

Monthly Meeting:

Wednesday, February 15 at 6:30 p.m.

Program: Harry Hunt presents "Quest for Adventure, Exploring Alaska's Backcountry for Ice Climbs."

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

February 2012

Volume 55 Number 2



"I am hopelessly and forever a mountaineer... and I care to live only to entice people to look at Nature's loveliness."

--John Muir

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in Prince William Sound

Peak of the Month: Lava Mountain

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 meetings the third Wednesday of the month at the BP Energy Center, 900 East Benson Boulevard, Anchorage, Alaska
www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC_map_06-04-03.pdf

February Program

Harry Hunt, local ice climber, presents "Quest for Adventure, Exploring Alaska's Backcountry for Ice Climbs."

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Cover Photo: Tammy Thiele nearing the alpine zone of Peak 2477. The head of Eaglek Bay is in the background.

Photo by Tim Kelley.

Article Submission

Text and photography submissions for the Scree can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 25th of the month to appear in the Scree. Do not submit material in the body of the email. 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.

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

MCA Training Schedule

For a full description and information on how to register for these training events, check-out this link: <http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm/What-We-Do/MCA-Training/Seminars>.

February 4-5, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Intro to Ice Climbing Seminar

Where: To be announced.

Tuesday, February 7, 6:00 – 9:00 p.m.

Snow Travel Seminar

Where: BP Energy Center

February 11-12, 9 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Snow Travel Field Session

Where: To be announced.

Except for the March 19 trip, the following trips are being led by Greg Bragiel. For more information, contact Greg at unknownhiker@alaska.net.

February 18-19: Resurrection River reconnaissance ski tour.

February 25-March 4 or 5: Seward to Hope ski tour.

Monday, March 19: Tit Mountain. This after-work hike starts at 6:00 p.m. To sign up, contact Steve Gruhn at 344-1219 or scgruhn@gmail.com at least 24 hours in advance of trip.

March 24- April 1: Lane to Dnigi Huts tour.

April 15-22: Eklutna Traverse (mandatory training session on April 7).

Don't forget to check the Meetup site and the Facebook page for last minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

On-line? – click me



For best viewing of the Scree on a monitor using Adobe Reader, click on 'View' and 'Full Screen.'



Tim Kelley hiking glacier-polished granite above Deep Water Bay. Photo by Tammy Thiele.



Tammy Thiele near the summit of 1950 (N), with the defining peaks of Deep Water Bay in the background. Photos by Tim Kelley.

Little Guys, Multiple Tries ... in Prince William Sound

By Tim Kelley

After more than a decade of boat-accessed peak bagging in Prince William Sound I find that the sound can still make me embarrassed. What's to be embarrassed about? Little peaks that kick your butt, that's what.

Many Prince William Sound peaks are easy to bag in the planning stage. When you are sitting at home in front of your computer and looking at topographic maps of potential routes - things look easy. "See these gradual contours here? This route should be no problem!"

But topo maps aren't good at showing the density of vegetation in a temperate rain forest environment. And they don't show jumbles of glacially deposited school bus-sized granite blocks coated in wet moss and brush. So more times than I would like to admit, Prince William Sound peak-bagging trips have ended with the words: "Holy crap! No way are we getting up this! What the f&^#! It sure looked easy on the map!"

Such was the case with a couple of small peaks to the south of Deep Water Bay in Prince William Sound. On August 24th, 2010, my wife, Tammy Thiele, and I tried getting up these peaks from the west end of Deep Water Bay. We tried going up the northwest ridge of the northernmost of these two 1,950-foot peaks. Cliffs that didn't show on the map and the prospects of endless steep vegetation wrestling made us decide to try another route on another day.

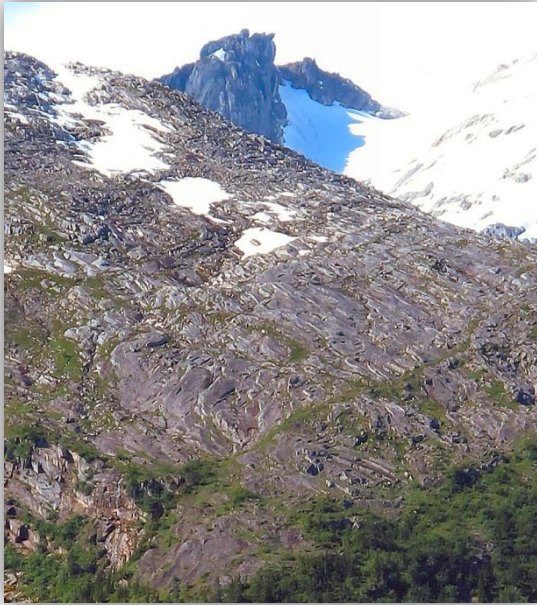
On July 21, 2011, we anchored our boat at the west end of Deep Water Bay and kayaked to a shallow cove on the southern shore. We hauled our kayaks over tide-zone-slimed boulders and tied them to a tree. Our first challenge was to get

up the shore-side cliffs to the forest above. I started scrambling up a steep streambed. Ten steps later a swarm of wasps or hornets or bees descended on me and stung the crap out of me. I'm not sure what they were, but soon I had big welts from where they had nailed me. My wife said: "Guess we aren't going that way. Time for Plan B, and I'm not leading!"

After a bout of slippery boulder crawling and root climbing we got up off the rocky shore and into the forest. Soon we were linking bog openings and gaining the crest of a small ridge that would lead us to the southwest.

At just 500 feet of elevation, the hiking got great. This is granite country. Unlike much of southcentral Alaska the peaks in this area are formed from intrusions of granite. As a result, there is fun hiking on glacier-buffed granite slabs. And the views of surrounding granite peaks are impressive.

Not surprisingly, the route that I figured would go looked like a dumb choice when we got a good view of it. We could see that there would be lots of scrambling over a huge jumble of granite



The polished granite slopes of Peak 1950 to the south of Deep Water Bay.

blocks. And above that lay some tough route finding through areas of cliffs and waterfalls.

And also not surprising is that once we were “on site,” we could see a route possibility that didn’t show on the map or with binoculars from the water. We decided to give a go at a steep hemlock stand that led up to grass-covered granite steps. Following a zigzag route up the steps, and staying away from cliffs that fell into a nearby gully, we got to the alpine zone. Here we found great “friction hiking” on steep granite slabs and then some snowfield travel to reach the ridge top. Once on the ridge, it was easy going to get to the northernmost of the two 1,950-foot peaks on this ridge.

On the summit (Peak 1950 (N) 60° 28.372’ North, 148° 24.443’ West) there are jaw-dropping views of a maritime world to the north and an ice-age world to the south. To the north Port Nellie Juan spreads between islands and the main Chugach Mountains can be seen in the distance. From the summit you can look down at the icebergs

bobbing in the entrance to the enchanted Nellie Juan Glacier lagoon. To the west stands the signature Half-Dome-looking peak of the Deep Water Bay area. [Ed. note: In the 2007 *American Alpine Journal*, Josh Varney called this peak “Brackish Bitch.”] And to the south the heavily crevassed Contact Glacier defines the northern reaches of the Sargent Icefield.

My wife opted to stay on the north summit as I hiked/ran to the south summit (Peak 1950 (S) 60° 27.749’ North, 148° 23.953’ West) and back.

The other factor that can make it embarrassing to not be able to climb seemingly small peaks in Prince William Sound is weather. Over the years there have been times that I thought I had the weather somewhat dialed in for Prince William Sound hiking and climbing. Using National Weather Service and marine weather forecasts I would start thinking that I had gotten to the point where I could make good calls and not end up going out and getting shut down by weather.

But once you think you know how to predict Prince William Sound, you get duped. Then you get duped again. And you come back to the realization that maritime weather in the sound is complex and it’s something that you will never be able to reliably predict.

Getting duped by the weather definitely was a factor with a peak to the west of Eaglek Bay (Peak 2477 60° 53.566’ North, 147° 48.969’ West) that my wife and I wanted to scramble up. Three times this summer we were enticed by weather forecasts of good weather and boated to Eaglek Bay. But each of the first two times we woke up the next morning to steady rain. Our potential climbing days turned into kayaking days.

On our third attempt, on July 23, 2011, we left our anchored boat and kayaked to the northeast corner of Derickson Bay (Note: This is Derickson Bay on the west side of Eaglek Bay and not the better known Derickson Bay off the southern part of Port Nellie Juan). We linked together peat bog openings, scrambled steep and slippery bog

slopes, followed bear trails through virgin timber, and swam uphill through brush until we reached the 1,000-foot level.

Once above the jungle, the hiking and views got good. There was just one steep section going through a cliff band where we had to kick steps in muck while we used dwarf willows as handholds. Near the top we traversed several snowfields until we topped out.

Views from the summit were great: an island-festooned ocean to the south and rugged coastal mountains draped with alpine glaciers to the north. We could see the leading-edge haze of a storm approaching from the south, so we knew that we had to get down before the weather changed. I noticed no signs of previous ascents on this peak (and I didn’t notice any signs of previous ascents on the two summits to the south of Deep Water Bay that I went up two days prior). [Ed. note: Paul May reported climbing Peak 1950 (N) on July 26, 1993, and Peak 2477 on June 30, 1999.] I left small cairns on all of these summits.

Five boat trips out of Whittier for two successful outings to climb three peaks that only average around 2,000 feet each. Yes, the amount of effort it took to get up these little guys is a bit embarrassing. But then again, it’s Prince William Sound.



Heading down snowfields near the summit of Peak 2477.



1983 party with Bill Wakeland at right.
Photos by Don Hansen.

Peak of the Month: Lava Mountain

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Talkeetna Mountains
Borough: Matanuska-Susitna Borough
Drainages: East Fork of Young Creek and Granite Creek
Latitude/Longitude: 61° 49' 37" North, 148° 45' 49" West
Elevation: 6620 feet
Prominence: 1270 feet from Mount Apollo (7950)

Adjacent Peaks: Peak 6150 in the East Fork of Young Creek and Granite Creek drainages, Peak 5302 in the Granite Creek drainage, Peak 4550 in the West Fork of Young Creek and Granite Creek drainages, and Flat-Lence (4550)
Distinctness: 1170 feet from Peak 6150
USGS Map: Anchorage (D-5)
First Recorded Ascent: May 10, 1970, by Grace Hoeman
Route of First Recorded Ascent: Southeast face
Access Point: Chickaloon Trail

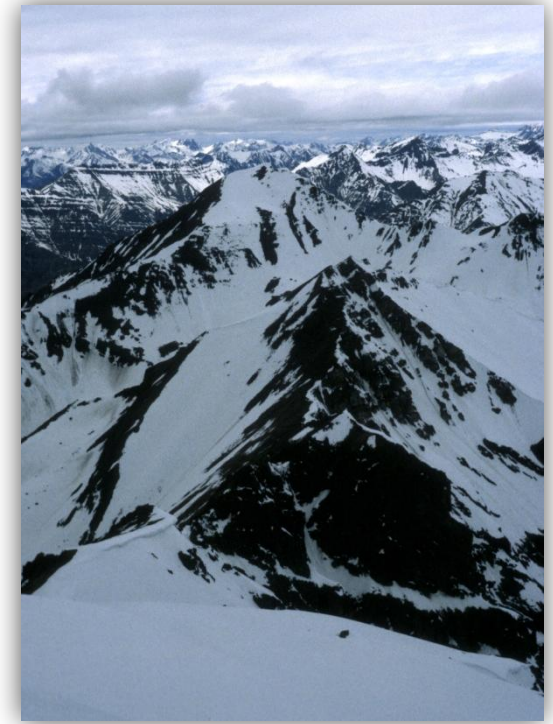
The USGS map indicates lava flows on the west, northwest, north, and northeast flanks of Lava Mountain – one of the few such mountains in the Talkeetna Mountains. These features led to J. Vin Hoeman to dub the peak Pseudo Volcano and Pseudovol Mountain in his unpublished

Alaska Mountain Guide. In that guide he suggested an approach via the southwest ridge.

On March 29, 1970, 11 months after her husband Vin's death, Grace Hoeman made a solo trip to the Granite Creek area to scout out a route to the summit. Unsuccessful in that first attempt, Lava Mountain became something of an obsession with her in the ensuing weeks. She made subsequent unsuccessful solo attempts of the southwest ridge on April 11 and 12 and April 18 and 19. Undeterred by these unsuccessful attempts and persistent in her quest, she returned to the area on May 9. This time she headed up the Chickaloon Trail near the Kings River. At Young Creek she turned off the trail and headed upstream. At the sharp bend to the east, a canyon forced her to leave the creekbed, but she was able to descend back to the stream after the canyon. Staying west of the West Fork of Young

Creek, she followed game trails uphill and crossed a talus slope before camping for the night. The next morning she crossed over the pass and descended to Sheep Valley, following the valley northward until turning westward into the valley south of Lava Mountain. She ascended the southeast face to a broad ramp, which she followed west to the summit. She built a tiny cairn and placed a rock-weighted plastic bag containing a register and quickly descended, avoiding the avalanches that ran down the southeast face.

On March 2, 1971, some 10 months after her ascent and less than six weeks before her death, Grace Hoeman proposed the name Lava Mountain to the Alaska State Geographic Board. The USGS made the name official in 1972.



View to the northeast from the summit of Lava Mountain.

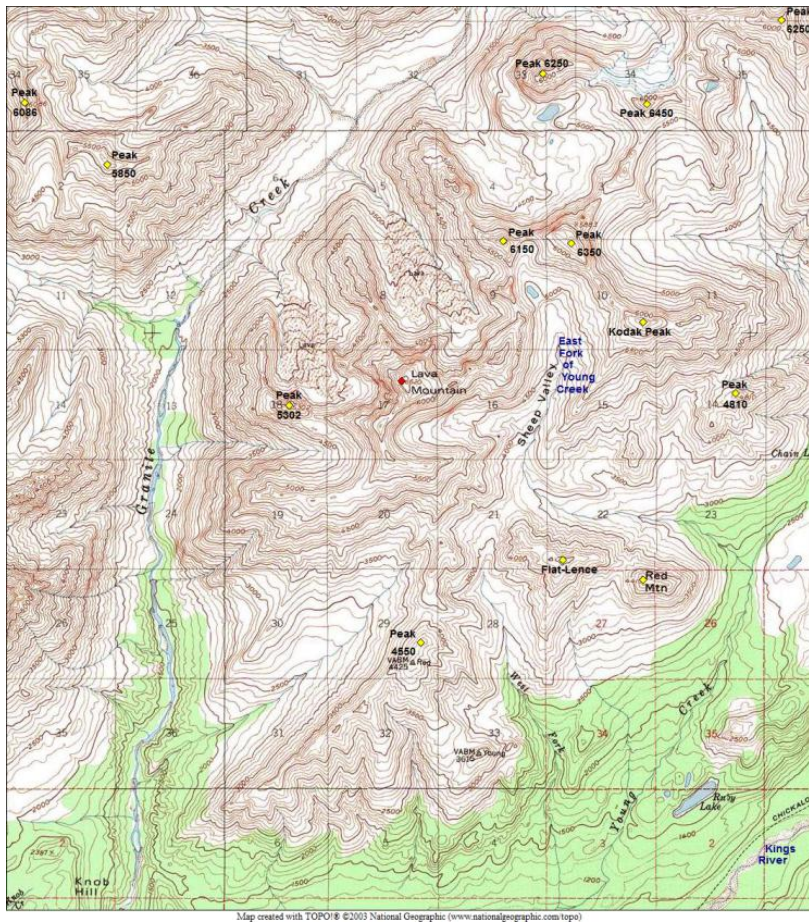
On May 29, 1983, Tom Choate, Don Hansen, Mike Miller, Jim Pommert, Ron Van Bergeyk, Brian Williams, and Dick Williams left their campsite at 3,500 feet in Sheep Valley and headed up Lava Mountain. Most of them reached the summit.

On May 29, 1993, 10 years to the day after making the mountain's second ascent, Don Hansen returned to Lava Mountain. From a campsite at 4,100 feet, Tom Herrnstein and he climbed the upper part of a gully to the right of the bowl at the base of the peak. Following their tracks the next day, Dave Logan, Larry Meshkin,

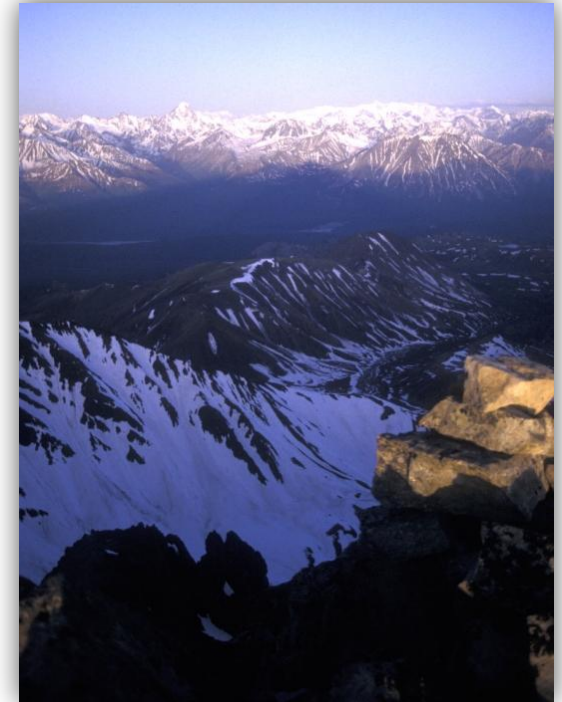
and Bryan Young made the fourth ascent of the mountain.

Via the same route, Az Sellers, Kathy Still, Wayne Todd, and Steve Wilson made the fifth known ascent on July 27, 1998.

Grace Hoeman's article entitled "Peak 6620' – A First Ascent" appeared in the June 1970 *Scree* and her report entitled "P6620, 'Lava Mountain,' Talkeetna Mountains" appeared on page 334 of the 1971 *American Alpine Journal*. The July 1983 *Scree* featured Bill Wakeland's report of the 1983 ascent, entitled "May 28-30, Young Creek – Sheep Valley." The July 1993 *Scree* featured Don Hansen's and Dave Logan's trip report of the 1993 ascents, entitled "Sheep Valley and Lava Mountain." Additional information for this article came from my correspondence with Don Hansen, Kathy Still, and Wayne Todd.



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



View southward from the summit of Lava Mountain.



Members of the 1993 party en route to Sheep Valley.

MCA Board Meeting Minutes January 4, 2012

Note: Tasks to be completed in **bold**

Members Present: Tim Silvers (President), Galen Flint (Vice President), Randy Plant (Treasurer), Mark Smith (Secretary), Greg Encelewski (Director), John Recktenwald (Director), Vicky Lytle (Director, Hiking & Climbing Committee).

1. Hut maintenance – Discussed possible objectives of maintenance plan. Include estimating frequency of flights, particularly for human waste, in order to budget, collecting costs by hut or group of huts in order to plan for a new hut. Marcin Ksok produced a hut inventory with photo documentation that could provide information. It has data that indicates relative usage.
2. Awards – Drawing to be held at next general meeting. **Tim** will buy \$50 AMH gift cards. **John** will provide drawing stubs for *Scree* contributors, **Galen** for ice fest instructors and other volunteers, and **Vicky** for trip leaders.
3. Handbook – Objective is to have everything but confidential club information from the Officer's Handbook on line on the website. **Mark** will see that appropriate documents are maintained on the website and will build a hyperlinked index. Any documents that should not be available to the general public will be emailed to board members. **Tim** will update the officer duties. **Vicky** recommended that we maintain online information learned from the Christmas party and picnic, including items and quantities ordered and number of attendees.
4. Insurance – Members are uncertain just the extent and nature of the coverage provided by Directors and Officers insurance. Does the "breach of duty" protection cover board

members and instructors or leaders from a liability suit arising from injury or death during an MCA activity? Is it just for typical business activities?

5. Library - Mark contacted an instructor at APU about supporting a request by the club for the UAA consortium library to house all or part of our collection. **Mark** will renew that contact and offered to go to the storage area to do a characterization of the collection so as to be able to provide meaningful data to the library.
6. Policies - Need to be updated, particularly equipment.
7. Ad flyer – **Tim** will do a rough design. It will be a 1/3 letter size card. Carrie Wang will implement the design.

Next meeting February 1. Venue to be determined.

---Mark Smith, secretary

MCA General Meeting Minutes, January 18, 2012

Training - Basic Mountain School Seminars: Back country Ski Clinic went well despite the cold temperatures and tough skiing conditions. Intro to Ice Climbing: four slots left. Snow Travel: 10 spaces available. Jayme planning some more training: Winter Camping and Snow Shelters, Nutrition and Equipment for Winter Activities, Navigation and Glacier Travel. Check the MCA website Seminars page for latest information:
<http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm/What-We-Do/MCA-Training/Seminars>.
Email Jayme at Training@mtnclubak.org to receive email notices on upcoming training.

Awards drawing for MCA volunteers August through December - \$50 AMH gift cards were won by Dean Carman (Ice Fest instructor), Charlie Sink (*Scree* article author) and Greg Bragiel (trip leader).

2012 Budget: Randy Plant, Treasurer, presented the proposed 2012 budget, which was approved unanimously by the membership.

Presentation: Tucker Chenoweth gave an exciting presentation "Alaska Range Traverses - Connecting the Landscape," including photos and video of a climb of Mount Hunter and a traverse from the Don Sheldon Mountain House all the way to the Parks Highway.

---Tim Silvers, MCA President

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Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Tim Silvers	250-3374	Board member	Greg Encelewski	360-0274
Vice-President	Galen Flint	650-207-0810	Board member	Brian Aho	223-4758
Secretary	Mark Smith	868-3155	Board member	Vicky Lytle	351-8246
Treasurer	Randy Plant	243-1438	Board member	John Recktenwald	346-2589
			Board member	Jim Sellers	360-2560

Annual membership dues: Single \$15, Family \$20

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address at right. 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 25th 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: Yukiko Hayano and Randy Plant - 243-1438
Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vicky Lytle - hcc@mtnclubak.org
Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008
Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127
Scree Editor: MCAScree@gmail.com Steve Gruhn (344-1219) assisted by Amy Murphy (338-3979)
Web: www.mtnclubak.org (change your address here)

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