



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 102037

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FEBRUARY 1991

Volume 34, Issue 02

FEBRUARY MEETING

February 20 7:30 pm Wednesday, Pioneer Schoolhouse Lower Basement Level
(go in normal entrance, traverse first floor, then down stairs)

SLIDE SHOW Slides of last year's traverse of the Sargent Icefield will be shown by Dan O'Haire.

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

- March 8-9 MANITOBA MT.
Second annual MCA trip to Manitoba Cabin, near Summit Lakes. The cabin has been reserved for Friday and Saturday nights. Sleeps 10. Each person using the cabin needs to contribute \$5.00 to the Nordic Ski Club (via the leader), others can use a tent. Great skiing plus a sauna! Cush approach, a definite Class A.
Leader: Neil O'Donnell 274-5069
- April 13-28 GRAND CANYON HIKE
Assemble at Phoenix or South Rim and spend 11 days in eastern un-maintained trail area, exiting at Grandview.
Leader: Bill Wakeland 586-6246
- May 24-27 AUGUSTINE VOLCANO
Fly in to the lagoon on the west side, climb the volcano and explore the island. Reputed to be a walk-up but there is a 4000-foot elevation gain.
Leader: Dan O'Haire 561-1141

TRIP REPORTS

Aconcagua - December 1990

Karen Cafmeyer

It was a spectacular Christmas Eve for some Alaskan climbers in Argentina this year. On that day we stood on the snowless summit of Aconcagua (22,835). The route we chose to get there was non-technical; basically a high altitude hike, but for me it was a challenge making my sorry muscles work in that thin air and gratifying to see our whole party reach the top.

Twelve days had passed since we began our trip in Puente del Inca, a tiny village along the highway between Mendoza and the border where Argentina meets Chile. Some climbers tried to summit in half that time, but found trouble in traveling too light and fast. A Korean group was hammered by a freak storm at 17,000 feet. One team member froze his hand. On the day we summited, a British group staggered up behind us. It had only taken them a week to get that far, but they were not having fun. Instead of rejoicing in their success, they were collapsed in heaps on the ground. Their guides almost carried them back to camp.

There was no chance of that happening to us. We were climbing Alaskan style, with towering packs so heavy that the earth shook at our passing. We were prepared for anything and everything that had even an infinitesimal potential of befalling us. In fact, I think we had enough supplies and manpower to rescue, re-clothe, do repairs for and cure disease in every other climber on the peak. I heard a rumor that no fewer than four full rolls of duct tape were carried to 18,500, but I can't prove it.

The approach to base camp is a twenty-five mile hike up the Horcones valley. The whole region is beautiful to look at, but not in the least tempting to climb. The rock is sedimentary and riddled with colorful strata, like Polychrome Pass. The peaks themselves, however are nothing but enormous scree cones topped with rotten towers and broken summit blocks. The Chugach seems downright solid in comparison.

Wildlife has been hunted almost to extinction in the valleys, but park rangers told us a frozen guanaco (a compact version of a llama) had been discovered at the pass between Aconcagua's north and south summits. We saw colorful songbirds; some so bold that they hopped on our boots for handouts.

The actual climb begins at 14,000 feet, from a base camp called Plaza de Mulas. This is the end of the road for mules bringing expedition gear from Puente del Inca. In Peron's day, "Andinistas" rode donkeys all the way to 18,500, then promptly succumbed to altitude sickness. The practice wreaked havoc on summit attempts, so climbers acclimatized by hiking to altitude instead. Today, bleached donkey bones can still be seen melting from the snowpack along the high trail.

Because Aconcagua is the highest peak in the western hemisphere, it attracts summit hounds from the world over. One American gave us his card, affirming that he was a professional mountaineer: "...since 1962, international high-altitude climbing; all seasons, extended traverses, first ascents..." In many cases, clothing "makes the man" in base camp. Neon-colored gear is so profuse, eye protection becomes mandatory. The color pink was "de rigueur" this year, including pink plastic boots and tents.

From Plaza de Mulas, it is 8000 feet to the summit. Vern Tejas can push his mountain bike up it in a day, but we went a little slower, spending several days at camps along the trail. Fresh water is a scarce commodity at all camps, red with glacier silt down low, and scattered in isolated snowdrifts up high. You camp where the water is. As a result, those few spots see a lot of traffic. The litter problem is intense, with some camps in danger of being buried in trash. The park rangers are dismayed by the problem, but lack authority to fine the offenders.

Our high camp, at 18,500, was a spot where many groups staged their summit attempts. It took the fastest member of our party five hours to reach the top. The slowest managed to get herself up there in nine. We had fine weather with no wind.

Six of us were happy enough to have summited Aconcogua, but Frank Jenkins still had energy to burn. While we packed up to leave base camp, he joined a Swiss team and led them up "El Cuerno," a 5462-meter snow and ice-capped peak nearby. The ascent put him almost a day behind us, yet he marched down the trail all night until the moon set. He sped back to Puente del Inca the next day and was polishing off a huge steak dinner before the last members of our party got back to town.

If anyone is planning to climb Aconcogua, we'd be happy to give current information about traveling, accomodations, prices and permits. Argentina is becoming an expensive place to visit, it is hard to find the bargains people enjoyed a few years ago.

Expedition members were: Jim Sayler, Larry and Glenn Hartig, Frank Jenkins, Phil Menke and John and Karen Cafmeyer.

Railroad Peak

Willy Hersman

On January 8th, Randy Howell, Gordy Vernon and I discovered a wonderful one-day winter climb not far from Anchorage. It has very little avalanche danger, good skiing and a constant ridge-top view. Most of it can be skied.

Leaving the car at the Portage turnoff, the three of us headed south along the Alaska Railroad bound for Skookum valley and a peak I sometimes refer to as Railroad Peak (4250). It sits just west of Skookum Glacier, the first of several peaks on the dividing ridge between Skookum and Spencer drainages. After skiing the flats below the cold side of a temperature inversion for an hour and a half we pulled out the climbing skins to find they were too cold to stick. Tape helped, but Gordy never had much luck and ended up postholing much of the way.

Randy and I weaved easily through the trees at the base of the north ridge, our route. We noticed on our way to treeline that several large trees had been snapped off at some time in the past. In fact, only the largest trees had been affected, ten feet in girth or so. It was hard to figure how, with no possibility of avalanches on the ridge and lesser sized spruces with no damage. Wind is all it could have been, we guessed, a real strong wind.

Skis came off at 2700, the snow being very wind-beaten, and we walked along the ridge noting goat tracks as we approached the steeper part of the climb. The goats finally emerged below us on the NE face, Gordy finally emerged from his postholing, and we finally emerged onto the summit. The view was not disappointing, alpenglow on Byron and Carpathian, peaks on the Isthmus Icefield, Placer valley, the Twentymile area. It would have been nice to stick around, but not in January. The climb may have been a first ascent, but hard to believe given its location. A summer trip would be needed to look for evidence showing otherwise.

Hatcher Pass Ski Workshop

Karen Cafmeyer

Fourteen people participated in this weekend event, January 19 and 20. The weather was warm, the snow deep and soft, a good setting to learn winter skills. Mark Findlay taught telemark turns while Mike Miller led a tour up to Friendship Pass. In the afternoon we worked on snow shelters. That night while wind pummeled Anchorage and rattled windows in the mine building, several workshop participants slept serenely in their igloo palace outside.

Special thanks to Dale Bingham of State Parks for allowing us to use the visitor center and Kevin Bell, the caretaker, for making our stay there so pleasant.

BRAD WASHBURN PRESENTATIONS

Bradford Washburn, Alaskan mountaineer, cartographer, photographer and MCA honorary member will be in Alaska during the week of March 11th for the annual Alaska Surveying and Mapping Conference. He will be featured at the conference's keynote luncheon and public lecture, where he will present programs on the Alaska range and Mt. Everest.

Dr. Washburn was Director of Boston's Museum of Science for 41 years. His black and white aerial photographs of Alaskan and Canadian mountains are legendary, and have inspired many first ascents. He recently led a nine-nation team to map the world's highest peak, resulting in the most detailed and accurate map of Mt. Everest ever produced. It covers 380 square miles.

Members of the MCA should be interested in attending the conference to hear Bradford Washburn speak and show slides at the Anchorage Hilton Hotel:

Keynote Luncheon	Monday March 11 - "50 Years in the Alaska Range"
Public Lecture	Tuesday March 12 - "The Mapping of Mt. Everest"

The luncheon will cost \$18.00 and the public lecture will be free. The exact times were not available at press time, but should be available at the February MCA meeting. More information can be received by calling:

Conference Chairperson, Dale Sherba, 271-5063,

who can also register you for the luncheon and give you details on the conference's workshops, and seminars.



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MINUTES OF THE JANUARY MEETING

The January meeting, held on the 16th at the Pioneer Schoolhouse, began with the introduction of new members.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Money Market	-	\$1634.53
Checking Acct	-	334.78
Petty Cash	-	<u>52.10</u>
Total		\$2021.41

COMMITTEES:

Parks Advisory. Ken Zafren reminded us that the Hilltop Expansion is still being considered by the legislature.

Hiking and Climbing. Note was taken of the full schedule. Participants were encouraged to join.

Dan assured us that his trip to the volcano would be safe.

OLD BUSINESS:

None.

NEW BUSINESS:

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

REI is looking for ideas for their community service projects. Any suggestions should be submitted to Karen Cafmeyer.

The Alaska Mountain Safety Center is offering a number of outdoor workshops in safety and instruction.

Please fill out the MCA questionnaire to help Karen get an idea of what activities to focus on and to set up a membership directory.

Karen mentioned that the Forest Service and the State have many cabins available for rent throughout the year. Cold is no excuse to not enjoy the wilderness.

People interested in learning about boating or meeting other boaters should get in touch with the Knik Kanoers and Kayakers. The club offers pool rolling sessions, instructional and safety classes. For more information contact Bob Wemple 274-7375(h) 257-2678(w), or the hotline 272-9351.

Dolly LeFever is planning organizing a group to go to Bhutan in mid to late October for a 3-week trip to the Lunana Valley. Contact her at 243-7027 soon, because she needs committments by end of March.

George Meegan is looking for Canadian Bunny Boots and coveralls for his North Slope journey. 276-4124(h) 346-2103(w)

Nick Parker presented a great slide show about his many trips in the Alaska Range.

Respectfully Submitted,
Mindy Baum

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING

January 29

1. Club Gear

Discussed having a deposit, or a user's fee.

Discussed AMH's role and need for members to do their own adjustments.

** Members need to have their card to check out gear!

Discussed need for instructions on adjusting crampons.

Vote on reimbursement for crampons already purchased.

Vote on funds:

straps for the above crampons -	16 x \$11.00 =	\$176.00
misc parts, earphones, etc. -		<u>50.00</u>
		225.00

Vote deferred to next general meeting.

2. REI presentation in May

Display board still available.

Slide show presentation discussed.

Date: 5/9/91 7:00 - 9:00 pm

3. Vandalism at trailheads

Petition discussed.

Club may circulate petition to ask for more police presence at trailheads and ask for criminals caught to pay restitution.

FUND FOR TONY BOCHSTAHLER

The Mountaineering Club is sad to note the recent loss of one of its Honorary Members. Tony Bochstahler passed away January 30th in Colorado Springs, Colorado. A memorial service was held there February 7th. It has been asked that no flowers be sent, however the club is sponsoring a memorial fund in his honor. Interested members can send donations for the fund directly to the treasurer written to MCA Tony B. Fund at the club address found on the front of Scree.

This happened just prior to press time, so there hasn't been time to gather any memoriums for Tony, but there should be some in the next issue. Also, the exact purpose of the fund is yet to be determined by the MCA Board. For more information you can call Bill Wakeland, 563-6246.