



FEBRUARY 1997

A Publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska

Volume 40 Issue 02

Box 102037, Anchorage, Alaska 99510

### FEBRUARY MEETING

Wednesday

February 19, 7:30 pm

Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets

Downtown Anchorage

**Slide Show:** Garth Lenz from the 210th Rescue Squadron will show 'Backcountry Rescue in Alaska'

### HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

#### Apr 19 - May 4 Grand Canyon and Paria Canyon

The permit for a group of six to do the Boucher-Hermit loop in Grand Canyon has been approved, but as of Jan. 1, that trip is full. On April 28 we will move to the Paria Canyon trailhead in Utah, hike that colorful slot canyon, and drive to Flag staff May 3, to fly home from Phoenix May 4.

This second hike is not full. If interested in either trip, please contact me after Jan 26.

Leader: Bill Wakeland 563-6346

#### June 28 - July 6 Aniakchak Crater and Vent Mt

Class B - C. Charter from King Salmon at a cost of \$240 - \$475 per person (plus air fare to King Salmon). Base camp will be in the crater. Trip limited to nine people including leader.

Leader: Don Hansen 248-7184 (h) or 271-6656

#### July 19 - Aug 3 Mount Igipak area of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

Class C. Charter from Bettles at a cost of \$430 - \$450 per person (plus approximately \$248 air fare from Fairbanks to Bettles). Climb of lesser peaks in the Mount Igipak area. Trip limited to 8 people including the leader. Note: This trip is NOT a climb of Mount Igipak

Leader: Don Hansen 248-7184 (h) or 271-6656

1997 Membership Dues are due now !! ➡

## TRIP REPORTS

### A Long Day on Rumble

by Joe Anders



It was a clear late summer day. Ted and I looked out our office windows at the warm blue skies. It was obviously way too nice to stay in the office - where could we go? After looking over our maps, we decided to give Mount Rumble a try.

I talked Ted into leaving bright and early for a change. Actually, it was a pretty easy task since we estimated this would be a 20+ miles and 10,000-foot day and we would need all the daylight we could get. After a couple of false turns, we headed up Prudhoe Bay Road, and parked at the last switchback before the gate. Hiked up the road, past an old abandoned cabin, then up a well worn trail into Ram Valley. We were a little unsure about where to park the car - apparently there are still several places where inadequate public access to the back country still exists.

Ram Valley is a real jewel! It's classic Alaska alpine meadow, easy hiking and wonderful views. The blueberries were thick and ripe! We counted over 40 sheep before we quit trying to keep track of them. Ted brought his dog, "Sheba" and another dog that he was dog-sitting, "Houdini." Houdini barely follows orders from his normal boss and did not pay any attention at all to us. Houdini was so excited by all the sheep that he decided to chase several over the ridge. That was the last we saw of old Houd! We called and called, but the dog was gone. Ted was worried - I thought good riddance to the ill mannered beast.

At the top of the valley, we left the green alpine meadow and started walking up a stream bed that marked the transition between meadow and glacial moraine. We climbed out of the stream bed and traversed along the left side of the moraine field. It was easy going - the rocks were large enough to hop on. We were treated to wonderful views of Korohusk and Yukla, Pleasant and Raina. As we approached the top of the moraine field, we encountered ice under a thin veneer of rock and dirt and the going got a little trickier, but still not too bad. At Bombardment Pass, we looked down at Peters Creek, 2500 feet below us and up at Rumble, 5000 feet above Peters Creek. Too bad there isn't some way of banking altitude.

Down several more moraine fields, then across another alpine meadow brought us to the mouth of a hanging valley. The view from this point is indescribably

beautiful - views of the headwaters of Peters Creek, incredyouslip. This is where we stopped. To continue, we wanted a fixed line to hang onto.

Back down the slope. Of course, the scree was perfectly engineered - it was just as miserable to descend as to come up. Large sections would slide down at once, knocking loose larger rocks to cream anyone below. It was perfectly sized to prevent skiing down. Plus, Sheba's feet were really starting to show signs of abuse due to the sharp rocks. Sheba was now leaving a bloody trail behind her. The scree slope nightmare finally ended and we stopped for a break. We shared our break area with two sheep that obviously hadn't seen too many people in those parts. It was starting to get late and it was becoming apparent that we would be hiking back in the dark.

Back across Peters Creek, up the hanging valley, up the meadow and moraine fields to Bombardment Pass. By now, the sun had set and we really wanted to get across the last moraine field before it got too dark. We made it off the moraine and to the top of Ram Valley just as the first stars were coming out. We were traveling light, so we had left our headlamps at home. We hiked down the valley in the dark, following faint outlines of the trail. As we approached the main trail, we started to worry we'd walk right by it and end up having to bushwhack down to Eagle River Valley Road, so I pulled out my little AAA flashlight and used it to try and stay on the trail. We were really lucky because it wasn't too long before we were back at the cabin. We'd made it!

Twenty-six miles and 11,000 feet later, back at Ted's car at 12:30 am. We were disappointed we didn't make it to the top, but thought we'd made the right choice at the top of the scree slope. Summiting would have added at least 2 more hours to the trip and possibly stuck us out for the night. Another pleasant surprise was that Houdini was waiting for us at the car! The dog had found its way back down the valley and spent the day setting on the car roof. We plopped down into the seats, exhausted and ready to head home. Not to be.

Ted, it turns out, is a firm believer in not doing car maintenance. "If it's not broke, don't mess with it," Ted says. That includes water in the battery. When Ted turned the ignition key, that car didn't even click - it was stone dead. We tried bump starting it - an advantage of a standard transmission, right? Well, these new cars with computers need some minimal amount of juice before they'll come to life. At 1:00 in the morning, we didn't think knocking on doors looking for a jump was a very good idea. So Ted drove his powerless car with power steering and power brakes down the steep, switchbacked hill in pitch dark. Plus, Houdini the wonderful dog had smeared mud all over the windshield, so Ted got to keep his head stuck out of the window. I walked in front (I was

really excited about hiking another two miles after the last 26!) and told Ted when he needed to turn if he wanted to keep his well maintained vehicle out of the ditches.

Got a jump-start off a nice guy at Eagle River Valley Road. Turns out the car had a bad alternator, so it just wasn't going to run. An Anchorage Police Officer stopped and called a Taxi for us. \$50 later, we finally made it back to Anchorage at 4:30 A.M.

## MINUTES

### DECEMBER MEETING

The meeting was conducted at the Pioneer Schoolhouse. The business portion of the meeting was kept short so that members could enjoy the healthy spread of holiday food. The minutes from the November meeting were published in the December Scree and were not read at the meeting. There were about five visitors and total attendance of about 40. The new members of the board were introduced.

#### TREASURY REPORT

**Kirk Towner** reports that we have a total of \$7093.92 in all accounts.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS

##### Huts

**Mark Miraglia** needs stove and lantern numbers from MCA huts. Supplies for hut repairs will be flown in this winter. Thanks to Louis for donating a lantern for the huts.

##### Parks Advisory

**Scott Bailey** encouraged the membership to follow the snowmachining and make concerns heard.

##### Hiking & Climbing

The winter solstice campout on Flattop will be Saturday, 21 December. **Mark**, our president will bring the marshmallows. Should be plenty of moonlight. Upcoming trips include a ski trip to the Wedge (**Steve Gruhn**) and the Hawaii hiking trip (**Curvin**).

##### History

The committee has completed the research of back issues of the Scree. One excellent benefit of this research is a list of peaks with references to articles in the Scree. There are plans to begin interviews of older members of the Club.

##### Geographic Names

**Tom Choate** requests that anyone with names of lesser known peaks should see him.

##### Training

**Aze Azegami** reports that the will be a second ice climbing class will be on Sunday, 22 December at Candyland; a sign-up sheet was posted. Forward any requests to Aze and he will work on accommodating your request.

##### Equipment

The newly adopted policy on beacons and EPIRBs was read to the membership and is presented later in this Scree. There are plans to track the equipment usage to help guide future spending.

##### Executive

A handout on the proposed bylaws changes which revise the way the Club allocates and spends money was distributed to the membership. A vote on this will be held at the January meeting. There are also proposals to combine the Conservation Committee into the Parks Advisory Committee.

##### Library

**Joe Kurtak** displayed the new books that the Club recently purchased. The books will be available for check out at the mountaineering library at AMH with a current membership card. Please remember to check in at the counter before going up to the library. It is amnesty month for overdue books; please return them so others can enjoy. Anyone interested in putting the books on a database, see Joe.

#### OLD BUSINESS

None.

#### NEW BUSINESS

The input for Scree can now be forwarded via internet to Willy at [mca@alaska.net](mailto:mca@alaska.net). Willy asked the Club for thoughts on producing a home page for the internet. The idea was well received and will be discussed further at the next board meeting.

The payment of \$376 + freight was unanimously approved to cover the cost of a 600 ft. spool of 11mm dry rope for the ice climbing class.

A reimbursement of \$89.90 was unanimously approved to cover the cost of the turkey dinners.

In response to declining club membership, Kirk Towner will head a membership drive.



A tremendous, fabulous turkey dinner was enjoyed by all. A selection of slides were then presented by several members.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cory Hinds, Secretary

## JANUARY MEETING

The meeting was conducted at the Pioneer Schoolhouse. President Mark Miraglia could not be present, so VP **Wayne Todd** ran the meeting. The minutes from the December meeting were read at the meeting. There were four visitors, and total attendance of about 40. A brief rundown of club benefits was given.

### TREASURY REPORT

**Kirk Towner** reports that we have a total of \$6,924 in all accounts. A recent expenditure was for the 600ft spool of rope.

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### *Huts*

A list of needed repairs for each hut was generated and distributed. Any members heading to a hut are encouraged to pack in materials and maintain the huts.

#### *Parks Advisory*

- 1) **Scott** presented a public review draft for the Girdwood Iditarod Trail.
- 2) There will be no areas off limits to snowmachine trail in Denali park.
- 3) Applications are due for the trails maintenance grant.

#### *Hiking & Climbing*

Details were presented on an upcoming trip to the Southwest.

#### *History*

The committee has completed the research of back issues of the Scree. The data has been compiled for climbs, presentations, and trip reports. There are plans to begin interviews of older members of the Club.

#### *Geographic Names*

**Tom Choate** reports that getting names approved will take longer than anticipated since the State has to approve the names. The plan to submit a whole list of names for consideration rather than one-by-one. Anyone with names of lesser-known peaks should see

Tom.

#### *Training*

Forward any requests to **Aze** and he will work on accommodating your request. Anyone interested in teaching skills should also see **Aze**.

#### *Equipment*

The new spool of 11mm dry rope is in and will be cut into sections soon.

### NEW BUSINESS

The proposed **bylaw change** which revises the way the Club allocates and spends money was summarized then voted on. After the bylaw change, the '97 budget was summarized and presented to the membership for vote. Both the budget bylaw change and the '97 budget passed with greater than 2/3 majority of membership present.

Plans for an MCA homepage on the Internet will be discussed at the next board meeting. Reminder: the input for Scree can now be forwarded via internet to **Willy** at [mca@alaska.net](mailto:mca@alaska.net).

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Dave Staeheli** reported that the Alaska Railroad is getting hot about the presence of ice-climbers at **Candyland**. All users of this area need to watch their step.

**Dave Staeheli** gave an excellent slideshow on climbing Everest from the north.

Respectfully submitted,  
Cory Hinds, Secretary





## ESSAYS

### Avalanche !

I lay motionless under the snow, trying not to feel trapped, not to breathe too quickly. Somewhere outside I hear a voice - or is it just my imagination? A footstep compacts the snow near my knee even tighter; someone is out there, looking for me!

Some time later, shovel-loads of snow land over my head, each one thumping down on the tiny air pocket surrounding my face. They're digging in the wrong place!! How long has it been: 10 minutes, 20 minutes?

More waiting. A footstep directly overhead. Suddenly - a poke on the shoulder, excited voices! Someone has uncovered my arm; my airspace has collapsed, but now they know where to dig. Finally, after nearly 25 minutes of burial, I am free!

Why did this near-tragedy happen? Why did I allow myself to be buried with my beacon turned off?? And why, oh why, did I pay to have this torture inflicted upon me???

Welcome to day 1 of the 3-day Avalanche Hazard Evaluation Workshop run by the Alaska Mountain Safety Center (the Snow Sense guys). The purpose is to present the basic skills and understanding necessary for safe travel in avalanche terrain. You will leave with a simple and practical framework for making decisions about avalanche hazard. The focus is not so much on rescue techniques as a process of continual hazard evaluation and avoidance. Many club members have completed this workshop or one like it. If you haven't, and you want to increase your margin of safety in winter recreation, read on...

This workshop was held at Hatcher Pass in the Talkeetna Mountains. Classroom sessions and overnight accommodations were indoors, with heat, water, and plenty of room to stretch out a sleeping bag and dry out gear. We were divided into groups of about 6 students per instructor. For the rest of the weekend, the groups remained intact with a different instructor each day. A combination of classroom time and field sessions was used to reinforce each day's topic.

The first day offered rescue techniques with

beacon and probe searches. By late afternoon it was time for a test: two teams taking turns creating a simulated avalanche accident. One group would hide packs, beacons, and bodies in the snow with a variety of clues on the surface. The other group would perform the rescue as quickly as possible. For the buried 'victims,' even the luxury of a hollowed-out airspace and foam pad did not detract from a memorable experience. Some of us even tried our hand at acting: the hysterical witness, unconscious victim, etc. Somehow, everyone survived, so we all headed indoors for an all-you-can-eat potluck supper.

The next day's field exercise was snow stability evaluation. We measured slope angles, dug snow pits, and performed a variety of stress tests to determine the stability of the snowpack. Again, the focus was not so much on digging pits as continually evaluating a wide variety of clues to the present snow condition. We didn't starve this night either, with an all-you-can-eat dinner at the Hatcher Pass Lodge.

Our final day was designed to put it all together, with experience in route selection and sound decision-making. Thanks to the snow conditions, our group was able to 'lead' Doug Fesler (in his rich-client-who-hired-six-guides role) safely to a ridge with a fine view of the surrounding area. We then packed up, cleaned up, and went home a little better prepared for safe winter fun.

If any of this sounds interesting to you, here's some ideas on what you can do:

1. Pick up a copy of Snow Sense to read (available in the MCA library),
2. Call the Alaska Mountain Safety Center at 345-3566, or
3. Call Aze, the MCA Training Committee chair, at 266-9249 or sign up at the meeting for the club's next Avalanche Skills training session. Let him know what you're interested in practicing and he'll make it happen!

Kirk Towner

