

MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

SCREE

Editor
Gwynneth Wilson
1215 - 8th Avenue
Anchorage, Alaska
Phone: BR 2-6153

Secretary
Helga Bading
c/o Jonas Bros.
700 - 5th Avenue
Phone: BR 7-7822

Vol. 2, No. 6

March, 1960

MEETING, MONDAY, APRIL 4

The next meeting of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska will be a potluck supper at 6:30 p.m. at the Willow Park Recreation Hall on Monday, April 4th. Leona Wilkerson (BR 7-5674) and Elinore Schuck (114-SK2-9448) are co-chairmen for the affair. They will be happy to answer any questions. Members attending and guests, who are most cordially invited, are asked to bring table service: plate, cup, silverware. This will be a REAL potluck dinner so bring what you want and please bring enough for yourself and several others!

CLIMBING SCHEDULE

Rabbit Creek to Campbell Creek via ridge - April 9th and 10th. Paul Crews, leader.

Contact Paul by April 1st. Use either snowshoes or skis with climbers. Be prepared to walk 7-10 miles each day, carrying about 35 to 40 lbs. The club has tents, but stoves are required as we will camp above timberline. Bring air mattress & double sleeping bag.

Paul's phones: business: BR 6-3455 & home BR 4-4731.

Carpathian Peak - April 23rd, 24th and 25th. Erik Barnes, leader.

Erik Barnes will lead this trip for good skiers only as it entails skiing ropes up. Climbing skins essential as well as campgear (sleeping bags and air mattresses) crampons and ice axes. Tentative plans are to leave Saturday morning and return Monday afternoon. Contact Erik for further information and register for the trip by April 16th.

Erik's phone: BR 8-2602

MEETING, MONDAY, APRIL 4

At the last MCA meeting Major Livesay who is a full time air force liaison officer with the Civil Air Patrol spoke to the Club. He pointed out that 52% of searching for civilians in '59 was done by CAP. The Rescue Co-ordination Center at Elmendorf (SK 2-0128) is able to contact private, commercial and government airplanes for search and rescue and can provide communications. With the 71st Air Squadron now defunct more civilian support is needed. Major Livesay felt this might be a good project for the MCA.

The CAP members can get gas and oil for search as well as civil service compensation in case of injury or survival liability insurance. They are able also to use military communication and transportation which is prohibited to civilians by law. The military is able to supply the CAP with surplus property.

It is not necessary to have a large group to belong to CAP. An individual can join for himself, serving as a mobile ground worker, administrator or observer. Major Livesay felt that a unit of CAP in the MCA would be useful especially in marking old airplane wrecks to prevent false missions.

LITTLE SUSITNA March 5-6, 1960 by Rod Wilson

Six showed up for this winter outing, - Joe Pichler, Paul Crews, Helga Bading, Dave Bernstein, Steve Foss and Rod Wilson. Weather was clear and cold. The car was left at Little Susitna Lodge in the Talkeetnas, 75 miles north of Anchorage. A brisk 6 mile walk up the Independence Mine road brought us to a campsite in deep snow at the Willow Pass turn off a mile below the mine. A chilly (minus 20°) but cosy night was spent in tents before arising to snowshoe about 2 miles west up to Willow Pass. Then with snowshoes on top of our packs we climbed the windswept, snow plummed ridges to the north of Willow Pass circling back toward but above our camp, finally roping up to descend steeply to a point just below Independence Mine. Once down we made a bee line on snowshoes to the warmth and coffee and cookies of Cortina Lodge at the now defunct Independence Mine. Then back one mile to camp and down the road six miles to the car to end an invigorating 24 hours in a lovely spot.

Cortina Lodge, incidentally, is new. It offers reasonable very pleasant accommodations in rooms or a bunk house. Meals are available. The area is a fine one for cross-country skiing or summer or winter climbing. This would be a good place for a 2 or 3 day Club outing without the rigors of camping out.

BYRON GLACIER MISERY March 19th and 20th by Helga Bading

Suffering from acute spring fever, caused by mellow air and brilliant sunshine, we sped toward Portage Paul Crews, Rod Wilson, Andy Brauchli, Chuck Metzger and I. But it wasn't until late afternoon with the sun already settling behind the mountains that we were ready to head up the valley towards Portage Lake. The road is closed in the winter and we used skis to negotiate these six miles, carrying our snowshoes and climbing boots

We were preceded, followed and accompanied by many "mooses" of various sizes, sexes and curiosity as we glided into the quiet evening and watched the sky turn purple. But soon the five of us we were strung out for almost half a miles, busily fighting ill-fitting cross-country harnesses or other ailments. Skiing up the valley was fun and little did we know how different our return trip would be.

It turned cold and dark in a hurry. Damp ice fog hung over the open creek where we secured a lonesome swan. Still some distance from the lake Paul sprinted up from behind and suggested we use the last few minutes of twilight to make camp. Shivering in the zero temperature we hastened to bring an orange colored canvas, namely the Logan Tent, between us and the merciless night.

There was room only for 4 air mattresses, so Paul and Andy gracefully offered to sleep in the "cracks". Soon the stillness was only interrupted by loud snores and barely audible whistles of the Whittier train.

Sunday, 6 a.m. ... I started the stove and then succeeded in shaking the other characters back to life. Outside the picture had changed. "Timmie", the thermometer said it was 5 below, but a bank of dark clouds was moving in from the East and a tremendous plume of snow was flying off Portage Peak. By the time we had consumed our ZOOM (mixed with raisins and oleo) the temperature had risen to eight above, indicating I had no right to be shivering.

We left the skis behind, but took the packs, since this was to be training, and walked toward the lake and then up the creekbed to Byron Glacier. Not even a twig of the famous alders by the creek was visible and we snowshoed right over them.

By now we were soaked in, but good. At the snout of the glacier we met the biggest obstacle of the trip, 1 large hole. We had to get down into it and then back out at the other end. Here it was proved what we had, of course, known all along. You just can't climb on snowshoes. In the flat light the bottom of the pit was invisible, except for the tracks of two moose leading straight on. And where moose could go

We slid, fell, got up, fell, cursed and pulled ourselves on our own ice axes in five different manners. Only Andy knew how to descend gracefully. He tobogganed on the tail of his snowshoes, steering with the ice axe.

Back on a more gentle slope (for snowshoers at least) we headed into zero visibility, fully roped up, probing pole in hand. But who'd probe through an estimated 15 ft. of snow? The moose tracks were still with us. The wind howled above and small avalanches roared off the cliffs on either side. Then, dead ahead, we saw the ice fall and stopped abruptly.

Huddled under a wall of ice were our two moose, their antenna-like ears tuned in on us! I could clearly distinguish a worried look on their faces. Why don't those people leave the glaciers to us moose?

Chuck suggested we make them honorary members of the Club. But this was not the time or place to hold conferences. It snowed and blew heavily. At this point we felt both our clothes and our enthusiasm had been dampened sufficiently and after replenishing our physical strength with peanuts and cheese we made a 180 degree turn and retreated toward civilization.

Once near the lake it stopped snowing. Instead it rained, hard! And the wind lashed the water right through us. Soon there wasn't a dry stitch anywhere on anybody. The heavy snow stuck to our snowshoes like glue. And six more miles to go. In silent misery we dodged through the valley, taking turns in breaking a trail through the mush. And then - wonders of civilization - we came upon a weasel track. It didn't reduce the distance, but it was a track. Back at the campspot, we switched to skis. Only Rod elected to use his old feet. Sometimes the gusts of wind were so strong I was actually pushed along the trail like a sailboat.

At 4:30 p.m., three hours from Portage Lake, five dripping sad sacks arrived at the camp with only one thought in mind: five cups of hot coffee and five tubs full of hot water. And our next trip will be on the weekend of April 9th and 10th.

THE OLD MAIL TRAIL, SHIP CREEK TO INDIAN HOUSE Febr. 13th, 14th & 15th by Joe Pichler.

It all started on the summit of the mountain over the skibowl. We looked down in the big wide valley of Ship Creek. As far as one could see, there were mountains and valleys melting together. "That was as far as we explored the creekbed years ago," I told a young group of mountaineers, "Down there is the old mail trail. Many years ago, long before the existence of Anchorage, gold was discovered in the Willow Creek area. Soon there were many people living and working up here. Mail and supplies came over the waterway. In the winter, however, most of the waters were ice covered and everything had to be over-land. The shortest way from Seward, which was the only ice free harbor at the time, was over the mountain passes and through the valleys. Indian Pass and Ship Creek Valley was one of the routes at that time.

"Let's make the trip someday", said Howard Schuck. "Yes", said the others. "And you, Howard, will be our leader." This was the beginning of a wonderful tour into the Alaskan wilderness.

About a month later, on February 13th at 6 o'clock in the morning, we left our house. There was Howard Schuck with his charming wife, Elinore. Then came our always cheerful Dick Cote and Gene Horning, Dr. Robert Layman, Bill Attwood and myself. Our tour was carefully planned. The 25 mile route could be done, without trouble, in two days. Two drivers would bring us to the skibowl from where our tour started. From there the drivers would take the cars to Indian House and leave them there for our return.

-2-

We had no trouble going up to the skibowl. It was still early and we needed this to start finish our tour in two days. The last stars were shining through the broken clouds and down below us was the silent valley. Far beyond we made out the south and north forks of the creek, beyond the creekfork should be our first camp for the night.

We had our snowshoes on and were just ready to shoulder our packs when two soldiers came out of the military ski clubhouse. We saw that they were M.P.'s.

We lost almost 3 hours of precious time before getting a Colonel's "O.K." to continue. The descent to the valley floor was not so easy. It took us $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours to come low enough to start up into the valley. The going was better than I had expected. By the place marks, we saw that we were on the old trail, but it made no difference whether we were on the trail or not since everything was under deep snow. Every hour we made a short rest and at noon we built a fire and cooked some tea. After hours on snowshoes, the going went slower, our packs were getting heavier. We had some 35-40 pounds each, and this is quite a pack for our girls. Jackie was on skis. However, this proved not the best.

The fork in the valley was still far ahead of us and the clouds were getting thicker. In bad weather, when the visibility is zero, it is possible to walk by the south fork into the north fork. This is especially so if travelling on the left side of the creek where the going is easier. If this should happen, the traveler would be helplessly lost in the north fork. In order to prevent this possibility, we pushed on hard. There was not much daylight left and still we were not on the fork. However, the branches in the valley looked close.

But we had lost too much time in the morning. Bill and I were ahead of the group, breaking trail. On a bend in the valley we came to a place where we could see clearly ahead of us into the south fork. So we had our bearing and no bad weather could stop us from finding our way into the pass. And here was a wonderful camping place. The big spruce trees kept the ground almost free of snow, and the creek had places with open water nearby. As the gang came up to us, they all cheered my decision to make camp here for the night.

With the onbreaking night we made a fire and set up camp. Jackie made a hot butter rum. It was really a delight after a hard day on snowshoes. The snow around camp was very deep. If anybody had to leave camp, even for a few steps, he had to put on snowshoes. Once I made a mistake. Close by was a piece of wood I wanted to get. I followed the snowshoe tracks for a few steps and then broke through and found myself up to my belly in a snowbank. After dinner, we sat around the campfire and here Gene announced his engagement to Jackie. It came as a surprise to all of us. A wonderful, warm feeling overcame me. Here were two young people pledging themselves to be married, here under an open sky, here in the still white Alaskan wilderness, far away from civilization. Never will I forget this picture. Gene slipped the ring on Jackie's finger, and the campfire lit up their happy faces. May the lives of these marvelous people be long and healthy and happy ones!

I got up at 6 o'clock and made a fire. Soon, Bill crawled out of the sack and helped me. However, it was much too long for me to bring that bunch on the trail. We crossed Ship Creek on a snowbridge and the going was good. By the trailmarks we saw that the old trail also followed this side of the creek. After a mile we finally came on the fork and here was the remains of the Old Roadhouse. The roof was caved in and the rest was almost covered in the deep snow. This is a monument of old Alaska, a memory of yesterday. It told us that we were on the right trail. It also told me that I misjudged my distance the day before. We camped about 2 miles below the fork and up to the fork it is 10 miles. So from here we still had 15 miles to go. I knew it was impossible to make in daylight and hoped that by dark we were far enough down Indian Trail so that the going would be better and it would be possible to travel in the dark.

There ahead of us was the Pass. Far ahead, where the mountains came together, was the end of it. The going went along a high plateau. The weather was marvelous. The sun came out of the clouds and we had a wonderful view of the mountains on both sides of us. Back there was a majestic mountain. It had two peaks and we earmarked it for a future trip. There is little doubt that anyone ever set foot on top of it. We saw many fresh tracks. The Lynx, the big cat of the northwoods, was roaming all around here.

At noon, we were tired. We stopped on a little hill which we promptly named "pooped-out hill". Somebody asked me, "How is it about you, Joe. You never seem to be tired". "Oh yes, I am, but I never admit it." The weather changed. The wind came up and it started to snow heavily. I started out first to break trail for the others. The going was still good. At 3:20 we came to the end of the pass. From here on it was all downhill. But we were far from the end of the trail and there was little daylight left. The going got worse and the snow heavier. Bill and I were breaking trail. We lost altitude fast and hoped the going would be better.

Through the snowclouds we were unable to see the mountains and get our bearings. Darkness came fast. Bill and Howard, the strongest of us, wanted to break trail ahead of us, so if it got totally dark it would be easier for the rest of us to follow. But they didn't travel any faster than we did and most of the time we were right on their heels. Finally, as it became real dark and the going became dangerous I called for a stop. I suggested a camp for the night. Everybody agreed and soon we had camp set up under a big spruce tree. The branches went down to the ground and gave us a natural shelter. Before we built a fire, we cleared out enough branches to prevent a forest fire. We shared our food and everybody was enough for the night and the next morning. That night, as the storm was shaking our trees, we sat around the campfire and talked about the last two days.

When we were on the trail once more, it was still snowing and the soft new snow made it hard to travel. After an hour or so, the trail got better and then we came on a

the road and with this back to civilization. At 12 o'clock we came on the Seward

4 (-3-)

Highway, just $\frac{1}{2}$ mile below Indian House. This ended our 25 mile tour on snowshoes. It was not easy either for my young friends or for myself. I will celebrate my 60th birthday next month. (Ed. Note: This was written in February). It was a pleasure for me to have this fine group of people with me and I am especially proud of the girls, Jackie and Elinore.

Berg Freil

MEETING, MONDAY, APRIL 4

The Board on Geographic Names has announced the naming of two mountains in Alaska to honor the late James Wickersham and the late Anthony Joseph Dimond. Mt. Wickersham, a 7,000 ft. peak about 80 miles northeast of Anchorage, was named for James Wickersham, who was an attorney, district judge and territorial delegate to Congress from Alaska. Mt. Dimond, also a 7,000 ft. peak about 26 miles east-north-east of Valdez, was named for A.J. Dimond who had been a territorial senator, delegate to Congress and a district judge.