

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club
of Alaska

February 2015

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Contents

Gakona's Serrated Edge
Prince William Sound Deepwater Bay Traverse
The Devils Prongs vs. The Three Sisters
"Spindrift Couloir" and "It's Included" on Radio Control Tower
"Lucey in the Sky"—Upper Eklutna Valley
Magical Moonlight Memories in Alaska
Time in Places, Places in Time
Peak of the Month: Lyman Peak

Monthly meeting: 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, February 17

Program: Local veteran climber Dave Lucey and friends will show slides on ice climbs in our back yard.

To the sober person adventurous conduct often seems insanity.

-Georg Simmel

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 meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, February 17, at the BP Energy Center, 1014 Energy Court, Anchorage, Alaska.

<http://www.alaskageology.org/graphics/meetingmap.gif>

For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit <http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=members.form>.

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Cover Photo

Alan Rousseau about to launch into Pitch 2, an M7, on "It's Included" on Radio Control Tower. Photo by Mark Pugliese.

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcas Cree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 24th of each month to appear in the next issue of *the Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. Do not submit photos embedded in the text file. Send the photo files separately. 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. Please submit at least one vertically oriented photo for consideration for the cover. Please submit captions with photos.

Monthly Meeting: Tuesday, February 17, at 6:30 p.m.

Program: Local veteran climber Dave Lucey and friends will show slides on ice climbs in our back yard. Most of these are within one hour of Anchorage, with several other areas all doable within a day's drive. The focus will be on: having fun (on ice and the surrounding area), area conditions – when to go to certain places and when to go look at others, getting to the climb (hike, ski, snowshoe, snowmachine, four-wheeler, bike, boat, or plane), and finding new (to you or otherwise) places.

Geographic Names: The Alaska Historical Commission has requested comments from the MCA regarding the proposed name of Mini-Cup for a 4410-foot-high summit in the Dome Creek, King Solomon Creek, and Little Champion Creek drainages of the Mertie Mountains. Comments and questions should be submitted to Steve Gruhn at geographicnames@mtnclubak.org by February 18.

Thank You: Many thanks to these volunteers that helped clear trail in Arctic Valley on December 20 and 21, 2014. Your efforts for the MCA are greatly appreciated, Stu Grenier, Shaun Sexton, and Scott Bailey! - Greg Bragiel

Mentorship Initiative: Mentors needed for beginning Mountaineering, Backcountry Skills, and Ice Climbing

1. MCA members can apply to become "mentors."
2. Mentors are outdoorsmen experienced in one or more sport or activity (skiing, climbing, mountaineering, ice climbing...)
3. Students are MCA members who would like to learn or advance their outdoor skills and who are willing to commit to a once-a-month outing with a mentor.
4. A mentor is required to meet with the two students once a month.
 - A. The meeting could be indoor (educational, learning about knots, reading from a book...)
 - B. The meeting could be outdoor (could be for a few hours or for several days).
5. Mentors agree to have up to two students for a period of six months.
6. Mentors will mention their type of expertise so that students would be matched with them based on common interests.
7. The aim of this proposal is to facilitate the transfer of experience from veteran to novice in different outdoor skills.

If interested in being a mentor or student, contact Rachad Rayess at rachetta@yahoo.com.

- Rachad Rayess

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

- ⇒ **Hope to Seward Ski Tour.** February 21-March 1. Contact Greg Bragiel at unknownhiker@alaska.net.
- ⇒ **Serenity Falls Ice Climbing.** February 27-March 1. Ice climbing weekend at Serenity Falls Hut, Eklutna Lake area. Contact Cory Hinds at chinds100@gmail.com for more information. The hut has been reserved for the nights of February 27 and 28.
- ⇒ **Eklutna Traverse.** April 12-19. Mandatory traverse training days March 21-22. Contact Greg Bragiel at unknownhiker@alaska.net.

Online? Click me!



Check the Meetup site and Facebook for last minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

Gakona's Serrated Edge

Text by Ian McRae

First time on the Serrated Edge, Jim Bouchard and I climbed halfway across, and stalled out at a horrifying double-cornice. Plenty of air beneath our feet, we engaged for an hour in a game of psychological manipulation. The goal: get the other guy to be responsible for the bail.

"Think we should bail?"

"If you wanna bail, then we gotta bail."

"Wanna lead?"

"Maybe we should bail."

The Serrated Edge stretches between the two principal summits of Mount Gakona in the eastern Alaska Range, three quarters of a mile of double-corniced ridge above 8,000 feet. Jim and I perched at the sag in the middle among crazy flukes of snow pointing every which way, on a section of ridge that seemed almost helical in nature, like a spiral staircase. The usual two-dimensional linearity of ridges had been transformed into three-dimensional complexity. Bouchard was in the lead, but was located below me in space. He was trying to get up the nerve to lower off a picket and dangle into unknown space from the lip of the cornice. The anchor was a combination of rimy snow-mushroom and boot-axe belay.

We switched positions. I stabbed down and took the position at the lip. Snow mushrooms floated ahead of me in the sky like widely-spaced stepping stones made of puffy cloud.

"Think we should bail?"

"If you wanna bail, then we gotta bail."

"Wanna lead?"

"Maybe we should bail."

I climbed back up to the belay prepared with the same prevarications, ploys, and manipulations that had not worked on

me, and would not work on Bouchard. The reality was plain to see: we would bail. Two of our Fairbanks compatriots, Jose Rueter and Phil Marshall, formed the other half of our Gakona expedition. We could see them down at basecamp on the glacier, ants moving between the tents. The four of us had summited Gakona a few hours earlier that March morning, but Phil and Jose had seen through Bouchard's figment of the Serrated Edge and declined to go. Bouchard had been able to talk me into the Edge by stroking my ego during the entire, three-day, ski-mountaineering approach, up the Canwell Glacier

and over Yeti Pass: "We'll go light and open bivy on the ridge. You can handle it, Ian. You're a hardman."

"But, Bouchard — it's not even a real climb. It's a horizontal traverse."

Nevertheless, the idea of the Serrated Edge had set in our minds. We high-wired back across the ridge the way we had come, and descended to the ants at basecamp. Bouchard and I would return...

Which is where the story begins, really — two years later, in July of 1990 — packing packs at the old Summit Lake Lodge on the Richardson Highway, this time with a fledgling Jeff Apple Benowitz, whose own ego itself had been stroked by Bouchard into coming with us on another absurd attempt at the Serrated Edge. Realize this was many years before Sir Apple would be knighted, before the years when he and Rick Studley would live to perpetrate great sufferfests in the Alaska Range. Gear was strewn all around the car, and Apple was trying to

decide between his leather hiking boots or his big plastic Koflachs for the long hiking trip about to begin. Bouchard, master log-peeler by trade, had brought only his leather hiking boots. He stormed around the parking lot trying to convince the rest of us to choose our leather hikers so that we would be like him.

"Jeff, do not listen to Bouchard. Wear your nice warm plastic



Ian McRae below the East Face of The Thorn. The Thorn is the easternmost peak in the Gakona Chain. It was 45 below in this picture, too cold for Jeff Benowitz and McRae to try the face. Benowitz went back with (the late, great) Rick Studley and climbed this face in the late nineties. Could it be the hardest ice climb in the Delta Range? It's still awaiting a second ascent. Photo by Jeff Benowitz.

boots. You will want them up high.”

Bouchard described the suppurating lesions we would develop if we hiked in our ice-climbing boots. I stuck with my plastic orange-and-white Asolos I had purchased from Clem Rawert in Fairbanks, which were marvelous to hike in, but Benowitz went with his leather hikers. Off we marched up Gunn Creek with no maps. Bouchard and I bragged about how we knew the area like the backs of our hands, then argued about which way to go.

After heavy-packing for most of a day along the southern flanks of the eastern Alaska Range, we grew lost. Bouchard and I pointed every which way, like no point at all, while Apple passed the time on his hands and knees gathering rocks to carry in his pack. We camped somewhere above the College Glacier alongside babbling brooks and profusions of wildflower, and ate fresh, rain-washed greens out of the brook. Bouchard recited Walt Whitman from memory against a background of roaring water and vapors. I want to be there again, listening to Jim belt out *Song of Myself*.

I celebrate myself, and sing myself,

And what I assume you shall assume,

For every atom belonging to me as good belongs to you.

After dinner, out of nowhere, Bouchard leapt up, and started coming at me across the soft moss. “Let’s wrestle, Ian!” he shouted, crouching low, and seeming to grow a little larger in size.

“Bouchard, I do not want to wrestle.”

It was no use. “We must wrestle!” he cried. Bouchard would not take “no” for an answer. Our brotherly battle would be an act of mutual respect, a matter of honor, an acknowledgement of truth, a natural response that brothers must inevitably negotiate. I objected on philosophical as well as practical grounds – “someone is going to get hurt” – but Jim relentlessly pressed my buttons.

“If you will not wrestle me, how will I be able to trust you on the Serrated Edge?”

“All right, all right... we can wrestle...”

Bouchard’s grin widened like a shark’s. He began to hop up and down like wearing skis with springs. For my own part, I was mildly terrified. Single combat, one-on-one battle ... not my cup of tea, just the thing I had fled to the mountains to escape, and now the mountains were gathering around to witness. Bouchard stood before me, a force of nature indifferent to human sentiment and frailty, the very embodiment of the mountains themselves. In that moment, *fear of the mountains* and *fear of Bouchard* became one and the same. It was not the first time my friend had elicited this feeling. I had accepted the Bouchardian pact by agreeing to go on this journey. Besides, his arguments made sense, in a Whitmanesque kind of way.

His deltoids were massive from log-peeling and ski-racing. We squared off. My epinephrine levels surged off the scale. Here it was, *life or death*, like a run-out pitch. I picked Bouchard up by the legs and discovered, to my wonder, that he was a good 20

pounds lighter than I. This made it relatively easy to hurl him down the hillside a ways. This seemed to satisfy Bouchard, and he picked himself up off the tundra, still wearing the shark grin.

Of the rest of the approach, memory is, of course, mostly obliterated. Days of hiking along green morainal sidewalks cantilevered above the Gakona Glacier on the west side, narrow channels of warbling, chirping life we followed to where the dead heart of the mountains began. These were the pre-surge days of the Gakona Glacier, and the icefall could not have been too bad. Our return after two years to the basecamp on the Gakona Glacier... this time we would be better rested for the Serrated Edge: we would install a snow cave near the summit of Gakona Central at the 8,000-foot level. Soon enough, we started up the climb. All was as we remembered it. Moderate snow slopes, moderate serac anxiety. Everything went well, until...

Our first mealtime in the cave at high camp Apple and I occupied the ends of the cave, with Bouchard in the middle by the door. First thing Apple and I did was pull out huge loaves of Logan bread. The two of us had baked them in our little Fairbanks cabins and saved them until high camp. The loaves bristled with walnuts and raisins and chocolate chips. Bouchard’s eyeballs bulged like a cartoon character’s.

“Hey!” he cried, indignantly. “Where’d you get that!” Apple Benowitz began to shrink into his sleeping bag, arms shielding his bread.

“I looked at your food bags at the store. You each had one food bag. I had one food bag,” said Bouchard. He looked half panicked, half furious.

“Jim... we had extra food bags we made in our cabins. They were buried in our packs, and you didn’t see them.”

Bouchard shook with wrath. He grew larger; the cave shrank. The corners of his mouth lifted again into the grin of the shark. We gave him some of our bread to go with his one chicken ramen he had allotted for dinner. After dinner, we all tried to go out on our front porch, which sported a tremendous view over the entire Copper Basin, but Bouchard and Benowitz were unable to stand outside the cave for more than 10 seconds: their leather hiking boots, thoroughly soaked in the lowlands, had turned to shrunken encasements of ice that pumped a distinct cold feeling upward through their bodies.

We got trapped in the cave. I no longer remember why. Unsettled weather, probably. What I do remember is FOOD SHORTAGE, a chondrichthian feeling of ravenousness pervading the cave, the evening ritual of parsing out food at mealtime, doting on every noodle, counting every spoonful that went into our mugs. The snow cave filled with the obsessive vibration of starving men, Bouchard first, later, all three of us. Apple and I secretly licked at the stumps of our bread behind our bags.

The feeling came over me again...*indifference*. The indifference of the mountains. Three boys on a desert island, *Lord of the Flies*, this is it, the real thing; we could really wither away. In many ways, Bouchard was ahead of Apple and me on the curve of alpine experience. Just recently he had Eskimo yo-yoed Gary

Donofrio out of a massive, squishing, falling cornice on Mount Deception. Bouchard was a late relic of the golden age in Fairbanks alpinism, made of harder stuff than I of the silver age could understand, and so mistakenly dismissed as narcissism. And now he's reciting poetry again:

*I do not trouble my spirit to vindicate itself or be understood,
I see that the elementary laws never apologize*

The three of us talked often of the Serrated Edge: in particular, a feature of the mountain we referred to as "Wall Holler," the yawning south face of Gakona, directly underneath the Serrated Edge itself. Our passage across the ridge sported a series of truncated torpedo tubes, which opened into overhanging space: a falling climber would eject into the empty space of Wall Holler.

Partly cloudy...we left high camp. It was not even a climb, really, just a level traverse, completely Dadaist in conception. The July temperatures were hideously warm. Cornices were already crumbling as we got started mid-morning. We left nothing in the cave, fully intending to make our way across the half mile of double cornices to Gakona North on the other side. Bouchard was in front, Apple in the middle, author in back. At the first torpedo tube, Bouchard called for a belay, climbed atop a hummock, and faced inward to down-climb an airy step. "Wall Holler!" he whispered with grim relish, glancing beneath his boots. When Apple reached the steep down climb, the steps kicked by Jim had languished too long in the hot sun. The steps crumbled under Apple's weight.

"FALLING!"

Benowitz shot down the torpedo tube toward Wall Holler. Up above, out of sight, I stood along the ridge, getting lucky on a boot axe belay. The whole unit of body, axe, and force from whipping climber locked together like a deadman in the snow. Apple clambered back up the slope, shaking like a junkie, eyes totally dilated, freaked like I have never seen the hardman, before or since, in all those years. Never mind that he would come back a year later to lead his childhood friends from New York on a multi-day, six-summit, epic traverse of this entire Gakona chain, in a Boyd-Everett-style tour-de-force from Gakona Central on down to The Thorn at the eastern end. Never mind that someday we would both find ourselves buried alive almost on a routine basis. On that day on the Serrated Edge, Sir Benowitz had been dipped in Wall Holler, and rendered speechless by what he had glimpsed there.

Bouchard scoffed, and we proceeded along the ridge until we got to the same impasse that had stopped us two years earlier. The same 60-foot slope led to the same Magritte drop-off I remembered into pure, puffy clouds. The next quarter mile of ridge showed through the clouds: stegosaurus dripping with marshmallow sauce.

"Think we should bail?"

"If you wanna bail, then we gotta bail."

"Wanna lead?"

"Maybe we should bail."

"Maybe I can bury a picket like a deadman..."

And then, came floating up the shocker. What one might call the "I've got a cook pot; you've got a cook pot" moment...

Jim yelled up: "I'm just gonna solo on. You guys can go back to the cave."

Now I see his comment as ploy and bluster, but at the time it produced in me a bolt of sensation...the feeling again. The *Comstockian Indifference* of the mountains. Chuck Comstock, Jim, Benowitz, too, for that matter, they had already learned to let go their human attachments. They were true hardmen. Only I was soft on the inside, and the mountains didn't care.

But the next thing I knew, Bouchard had joined me at the belay. "Let's go back to the cave and have the rest of your coffee."

Oh mountaineers of Alaska, you will be joyous to hear the first crossing of Gakona's Serrated Edge still awaits a taker. We bailed a second time, feeling silly at the effort we had devoted to such a bizarre conception. On the long, starving hike out via Gunn Creek, we grew hallucinatory and delirious. Apple had us collecting rocks in the Gakona moraines, rocks that shined like gems. We carefully lodged the stones in our packs for safekeeping. When I finally got back to Fairbanks days later, dull pieces of heavy schist clattered out of my pack onto the floor. "Hey! Who put rocks in my pack?"

We went to a party at Dead End Alley where Doug Buchanan was. The Serrated Edge had been Buchanan's brainchild to begin with. He had encouraged us to go back and told us we would be local heroes should we succeed. So I asked him now, for the truth – had we been played? His preternaturally blue eyes twinkled above the Darwin beard. I drew closer to hear the secret. "The Serrated Edge...it's completely daft," said Doug.



Prince William Sound Deepwater Bay Traverse

Text and photos by Dave Lucey

Traversers – Mike Miller, Cory Hinds, and Dave Lucey

Last weekend of June 2014

We took Mike Miller's boat out of Whittier. Our destination was Deepwater Bay, a bay that we've rock climbed in before. It has beautiful granite reminiscent of Yosemite that is unlike most of the rock in Alaska. Very few people have ever climbed here, so we feel fortunate every time we go out there.

Mike has been working on this rock ridge traverse in his head for quite some time. It's something that he has really wanted to do now for the past five years – bucket list, I think he said! Mike has been coming out here with his boat and family for many years. He has looked at this possible traverse for most of that time, figuring out how to make it happen. The challenges to get started are typical for the sound – snow level, daylight, and good weather. In some years you could have tons of snow at beach level in May. Higher up could be worse, with cascades of water pouring off the ridges. The highpoint on this trip would be 3,500 feet on a granite dome – Deepwater Dome, I call it. Others have named it mini Half Dome. [Ed. note: In the 2007 American Alpine Journal, Josh Varney called this peak *Brackish Bitch*.] I prefer the Alaska reference. We would be starting this one right off the water, so we are going to earn every step with ups and downs throughout. Daylight was another challenge. We expected it to be 16-plus hours, start to finish, for the full

traverse. Lastly, we needed good weather. Since much of this would be on rock, we were hoping for somewhat dry conditions. 2014 seemed like the year to do it. There was low winter snowfall, which meant the snowline was much higher in elevation than in other years. The 10-day forecast was looking good and we were all available within a week of summer solstice – June 21st.

I had my own challenge. It was five months to the day from some major hip surgery. Plus, I've been a slug for the past 3 to 4 years delaying the surgery. I was worried that I couldn't hang with these guys. In the end it wasn't an issue – they weren't going to listen to me anyway.

We agreed the weekend. The start of the trip kind of went like this:

Arrive at Deepwater Bay 8:00 p.m. Thursday night – weather unsettled;

Drop shrimp pots (four of them – the first of many);

Grab some dinner, couple of beers, and head to bed (on the boat);

Friday morning, check weather....looking good!;

Clear and reset shrimp pots (nice haul for the first set of



Cory Hinds making his way up to the first high point, Splitter Peak. Mike Miller had been this far before.



Mike Miller with the rock ridge in the foreground and Splitter Peak (center) and Deepwater Dome (left) in the background. Photo by Cory Hinds.

shrimp!);

Eat breakfast (shrimp egg burritos of course – damn, they were good!);

Ready the kayaks and packs for the traverse;

Drop off Cory's three-man inflatable kayak at the far end of the traverse;

Kayak to the opposite end of the traverse and start the trip;

We started up the ridge about 11:00 a.m. Friday, June 27.

On with the trip. We don't think this traverse had been done before, so there was no way to verify anything in advance. That we know of, only Mike had been on the first part of the traverse. He went up to the first highpoint a few years earlier and so knew that much about the ridge – it was a 12-hour round-trip to the first highpoint and back to shore for him. The rest of it was unknown and unseen. We were bringing rock shoes, harnesses, rappel/belay devices, an 80-foot rope, some rock protection, ice axes, clothes, food, and maps. No radio, headlamps, etc. We were counting on encountering plenty of water, so we only started with a liter of water each.

After a full breakfast of the shrimp egg burritos, we were set and started off. Kayaking to shore, we stashed the kayaks planning to pick them up the following day. We started as low on the

rock ridge as possible to get the full ridge in. A 30- to 45-minute bushwhack through trees and brush and then on the ridge proper. Did I say this was beautiful granite!?! From there on, we are gaining elevation and getting stellar views in every direction as we left the ocean behind us. The ridge we were on divided two bays – Deepwater Bay and Greystone Bay. We saw a couple boats out in the bays, but we were alone – not another person in sight the entire time we were on shore. That is typical for being out there. A snack and water break early on allowed us to see a humpback whale doing some fishing. The whale repeatedly dove down, blew its bubble net and then surfaced through the ring catching fish the whole way up. Quite a scene and a view none of us had seen from a couple thousand feet above the water.

The first major milestone on the ridge was the highpoint we called Splitter Peak. This was about halfway and separated the start of the ridge from what would be the highpoint on the traverse – Deepwater Dome. This was also as far as Mike had gone a few years earlier. It was somewhat uneventful getting to the top of Splitter Peak, but the descent toward Deepwater Dome required three rappels. Once down off the peak we ascended about 500 feet back to the ridge and saw our way forward to the dome. A glacier – Contact Glacier, not visible



The first half of the traverse from the water. We would ascend all the highpoints in the photo.

from water level – provided a straightforward way up to the dome. It was along this glacier once the sun lost direct contact with it that we were inundated with iceworms. For the better part of a couple hours they were everywhere as far as we could see. A couple photos and we moved on. I had recalled Roman Dial doing some iceworm research, so we contacted him afterward and relayed our story. He was as (or more) interested in the iceworm find than the traverse itself! He hadn't heard of anyone coming in contact with iceworms on that glacier before, so it was a new data point for his work.

We topped out on the 3596-foot dome about 11:00 p.m. Plenty of daylight, and the weather was holding, so we were doing well. A quick look around and we realized we were not going to be able to continue the traverse via the ridge. We were unable to descend off the peak down to the ridge proper. Too steep to walk off and with a short rope for rappels, we were unable to rap the distance we needed to reach the ridge below. It was clear we would have to descend down the back of the dome on the glacier. Essentially dropping several thousand feet coming out in a valley that was below the ridge we had targeted from the water. We ended up getting to the same place, but did it a bit differently than we thought we could. After negotiating crevasses and moulins at the toe of

the glacier, we were quickly back on tundra by about 4:00 a.m. The soft, springy tundra made for an ideal mattress as we lounged around for a while before heading to the beach where we stashed the three-man inflatable kayak – and three beers to seal the end of the traverse. Nothing like a 6:00 a.m. beer after an 18-hour day. It was a short paddle back to Mike's boat, where we just had to make shrimp and egg burritos again. A couple more beers and nap time until midday when shrimp pots and kayaks were calling our names!



Shrimp pot on the first morning.

The Devils Prongs vs. The Three Sisters

Text and photo by Wayne L. Todd with Carrie Wang and Zac Davies

September 15, 2014



Looking west from "Angelica."

Three bumps wave the west skyline from the friendly town of Kodiak. These bumps are known locally as The Three Sisters. All the maps label them as the Devils Prongs. I didn't catch the names, so I made some up. This is a local workout hike, similar to Anchorage's Flattop Mountain to Peak Three, except steeper and a bit more scenic (and much less crowded).

We are visiting our friends Zac Davies and Katie Elliott, but she is working, so our hike is comprised of Zac, Carrie Wang, and me. I like "steep workout hikes" with short approaches (reality: mountaineering). The trail for "Cindy" (2080 feet, closest from the east), really has no approach and starts climbing from near sea level to 2080 feet in ½ mile. Despite the damp trail from intermittent sprinkles, the footing is reasonable on sandy steps. (OK, there are a few slips). A wonderful benefit to the sprinkles is frequent rainbows and the more precipitation, the more intense the colors, and even multiple bands. The beauty is enhanced by the blue ocean backdrop.

From "Cindy," we follow the ridge south, which necks down significantly. A slip here would result in a lengthy tumble or slide, best to be avoided. The mostly dry footing is appreciated. We begin to notice prolific large, deep red, and tasty,

cranberries. Some get procured for later cooking. The blueberries are not of the same caliber. Ascending "Bertha" (2169), murders of ravens play on the drafts above, but move down the ridge.

The weather looks seriously nasty as we descend west from "Bertha," this ridge also necking down. The water-filtered sunlight on surrounding verdant slopes, along with the rainbows, keeps us motivated even after donning rain gear. The ravens play above "Angelica" (2329), but fly off to the rainbows as we approach. The precipitation lets up as we break on top and continue our conversations while watching the aerial dancing black birds contrasting with the infused color stripes. We then descend southeast from Angelica toward our exit valley.

A few slides from Zac are entertaining, especially the planned ones. I comment at a large bird-looking-rock: "That looks so much like a bird, except it's way too big." Then the massive immature eagle lifts off. Soon on the trail, we descend to mid-valley, then follow the trail northeast out the valley, completing a wonderful five-mile, 2,800-foot loop.

Devils Prongs or Sisters? You decide.

“Spindrift Couloir” and “It’s Included” on Radio Control Tower

Text and photos by Alan Rousseau



Looking down from near the top of “Spindrift Couloir” as Mark Pugliese ascends. The southwest buttress that “It’s Included” tops out is the main pillar feature visible.

The first time I flew into Denali Base Camp was to guide Denali in May of 2012. As we were circling in to the airstrip, my buddy Mike Pond was telling me what all the features were: Annie’s Ridge, Mount Hunter, Mount Frances, Kahiltna Queen, and, of course, the (relatively) little guy, Radio Control Tower. The next year (May 2013) I flew back into the Southeast Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier, again guiding, but instead of starting the long slog across the main body of the lower Kahiltna, we would be spending a couple weeks in Base Camp attempting the West Ridge of Hunter.

Our second day in camp there was a storm coming in. I saw a line on the west face of Radio Control Tower. My friend, and at the time client, Aaron Kurland was chomping at the bit to get after it. I figured we could launch into the west face and bail when the storm came in. Aaron and I got about 600 feet into the route when it switched on in classic Alaska Range style. Three snow bollards got us down, but the face immediately began shedding. It was harmless enough slough, but we found ourselves fully immersed in powder clouds a few times. After the storm passed we climbed “Bacon and Eggs,” encountering WI4/5 conditions and moderate mixed climbing. A couple days later we went for an attempt on the west ridge of Hunter. Unfortunately, on the second day of the climb, we found precarious wind-slab conditions, and returned back down.

After a rest day, we planned to climb the “Mugs Start” to the Moonflower Buttress. We scheduled an early wake-up to try and be off the face before the sun hit at 2 p.m. But in the middle of

the night, there was a pee-bottle incident; I won’t get into the details, but it resulted in a very wet Spantik liner. This caused a bit of a false start to the day, and the “Mugs Start” was out. Again I was looking for an objective with less objective hazard, but still with fun, steep terrain. So we headed back to what we had begun calling the “Spindrift Couloir” on the west face of RCT.

We were pleasantly surprised with good cramponing separated by fun water ice and granite steps. Our line offered just over 1,000 feet of technical climbing with cruxes to WI3, M5. After surmounting the summit cornice, we had a nice ridge walk from the south end of the massif to the summit, and then descended the standard climbing route. It was a complete spur-of-the-moment decision to head up there that day, but turned out to be one of the most fun days of the trip. It also opened up my eyes to a feature that is often overlooked for its bigger next-door neighbors. I had a hard time saying that this was a first ascent since it is right there, and is likely that someone else has climbed it before and did not record it. Therefore, I have just referred to it as the first recorded ascent, since I can find no previous record. The “Spindrift Couloir” is one that I would recommend to those looking for a less intimidating way to sort of dip the toe into the technical climbing of the area. Or when dealing with less than ideal conditions the sustained steepness of the face and west aspect causes it to shed quickly. So if the upper slopes of the southwest ridge of Frances are still too iffy, it is a good way to still get in some fun, moderate climbing.

This past spring I flew into the Southeast Fork again for two trips; one to guide Denali, and one personal trip. As many of you know, May and June of 2014 were less than ideal in the Alaska Range. After guiding Denali Mark Pugliese and I had about 12 days to try to do a quick trip into the central Alaska Range. We wanted to go into the Tokositna Glacier, but after three days of no flights, Paul Roderick suggested we find another place to go. He did not think he would be able to get us into the Tok for a week. So, being flexible as we are, Mark and I said, "Just put us on the soonest flight you can, doesn't matter where." So, Alaska SuperTopo book in hand, we went to the loading deck.

Due to the mass numbers flying into Denali Base Camp and its reputation as being one of the first landing strips to clear, we figured that is where we would end up. Sure enough, an hour later we found ourselves on board for the Southeast Fork. Again with challenging conditions I found myself in Denali Base Camp. We rolled the dice and an hour after landing we skied down to the base of the southwest ridge of Frances. We soloed the rock portions, and roped up for the steeper glaciated snow-climbing portions. A challenging trail break, both to the summit and back to camp, made for a bit of a longer day than we had planned. We were just happy to have climbed something instead of spending another day festering in Talkeetna. The next day we skinned out to below Kahiltna Queen. What we saw validated our fears, that there were few routes in condition. All day and night we could hear avalanching and rockfall on all aspects echoing through the Southeast Fork.

Once again I was drawn to old, reliable RCT. This time the Southwest Buttress looked exciting, with good rock, and some water-ice smears present. After a weather day or two, we went up there to check it out. The day was one of those hard to

motivate 35 degrees and rain/snowing. So we decided to leave rock shoes behind, and figured maybe it would just be a reconnaissance up a couple pitches. The classic adage I lived by in the Cascades, "If you don't go, you will never know" once again provided. By the time we hit the buttress, the precipitation stopped and the clouds quickly followed suit.

The weather was giving us a break, but the climbing was on us from the start. An iced M6 squeeze chimney followed by an M7 fist crack with blobs of ice made up the first two pitches. I led the second pitch with no gloves, due to a crimpy start, then had to punch snice out of the crack that followed for the last 30 feet. I couldn't open my hands at the anchor they were cramping so badly.

The route stayed quite sustained at 5.8 to 5.10+ and M5 to M6. We mostly followed icy chimney systems, but found splitter dihedral, and straight-in crack pitches. We took the route up again around 1,000 feet to the top of the Southwest Buttress, a kind of pillar feature. We called our route "It's Included." Beyond this the route would have merged into the upper half of the "Spindrift Couloir." Dangerous isothermal snow made us decide to call it a day. We rappelled off the mushroom-capped summit of the pillar with buried rocks as our anchor. A couple more double-rope raps landed us in a gully we could down-climb. Once again the west aspects of RCT provided fun climbing and some adventure on a day where the other faces of the area were out of commission.

After climbing this route, the forecast looked dire for the next few days. So with that we finished the whiskey and got on a flight the next morning before the next wave of low pressure settled in.



Routes on Radio Control Tower. "Spindrift Couloir" was climbed in May 2013. "It's Included" was climbed in June 2014.

“Lucey in the Sky” – Upper Eklutna Glacier Valley, Alaska

Text by Dave Lucey

One of the more spectacular climbing areas in Southcentral Alaska is the Upper Eklutna Glacier Valley. The valley was formed by the Eklutna Glacier as it carved itself through solid rock, leaving behind sheer rock walls thousands of feet high and less than one-quarter mile wide. Capped at the head of the valley sits the Eklutna Glacier, this is the source of the eight-mile-long turquoise Eklutna Lake.

This area has been the site of an annual early spring ice climbing festival dating back 10 to 12 years. Spilling off of the mountain slopes and rock walls are long multi-pitch ice climbs of various degrees of difficulty. The festival at times has hosted upward of 30 climbers scaling the ice covered walls over a three-to four-day period. This is quite a scene and a great opportunity for climbers to get together after the long winter climbing season.

Some of the standard climbs that form every year are classics and offer great climbing in a scenic alpine mountain setting.

Climbs such as Serenity Falls, “Iron Curtain,” “Mitre Might,” “Miller Might,” and “Freer’s Tears” are all excellent climbs and are dependable formers year-on-year. Other climbs are much more fickle and form as a result of environmental and weather conditions whose nature is a topic of frequent and intense discussion.

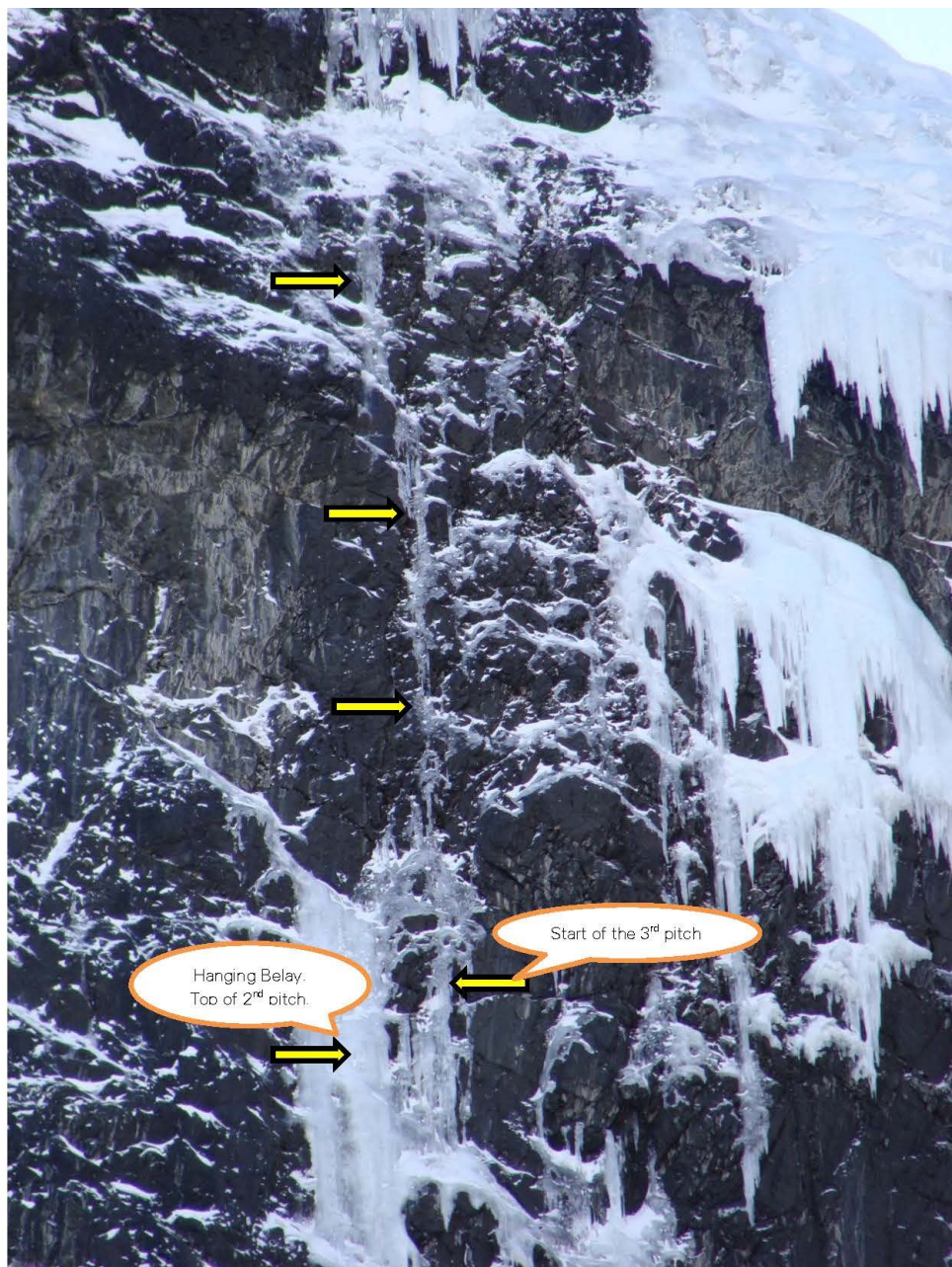
One such climb formed several years ago and spilled down one of the more sheer sections of the wall. This ice line was just left (north) off the “Headstone Pillars” area and just to the right of “Eklutna Man.” Harry Hunt and I spied the climb on one of our frequent winter trips into the valley. Because it linked up the

lower section of the wall with the upper, we gave it the name “the Direct” for reference. In the year that we first noticed it, though the climb was formed, it was extremely thin with at least one section of blank rock that would need to be negotiated. We kept our eye on the climb in subsequent trips into the area.

During the 2003 ice-climbing festival I arrived on a Friday, the day after Harry and Kristian Sieling came in. The word was, “the ‘Direct’ is in!” The following day Kristian and I set out for the climb. Standing on the valley floor looking up at the wall the climb was an obvious ribbon of ice fully formed from bottom to top. There was no question this is the best condition it had been in a couple years.

Kristian and I were excited to get on a new route and we started up.

The route begins just left of the start for “Headstone Pillars” and traverses around a fairly large, compact, glacier-polished rock outcrop, which splits the start for “Headstone Pillars” to the



Upper portion of “Lucey in the Sky.” Photo by Cory Hinds.

right and the unclimbed “Direct” to the left. Pitch One was led by Kristian and offered moves over thin ice while using rock pro in corners for protection. Once around the outcrop the climbing turned a corner and led to a couple short, steep, and narrow pillars that offered either tie-offs around the bases for protection or slings run through holes that appeared in the ice. On this pitch the ice was generally too thin for screws and was protected using what ever natural means were available.

Pitch Two started at the top of the rock outcrop and quickly steepened to where it ended at the base of the ice ribbon dripping down the rock wall. The end of this pitch finished in a near-vertical sheet of smooth blue-green ice, requiring a hanging belay just left of an ice step leading to the bottom of the ice ribbon. This second pitch felt like Grade V ice and the beautiful, aesthetic ice ribbon was still to be climbed – no doubt this would be the crux of the climb and what we had come to do.

Kristian came up to the top of the second pitch and from our hanging belay we assessed the next pitch. Knowing I had been watching the climb for some time and after having had a hard day of dry-tool rock climbing with Harry the previous day, Kristian graciously gave me the sharp end for the next pitch.

Pitch Three was like something I had never climbed before. Having topped out on the ice step 15 feet up and to the right of Kristian’s belay, I was now able to fully appreciate the ice ribbon above me. Looking up the sheer wall the ice was never any wider than 3 feet across and the majority of the ice was nearer to 18 inches wide and never much thicker than that. I found that the 36-inch-wide sections were formed when the ice built up on small ledges on the rock wall, allowing the ice to flow along the ledges a bit before continuing its plunge downward.

Before fully committing to the ice ribbon, I received some timely and well-needed encouragement from Kristian. He could sense my hesitation in wanting to begin. The nature of the climb required my feet to be directly below my body to keep my front points in the ice. No wide stances or stemming were available. Along with the position I would have to be in to climb the ribbon, I also have a reputation for not possessing a gentle swing with my tools. It didn’t take me long to realize that I was fracturing off sections of ice that I couldn’t afford to lose. Though I began to make progress up the ribbon and the screws were going into the ice, I also had visions of the entire thing peeling away from the rock wall. It wasn’t really clear to me how the ice was staying adhered to the wall because it was so narrow.

After what seemed to be 70 to 80 feet out from Kristian, I was doing everything I could to keep moving and yet find a way to reduce the strain on my upper body. I began to stem out on the rock wall, looking for front-point placements to take some weight off of my arms. About this time I took a high step with my right foot in order to reach a much-needed bulge of ice when I felt my calf muscle launched my third tool into the air. It sailed out of my back holster and I saw it land well below me in a patch of snow. At the time this was the least of my worries.

Having climbed up a bit more, I noticed that not far ahead the ribbon of ice led over a bulge and met up with a wide ice curtain

on the first substantial ledge above the sheerest part of the wall. It was about here that I began to feel really pumped in my arms. In one of my rock stem stances my left foot scraped off of the wall and my left tool came out of the ice. Before I realized it I was airborne, almost horizontal in the air with my feet perpendicular to the rock wall and me looking up at the sky. The sensation was like nothing I had never felt before and I saw a couple ice screws in the ice ribbon go racing upward before I felt the rope take my weight. I was climbing with half ropes and alternating clipping and the first screw on one rope grabbed. I was now dangling about 35 feet up above Kristian, and when I looked in my hands, I only had my left ice tool. Looking up the climb, I could see my right-hand tool still in the ice where I last planted it. For years I climbed with leashes made out of 1-inch tubular webbing with a large loop in the bottom. I would stick my hand through the loop and do one or two twists to close it and that would be my leash. The system worked well, as it allowed easy access in and out of the leashes, never put strain on my wrists, and I felt it never took any weight off of my forearms. I just now tested how well this method kept me connected to the tools!

I was in a bit of situation at this point. I was about 35 feet above Kristian. I had one tool in my hand, one tool buried in the snow about 100 feet below me, and one tool still in the ice ribbon about 50 feet above me. It never occurred to me to be lowered off or to come down. I exchanged a few words with Kristian and before I knew it he had untied from one of the twin ropes and tied his tool to the end of it. I hauled it up to me, lowered the rope back down to him, he tied back in and up the ribbon I started again.

I seemed to do better the second time up, whether it was because I was committed to retrieving my tool or still in shock from falling, but I got up to my tool with no problems. I was able to get up to the ice curtain that now guarded the upper rock wall. One final vertical section before the ice laid back and continued for a long run up the upper reaches of The Mitre. It was there that I ended the route. Unfortunately because of the time it took to lead this pitch and then re-climbing after the fall, it had gotten too dark for Kristian to second the pitch. I buried a good screw in the ice and rapped down.

Because I was whipped from the climb, we didn’t stay long trying to find my tool in the snow. I noted the area and planned on coming back in the spring to get it. When Kristian and I got back to the hut we were the last ones out that day. Some Canadian friends from Calgary where climbing with us that year, and after a brief period of silence, one of them asked how the climb was. It didn’t take long before everyone was grilling me about the fall. They were across the valley doing a new finish to “Road to Nowhere” when they saw me high on the ribbon one minute and the next I was dangling just above Kristian.

I didn’t get to name this climb – it seemed obvious to everyone in the hut what it would be.

“Lucey in the Sky” – FA 150 Meters, WI6 Dave Lucey, Kristian Sieling. March 2003 Eklutna Ice-fest. Eklutna Glacier, Alaska.

*Cold hearted orb that rules the night,
Removes the colours from our sight;
Red is grey and yellow white,
But we decide which is right.
And which is an illusion?*

-The Moody Blues

Magical Moonlight Memories in Alaska

Text and photo by Frank E. Baker

Despite the fact it has been probed and studied for years and astronauts have left footprints on its surface, our moon still retains much of its mystery and magic, kindling deep emotions within us as it wanders slowly across the night sky. In midwinter when daylight in Alaska is at a minimum, I really enjoy getting outdoors under a full moon for hiking, skiing, or snowshoeing.

While a full moon at 0.1 LUX is barely a fraction of the full daylight brightness (10,000 LUX), when it's reflected off snow and diffused across a broad area, a mountainside for example, it can cast shadows and in general, create a very bright setting--certainly sufficient for moving about.

One of the more interesting things about moonlight is that it limits our vision to black and white, or monochromatic view, as noted in The Moody Blues' song lyric. The reason is that its luminosity is not sufficient to activate the cone cells, which provide color, in our eyes. In low light our rod cells are activated, and they're only capable of giving us black and white.

This absence of color tricks our brain and sometimes makes us think we're seeing color when we aren't. I think the uncertainty of not knowing exactly what we're looking at adds to the allure and magic of moonlight.

I might take along a headlamp to show me some detail in case I'm in a shadowed area. But generally, I like to allow my eyes to



Some close-up detail is rendered by moonlight reflected off snow.

adjust to the low light level and work with what's available. I'm sure readers have experienced how quickly one's night vision is ruined after turning on a bright headlamp.

Sometimes for navigation in a relatively unfamiliar area, leaving the headlamp off is preferable because its light washes out distant

views of ridges and other landforms. On a winter snowshoe trip not far from my home north of Anchorage, I almost became lost because I relied too much on my headlamp. When I turned it off, I immediately saw a familiar land feature and got back on track.

On moonlit outings (even half moons are great) I no longer struggle to see what is not visible at that low light level. It makes the trip much more enjoyable. Allow the scenes to come to you, accept what the gray and silvery light will show you. Trust your rods. For me, that's when it becomes magical, even mystical. Sometimes you're not sure what you're looking at, but it doesn't matter. As The Moody Blues say, it can be your "illusion."

But a caveat: Be sure of your terrain. You don't want to wander into a glacier crevasse or open water on a frozen river or lake. But once you're in a familiar area and know what to expect, a moonlit excursion can make you feel like you're journeying into the unknown. And in a way, you are.

Time in Places and Places in Time

Text and photo by Frank E. Baker

We all live in places – in houses in neighborhoods within communities such as Anchorage, Eagle River, Peters Creek, Chugiak, Birchwood, and beyond. But we sometimes live elsewhere – in places of the heart and mind and spirit.

These are familiar places, both far and near. They remain alive in our memories, beckoning us to return. And we return to them again and again.

In the summer there is a small, green meadow inside a canyon high in the Chugach Mountains that has a small, clear stream running through it.

Over the years I've nicknamed the area "heavenly valley" because when I'm there I feel as if I've touched a bit of heaven.

In the valley beneath this mountain is a small blue lake that is dotted with boulders, some rising above the water's surface. I once spotted small fish in this lake and thought it curious, since it is landlocked. With no inlet or outlet, it is spring fed.

In the Kenai Mountains west of Seward lies a 3,550-foot mountain that I named after my father, Kenneth D. Baker, who mined the area from 1947 to 1950. From this aerie I can look south past the headlands and outer reaches of Resurrection Bay to the open ocean; and my view west is the Bear Glacier that flows toward the sea; to the north is the expansive Harding Icefield that caps the Kenai Peninsula.

There is a valley not far from Eagle River that leads to a tarn. I hike there often in spring, summer, and fall, and almost feel reborn as I commune with the lingering silence, surrounded by steep mountains. Several pairs of small ducks, I believe Barrow's goldeneyes, swim blissfully around on the lake, occasionally diving to the bottom for food – I believe some kind of a black, leech-type snail.

On winters without much snow, like this one, I've climbed the ridges on both sides South Fork Valley and basked in the low-angled sun that even in January emits some warmth. During snowy years I've skied back to Eagle and Symphony Lakes and enjoyed the late-afternoon, frolicking calls of ravens returning to their nests after commuting to Eagle River and Anchorage in search of easy food.

I've heard the cracks and groans of glaciers that are endlessly recording their own version of history, and crouched in my



Upper Eagle River Valley.

sheltered position behind large rocks, cowering from winds shrieking overhead.

For many years in Alaska, I've immersed myself in the change of seasons, and observed subtle changes inside those seasons. From sunrise to sunset, from storm to calm, the sky always reveals something different.

On a late-autumn boat ride on Nancy Lake many years

ago, my sister and I were shrouded on all sides by an umbrella of dazzling green and red, the aurora, a phantasm of light that I will never forget.

There are other places that capture the soul; a beach on the north side of the Hawaiian island of Kauai that if walked at the right time of the day, before other hikers are there, makes me feel like Robinson Crusoe exploring a new and mysterious domain.

On that same island is a waterfall on the Wailua River. It is popular with tourists, but I have climbed down the steep bank and hiked along the river to a spot at the base of the falls. Cooled by its spray, I knew in an instant that to Hawaiians it must have been, and perhaps still is, a holy place, and I said a prayer.

Alongside the trail descending deep into the Grand Canyon is an outcropping with a gnarled pine tree, jutting up defiantly from the rocks. This place is always in my mind because I took a photo of my daughter there when she was 24.

On a visit to a Lakota reservation some years ago, I walked on a bluff overlooking the Little White River, where it is said the legendary leader Crazy Horse often secreted himself to meditate.

We all have these places – places preserved in memories, photos, journals, and in stories we've shared. They are very special places because we can visit them whenever we want – if not in body, in mind. Some we might prefer to keep to ourselves. Some we like to share. We dash through life quickly, but nature moves much slower. We are fortunate because even though we change, nature will remain much the same throughout our lives. Most of those special places will always be there. And we can feel them pulling us.

Peak of the Month: Lyman Peak

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Alaska Range; Revelation Mountains

Borough: Unorganized Borough

Drainages: Fish Creek Glacier and Wild Goose Glacier

Latitude/Longitude: 61° 45' 49" North, 153° 53' 32" West

Elevation: 9304 feet

Prominence: 2354 feet from either Peak 9450 in the Fish Creek Glacier and Wild Goose Glacier drainages or Jezebel Peak (9650)

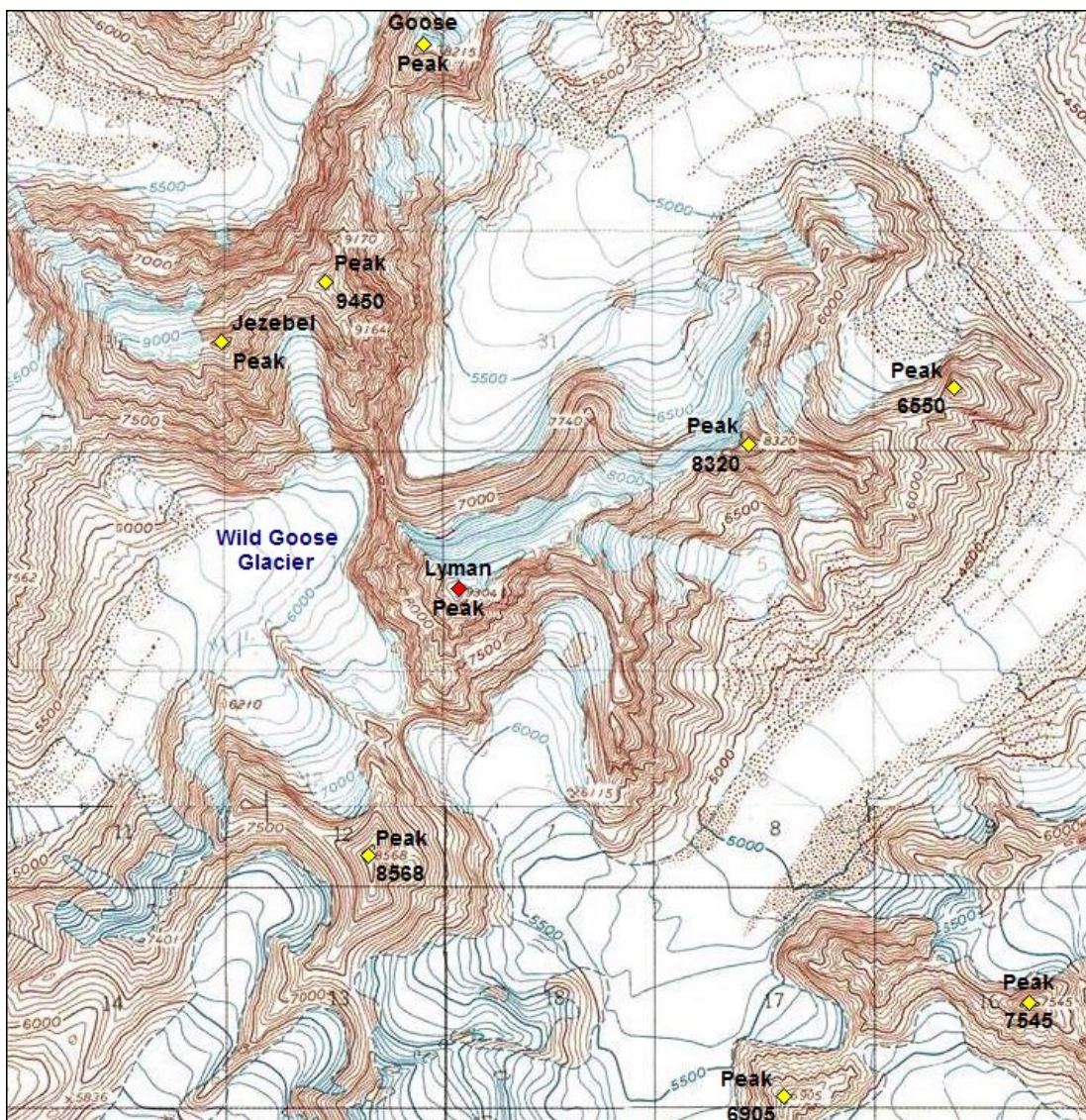
Adjacent Peaks: Peak 8320 in the Fish Creek Glacier drainage, Peak 9450, and Peak 8568 in the Fish Creek Glacier and Wild Goose Glacier drainages

Distinctness: 1554 feet from Peak 8320

USGS Map: Lime Hills (D-3)

First Recorded Ascent: This peak might be unclimbed.

Access Point: Wild Goose Glacier



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

immediately west of Lyman Peak and could be a suitable location for a base camp for a climb of Lyman Peak.

The name Lyman Peak has been used on bivouac.com to refer to the peak. Because that name has wider use than the name given by Hoeman, I am referring to Peak 9304 as Lyman Peak instead of Peak A-26. Presumably the name is derived from the nearby Lyman Fork of the Big River, which was named in honor of Robert Fisk Lyman (1911-1974), a cinnabar miner at the White Mountain Mine 43 miles northwest of Lyman Peak.

In 2008 Clint Helander received the American Alpine Club's Mountaineering Fellowship Award to attempt to climb Lyman Peak. Although he ventured to the Big River Glacier and made the first ascent of The Exodus (8385) that year, he did not reach the summit of Lyman Peak.

The 2013 *American Alpine Journal* featured Helander's profile of the Revelation Mountains on pages 102 through 115.

With a summit elevation of 9304 feet, Lyman Peak is, by my count, the seventh highest peak in the Revelation Mountains. Although its summit might never have been touched, Lyman Peak has received quite a bit of attention over the years.

In his 1960s unpublished manuscript on Alaska's mountains, Vin Hoeman identified over 150 peaks in the Alaska Range as worthy mountaineering objectives, including Lyman Peak, which he referred to as Peak A-26.

On April 24, 1981, Kimball Forrest of K2 Aviation flew Kitty Banner, Peter Sennhauser, and Janet Smalley in a Cessna 185 from Talkeetna to the Wild Goose Glacier. Sennhauser and Smalley then climbed Jezebel Peak (9650). This glacier is



Helander's photo of the southwest face of Lyman Peak (above) appeared on page 112.

In 2014 Graham Zimmerman was awarded a Mount Everest Foundation grant to attempt several objectives in the Revelation Mountains, including the northwest ridge of Lyman Peak, with Helander and Jens Holsten. Holsten ended up not going on the expedition, but on April 17 Helander and Zimmerman were flown to an unnamed glacier east of the South Fork of the Big River to begin their expedition. On April 25, four days after the party climbed Mount Titanic (9350), Zimmerman injured his right knee when he fell into a hidden crevasse while returning to base camp from the Wild Goose Glacier. As a result, Helander and Zimmerman aborted their expedition and were flown to Talkeetna that same day, leaving Lyman Peak unclimbed.

A 2015 Mugs Stump Award was granted to Chris Thomas and Rick Vance for a proposed climb of the southwest face of Lyman Peak.

The information for this column came from Vin Hoeman's unpublished manuscript on Alaska's mountains, available in the Grace and John Vincent Hoeman Collection stored at the UAA/APU Consortium Library's Archives and Special Collections; from Pete Sennhauser's trip report titled "P 9650 and Attempt on

Mount Hesperus, Revelation Mountains," which appeared on page 138 of the 1982 *AAJ*; from <http://bivouac.com/MtnPg.asp?MtnId=23168>; from Helen T. Lyman's biography of Bob Lyman, available at <http://alaskamininghalloffame.org/inductees/lyman.php>; from a list of 2008 Mountaineering Fellowship Grant recipients posted at <http://www.americanalpineclub.org/grants/r/112/Recipients>; from Clint Helander's report titled "Exodus, first ascent, Lefternliest Couloir; Ice Pyramid, attempt," which appeared on pages 141 through 143 of the 2009 *AAJ*; from Helander's profile of the Revelation Mountains titled "Recon: Revelations: Great Objectives in Alaska's Forgotten Mountains," which appeared on pages 102 through 115 of the 2013 *AAJ*; from Graham Zimmerman's Mount Everest Foundation Grant Application 14-17; from Zimmerman's trip report titled "Zimmerman-Helander Revelations 2014," which appeared in the June 2014 *Scree*; from Zimmerman's expedition report to the New Zealand Alpine Club titled "Revelations, Alaska Expedition 2014," available at https://alpineclub.org.nz/system/files/Revelations_Alaska_Expedition_2014.pdf; from a list of 2015 Mugs Stump Award recipients posted at <http://www.alpinist.com/doc/web14f/newswire-2015-mugs-stump-award-recipients-announced>, which included a photo of Thomas' and Vance's proposed route on the southwest face of Lyman Peak; and from my correspondence with Sennhauser.

MCA Executive Committee Meeting, December 2014

Agenda

Date: December 15, 2014

Meeting convened at 6:51 p.m.

Attendees: Cory Hinds, Liz Bennett, Galen Flint, Carlene Van Tol, Aaron Gallagher, Greg Encelewski, and Rachad Rayess.

Old Business

1. Officer/Board Responsibilities (Cory)

- a. Need everyone to be clear on responsibilities. Secretary - Schedule meeting locations, Vice President - set up program and entertainment for monthly general club meetings.
- b. Status of meeting room reservations: scheduled board meetings and general club meetings both scheduled up to December 2015 and print out provided to all board members. Exception of July 21st, 2015 general meeting will be picnic style held at a city park; possibly Valley of the Moon Park. Summer 2015 monthly general meetings may be rescheduled to an outdoor setting.

2. Treasurer's Report (Aaron)

- a. 2015 Proposed Budget - all approved and ready? Yes.
- b. November ledger and issues: Post Office box good through 2015.

3. Programs/Speakers (Galen)

- a. Christmas party planning:
- b. Galen will be picking up beverages and will be picking up Moose's Tooth pizza (15 pizzas today - 10 meat, 5 veggie) and possibly holiday music to play.
- c. Cory bringing ice, ice chest, and computer.
- d. Liz bringing, utensils, cups, napkins, plates, and MCA laptop.

4. Basic Mountaineering School (Jayme) - not present. Project is incomplete and Jayme will be working on this project the week of December 15, 2014

- a. Status of volunteers, courses, dates (Jayme) - Tabled.
- b. Information from Avalanche Information Center on half-day avalanche recognition? (Josh)-looking into that. Tabled.

5. Huts (Cory)

- a. Cory met with the Department of Natural Resources on the possibility of moving a hut. It appears that a new lease application would be feasible, but public comments could cause delays. Cory has contacted Stan Olsen for the hut assessment.
- b. Updated/clarified proposal for Dnigi Hut evaluation, proposed timeline:
 1. February 2015. Send in an assessment team to open walls, take photos, and report back to the Board with an assessment of the condition of the rot/mold in the hut walls. The assessment team would travel via snowmachine if possible, and if that is not feasible we will consider helicopter travel. A-Star helicopter services are an estimated \$2,000 for 1- to 1-½- hour flight time and may be able to carry two to three people. Rachad will research figures and come to conclusion of cost after the holidays. Aaron will check MCA budget for available funds. Galen contacting Ross Noffsinger and Vickie Lytle. Possibly recruit MCA members who own snowmachines to volunteer to bring in evaluators in efforts to save funds. Snowmachiner volunteers will be reimbursed for fuel and mileage. Information regarding as-

assessment will be presented in *the Scree* and will give members an opportunity to submit comments and questions.

2. March 2015. Board members will discuss and make a decision on proposed action for the Dnigi Hut at the March 2015 Board meeting. The Board will present the assessment and proposed action through a Powerpoint presentation at the March general meeting; comments and questions from the membership will be addressed at the meeting. It will be mandatory that all comments and suggestions be submitted in writing. The Board will then make a decision and the decision will be printed in the April 2015 *Scree*. If the decision is to relocate the hut, then the Board will move forward with the permit process in 2015. Under this scenario, we would prepare a foundation for the hut at the new location in 2016.

c. Urine-separating toilet seats. The issue is that our waste barrels are filling up quickly, and with lots of urine. The Snowbird Hut currently has a urine-separating toilet seat. The Mint Hut currently has blue barrels that are designed to only hold solids...these barrels are helicoptered out or packed out in wag-bags. Possibly post instructions for use of toilet system (i.e., pour boiling water down toilet before leaving hut). Cory motioned to price out number of seats needed to create a proposed budget. Carlene seconds Cory's motion. Cory will be speaking to Greg Bragiell for proposed budget.

6. Equipment Chairperson (Josh)

a. Proposal from Best Storage? Josh not present. Tabled.

New Business

1. Mentoring (Rachad)

a. Mentoring proposal-put article in *the Scree* and start sign-up sheet December 16, 2014, at the general meeting. Discussed three-to-six-month mentorships. It was recommended mentors have the same qualifications as instructors at MCA trainings. Board approved, consensus. Rachad will create sign-up sheets for mentors to write two or three skill areas. Mentors will be informed of liability. Students will be assigned to mentors by Board. Discussed just connecting people, writing intentions and do not make formal to avoid legal issues. Vickie Lytle may be able to help with this portion. Decided to see how much interest there is. Rachad will write an article and submit it to *the Scree*.

2. Summer meeting activities (Galen)

a. Outside meetings/climbing at local park or rock – Galen will look into finalizing and scheduling.

Other Discussion -

1. Insurance for MCA Board due to high risk activities. This issue has been discussed by Boards in the past, but the Board agreed not to get insurance. Would people sue just because we have insurance? High expenses associated with insurance? Discussed possibility of creating a waiver to utilize. Discuss liability waiver with a lawyer for a full understanding? Is the MCA membership waiver sufficient?

2. Announce the location of MCA library at holiday party. Possibly solicit a librarian? Set up a neighborhood library? Get rid of library? Find librarian first and then decide on possibly getting rid of library. Make the decision to get rid of the library a public decision. Should the idea of discontinuing the library be published in *the Scree*? Is there a reason for library? Talk with Vickie Lytle.

3. Aaron - Would like to make an announcement at the January 2015 general meeting of the Snow Penetrometer and conduct a survey (would experts find this tool useful?). Group of above-stated invention are located in Boise, Idaho. Would experts find this tool useful?

4. Awards for volunteers - consider handing out at January 2015 general meeting.

Next Meeting: January 19th, 2015, in REI classroom

Adjournment 7:13 p.m.

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Cory Hinds	229-6809	Board member (term expires in 2015)	Rachad Rayess	617-309-6566
Vice-President	Galen Flint	650-207-0810	Board member (term expires in 2015)	Joshua Clark	887-1888
Secretary	Liz Bennett	830-9656	Board member (term expires in 2016)	Jayne Mack	382-0212
Treasurer	Aaron Gallagher	250-9555	Board member (term expires in 2016)	Carlene Van Tol	748-5270
Past President	Greg Encelewski	360-0274			

Annual membership dues: Single \$20, Family \$25

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address below. 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@mtclubak.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 24th 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@mtclubak.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: Aaron Gallagher - membership@mtclubak.org

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vicky Lytle - hcc@mtclubak.org

Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008 or huts@mtclubak.org

Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127 or stugrenier@gmail.com

Scree Editor: MCAScree@gmail.com Steve Gruhn (344-1219) assisted by Elizabeth Ellis (elizabeth.anne.russo@gmail.com)

Web: www.mtclubak.org

Find MCAK listserv at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/MCAK/info>.

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