

"Go forward in life with a twinkle in your eye and a smile on your face, but with great and strong purpose in your heart. Love life and look for its opportunities."

— Gordon B. Hinckley

the **SCREE**

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

February 2018

Volume 61 Number 2



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Peak of the Month: Peak 5550

Monthly meeting: Monday, February 19th, 8 p.m., at the Beartooth Theatre at 1230 West 27th Avenue. Conrad Anker will give a presentation.

"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."

This issue brought to you by: **Editor**—Steve Gruhn **assisted by** Dawn Munroe

Cover Photo

John Giraldo on Mount Laurens. How about now; are you getting the stallion vibes yet?

Photo by Jason Stuckey

FEBRUARY MEETING

Join us for our club meeting on Monday, February 19th, 8 p.m., at the Beartooth Theatre at 1230 West 27th Avenue. Conrad Anker will give a presentation.

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcascre@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.

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Announcements

For those of you not on the MCA Facebook page, here's a posting about upcoming speakers and benefits for club members; you may want to forward to friends and encourage them to join as well!

Monday, 19 March - Film Fest at 49th State Brewing Company (more details to be announced later).

Tuesday, 17 April - Richard Baranow at the BP Energy Center.

Backcountry.com 15% purchases will only be given to members (working on details now).

Working on more discounts that will be for club members as well. Lets not forget the AMH discounts, speakers through the year and of course the amazing huts. Small price to pay for a great club!

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

July 13-21 MCA Summer Mountaineering Instructional Trip. Learn: trip organization, leadership, meal planning, navigation, route-finding, snow travel, running belays, snow anchors, knots, 10 essentials, terminology, glacier travel, ice climbing, belaying, crevasse rescue, wilderness medicine, bouldering, rock climbing, rappelling, and more while traveling the Bomber Traverse. Lead instructor: Greg Bragiel (unknownhiker@alaska.net). Meet with Greg at the March MCA meeting.

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

Online? Click me!



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

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Given what we know of the human striving for high places and long views, it's plausible that many "first ascents" memorialized by modern Alaska climbers were of summits previously visited by indigenous or later climbers whose achievements weren't preserved in any written record. All of us who claim first ascents in Alaska should give our assertion a mental asterisk, "first, as far as we know."

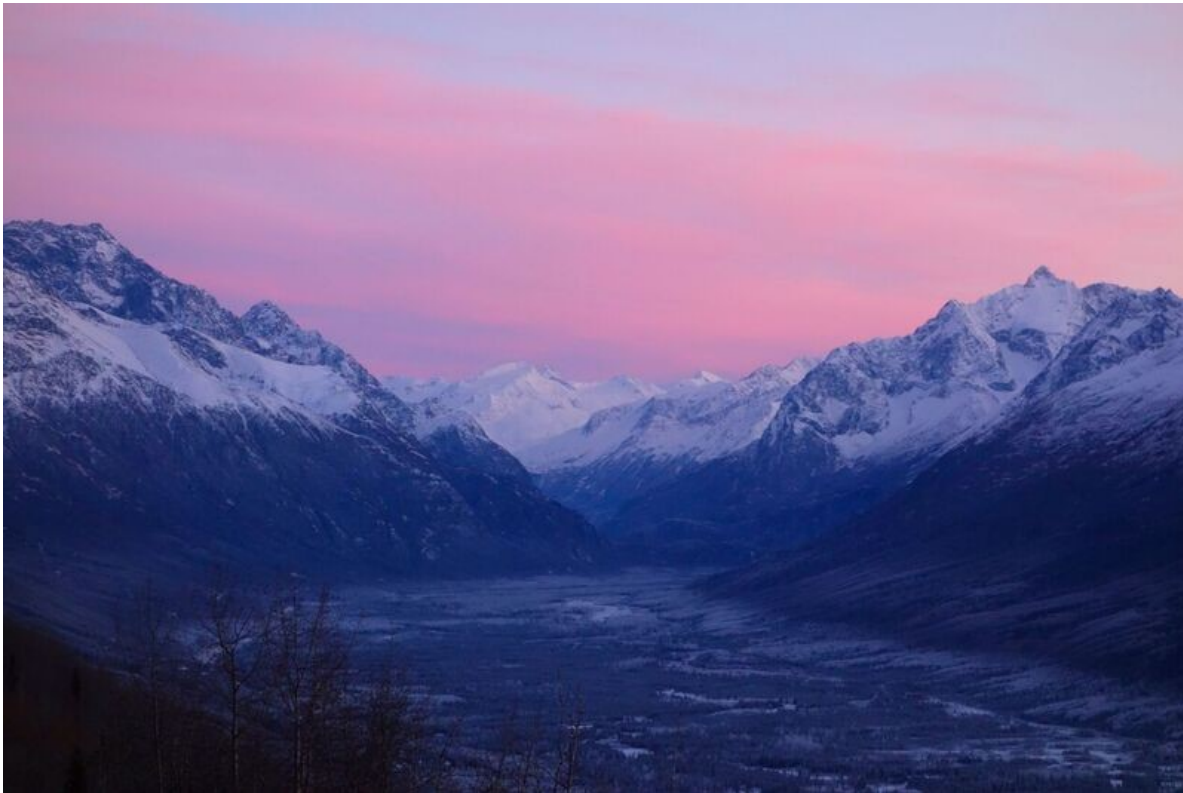
On the other hand, some recorded "first ascents" may be apocryphal. Sometime in July 1961 the news that Paul Crews, Helga Bading, Erik Barnes, and I had reached the summit of Iliamna Volcano was splashed across the front-page of the *Anchorage Daily Times*. A few days later a mildly irritated Milo Fritz, a local physician and eye doctor, phoned to inform me that we were the second, not the first. When he was a U.S. Army Air Corps flight surgeon in Alaska in World War II, he had ascended the volcano as part of an effort to rescue survivors of an aircraft crash on the upper slopes of the mountain.

He produced a copy of an illustrated magazine article describing the heroic effort. (The magazine was either *The Saturday Evening Post* or *Look*; I can't recall which.) The U.S. Army Air Corps team did indeed "climb" on Iliamna, and got pretty high, but, as the story made clear, no one in the party attempted the summit.

It's easy to imagine that the 1852 Russian Imperial Academy of Sciences expedition visited the summit of this striking stratovolcano. The late Rod Wilson, whose judgment I respected, apparently thought so. But here, too, a mental asterisk may be appropriate, especially with regard to a claim based – as it is here – on a tertiary source.

The Imperial Academy expedition's 1852 report must be available in some library or archive. It would be fun to track it down and see exactly what it says. Next time I'm in Saint Petersburg

Gregg Erickson



*Upper Eagle River Valley at sunset, November 29, 2016, from Mile High Road.
Photo by Frank Baker*

Choate's Chuckle - Tom Choate

Q: Why might a falling climber be the opposite of a criminal?

Answer: on page 23.

Behind the Mask: "The Cleveland Steam" on Mount Gabriel (8550 feet) and Mount Laurens (10042 feet), Alaska Range

Text by John Giraldo



Left: John Giraldo hoping he looks like a tanned stallion. Right: John Giraldo on the summit of Mount Laurens. The mask was worth the weight.

Photos by Jason Stuckey

Climbing is my ultimate form of self-expression. The mountains have shaped me: I'm a product of my experiences with them. My activities are centered on my desire to play in them; my drive has lifted me to summits and has ensnared me in my ego.

My early years were fueled by Mark Twight; I marched toward the mountains to prove myself. Success felt magical, the wild adventure euphoric. I realized I loved the physical and mental effort, and with increased skill each new goal was harder than the last. The only constant was uncertainty of success - the possibility of failure always loomed overhead. My focus narrowed; few things that didn't contribute toward my becoming a better climber interested me.

The bubble burst when I read the late Kyle Dempster's article in *Alpinist* 42 titled "The Torch and the Brotherhood." In it he described a life in which climbing was for fun - heroes need not apply. As I began to appreciate the understated style of some of my other acquaintances, my hero-on-the-battlefield perspective faded. I retrained my brain to realize that I was just a silly climber struggling up mountains because that's what made me feel real.

April 2017: I sat discontentedly on the snow bench in the blue and gray cook tent, deep in thought. We were preparing for an attempt on Mount Laurens the next day, but my mind was elsewhere. My ambition wanted to attempt The Fin, tucked away into the farthest corner of the glacier system, yet close enough I could clearly see its beautiful soaring features through the binoculars. The approach was full of objective hazards and we weren't climbing efficiently enough to have a realistic shot, but I was struggling to let it go. Ambition, safety, and hardheadedness had always been a difficult trio for me to balance.

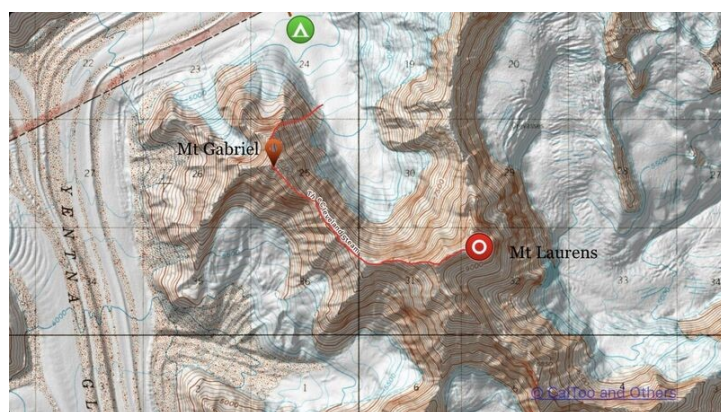
As I stood on the summit of Mount Laurens on a calm, sunny day, wearing a damp volleyball kneepad to hold my ripped pant leg together, I looked over at Jason Stuckey's sunscreen-

smearing face and smiled. The bubble had burst again. No, it wasn't the route that I had originally envisioned, but there we were: two friends, safe, stoked to be climbing a big route together, and having the time of our lives.

A stinky male (Chad Diesinger) getting ready for a long, cold night under the tarp; best thing ever.



Photo by John Giraldo



"The Cleveland Steam." Giraldo's and Stuckey's route climbed a roughly 2,500-foot buttress to an 8550-foot sub-peak of Mount Laurens that they named Mount Gabriel. They then continued on the ridge for about 3 miles and about 3,500 feet, linking up with the first ascent route of Mount Laurens, which was established solo by Thomas Buben-dorfer in 1997. Unsure of which summit was the highest, they tagged both the east and west summits on the summit plateau.

Devils Fist (5850 feet) and Satans Mistress (4401 feet), Northern Lynn Canal Area, Coast Mountains

Text by Ben Still



Ben Still scrambling down to a sub-summit of Devils Fist with Satans Mistress and northern Lynn Canal behind.

Photo by

Mike Miller and I boated up Lynn Canal from Juneau on August 8th, 2003, and picked up Will Wacker at Haines Harbor for some peak bagging. We were able to beach the *Nunatak* at high tide along the rugged shoreline of the east side of Lynn Canal just south of Yeldagalga Creek using some sheet metal, PVC pipe, and small logs. We used a come-a-long to pull the boat just a touch higher than high tide at sunset. We built a large fire on the beach and watched the giant floating cities cruise by after departing Skagway.

We awoke early to see even more cruise ships floating by, heading north to Skagway. We debated about bringing a rope and decide to leave it behind along with the all the other climbing gear. We started heading north, scrambling along the rocky shoreline to Yeldagalga Creek. After a slick and swift crossing of the creek, we entered the forest. Steep, mossy slopes with thick blueberry bushes, devil's club, and other fun plants kept the going slow in the spruce-hemlock forest. After the initial 1,300 vertical feet, the going leveled off into the Yeldagalga valley. We continued for 1 mile up-valley, finding worsening bushwhacking and steep side-hilling as the creek hugged the north side of the valley, pushing us upslope. We tried to get some sort of view looking up for a reference point, but couldn't see anything

through the lush foliage. We decided to start up, hoping we were aiming for the saddle to the east of Peak 4401. Another 1,000 feet of steep, thick brush with some small cliffs intermixed and we broke out into open country at 2500 feet.

It looked like we ended up in the right place; steep terrain continued above. Views of Sinclair Mountain and the jagged ridge-line of the Pickets to the south were impressive. We made quick work of the steep alpine terrain to the 3750-foot pass to the east of Peak 4401. We decided to quickly run up Peak 4401 and found some fun Class-3 scrambling over shattered granite near the summit. We left a small film canister and dubbed that peak Satans Mistress.

The terrain toward Peak 5850 was a beautiful mix of lakes, boulders, cliffs, and green expanses of heather with a few lingering snow patches. The basin between the peaks was an amazing bouldering Mecca. Hundreds of large granite boulders dotted the basin. We descended back down the ridge, carefully scrambling down the steeper sections, making our way around the lakes, and began the ascent of Peak 5850, which looked like a giant fist breaking up through the mountains. We aimed for a steep scree gully to the northwest of the summit that looked



Right: Mike Miller with Satans Mistress behind and northern Lynn Canal below. Photo by Ben Still



Left: Devils Fist's overhanging summit with Mike Miller (left) and Will Wacker. Photo by Ben Still

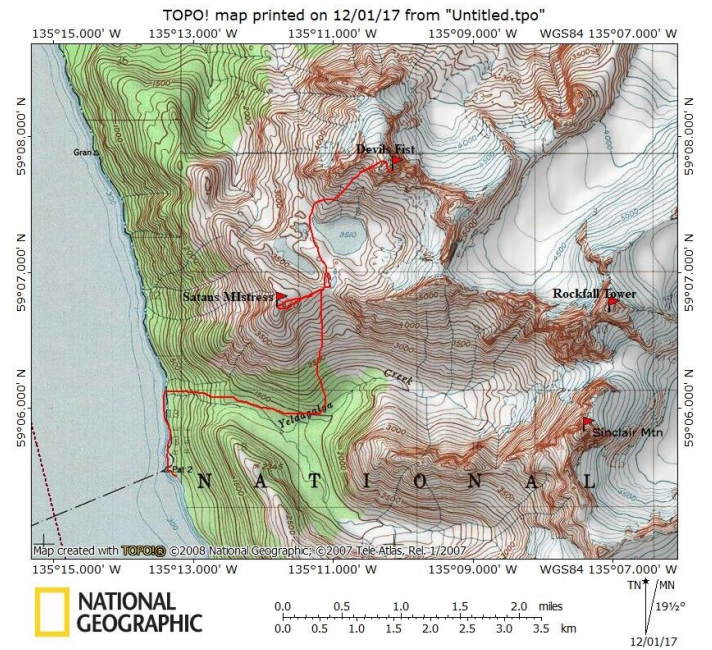
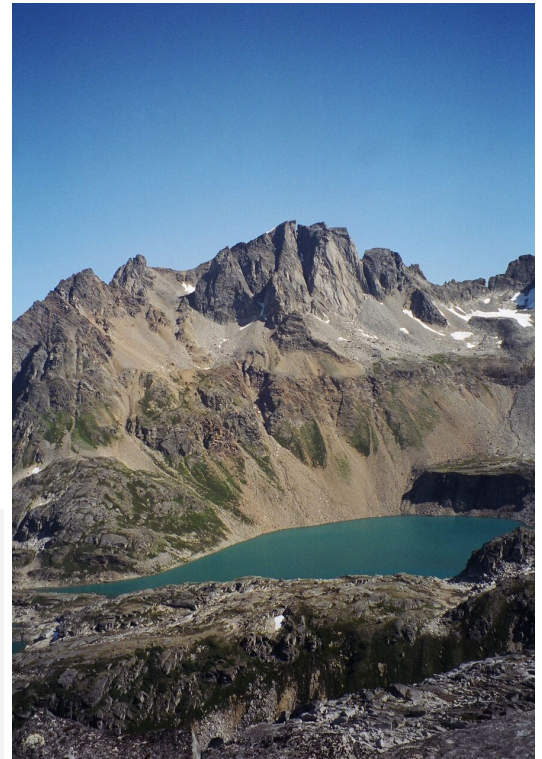
like it would lead to easy scrambling to the summit block, which was a giant overhang on its southeast side. We carefully made our way up through the boulders of loose granite and gained the summit ridge. A couple hundred feet of fun Class-3 scrambling with a few exposed Class-4 moves brought us to the summit. No rope needed! We spent a couple hours taking in the view from that rewarding vantage point. The distant Fairweather Range loomed above the closer Chilkat Range to the west and the Coast Mountains dominated the view in all other directions. On the summit we found an old rock cairn with lichen binding the rocks together. No register was found, so we left another film canister there and dubbed that peak Devils Fist. I found a cool little scramble to a sub-summit to the southwest that offered great views of the overhanging summit block and snapped some fun photos.

We found leaving the warm summit sun difficult, but realized we needed to get back down to the beach before the late evening tide began to go out. We retraced our steps back down the exposed moves and carefully made our way down the scree gully. Once back down in the bouldering-lake paradise, we found a perfect 15-foot cliff jump into one of the lakes. Will immediately stripped down and jumped in. Mike and I hesitated, but eventually jumped in as well. A great way to refresh your body before heading back into the thick brush. We crashed down the rest of the mountain through the thick brush and made it back to the beach with minutes to spare. We pushed the boat down along our dunnage and into the calm water. An awesome day in the mountains!

Scree—February 2018

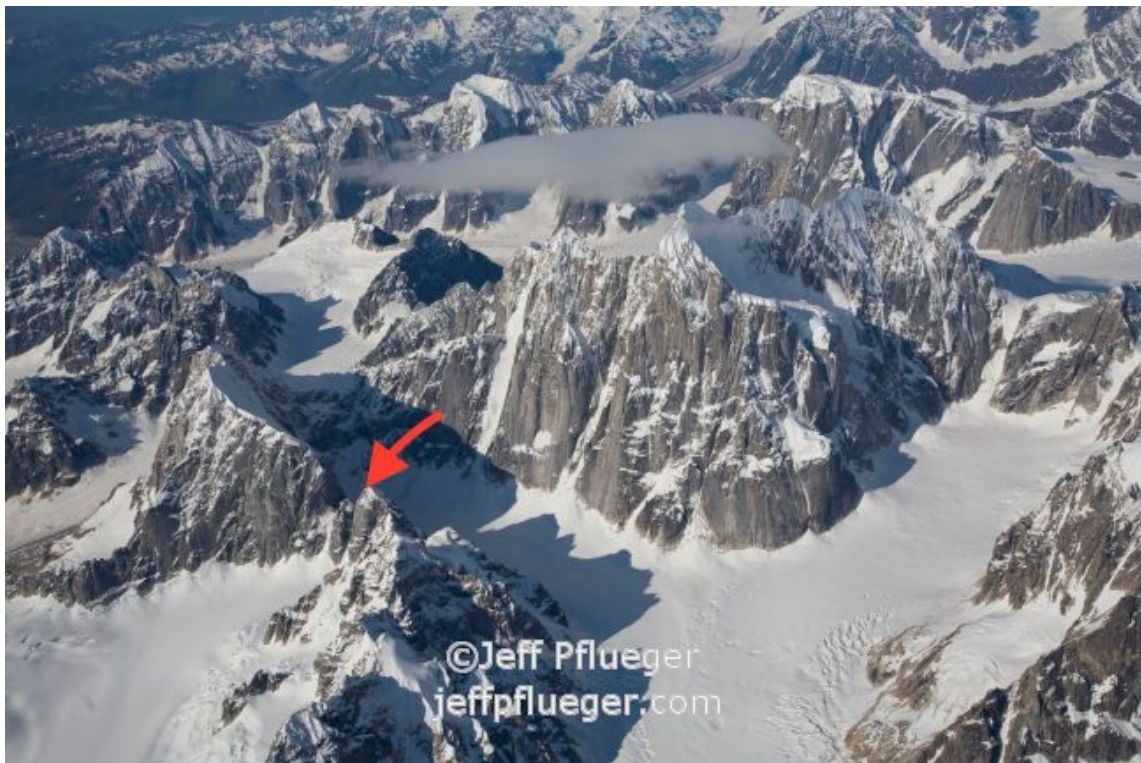
Devils Fist with Lake 3510 below. Photo by Ben Still

Devils Fist route map below.



Gem: "Beastiality" on Bear's Tooth (10070 feet), "Shark Fishing" on Shark Tooth (7350 feet), Central Alaska Range

Text by Will Sim



Location of Shark Tooth.

Photo by Jeff Pflueger. Used with permission.

In early May, Greg Boswell, Lindsay Yule, Paul Prentice, and I flew to the lower Buckskin Glacier with food for three weeks. It was a trip with no set objectives, but with lots of ideas and flexibility in mind. Aware that we had flown in during a huge high-pressure system, we set about climbing immediately. Over the next 10 days, Greg and I climbed two new routes, including the first ascent of a mountain.

Our first objective was the obvious, huge fault line splitting the southeast face of the Bear's Tooth, which, other than this chimney system, is a big wall of compact rock straight out of Yosemite.

The first day we climbed a couloir and thin connecting ramp that bypassed a dangerous icefall below the chimney. [Ed. note: In 2007 Jesse "Bill" Billmeier, Zach Schlosar, and Jared Vilhauer established "House of the Rising Sun," a 3,200-foot route that climbed the icefall, connected into a couloir system to the left of the chimney climbed by Boswell and Sim, and ended below the cornice on the southwest ridge of Bear's Tooth; see pages 159 and 160 of the 2008 American Alpine Journal.] That made the route safer and better than running the gantlet under seracs.

We then had a luxury bivy on the lip of a crevasse on the hanging glacier, beneath the 900-meter headwall.

Day Two was slow, absorbing, and stressful as we navigated up and around the fault line. Rotten and blank rock forced us out right onto the face for eight or nine pitches. That felt a bit like climbing on El Capitan in crampons, but was extremely fun and engaging — the whole time we were unsure if it would be possible to re-enter the chimney.

A make-or-break last lead of the day saw me up a nerve-racking pitch to a point where I reckoned we could access the chimney again. I fixed a line so we could lower to the only bum-seat bivy in sight, and then had an uncomfortable few hours of continually slipping off the ledge in our sleeping bags.

On Day Three, we miraculously managed to re-enter the chimney and had one of the most amazing days ever on sustained, sometimes-thin, five-star ice, all the time pinching ourselves that the route was actually going. We topped out into a windless sunset, strolled to the summit, and bivied again. The next day we rappelled the line, which went surprisingly without a hitch!

"Beastiality" (1,400 meters) had roughly 30 sustained pitches, with some of the best and most sustained technical climbing I've ever done on a big route — it was simply Alaskan perfection.

After two days of rest, there was no sign of the good weather leaving us, so we decided to try a smaller, but very technical, line up the center of an unnamed mountain we'd been eyeing during the four days on the Bear's Tooth. We were unsure what tactics to employ, but in the end it did require a bivy, despite only being about 600 meters and 15 pitches. All the pitches had some spice: scary, thin ice, snow mushrooms requiring careful clearing, and just hard climbing. As on "Beastiality," we were blown away by the quality of climbing — the kind of route where you lean back on the belay after leading and can't stop smiling about how outrageous the last 40 meters had been.

We named the route "Shark Fishing" (600 meters) as the colors and shapes of some of the granite features resembled the markings of a great white shark. After a bagel on the summit, we rapped the route and returned to base camp on Day Two. To our knowledge, this peak was previously unclimbed [Ed.



Will Sim on a steep ice pillar inside the massive chimney system that defined Greg Boswell's and his route on "Beastiality" (1,400 meters) on Bear's Tooth. Sim is on the 30th and last difficult pitch of "Beastiality" on Bear's Tooth.

Photo by Greg Boswell

note: Marcus Donaldson and Chris Donharl made an attempt in mid-April 2004, but did not reach the summit; see page 190 of the 2005 AAJ, and we gave the mountain the unofficial name of Shark Tooth, keeping in line with the local animal and dental names.

The Buckskin Glacier is perhaps the most impressive place I've been in Alaska with regard to big granite mixed lines. I hope that in years to come, when people are climbing incomprehensibly hard, routes such as "Arctic Rage" [Ed. note: see pages 24 through 31 of the 2005 AAJ], "NWS" [Ed. note: see pages 22 through 31 of the 2014 AAJ], "Bear Skin" [Ed. note: see pages 146 through 148 of the 2013 AAJ], and "Beastiality" will be often-repeated classics so that more people can see just how incredible the quality of climbing is on these walls.



Will Sim seconding a tricky mixed pitch through steep compact granite on day two during the first ascent of "Beastiality" on Bear's Tooth. Sim and Greg Boswell spent three days on the route and a fourth day descending back to the Buckskin Glacier.

Photo by Greg Boswell

Katmai National Park Ski Traverse, Aleutian Range

Text and photos by Luc Mehl



Left: Josh Mumm and Chris Klosterman of Trygg Air below Mount Douglas.

Right: Josh Mumm descending Mount Douglas. The next objective, Fourpeaked Mountain, is in the background.

Katmai is a huge and remote National Park in southwest Alaska, best known for bears and volcanoes. The 1912 Novarupta eruption was heard as far as Juneau, and cooled global temperatures by 2 degrees Fahrenheit for a year (due to ash particles in the upper atmosphere). I like to give bears a wide margin, so I've been scheming on a winter trip to Katmai. I ran the idea by Josh Mumm, from Homer, and he was quick to commit, quite an anomaly for the Mumms. Josh's commitment was largely because he can see Katmai's two northernmost volcanoes, Mount Douglas and Fourpeaked Mountain, from his home in Homer, and he has wanted to ski them for years.

We flew from Anchorage, intending to land on the Kamishak Bay beach, but the beach was too rough. Our pilot, Chris Klosterman, of Trygg Air Alaska, dropped us on the lowest glacier lobe below Douglas, 4 or 5 miles from the shore. We could see Augustine Volcano and Iliamna Volcano smoking behind us, with Douglas and Fourpeaked ahead. Chris took off; Josh and I started skinning.

Like all of my trips with Josh, this one was planned using Google Earth and other satellite imagery resources. Without any weather stations or reports from locals, we didn't know what to expect for snow conditions, and the satellite imagery showed dense fields of crevasses throughout the route. Fortunately, the windy spring sculpted thick bridges and firm snow crusts. Great for covering ground, but not much fun for making turns.

Our first objective was Mount Douglas (7021 feet). The route was semi-technical, a not-too-steep climb with crampons up the southwest face. We had heard that Douglas' caldera lake was highly acidic, so we brought litmus paper. The lake water was pH 1, which places it somewhere between battery acid (0) and lemon juice or vinegar (2). We explored the bubbling water, hot steam vents, and enjoyed warming our feet on the bare rock. Half the lake had a sheen of ice, and we had ice skates, but the potential plunge into acid wasn't worth the risk. (The skates were

"skicketts," modified Nordic ice skates without bindings. They worked great as snow pickets.) Even though Douglas was Day 1, it might have been the highlight of the trip.

We spent a scenic night on the bench between Douglas and Fourpeaked, and climbed Fourpeaked (6903 feet) the next day (southeast face). It took a few attempts to find the right route to the summit. The crux was a belayed step across a nasty downward-widening crack. But like the rest of the wind-hammered snow, the snow bridge showed no hint of collapsing.



Josh Mumm navigating fumaroles in the Mount Douglas caldera.

From the Fourpeaked summit, we weaved through an ice fall and down to the Swikshak River, where bare ice and a tailwind propelled us to the beach by midnight. In the morning we waited for low tide by exploring the fishery remains, a few old vehicles and foundations. At low tide we hiked back up the lagoon and pieced together a sketchy crossing over dammed river ice.

At low tide we walked the beach to the Big River, where Chris Klosterman had dropped our food cache after our flight in. The beach travel was a stark contrast from the wind-hammered snow and cold nights on the volcanoes. We were several days ahead of schedule, so we built a beach fire and ate as much of our extra food as we could stomach. Josh had a 12-pack of sausages in the cache, I ate five.

It was hard to leave the coast, especially because our packs now weighed 80 pounds and the brush and lack of snow made for slow progress. So, we made it Kaguyak Crater for the night. The crater was huge, 1.5 miles across. The crater turned out to be a cold air trap, probably our coldest night of the trip. Josh explored the crater island while I set up camp. Back at camp he told me he nearly lost a ski. There were a few patches of open water on the edges of the island, his ski had popped off and was flying toward an opening. Luckily, the ski got stuck in a warm vent (dry) before reaching the open water.

From Kaguyak we navigated a confusing drainage system of incised basalt to reach the next massif of ice and volcanoes: Devils Desk, Kukak Volcano, Mount Steller, and Mount Denison. Kukak had several large steam vents, and Denison had two small vents, directly in our route. We wrapped around one of the vents, but couldn't get close enough to peer over the icy lip. On the south side of Denison we quickly descended through icefalls and were rewarded with a view of the next volcanoes: Snowy Mountain, Mount Katmai, and Mount Griggs.

Our intended route to Katmai had several steep sections, and after struggling to hold our edges on the wind slabs, sastrugi, and ice, we opted for a valley descent to the Katmai Lakes, through Katmai Canyon, and then up to Katmai Pass. The Princess Glacier descent to the Katmai Lakes was choked with ash and pumice from the Novarupta explosion (1912). Each patch of ash and pumice stalled our skis, but the novelty of the "kitty-litter" pockets outweighed frustration. That was a wild and foreign landscape.

The constant tailwind gave us a boost down the river from the Katmai Lakes, though it also meant a windy camp. In the morning we reached the mouth of Katmai Canyon. I was nervous about anything labeled "canyon" on the topographic maps, and the river had enough water (400 cubic feet per second?) that



Josh Mumm on Fourpeaked Mountain.

we couldn't cross easily. Fortunately, the canyon walls left enough room to manage the channel, and the crossings never passed thigh height. A hot springs seep on river right was an unexpected bonus. The hottest pocket of water (105 °F?) wasn't deep enough to sit in, but Josh and I each found deeper pockets that were warm enough for a soak and wash. That was a real treat!

We exited Katmai Canyon and crossed over to Mageik Creek to hike to Katmai Pass. The ground

was snow-free, and the views were excellent. That was a traditional trade route before the Novarupta eruption; I enjoyed imagining Native Alaskans traveling through that terrain. All of the Native Alaskans that lived in the Katmai area survived the Novarupta eruption, and they resettled in Perryville, farther down the Alaska Peninsula.



From summit to sea ... walking on the beach to the Big River and a food cache.

Around 9 p.m., we stopped to discuss setting up camp. Josh had been obsessed with storm and "blizzard" forecasts, which seemed unlikely under the calm wind and blue sky. We decided to push the last 4 miles to the USGS' Baked Mountain Hut in the dark, just in case. We reached the hut at midnight; shoveled the snow away from the door; and discovered a dark, dirty, and snowy shelter. We cleaned the hut of drift snow and pumice, and tucked in for the night. Around 3 a.m., I woke to a shaking hut and blowing snow. I tried to wake Josh to

point out that he was right about the storm, but he wouldn't budge.

We spent two nights in the hut, only exploring as far as the Novarupta crater, which was still steaming. I had wanted to ski both Katmai and Griggs, but with 80 miles left to exit, unknown snow conditions, and six days of food, we decided to start the exit. We had several nice views of the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes. The new snow was warm and wet, ripe for sticking to our skins, and even my dry ski bases. The snow was sticky enough to pick up chunks of pumice.

We skied the road from the Three Forks Visitor Center to Brooks Camp, and then cruised across Naknek Lake with a 20- to 30-mile-per-hour tailwind. We were able to use the ice skates for a few miles, but had missed the window of skate-able ice by four days.

We reached the boat dock at 8 p.m., hitched a ride into town, and slept at Chris Klosterman's duplex. In the morning we got

bad coffee from the bar, breakfast burritos from the AC store, and flew back to Anchorage. Josh wore his ski boots on the plane, I wore a pair of tennis shoes I found hanging in Chris' garage.

The traverse was 200 miles and took 15 days. We finished a full week early, thanks to the tailwind and fast travel on sastrugi. The combination of ice travel, active volcanoes, and beach time made this a world-class tour, uniquely Alaskan. In the Baked Mountain Hut I read about Alaska's resistance to the initial designation as a national monument, then park, and the Sierra Club's resistance to the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes road access. I'm grateful that the Katmai area is protected and managed as a National Park, and that there is at least some sort of road access. Katmai is hard to get to, but without visitors to Alaska's wild lands, I'm afraid there won't be continued support to protect them. I hope these pictures convey some of the "wealth in wilderness" of Katmai National Park.



Mount Denison fumarole. Mount Steller and Kukak Volcano are in the background.



Josh Mumm leaving the USGS' Baked Mountain Hut, a very appreciated storm shelter.



Josh Mumm scaling talus above the Katmai River. Mehl and Mumm did laundry in the hot springs just upriver.



Josh Mumm (left) and Luc Mehl back at Lake Hood in Anchorage.



Magnificent Significance: Mount Magnificent (1302 meters [4272 feet]) and Mount Significant (1663 meters [5456 feet]), Western Chugach Mountains

Text and photo by Marcin Ksok



Greg Encelewski (left) and Wayne Todd on the ridge line.

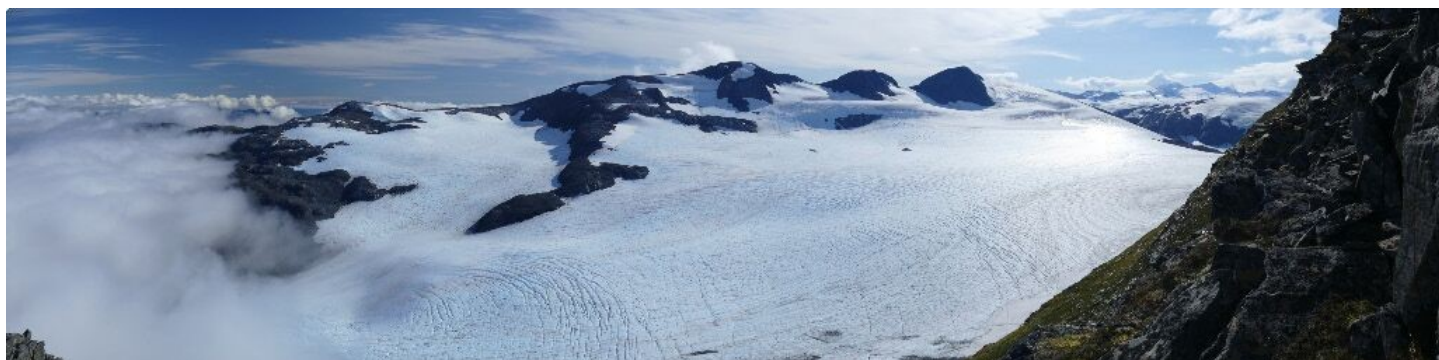
To continue this spring's theme of ridge lines, it was only fitting to head up this classic example. Greg Encelewski, Wayne Todd, and I decided not to be discouraged by a mediocre forecast and headed up to Mile High Saddle above the town of Eagle River. The lower trail followed forested terrain, which, combined with foggy and dreary ambiance, brought on feelings of some middle-earth adventure. Yet, as we gained the ridge and approached Mount Magnificent, things improved and some views were presented. There was much talking and storytelling, political debates, and general complaining about the present state of things as we were cruising on and up the narrow trail. Being involved in endless debates, we appreciated the simple nature of the route

- just follow the ridge. Eventually Mount Significant came into view and there was a proposed desertion, but it was promptly put down and all three of us reached the summit. There was also a mention to continue on and exit down Ram Valley, hitching or calling for a ride, yet reason prevailed and the three musketeers returned the way they came. Up and down the undulating ridgeline we went, admiring the layered blankets of clouds and scheming about future adventures. After some complaints about lack of wildlife sightings, nature obliged - just before the car a moose materialized in the middle of the trail and gave the unsuspecting travelers a bit of a scare. You ask and you shall receive.

Shakespeare Shoulder (1067 meters [3501 feet]), South Face*, Kenai Mountains

Text and photos by Wayne L. Todd

September 11, 2017



Shakespeare Shoulder's horizon.

After a foray with Steve Gruhn a few weeks prior, the route is a bit more dialed in. The key is to minimize brush, so after parking off the Whittier Road, I brush swim just 20 yards directly to a nano-ridge, follow it briefly, and then access the creek, which is low enough to hop back and forth, avoiding brush. Just before the waterfalls, I deviate left up a steep bank to top out on rock debris, and follow this up and left.

Annoyingly, today is quite foggy, which makes everything damp, including moss and rock, so I acknowledge descending will be slow. At a rock debris "Y," I go right instead of left, as Steve and I had done. (Our previous route became too steep and had serious consequence from a fall, so we aborted).

Where my rock pile ends, I don't see any better option close by



Shakespeare Shoulder

with the limited visibility, so I climb up rather steep moss on rock and variations. The Whippet is essential and the helmet gives a wee bit of security. After about 50 yards this tops out to much mellower terrain. I mark this with rocks and a GPS. The fog thins as I traverse toward the northeast ridge, passing by fall-accent-

colored mini-sorrel gardens. Above an alpine pond, a glimpse of Byron Peak (4750 feet) reveals a potential nice campsite, especially with waterfall-accented sound.

Cable; black sheathed cable with an aluminum pair lines the route, so I semi-follow it to the ridge. (I remember this from a previous foray on the lower northeast ridge). As I emerge from the fog, a Brocken spectre trails behind.

By the ridge I'm above the fog and now, along with good views behind, have bright sunny views of the Whittier Glacier and beyond. The warmth and sun

feel summer-ish. (I also enter cell "view," as my phone pops with texts). The ridgeline is easy, modestly-steep hiking. The cable keeps going and going. One could almost clip into the cable and use it as a running belay. More realistically(?), I wonder if anyone has considered removing all this cable for recycling. The cable runs to a collapsed hut, which is just yards from the summit. During the ascent I hear numerous swan or crane flocks, but only spy them once.

The east side of Shakespeare Shoulder, which on the map looks reasonable to travel, is in reality a steep, hard, dirt face that



Fog-sunlit sorrels.

would be risky to climb. Conversely, the ridgeline between Shakespeare Shoulder and Bard Peak (3850 feet) looks hike-able. The upper section of the Shakespeare Glacier is rather cracked. The *M/V Ptarmigan* makes its rounds on Portage Lake. I have a long break, take many pictures, and add a rock to the register-less cairn.

Most of the fog has burned off by the steep descent section, which helps with finding the line. In addition to the helmet and Whippet, I add a snow axe and Kahtoolas to the mix, and still down-climb, moving just one extremity at a time. A memo goes out about my slow pace and abruptly I'm harassed by small flies, which go for my eyes and ears. I stop and don tight safety glasses and a hat so they can only get to my nostrils and face, then continue my slow descent. Back to the rocks, which have dried a bit, I make better time than expected and ditch most of the flies. At the stream, still at low level, I hike it almost to the road, negating most brush. This is a creek just east of Shakespeare Creek.

Five and a half hours (with photo time), 4 miles, 3,500 feet of elevation gain.

The only crux to this climb is the 50-yard steep band. There may be an easier route through this slightly right of where I ascended. (While climbing Cummings Peak [3609 feet], I viewed a lesser-angle slope a half mile east of the steep section that could be accessed by traversing left.)

A good loop would be to ascend Shakespeare Shoulder, hike to Bard, drop and cross the Whittier Glacier, hike the Three Blind Mice, and descend to the Horsetail Falls Trail. (The caveat being knowing where the trail is.)

*That's mostly a joke.



Patterns on the Whittier Glacier.



Wayne Todd on Shakespeare Shoulder with Portage Lake and Glacier; note the M/V Ptarmigan.



Above: Shakespeare Shoulder and Bard Peak.

Left: The pervasive cable.

Right: The steep section.



Cummings Peak (3609 feet) / Three Blind Mice, Kenai Mountains

Text and photos by Wayne L. Todd

September 20, 2017



*Above: Cummings Peak horizon with Carpathian Peak in the center.
Below: 360-Degree panorama from Carpathian Peak to Three Blind Mice 2.*



After climbing Shakespeare Shoulder (3501 feet [1067 meters]) a couple weeks previous and being re-visualized of the three bumps across the Whittier Glacier, I find myself on the Horsetail Falls Trail in the early morning. Having lived here more than "thirty-something" years, I'm surprised I've never been on this trail. It's a great trail, boardwalk, with netting and house shingles (obviously it gets quite slick at times) and rock and wood steps. At timberline I pass a small camera-loaded group; I relate. Shortly thereafter, the official trail ends at a lookout over Whittier, though oddly not in view of the falls. I find a rather slick muddy trail that continues upward; initially there are two trails.

The sorrel leaves are thick and a color mix from green to yellow and beyond. A short distance above the wooden trail, the falls come into view to the mountain side, but more scenic are the peaks opening up to the south across Passage Canal below, especially front-dropped by the numerous alpine ponds.

I ascend a mildly steep section next to a wet chimney, which has red hair-like moss growing in it, gorgeous. Above this, alpine gives way to bare rock, perhaps recently covered by glacier. I note human cairns here and there. Next is a lower-angle, mostly snow-free glacier. I skirt this on the left, gaining the northeast ridge where Blackstone Bay presents itself along with the glaciers that feed it and the mountains that top them. Doubly gorgeous! The bay water sparkles in rows.

The ridgeline travel is good and fairly traveled (what human/animal mix?). At the first bump, Three Blind Mice 1 (TBM1; not

sure where I heard these names; Steve Gruhn hadn't, so ...), Carpathian Peak and ramparts lie beyond. I break here and appreciate the close-by glacier to the right. The glacier adjacent to the ridge is not travel-friendly, but farther out I like the concentric-snow-circle patterns. The traveling slows way down beyond TBM2 as the ridge becomes quite narrow and steep, I note easier ground a couple hundred feet below on the east side.

Then the mild route finding up TBM3, Cummings Peak unofficially, to more expansive views of Carpathian, Byron Peak, and many peaks to the south and east, including Isthmus Peak. I loiter, take many pictures, and note my idea of the Shakespeare Shoulder-Bard Peak-TBM loop still looks good, except there are a couple hundred yards of serious semi-snow-covered crevasses at the base of TBM3 that would require some zigzagging, ideally on rope. Adding a rock to the register-less cairn, seems the norm in this 'hood; I head back, this time skirting TBM2 on the east side.

I can't resist some glacier time, so don my Kahtoolas for the low-angle blue ice and more photo time. Below this, back on rock-strewn scoured rock, I intersect the ascent route. The alpine ponds with peak and bay backdrops are even more scenic than in the morning, as they're now sunlit. I foolishly don't put the Kahtoolas on for the slick alpine descent.

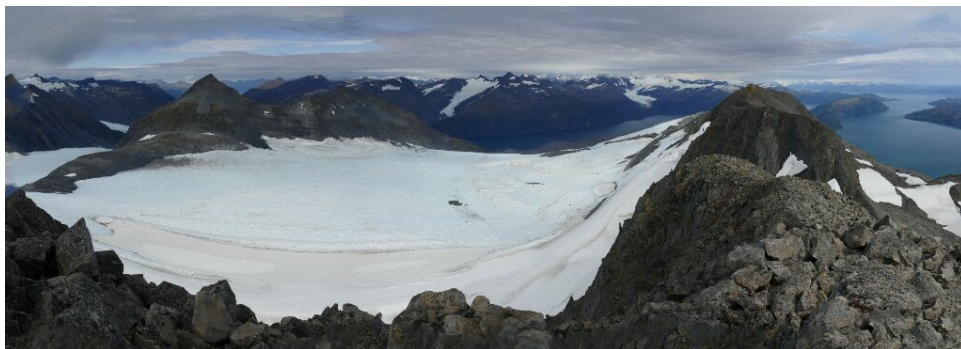
Back on the dry boardwalk, I drop my "slick guard" and make quite the body contortions when one of the shingles breaks loose. I walk more carefully thereafter, but still make a couple more slips. I can't imagine this walk when it's wet!

At the brief wait for the tunnel, tourists take pictures of the surrounding glaciers and peaks. I follow suit. I wonder if I told them of climbing these peaks if they'd be impressed, think I'm a liar, or just boasting.

After the tunnel, which is just dang cool - how many places do you pass through a long tunnel to recreate? (OK, fine, there's probably quite a few) - there's a kite boarder in the inlet, then boarders riding in a bore tide. What an amazing place.

And I still make town mostly on time for a 6 p.m. meeting!

Eight hours (with one being pictures), 10 miles (Gaia, GPS says 1 less mile?), 4,300 feet of elevation gain.



Shakespeare Shoulder to Three Blind Mice 2 panorama.



Wayne Todd with Carpathian Peak backdrop.



Cummings Peak and Carpathian Peak.



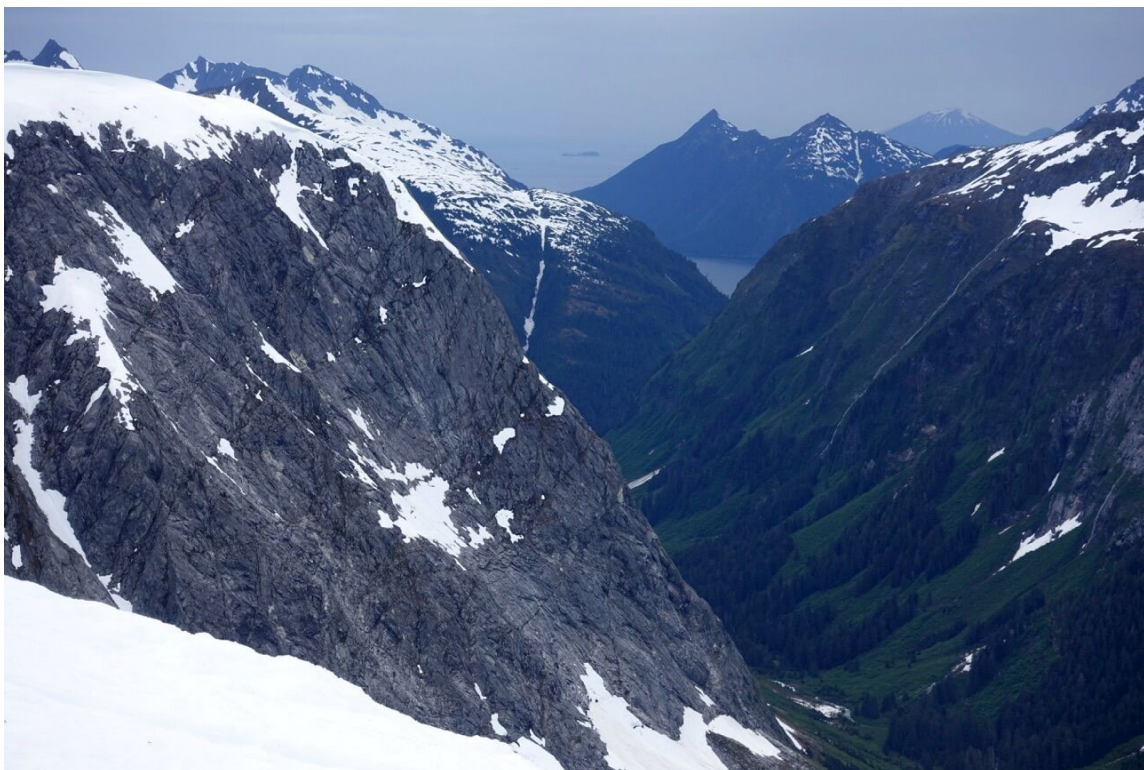
Wayne Todd on Three Blind Mice 2.



Alpine pond above trail.

Baranof Island Ridge Traverse

Text by Max Neale



Baranof Island is almost entirely mountains. They rise from the outer coast of Southeast Alaska, steep, rocky, clad with rain forest, and capped by glaciers. Most are rarely visited and many non-technical peaks are unclimbed. In the spring, from almost any point on the interior ridge, you can see dozens of waterfalls pouring thousands of feet into lush valleys, which are home to pristine salmon streams. Grizzly bears are the island's most frequent backcountry traveler and live there in one of highest densities on the planet.

Our objective was to travel Baranof lengthwise via ridgelines in one trip. I tried last summer. Thanks to support from the American Alpine Club, John Wros and I tried this year!

Starting on a rocky beach on the island's northernmost point, near whales, seals, and salmon, we journeyed south for 60 miles with 36,600 feet of elevation gain in four and a half days. Though we saw less than half the island's length, this was the longest known distance a human has been overland in one trip. We carried harnesses, a 60-meter rope, strap-on crampons, ice axes, stoppers, slings, and an 11-ounce can of pepper spray in

case we accidentally irritated any other travelers.

We hiked up and down, up and down, up and down. Rain forest. Salmon stream. Tundra. Snow. Rock. Repeat.

It was glorious!

And physically and mentally exhausting.

Besides route planning, the greatest logistical challenge is guessing when precipitation will least affect travel on Baranof. A display in the Stika Airport says it rains 60 percent of the time. But rain isn't the primary obstacle to mountain travel. It's what some locals call the cloud dragon, a very dense, yet gentle, mist monster that slowly soaks everything to its core. Even your sleeping bag *underneath* a tarp! The dragon also makes it very difficult to see the route of least resistance - more often than not, I found that a phone's GPS app was the most useful thing to look at.

Come August, rain falls nearly non-stop until it turns to snow.

According to a longtime local mountaineer, last season was the snowiest year in the past 20. We went to Baranof in early and

June and found that skis would have been great for most of the ridge. Fortunately, except for a brief bit of whiteout, the cloud dragon remained at bay.

John and I slept in our rain jackets inside synthetic insulated quilt sleeping bags. I put my head inside my backpack.

We walked in the snow for four days, wearing trail-running shoes with our feet in plastic bags that previously contained M&Ms, Triscuits, and other calories. The plastic bags decrease friction between your socks and shoes - removing the bags was our recommended technique for rock scrambling.

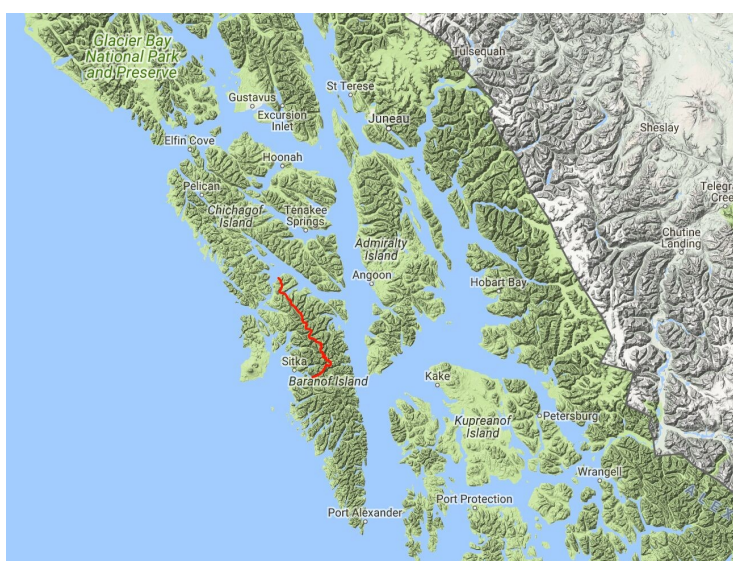
John's feet were vulnerable to the cold because he had had frostbite and related surgeries. By day four, he was developing trench foot.

Do we continue for another week and risk John's feet? He was willing to do so. Do I go on alone? It was more dangerous, physically harder, and would require a lot of mental stamina. Do we head down, out of the snow, and back to our homes in the Anchorage area?

Of all the trips I had planned for 2017, that was the one I was most excited about. I was attached to completing the traverse and I cried as I told John I thought we should both bail.

So we walked downhill. Post-holing up to our waists in snowdrifts, slithering through alders and salmonberries, leaping from one slippery log to another, and skirting the edge of a majestic lake surrounded on three sides by granite cliffs and myriad waterfalls.

Baranof, we will be back!



Chilling on Guadalupe Peak, the Highest Point in Texas

Text and photo by Frank E. Baker



Frank Baker on 8749-foot Guadalupe Peak, the highest point in Texas, as sunlight reflects off the summit monument.

As winter deepens, we Alaskans traditionally spend a lot of time taking steps to stay warm. But I recall a climb of Guadalupe Peak in Texas several years ago, when upon reaching the mountain's 8749-foot summit, I discovered something extremely rare in my Lone Star State experience: Cold! For half an hour I sat goose-pimpled on a rock and shivered, enjoying every single moment!

I know intrepid souls, such as the MCA's Steve Gruhn, who has reached the highest point in every state, including Denali. I confess that my accomplishment of climbing to the highest point in only one state, Texas, was quite meager.

The idea of climbing Guadalupe came in 2004 when I was temporarily assigned to Houston, Texas, by my former employer, BP. I quickly learned that much of the state is as flat as a phonograph record. Great for biking, but for climbing, not so much.

Having lived in mountainous Alaska all my life, that situation was completely untenable. I soon found myself driving 500 miles due west on weekends to the Chisos Mountains that lay within Big Bend National Park. Some of those mountains rose to nearly 8000 feet, including 7825-foot Emory Peak, which I summited twice.

Incidental to one of those trips, I decided to drive north toward the border with New Mexico, where I would eventually visit Carlsbad Caverns. Along the way and early in the morning, I came upon Guadalupe Mountains National Park (about 90 miles east of El Paso) and quickly found the trail. With an elevation gain of about 3,000 feet, the round-trip distance was about 8-1/2 miles.

From the first minute I set foot in Texas, my eyes were continuously directed in one direction: down to my feet. That's because of my deathly fear of snakes. Fortunately, it was late autumn

and I was told most of the area's vipers were in hibernation. Nevertheless, I kept my eyes focused – and through my vigilance spotted a few small lizards.

After about a mile and a half, the trail became less steep and turned around to a north-facing slope, where I came upon a small forest of piñon pine, southwestern white pine, and Douglas fir. I learned that the slightly cooler, shadier north-facing slope allowed these pines to survive.

Interesting geology: The Guadalupe Mountains are an ancient reef that grew during the Permian period, about 260 to 280 million years ago. That makes them older than the dinosaurs, and even older than the supercontinent, Pangaea. When you stand on the Guadalupe Mountains, it's just like you're standing on the reef 280 million years ago and looking out over the original ocean floor! That's why the area is rich in small fossils, some of which I spotted in the outcroppings.

After nearly three miles, the well-maintained trail came to a false summit – about a mile shy of the actual summit. There was little wind, but by that time I could feel the temperature dropping to somewhere in the low 40s, perhaps high 30s. It felt wonderful! The trail flattened out for a short distance as it passed through a sparse forest of ponderosa pine, then crossed a wooden bridge. After the bridge I hiked the final switchbacks to the summit, arriving about 9 a.m.

There was no one else there, and gazing around, the view of the dramatic mountain to the south, El Capitan, was spectacular.

Clear skies allowed me to see far to the south into Mexico.

Dominating Guadalupe's summit was a tall, silver, triangular-shaped object – a monument that commemorates overland stage and air travel. It was installed by American Airlines in 1958 before the area became a national park, and its plaque has two dates: 1858 and 1958. The inscription read:

"Dedicated to the airmen, who, like the stage drivers before them, challenged the elements through this pass with the pioneer spirit and courage which resulted in a vast system of airline transport known as 'American Airlines'."

I set my camera for a timed shot and hoped for the best. The sun struck the monument's peak with a brilliant flash of light that was totally unexpected!

Following a brief lunch, during which I convulsively shivered from cold (that I thoroughly enjoyed), I headed down. I didn't want to be on the mountain during afternoon thunderstorms that were forecast for the area.

I looked back over my shoulder several times on the descent, knowing that I would probably never get that way again. My presence on that historical trail through eons of geologic time was like the brief flash of light captured in my photo – a blink in time – but an experience that I will remember for the rest of my life.

Frank E. Baker is an MCA member who lives in Eagle River.

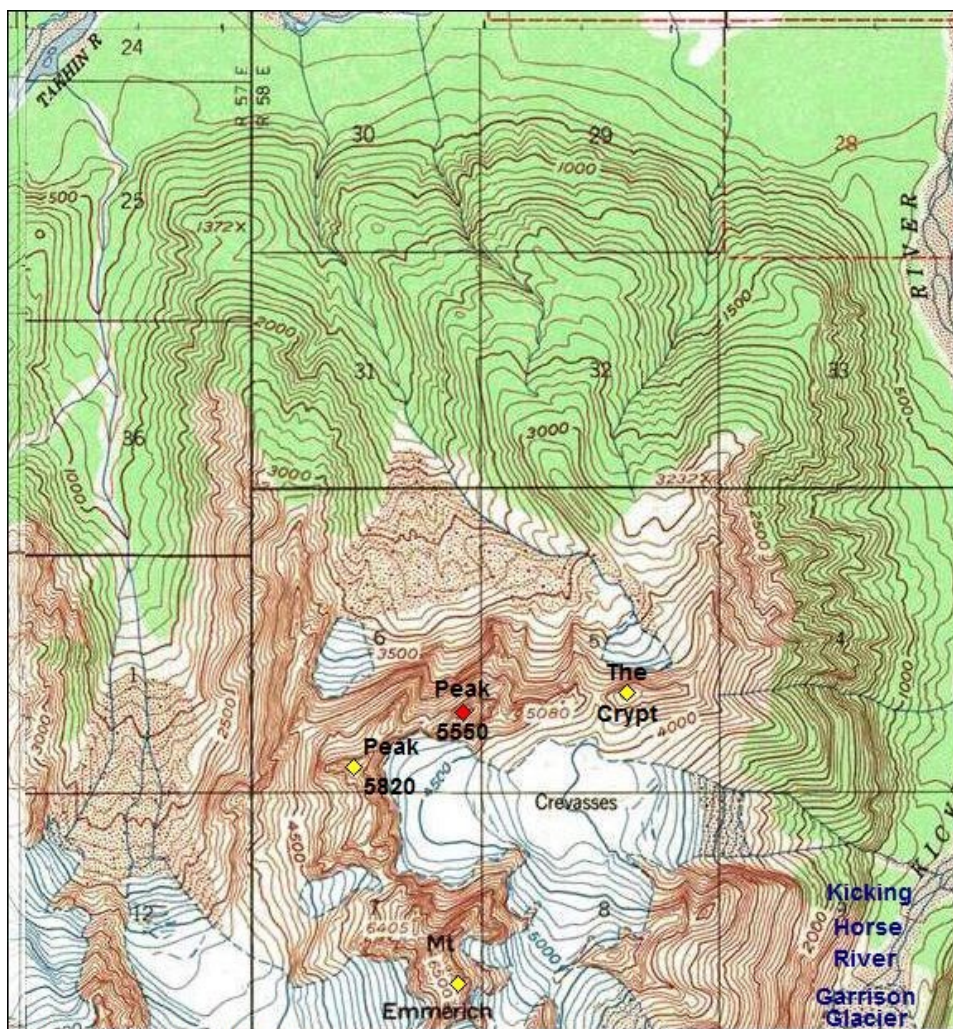


EAGLE RIVER GIANTS – MCA member Pete Panarese hikes in Eagle River Valley in late January 2018. At left, Nantina Point, 6850 feet, and at right, Mount Yukla, 7535 feet.

Photo by Frank E. Baker

Peak of the Month: Peak 5550

Text by Steve Gruhn



Mountain Range: Saint Elias Mountains; Takhinsha Mountains

Borough: Haines Borough

Drainages: Kicking Horse River and Takhin River

Latitude/Longitude: 59° 12' 27" North, 135° 41' 57" West

Elevation: 5550 ± 50 feet

Adjacent Peaks: Peak 5820 in the Kicking Horse River and Takhin River drainages and The Crypt (4850 feet)

Prominence: 480 feet from Peak 5820

Distinctness: 480 feet from Peak 5820

USGS Map: 1:63,360: Skagway (A-2); 1:25,000: Skagway A-2 NW

First Recorded Ascent: This peak might be unclimbed.

Access Point: 4050-Foot level of an unnamed glacier in the Kicking Horse River drainage northeast of Mount Emmerich

In May 2013 Drake Olson of Fly Drake flew David Hertel and Kurt Ross in a Cessna 206 from Haines to a cirque in the Kicking Horse River drainage northeast of Mount Emmerich, where they landed at the 4050-foot level of an unnamed glacier. In the ensuing days Hertel climbed The Crypt and both Hertel and Ross attempted a line on the south face of Peak 5550, but backed off without completing it.

As temperatures warmed, the snow softened. The pair opted for a 3 a.m. start to attempt a line that they had scouted during the warm spell. Their route was up a rock spine on the south side of a 4750-foot point about a half mile down the east ridge of Peak 5550. The two climbed the 250-meter route, rated it M5 WI3, and named it "Dysentery Chute," alluding to a bout of intestinal distress that Ross had suffered in Haines before the start of the expedition. Their descent was via the snow gully west of their ascent route.

After their climb warming temperatures continued to soften the snow, causing cornices to collapse along their intended exit route. Consequently, the duo placed a satellite-phone call to Olson, who returned to pluck the pair from the glacier and return them to Haines.

I don't know of anyone reaching the summit of Peak 5550 and I don't know of any other climbing attempts on other parts of the mountain.

The information for this column came from Kurt Ross' trip report titled "Southeast Alaska, Spring 2013," which appeared in the December 2013 *Scree*; from Ross' trip report titled "Mt. Emmerich Cirque, Point 4,700', Dysentery Chute; Upper Dewey Lake, 'Ships Prow,' northwest ridge," which appeared on pages 164 and 165 of the 2014 *American Alpine Journal*; and from my correspondence with both Ross and Ben Still.



*Kurt Ross attempting a route on the south aspect of Peak 5550.
Photo by David Hertel*



*East aspect of Peak 5550, as viewed from the summit of The Crypt.
Photo by Ben Still*



*Kurt Ross on the east ridge of Peak 5550 after completing
"Dysentery Chute."
Photo by David Hertel*

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

January 8, 2018

Roll Call

Ralph Baldwin (Director) - Present
Jennifer DuFord (Director) - Not Present
Max Neale (Director) - Present
Jen Aschoff (Secretary) - Not Present
Charlie Sink (President) - Present
Tom Meacham (Director) - Present (arrived late)
Marcin Ksok (Director) - Present
Mike Meyers (Vice-President) - Not Present
Mark Smith (Treasurer) - Present (arrived late)

Scribe

Max Neale

President's Report

Long-term forecast for hut expenses – Mark Smith has an update.
Budget development for January 2018 meeting.

Committee Reports

Vice President (Mike Meyers)

Board approved a small honorarium for the Conrad Anker fundraiser.

Treasurer (Mark Smith)

Board reviewed proposed 2018 budget.
Several Board members will collaborate with external, objective individuals to conduct an audit for the MCA.
Board will present proposed 2018 budget at the January meeting, bringing printed copies for members, and presenting a digital version on the screen.

Secretary (Jen Aschoff)

Not Present.

Huts (Cory Hinds)

The Dnigi Hut needs a major renovation. The Huts Committee is focused on building the Holden Hut in 2018, so we will renovate Dnigi in 2019.

Training (Max Neale)

Katie Strong will be teaching a course on ultralight ski touring on January 22, 2018, at the BP Energy Center Fir Room at 6:30 p.m.

A variety of other trainings will be scheduled soon.

Mentorship (Nathan Hebda)

Nothing to report

Parks Advisory (Tom Meacham and Ralph Baldwin)

Free Hatcher Pass avalanche workshop January 13, 2018. See Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center for more information.

MCA will create a marked trail/route to the Holden Hut.

Hiking, Skiing, and Climbing (Jen Aschoff and Mike Meyers)

Not Present.

Library (Charlotte Foley)

Comments from Mike.

Unfinished Business

Charlie – work with Dave Hart on a Scree policy
Hut leases from Ralph to Tom
MCA-branded Patagonia gear—We will place an order for \$5,000.

New Business

Announcements

Board Comments

Time and location of next meeting

Board Meeting - 6 p.m., February 12 at the BP Energy Center

Choate's Chuckle (continued from page 3) - Tom Choate
Answer: He would like to be arrested!

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Charlie Sink	258-8770	Board member (term expires in 2018)	Ralph Baldwin	232-0897
Vice-President	Mike Meyers	202-1640	Board member (term expires in 2018)	Jennifer DuFord	227-6995
Secretary	Jen Aschoff	jaschoff@gmail.com	Board member (term expires in 2018)	Marcin Ksok	928-380-2995
Treasurer	Mark Smith	717-9501	Board member (term expires in 2019)	Max Neale	207-712-1355
			Board member (term expires in 2019)	Tom Meacham	346-1077

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@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 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@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: Mark Smith —717-9501 - membership@mtnclubak.org

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Jen Aschoff - jaschoff@gmail.com - and Mike Meyers - 202-1640 or hcc@mtnclubak.org

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

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Librarian: Charlotte Foley—603-493-7146 or library@mtaclubak.org

Scree Editor: MCAScree@gmail.com Dave Hart (244-1722), assisted by Dawn Munroe (350-5121) dawn.talbott@yahoo.com

Web: www.mtnclubak.org

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

John Giraldo hoping his grips don't un-grip mid-climb on Mount Gabriel.

Photo by Chad Diesinger

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