

SCREE

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NEXT MEETING -- The MCA meeting will be held February 17 at 8 p.m. in the Willow Park Recreation Hall. 9th and Fairbanks.

EDITORIAL PLEA -- All articles for Scree must be in the hands of the editors not later than ten (10) days before the monthly meetings, which are held on the third Monday of each month.

MT. TORBERT EXPEDITION

January 1-9, 1964

by Gary Hansen

After cheating ourselves of sleep to herald in the new year, our three-man party, comprising Vin Hoeman (leader), Gene Horning and myself, assembled on Merrill Field at 9 a.m. Our project was to make the first ascent of Mt. Torbert, 11,413-foot high point of the Aleutian Range. At Merrill, we met our pilot George Kitchen, who was already sweeping snow off the plane and warming the engine. The forecast was for snow, but skies were clear over Anchorage, and the temperature was in the lower 20's. We took off, and passing south of Mt. Susitna, became confronted with a dense cloud formation which totally obscured the Aleutian and Lower Alaskan Ranges. Thwarted, we returned to Anchorage to await a new day.

Thursday, January 2 Since the plane was already loaded, we were airborne the next day by 9:30 a.m., armed with the assurance from Mt. Susitna radio conversation that the Aleutian Range was indeed visible and flooded in sunlight. Our route passed directly over Beluga Lake and up the Tiumvirate Glacier, which, to our dismay, had a very light cover of snow on its lower regions, past Strandline Lake to our right, and on to a small lake about three miles above Strandline where we planned to land. This lake, however, was choked with huge icebergs. We flew on up the glacier to make a brief reconnaissance of our proposed route, returned to Strandline Lake, and made an easy landing at 11:15. In the early afternoon, on skis with skins and with heavy packs, we made out way off the lake up a steep hillside. Because of snow conditions varying from two feet of soft powder to unbreakable crust and alternating about every third step, we experienced some trouble with our ski bindings and skins. When we made camp at 3 p.m., we were approximately level with the small lake upon which we had originally hoped to land; we and progressed a bare three miles. We compacted a level platform on the hillside for our camp and settled down, preparing the first of our week-long routine meals. Dinner comprised a hot chocolate drink followed by hot chocolate-tasting instant beef stew. We slept comfortably after a day in which we had seen stunted willow and alder on the hillside and the tracks of marten, mice, ptarmigan, and a rabbit. The temperature at 6:30 p.m. was 11 degrees.

Friday, January 3 Rising at 7 a.m. to prepare a beef stew-flavored cream of wheat breakfast, we decamped and spent the day traversing the hill, trying to maintain our elevation of about 2300 feet. The day was beautiful and sunny, but the pace was again uncomfortably slow. We lost considerable altitude in crossing a deep ravine cut by a tributary to the small lake; we scrambled and slid down and scrambled on all fours up the other side. By the end of the day, I think that the seeds of doubt and been sown in our minds about making a successful ascent and return in a single week.

Saturday, January 4 Snow had fallen all night and continued all morning. We made only short excursions to desnow our tent; it was no day for moving. A strong wind blew up during the day, clearing the snow somewhat. Besides reading, we planned an ambitious trek up the glacier for the next day,

perhaps even to include an ascent of the 5550-foot island in the glacier's center.

Sunday, January 5 The wind had dropped overnight but promptly resumed its furor at dawn, gusting to 60 mph. The sky was clear, but against such wind, our incentive to move on was not strong enough.

Monday, January 6 We left camp with day packs and moved forward to the point where we met the rising edge of the glacier. We roped up. Vin in the lead, followed by Gene, who was weighed down with a huge pile of willow wands, which he obviously delighted in using and losing. The surface of the glacier was hard packed wind-swept snow with no apparent crevasses. It was not easy to establish what the snow depth was, but using a four-foot probe we found about the same consistency throughout. The wind blew strongly down the glacier all day. The sun dipped below the jagged skyline as we were about three fourths of the way past the rocky island and out in the center of the northern arm of the glacier. We skied back, following Gene's willow wands.

Tuesday January 7 It was 3 degrees at dawn when we broke camp and descended to the little lake we had, by then, affectionately labeled "Frustration Lake." Wandering among impressive sculptured bergs, we photographed wind blown caves and sunlight filtering through dense blue ice. Again we climbed back onto the hill in deep powder snow that was just beginning to crust - very rough going. Dusk caught us before we sighted Strandline Lake, so we camped on a knoll which had a commanding view to the east across to Anchorage and the Chugach Range, Turnagain Arm, the Kenai Peninsula, and the Aleutian Range from Redoubt to Spurr, Torbert, and west to Mt. Gerdine.

Wednesday January 8 Breaking camp about 10, we made good progress, passing impressive wind-swept snow formations on the way to a steep slope overlooking Strandline Lake. This was rather slide-prone, so we zig-zagged down spurs to the lake shore with the temperature dropping 20 degrees within the last 200 feet to -10 degrees. We made camp and wandered around the icebergs at the south end of the lake. At dusk, we retired to our sacks, talking, reading, eating, and finally just thinking about how cold it was. Vin checked his thermometer several times, until it dropped below -17 degrees at 8 pm. It dropped even more, but we were not inclined to go out to find out how much!

Thursday January 9 We arose in a sunny morning for a leisurely breakfast and were pleased to hear the drone of George Kitchen's plane about 11 am. The landing dumped him at a crazy angle with one ski in an overflow in the ice. Energetic digging and runway packing followed, but after the second overflow and runway packing exercise, the amusement wore thin. Finally George took Vin out to Beluga Lake and returned for a second airlift. Anchorage was a very welcome home to return to at 3 pm.

WINTER OUTING AT INDEPENDENCE MINE January 25-26, 1964 by Dave Devoe

Of the several MCAers who were skiing, snowshoeing, and sightseeing at Independence on Saturday, Bill and Nancy Davis were the only ones to stay the night. Even after a Saturday night birthday party and a rumbling midnight basketball game, they appeared refreshed Sunday morning when the rest of us arrived. We all had coffee and breakfast to the tune of bongo boards and eventually got underway around 10 am.

Ten of us strung out in a line that pointed crookedly toward the Pinnacle. Wearing an assortment of skis and snowshoes, we traversed the ski hill and the swale to the right of the rope tow. Those with snowshoes had to take them off where the route became steep. Skis worked well, though, even through the boulders, for they gave support over the snow bridges between rocks; those on feet found themselves stepping on thin cold air frequently.

Bill and Nancy and Jim Messick stopped for lunch on top of the first ridge above the valley. Ruth Schmidt decided to go back and ski where there weren't so many rocks. Cliff Ells and Ricky Ramert took a route around the right side of the first bowl and in short time found themselves high on the sharp ridge south of the Pinnacle.

Helga Bading, Joe Pichler, Dave Devoe and Gil Roetman continued up to the base of the west ridge of the Pinnacle itself. It was then about 2 pm and apparent that the summit was too few daylight hours away, so Joe and Gil headed back while Helga and Dave skied on up for a look at the gully on the north side of the peak.

The gully, they found, presented a straight fairly solid route to the ridge. They also found that from this ridge there is a fine view of the jagged Talkeetna Mountains. With more time, a relatively short, but interesting, rock climb would then have put the two on the 5500-foot summit. But it was late, so without feeling too defeated, Helga led off a series of belayed sitting glissades down the snow chute. After they reached their skis, a sliding, plunging-into-holes descent took the pair off the mountain. Helga and Dave noted that the three greeters waiting in the snow at the end of the trail, a little ominously it seemed, were all members of the Alaska Rescue Group.

THE TWINS TRAVERSE

February 1-2

by Hans R. Van der Laan

Austrian proverb: "To walk up a mountain and to ski down is one thing. To ski up and walk down is quite another."

Not long after I woke up Gary Hansen by doorbell and Gregg Erickson by phone at 6:15 am to remind them that we had scheduled a climb, we were to learn the truth of the above statement. Eight o'clock found us departing from Anchorage underneath cloudy skies. It was past 10:30 when we finally left the car a short way above Eklutna Lake to start our climb which we hoped would take us over one of the Twins and down the other side to the Palmer Highway. After much deliberation, Gregg decided to leave his showshoes and try his luck on foot, and Gary and I decided to take our skis with climbing skins and chance having to carry them on our backs. The snow was light and thus the going was relatively easy, it was not cold, and there was only a slight breeze. However, we expected high winds later (which we got) as we could see great plumes of snow being blown from the peaks and ridges surrounding us. The fact that we could follow a deserted trail for part of our trip made things easier for a while, but before long we were forced to slow down as the snow got deeper and, what was worse, quite crusty. Here we found that the skis worked well. Although we would often break through the crust, it was far easier and faster than going on foot.

Darkness descended upon us and we moved snow about in order to make a platform for the tent. Here we could use the skis as bulldozer blades for moving snow. The evening's entertainment consisted of reading *The Ascent of Rum Doodle*, a marvelous satire on mountaineering books. The club logan tent knocked about severely by the strong winds, but the morning still found it upright. Several morning hours of climbing up the open but snow-covered rocks brought us to the top of the ridge leading to the East Twin. Here we stopped, ate our lunch, braced ourselves against the wind, looked out at the snowless Matanuska Valley, and came to the conclusion that there would not be time to climb to the peak if we desired to descend by daylight. There being very little snow on the north slopes, we strapped our skis to our packs and began the hike downward. Due to Gregg's excellent job of route finding, we came to the end of a very old logging road and followed our own to the Palmer Highway where we had parked the car to get back home.