find a fairly established trail that led all the way down the mountain to Mile 5 on Eklutna Lake Road. In half an hour I was at the road and hiking back to my car, completing a roughly four-mile loop.

I like going to new places, but discoveries can sometimes be found at old haunts; for instance, trees growing where I didn't see them before.

Frank E. Baker is a lifetime Alaska resident, MCA member, and freelance writer who lives in Eagle River.



Birchwood's Jeff Worrell on November 18 on a second hike to the ridge to find Frank's lost hat – a hunt that was successful!

Parting Shot



View to the southwest from Mount Magnificent

Photo by Frank Baker

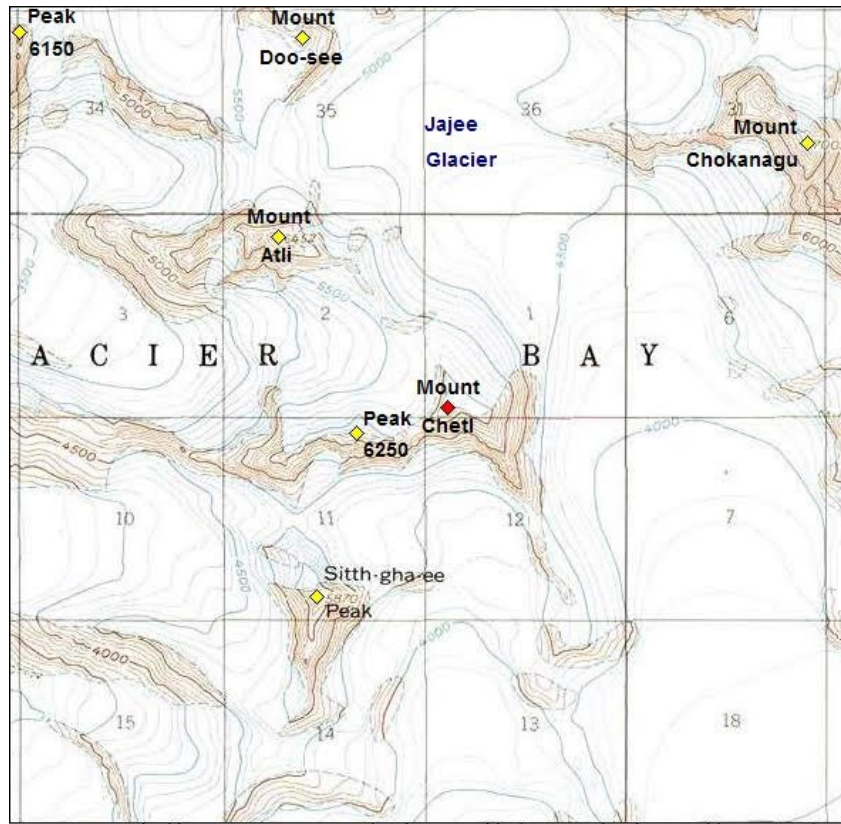
Fun Trivia Answers:

Answers from page 3.

1. What is the 5th highest mountain?
A. Makalu, Nepal
2. How high is the highest peak above sea level?
C. 29,035 feet Mount Everest
3. What is the nickname of Mount Everest?
B. Sir George Mountain
4. What is the longest mountain range in the world?
C. Andes
5. Which mountain is the highest volcano in the U.S. at 16,550 feet, is the head of the glacier- and icefield-covered mountain massif in Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park ?
D. Mount Bona

Peak of the Month: Mount Chetl

Text by Steve Gruhn



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

Mountain Range: Saint Elias Mountains; Takhinsha Mountains

Borough: Unorganized Borough

Drainages: Jajee Glacier and McBride Glacier

Latitude/Longitude: 59° 6' 59" North, 135° 55' 4" West

Elevation: 6350 ± 50 feet

Prominence: 600 feet from Mount Atli (6452)

Adjacent Peaks: Mount Atli and Peak 6250 in the Casement Glacier and McBride Glacier drainages

Distinctness: 600 feet from either Mount Atli or Peak 6250

USGS Maps: Skagway (A-3)

First Recorded Ascent: This peak might be unclimbed

Access Point: Jajee Glacier

On June 5, 1966, Layton A. Bennett flew Lawrence E. Nielsen and David C. Chappellear in a Piper Super Cub from Haines to the 4000-foot level of the Jajee Glacier, where Nielsen established a base camp. Nielsen, Chappellear, and three other men spent the next three weeks exploring and naming the peaks and glaciers of the area. On June 25 Bennett returned and flew them to Haines.

Nielsen and Chappellear described their base camp as being in a spectacular setting and noted the hanging glaciers of Mount Chetl that periodically poured down snow and ice avalanches onto the glacier. The name Chetl reportedly means thunder in Tlingit.

During the course of the expedition, members of the party climbed several peaks in the area, including Mount Atli (6452), Mount Doo-see (6025), Mount Yeet (6075), and Mount Dech (7475). However, they never attempted Mount Chetl. As far as I know, the peak remains unclimbed. Your ascent could be the first.

The information for this article came from Nielsen's and Chappellear's report titled "First Party in the Takhinsha Mountains, Alaska," which appeared on pages 273 through 287 of the December 1966 *Appalachia*, the journal of the Appalachian Mountain Club.

Arctic Valley Trail Clearing December 5-6, 2015

The MCA recognizes and thanks the following members for their dedication: Ashley Vanosdel, Scott Stibrich, Lisa Maas, Carol Akerson, Bernard Federspiel, and Mary Mears. The team cleared five miles of the Arctic Valley to Indian Trail from the Arctic Valley Trailhead southbound into the Ship Creek valley, to the beaver pond. Flagging was placed to guide travelers from the wooded corridor to the beaver pond. Thank you for your hard work!

Greg Bragiel - Trip leader



From left to right: Scott Stibrich, Mary Mears, Ashley Vanosdel, and Bernard Federspiel

Photo by Greg Bragiel

Archived Issues of the Scree

So, you're an MCA member and are interested in tracking down some route information for a climb, but you don't know where to turn. Why not try the MCA's archives of past issues of *the Scree*? Visit <http://www.mtnclubak.org/> and click on Membership and then Download MCA *Scree*. All past issues of *the Scree* from 1958 to the present are available for downloading. Additionally, all issues of *the Scree* since the November 1998 issue are searchable. Type the search item in the space provided on the Download MCA *Scree* page and click submit. If you're searching for information contained in issues before November 1998, use Willy's Index of Peaks in *Scree* (which covers issues from 1958 to March 2012), courtesy of Willy Hersman. And if you're still having difficulty finding what you want, email me at mcascree@gmail.com and I'll try to help. I've compiled information on all of the peaks mentioned in previous issues of *the Scree*, but my compilation isn't as user friendly as either of the above methods.

- Steve Gruhn

MCA Meeting Minutes - Tuesday, November 17, 2015

1. **Training (Jayme Mack, Josh Clark):**

- a. Upcoming winter mountaineering course! Stay tuned for details.

2. **Huts (Cory Hinds):**

- a. Dnigi Hut relocation: we're going to tear this hut down and relocate it to a new area – north of the Mint and Bomber Huts. The aim is to create new loops that access great backcountry areas. Go to the Dnigi Hut now before it's gone!
- b. Mint Hut: if you go there please open a window or crack the door so moisture can escape. This is critical for preventing mold. Ross Noffsinger designed two new vents that need to be installed. We also need to bring in a new urine-separating toilet. Reminder: don't urinate in the buckets; we can't fly urine out!

3. **Geographic Names:**

- a. Prince William Sound Economic Development District wants to name a peak after Carl Brady, the man who brought helicopters to Alaska in the 1940s. Comments

are due December 1 prior to the December 8 Alaska Historical Commission meeting.

4. **Other:**

- a. The new MCA calendar is available for \$13. We make a few dollars from each purchase of this Alaska-made beauty.
- b. Mentor program: we're in the process of finding more mentors. We will also run another mentor program in the spring.
- c. Volunteer opportunities at Hatcher Pass to assist ranger with snowmachine outreach. Contact Ralph Baldwin if you're interested.
- d. The 2016 budget will be published in the December *Scree*. Member voting happens in January. The largest item (\$20,000) is for the Dnigi Hut relocation.
- e. We're looking for someone to volunteer to bring refreshments to general meetings. Contact Cory Hinds (president@mtnclubak.org).

MCA Board Meeting Minutes - Tuesday, December 8, 2015

Attendees: Cory Hinds, Nathan Hebda, Max Neale, Galen Flint (via telephone), Steve Gruhn

1. VP-Programs (Galen Flint)

- a. December: holiday party at Pioneer School House. Max will arrange audio/video. Need people to help with setup. Galen investigating liability insurance. Bring your own beverage. Max will present on Cassin Ridge at the January general meeting.

3. Treasurer's report (Aaron Gallagher)

- a. We have proposed a budget. It is in *the Scree* for December and will be in the January *Scree* as well. We will vote on the budget at the January general meeting. Board is considering increasing fees for printed *Screes* to cover a larger portion of the cost.

4. Secretary's report (Max)

- a. One hundred fourteen out of 644 active members (18%) responded to the survey. Respondents primarily intend to pursue backcountry skiing, hiking, and backpacking over the next year. They've been a member for two years (median) and have attended 1.8 meetings in the last year (mean). They find huts and training to be the two most valuable aspects of MCA membership. Huts, learning about climbing locations/opportunities, and learning from trainings constitute the vast majority of their motivation for being members. Significantly more respondents read *the Scree* than skim *the Scree*. Respondents spent an average of two nights in MCA huts in the last two years. In declining order, respondents suggest the following as improvements: more training, more trips, more social events, online searchable *Scree*, more welcoming for new members/more inclusive, better communication about trips. Finally, 67% of respondents would prefer an online version of *the Scree*. Max contacted gift certificate winner and will mail prize.
- b. We briefly discussed moving *the Scree* online and will talk more about this next meeting when more Board members are present.
- c. Several survey respondents suggested more fundraising for huts. The Board is keen to have a large event in fall 2016 with multiple presentations and videos.

5. Huts (Cory):

- a. Department of natural Resources leases for Bomber,

Mint, and Dnigi Huts will be updated on Thursday.

- b. New Hut: next step is getting materials list, then pricing for materials and helicopter. Cory envisions a hut like the Bomber Hut, but with better ventilation, a large porch, and an arctic entry. Nathan will assist Cory with materials list.

6. Training (Jayme Mack):

Update on Winter Basic Mountaineering Courses. Plan to line up a selection of courses with combination of volunteer and paid instruction.

- a. Level 1 Avalanche course, March 5-7 at Hatcher Pass
- b. Crevasse Rescue – date to be determined (TBD). Schedule and sign-up.
- c. Snow climbing with Dave Staeheli
- d. Ice climbing – date TBD.

7. Hiking and Climbing

- a. Ed Smith is generating a list of trips. Board members will be asked to make calls to members. Ed: create a trip wish list to have at next meeting.
- b. Need volunteer to start solstice trip (~8 p.m.).

8. Mentoring (see new business)

- a. Board members will also ask for mentors when they call members about leading trips.
- b. Jennifer DuFord: contact Rachad Rayess, get feedback from mentees at the end of this cycle (online survey?), need updated list with current mentors and mentees, ask him to file to Google drive.

9. Library — Max will check in on status.

10. Equipment (Josh Clark)

No activity.

11. Parks Advisory

Successful meet and greet at Hatcher Pass for snowmachine access. End goal is mutual respect and reduction of snowmachine impacts to our backcountry ski destinations near the Snowbird and Bomber Huts.

13. Next Board meeting:

- a. January 12, 6 p.m., REI classroom. Next general meeting: Holiday Party December 15, 6:30 p.m., Pioneer School House (Anchorage)

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

2016 PROPOSED BUDGET

		Proposed for 2016	Budget Change	Approved for 2015	Current for 2015
REVENUE					
Membership Dues	<i>received during calendar year</i>	\$9,500	\$500	\$9,000	\$9,745
Scree subscriptions		\$450	\$100	\$350	\$430
Training	<i>BMS, ice climbing, rock climbing, other</i>	\$8,000	\$1,000	\$7,000	\$9,175
Photo Calendar		\$2,300	(\$200)	\$2,500	\$2,268
MCA Products: T-Shirts, Patches, Etc.		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Interest on Accounts		\$75	\$0	\$75	\$73
Other - Donations, etc		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$168
TOTAL REVENUE		\$20,325	\$1,400	\$18,925	\$21,859
EXPENSE					
Training	<i>campsite, access fees, instructors, trip leaders</i>	\$4,000	(\$200)	\$4,200	\$3,570
Scree	<i>postage, mailing, printing</i>	\$2,800	\$400	\$2,400	\$2,447
General Meeting	<i>rent, refreshments, entertainment</i>	\$1,000	(\$700)	\$1,700	\$657
Administrative	<i>supplies, PO box, web site, ads, travel, misc.</i>	\$800	\$0	\$800	\$728
Hut Construction & Maint.	<i>materials, supplies, hut equipment, lease fees</i>	\$30,000	\$13,000	\$17,000	\$13,858
Insurance	<i>reincorporation fees, insurance</i>	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Club Equipment	<i>climbing gear, misc equipment, storage</i>	\$500	(\$200)	\$700	\$609
Library	<i>new books, periodicals, storage</i>	\$200	(\$50)	\$250	\$0
Other:	<i>miscellaneous expenses</i>				
Photo Calendar		\$2,600	\$0	\$2,600	\$0
MCA Products: T-Shirts, Patches, Etc.		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other - Awards		\$600	\$0	\$600	\$0
Other -		\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
TOTAL EXPENSE		\$42,500	\$12,250	\$30,250	\$21,869
DUE TO (FROM) RESERVE		(\$22,175)		(\$11,325)	(\$10)
CASH BALANCE - All Accounts					
Beginning Balance - January 1, 2015					\$37,851
Increase (decrease) during 2015					(\$10)
Current Balance for 2015					\$37,841
Checking - Credit Union 1					\$15,539
Money Mkt and CDs - Credit Union 1					\$20,712
Savings - Credit Union 1					\$416
18-month CD - in trust for hut lease - Northrim Bank					\$1,169
Petty Cash					\$5
Ending Balance - Revised 11/16/2015					\$37,841

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Cory Hinds	229-6809	Board member (term expires in 2016)	Jamye Mack	382-0212
Vice-President	Galen Flint	650-207-0810	Board member (term expires in 2016)	Carlene Van Tol	748-5270
Secretary	Max Neale	207-712-1355	Board member (term expires in 2017)	Nathan Hebda	310-3255
Treasurer	Aaron Gallagher	250-9555	Board member (term expires in 2017)	Stephen Austria	402-540-7037
			Board member (term expires in 2016)	Jennifer DuFord	227-6995

Annual membership dues: Single \$20, Family \$25

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address below. 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 24th 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: Aaron Gallagher - membership@mtnclubak.org

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Ed Smith - 854-5702 or hcc@mtnclubak.org

Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008 or huts@mtnclubak.org

Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127 or stugrenier@gmail.com

Scree Editor: MCAScree@gmail.com Steve Gruhn (344-1219) assisted by Dawn Talbott (dawn.talbott@yahoo.com)

Web: www.mtnclubak.org

Find MCAK listserv at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/MCAK/info>.

Mountaineering Club of Alaska
Box 243561
Anchorage, AK 99524-3561