

MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 102037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

FEBRUARY 1990

Volume 33, Issue 02

FEBRUARY MEETING

The next monthly meeting of the MCA will be held Wednesday, February 21st, at 7:30 pm at the Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd and Eagle Sts., downtown Anchorage.

\* \* After the business meeting, a slide show entitled, "In Fat City: An Audio-Visual Guide to Southcentral Ice" will be presented by Steve Davis. Steve has just finished compiling a new guidebook on ice climbs in our area. \* \*

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

- February 10-11 ECHO BEND ICE WEEKEND  
This trip is with the American Alpine Club - Alaska Section. Sort of a warm-up for the Annual Valdez Festival. Ice climbs of all difficulties can be found at Echo Bend along Eagle River. TECHNICAL: Fifth Class. Snowmachine in to the climbs and camp along the river. Bonfire! Film-making! Prizes! 'Fun!  
Contact: Paul Denkwalter 272-1811 Steve Davis 694-3556
- 25 VISTA PEAK  
Leave Eagle River valley at Meadow Creek entrance to Chugach State Park. Ski to Vista. Bring climbing boots, ice axe, and crampons. Elevation gain 3000 feet, 6 miles r/t. Class C.  
Leader: Tom Meacham 346-2981
- March 3 CREVASSE RESCUE PRACTICE  
Leader: Dan O'Haire 561-1141
- 9-18 MATANUSKA GLACIER SKI TRIP  
Join us at MCA basecamp to play in the mountains. Ski, climb and explore. Crevasse rescue practice is required to ski around on the glacier. Class: GLACIER TRAVEL.  
Leader: Dan O'Haire 561-1141
- 10 ARCTIC TO INDIAN  
Come ski this classic traverse with friends to help break trail. Elevation gain: 1250'; distance: 21 miles. 55 Ways #27. Need climbing skins and should be a relatively strong skier. ClassD.  
Leader: Neil O'Donnell 274-5069

March 18

HIDDEN PEAK

Ski from Glen Alps. Bring boots, crampons and ice axe, also shovel and avalanche beacon. Elevation gain 2500. Class C. Leader: Tom Brigham 276-4406

TRIP CLASSIFICATIONS

The classifications below do not consider individual trip hazards such as river crossings, scree slopes, snow fields, bears, etc. Trip leaders are required to inform the trip participants of any such hazards either verbally, on the sign-up sheet, or in the trip description. Leader approval is required for all trips.

**NON-TECHNICAL:** Following are a few standards used to classify non-technical trips. The classification is made in terms of hiking distance and altitude gain. Many trips are not on established trails.

**CLASS A:** Easy hikes with a maximum distance of 8 miles for day trips or 4 miles per day for overnight trips. Altitude gain up to 1200 feet.

**CLASS B:** Trips involving a maximum distance of up to 12 miles for a day hike or 6 miles per day for an overnight trip. Altitude gain of 1200 to 2500 feet.

**CLASS C:** Trips up to 15 miles for a day hike or 8 miles per day for an overnight trip. Altitude gain up to 3500 feet. Scree, steep grass, or other rough terrain problems may be encountered.

**CLASS D:** Hikes and climbs with an altitude gain of over 3500 feet or a distance of greater than 15 miles for a day hike or greater than 8 miles per day for an overnight trip. Peaks in this classification may require minimal climbing skills.

**CLASS E:** Hazardous climbing conditions may be encountered. A Basic Mountaineering Course may be required.

**TECHNICAL:** Technical trips are open to all qualified climbers.

However, the registration on any particular trip must be restricted to a safe and manageable number of climbers. Registration is made directly with the leader who determines the qualifications needed for the trip.

**GLACIER TRAVEL:** Trips requiring roped travel over glaciers. Knowledge of crevasse rescue, ice axe and crampon skills are required. Basic understanding of ice and snow anchors may be required.

**FIFTH CLASS:** Trips which may involve fifth class climbing. A Basic Mountaineering course or equivalent is required. Knowledge of belay and rappel techniques and placing anchors is required. Climbing difficulty varies widely with each trip.

**TRIP PARTICIPANTS** have the obligation to acquaint themselves with the nature of the trip and to verify that it is within their capability and experience. Anyone wishing to participate in any trip above CLASS A must have completed one or more trips of the next lower classification, or the equivalent.

## TRIP REPORTS

### See You Next Winter on Flattop

Jim Wright

One of the finer traditions of the MCA was continued when John Maltas and Neil O'Donnell urged me to join the 1989 winter solstice Flattop overnighiter. Given my rather poor attendance record at MCA meetings and functions, Neil was able to successfully shame me into going...with John. Neil attended only in spirit, as he had a prior engagement at a cozy Trout Lake cabin with Margaret Stock. In his place we enlisted Moon Allen, who set the tone for what followed with the phrase, "It appears to be less than optimal conditions."

I don't have much to tell about the sights along the way, as it was dark and overcast at least to the saddle, after which it was more or less white-out conditions. I assume poor visibility was the reason we couldn't see any of you up there. Once on top it was your basic hurricane, and a good opportunity to test gear. Conversation was pointless due to the howling wind. I assume the howling wind was why we couldn't hear any of you up there. For entertainment John and Moon sipped peppermint schnapps til long after midnight, while I slept. We awoke to the same howling wind late on Christmas Eve morning. By the time we rolled out of our bags, all the other folks who must have been up there had already left. Sorry we missed you, but there's always next year.


### Ski Traverse of North and Middle Forks of Campbell Creek

Alan Julliard, V.P.

Six to eight inches of new snow greeted Deanna Bell, Paul Berryhill and myself as we drove up to the Prospect Heights parking lot on the morning of December 23. There we were joined by Marcia Bandy and Joel Babb. Surprisingly, there was less than an inch of new snow at the parking lot, as the clouds were thick over the Anchorage basin but scattered up higher. We left at about 8:30 am with headlamps on. the first objective was the saddle between Wolverine Peak and Near Point. This was accomplished with the use of skins by all except, of course, the leader (cheapskate that he is), who opted to apply generous amounts of wax, grunts and suffering while bringing up the rear.

From the saddle, we continued to traverse into the North Fork of Campbell Creek. the terrain here consisted of tundra swept free of snow by the winds and a few gullies into whcih all the snwo was packed. Paul was in the lead and just starting to cross the second gully when the entire slope broke out from under him. I was looking at the ground under my skis when Deanna excitedly started yelling, "Snow! Paul!", searching for the right word but never getting it. "Avalanche!!"

# Raft Rock & Roll



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I had read enough books on the subject and knew what I was supposed to do, which is simply nothing, except keep Paul lined up with various landmarks in case he went under, but it was very hard to watch your friend of many years be swept away while you stood helplessly by. To Paul's credit, he is very good at skiing tough conditions and at keeping a cool head, it was that, although he got tossed around a bit, he managed to stay on top of it for the whole ride. When it stopped, we all hurried down the slope to check him out. He was not only unhurt, but had lost no equipment. The slide itself was approximately 100-200 yards long, 100 feet wide with a fracture depth of about 12-18 inches.

Joel had been immediately behind Paul and had been able to step back out of the way as the slope above Paul's line went racing past. This was a wind slab avalanche with the largest blocks about the size of a toilet (pardon the comparison). We were all wearing avalanche beacons plus carrying shovels and probes. Still we were happy not to use them. Though shaken, all were in favor of continuing.

We headed up the North Fork valley into a constant headwind which sent waves of spindrift across our faces. All agreed that Antarctica must be like this all the time, only much colder. With our mild temperature (in the 20's) it was just bearable and there was much rejoicing when we reached the foot of the pass between the North and Middle Forks for here the wind died down and what little remained was at our backs. We were still somewhat wary from the avalanche, but snow conditions at the pass were very different and stable. The climb over the pass was without incident.

I would like to add that the summer visitor to this pass will be surprised to see a large amount of blue ice on the lower flanks of Williwaw Peak's north side. The USGS map indicates this to be a rock glacier but there is much more ice than rock and I personally believe this to be a small glacier. If it is, it is the closest one to Anchorage, as the raven flies. In late summer, the adventurous ice climber will also find several steep gullies that bear more investigation.

We postholed down the first third of the pass, it being too steep to ski, but then were able to cut loose the rest of the way down to Williwaw Lakes, varying such maneuvers as graceful turns and ostrich-like face-plops. Conditions were mild and pleasant as we left the high country for the long, slightly downhill trip along the Middle Fork. Darkness caught us with a couple of miles to go. As we made our way by headlamp we were surprised to spot a porcupine, curled up to protect itself from the five strange creatures that surrounded it. The loop back to Prospect was, as usual, an exciting downhill rush through the brush and forest. After nine hours and about 20 miles we were back at the cars.

As a final note, my wife, Linda, and Paul's wife, Sherri, were out riding around in the car that afternoon, listening to the radio which had broadcasted warnings of avalanche danger. Sherri had a strong premonition that Paul had been in an avalanche. Now, if only we could work on the forecasting a little bit...

#### McHugh Peak

Niel O'Donnell

MCAers Laura Garrett, Neil O'Donnell, Dan O'Haire, Stephan Otterson, Jim Saylor, John Thorsness, Jeff Young and Tracker the avalanche dog made short work of McHugh Peak on January 21. Starting at Upper DeArmoun, we skied across Rabbit Creek and up a wide, gently sloping, gully on the north side of the mountain.

Trailbreaking was not a problem as high winds had blown all the snow to Wasilla. Visible lower on the mountain were tracks put in by another group of MCAers on December 29th, tracks which sat just above a layer of ash from Redoubt.

Hard, wind-blasted snow, alternating with washboard sastrugi, made for an exciting ski descent. The everyday fear of falling was compounded by the knowledge that hitting the deck put one within range of a very wet tongue belonging to Tracker. The author swears he never fell once.

Portage Pass Annual Superbowl Ski Trip  
And Membership Drive

Karl Becker

We laid the groundwork for this trip on Friday and Saturday with two trips to Portage to check ice conditions on the lake. A strata of water under a foot of new snow concerned us but we were reassured on Sunday by the solid "clunk" of thick ice under the saturated snow. By 9:15 on Sunday morning, with Ken Farmer breaking trail and a chilly brrreeze at our backs, our troupe of 62 skiers and one dog skied away from the Portage Glacier Center parking lot. The sports section of the Anchorage Times had given the trip some unsolicited publicity, which accounted in part for the great turnout.

After an hour's easy ski, we were ready to skin-up for the ascent to the pass. The bright overcast illuminated our crew, snaking across the pass in a credible reenactment of the classic Chilkoot Pass photo. The spectacle was too much for an improbable moose, grazing near the summit. The startled animal fled before the hoard.

Our route off the pass took us down a gully of wind-packed and blowing snow, where a freestyle descent littered the ravine with skiers in assorted poses, from the sublime to the hilarious. At the bottom, a quick ski through the alders brought us to the road and railroad tracks, and a 45-knot gale, which literally blew us into town on the ice.

As cherry-faced skiers walked into the Anchor Inn, Joe supplied each with a mug of complimentary hot chocolate. We were even given a room in which to stretch out and store gear. We settled into burgers, fries, beer, newspapers, good talk, good laughs, scrabble, and snoozes. A group of die-hards even challenged the Whittier breeze for a tour of the harbor, where a friendly, free-loading sea otter rewarded the visitors with kisses and snuggles. Some of us even watched the game. The commercials weren't bad.

At five o'clock, with an SRO crowd, we boarded the buses (the railroad had added an extra bus for the MCA) and were on our way back to Portage. In less than ten minutes a third of Whittier's population disappeared through the tunnel.

## MINUTES OF THE JANUARY MEETING

The monthly meeting was held at the Pioneer Schoolhouse on the 17th. There were many in attendance, including several new members, who were introduced.

### Treasurer's Report:

Petty cash	- \$ 52.10
Checking	- 2728.39
Money market	- <u>3846.25</u>
Total	- \$6626.74

Some of this total has been collected for Huts Committee.

### COMMITTEES :

Huts: Gretchen Staeheli reported that we still need materials for donation to the hut cause. Please contact her if you can help (344-3986). The National Guard may be able to help with helicopter transport. We are still waiting for word on the permit applications.

Hiking and Climbing: Trip leaders touted upcoming trips. And as usual, the committee is looking for leaders to do trips in the future.

Training: Todd Miner announced a tentative green light for placing the climbing wall at Kincaid Park. A small wall exists at APU, which may also be expanded to meet our purposes if Kincaid doesn't work out, and UAA may also be a possibility. Please contact Todd (786-1122) if you are interested in helping to make a decision about location. So far, \$1000 of materials have been ordered for the wall.

### OLD BUSINESS

A plaque was presented to John Baker, past president, as is traditional for the club. Thanks to John for the many accomplishments during his year as President.

Mark Findlay brought in the club phone recorder, the service was discontinued by the Executive Committee last month.

### NEW BUSINESS

Mike King is stepping down as the refreshment person for the meetings, Vicki Jorgensen announced. A volunteer for refreshments was solicited. If your are interested, please contact Vicki, 243-4362.

Special thanks to Bob Jacobs and George Rooney for their presentation of the 1989 West Ridge Everest climb, which they participated in with the Polish. The show was dedicated to the five members of the expedition, who tragically lost their lives on the last day of the descent, after success had been acheived on the summit. A very intense climb.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Dan O'Haire

ADZE

For Sale:

2 Thommen Altimeters, 15,000' models, new	\$ 70 ea.
Galibier Double Boots, size 9 1/2 mens, good cond.	\$ 35
<i>sold</i> <del>Goretex Bivouac Sack, new</del>	\$ 35
North Face Geodesic Dome, 6-man, good cond.	\$150
Sierra Designs One-Man Goretex Tent, new	\$ 65

Contact: Kerwin Krause 333-8405

History Corner

Neil O'Donnell

The President's Box

Rummaging through the President's Box this month, I came upon a letter written November 1984 by Paul Crews, first MCA president, to then president Doug Van Etten. The subject was the appropriate names given to the MCA huts on the Eklutna Traverse. This issue has been in the Scree since, but bears repeating. Here is the letter:

Dear Doug,

Congratulations on your unanimous choice as MCA president for the coming year. Your comments in latest Scree (which I enjoy reading every month) indicate a good year coming up for MCA.

I noted that the last page of the November issue included a map of the MCA huts between Eklutna and Girdwood. As you are probably aware, these huts were designed by Tony Bockstahler and purchased, transported and erected with a lot of blood, sweat and tears by MCA members.

Joe Pichler, a charter member of MCA and a carpenter by trade, personally supervised and did a major part of the effort on the first cabin, and because of his efforts, the club unanimously voted to name it Pichler's Perch. The name has stuck and rightfully so. Many have enjoyed its comfort and shelter since then.

Less known but with just as much blood, sweat and tears expended, was the installation of the second cabin above the Whiteout Glacier in 1968. The driving force in this project was Hans Van Der Laan. He supplied the enthusiasm to carry it through to completion. It was shortly after this construction that Hans was killed in an avalanche (as was Grace Hoeman) on the snowfield directly below Pichler's Perch. This was a great loss to all of us and therefore the members officially named the cabin on the Whiteout, Hans' Hut.

The third hut, erected on the Eagle Glacier in 1968, was entirely financed by an MCA member whose wife had recently been a victim of cancer. He wished to remain anonymous, but this writer, who accepted the donation for the membership, felt that the hut should be named for the donor's wife. The club thereafter named it Rosie's Roost in memory of his wife.

Having been personally involved in the construction of all these huts I feel obligated to attempt to correct the naming of the cabins. Those involved,

Pichler, Hans and Rosie are all deceased. I would think that the efforts involved in the planning, erecting and maintaining the cabins during that period would warrant maintaining the names.

If you would care to discuss the above or need further classification, please contact me. I'm sure there are others of the early members who would like to see the tradition continued.

Yours for climbing,  
Paul Crews

I think we would all agree that the traditions of those who constructed the huts deserve to be continued. The club minutes also reflect that Lowell Thomas, Jr. flew in all the materials for Hans' Hut and Rosie's Roost. His contribution should not be overlooked while on the subject of these huts.

#### Book Review

Willy Hersman

Fifty State Summits , Paul Zumwalt, Jack Grauer - Publisher, Portland, OR, 1988.

The quest to stand on the highest point of each of the 50 states is one which probably does not motivate too many mountaineers to action. After all, a "climb" from your car to the apex of the state of Florida, at the dizzying height of 345 feet, is not the kind of experience that one goes out of his or her way for. Most of us would rather spend the day at Disney or the Keys. Unless, of course you're obsessed with collecting things, like coins, arrowheads, summits, etc.

Vin Hoeman, probably the most prolific summiter to call Alaska his home, had such an obsession. Rarely did he visit anyplace without eventually standing on its highest point. In 1967 he became the first person to "collect" the fifty summits. At the time of his death, in 1969, Vin was working on a guidebook for those fifty places. Two such guidebooks have now been written.

Mr. Zumwalt's guidebook is very complete in terms of information given to reach these points in the U.S. For each highpoint there is a topo map, road and trail information, description of the highpoint, nearby points of interest and camping information and usually a picture of the "summit." One of my favorites shows Iowa's high point, situated on a farm feed lot, amongst the local cattle.

The most impressive thing about Mr. Zumwalt and his wife Lilan has been their persistence in this endeavor, as evidenced by the following passage of their climb of Boundary Peak, Nevada:

"We reached the saddle to the left of Peak 12,201 by 1 pm, an ideal place to eat lunch. Lila decided to wait for me there and I went on to the summit. ...at 12,800 I reached a point where the ridge turns SW then soon to another point where the ridge ran W up to the summit (13,143). By 4 pm I was back with Lila. We were 10 hours from camp and worried we might not make it back before dark so I looked for a shorter, quicker way back. It looked feasible to go down from the saddle on the sand. We started glissading down the scree... Actually I glissaded in a seated position, while Lila supported herself on her hands and heels. We managed to stay in control, except for dislodging an occasional boulder which would bound ahead of us at astonishing speed. We were back at the tent by 7 pm, pleased to find the cows had not disturbed it. Lila was 68 and I was 70."