



MARCH 1997

A Publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska

Volume 40 Issue 03

Box 102037, Anchorage, Alaska 99510

MARCH MEETING
Wednesday
March 19, 7:30 pm
Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets
Downtown Anchorage

Slide Show: *Tom Choate* will show us what climbing in New Zealand was like 30 years ago.

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

Mar 22 Beacon Practice and Self-Arrest
Contact: Aze Azegami 266-9249

Apr 19 - May 4 Grand Canyon and Paria Canyon
The permit for a group of six to do the Boucher-Hermit loop in Grand Canyon has been approved, but as of Jan. 1, that trip is full. On April 28 we will move to the Paria Canyon trailhead in Utah, hike that colorful slot canyon, and drive to Flagstaff May 3, to fly home from Phoenix May 4. This second hike is not full.
Leader: Bill Wakeland 563-6346

May 3-4 Glacier Travel Class
Contact: Aze Azegami 266-9249

June 28 - July 6 Aniakchak Crater and Vent Mt.
Class B - C. Charter from King Salmon at a cost of \$240 - \$475 per person (plus air fare to King Salmon). Base camp will be in the crater. Trip limited to nine people including leader.
Leader: Don Hansen 248-7184 (h) or 271-6656 (w).

July 19 - Aug 3 Mt. Igikpak area of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve
Class C. Charter from Bettles at a cost of \$430 - \$450 per person (plus approximately \$248 air fare from Fairbanks to Bettles). Climb of lesser peaks in the Mount Igikpak area. Trip limited to 8 people including the leader. Note: This trip is NOT a climb of Mount Igikpak
Leader: Don Hansen 248-7184 (h) or 271-6656 (w).

TRIP REPORTS

Valdez Ice Climbing Festival 97

by Kirk Towner



our MCA president knows the importance of security. Apparently Valdez hotels are full of roving bands of thugs, just waiting for unsuspecting guests to leave their gear, supposedly safe behind locked doors. Knowing the futility of such a gesture against the wiles of the criminal mind, he shrewdly removed the lock, cylinder and all, from its resting place within the knob of our door. Ha! See if they can pick that one! And so began my first trip to Valdez...

I was really fortunate to have that kind of wisdom to guide me during the trip. Mark Miraglia, Aze Azegami, and I were able to fly down to Valdez for the weekend of the Ice Climbing Festival. We roughed it of course: crowding into a warm, dry hotel room; putting up with hot food that we didn't cook ourselves; walking dozens of feet to get to the base of a climb.

We left word of our security arrangements at the hotel desk and proceeded to Keystone Canyon. Apparently thinking he could belay me from inside the rental car, Aze offered me the first lead on Horsetail Falls, 'the most frequently climbed ice in Valdez' according to the guidebook. The climb went well, even if we did all have to stay outside in the wind. After rappelling down, enjoying a quick lunch, and resisting the temptation to take a nap, we selected another climb in a small canyon that promised to be out of the wind.

This one required a few minutes of snowshoeing to reach, and we knew that daylight would be failing soon, so Mark led up an unnamed half-pitch pillar located next to our intended climb, No Way Jose. He then set up a top-rope for Aze and I to ascend into the twilight. With the first day of climbing thus complete, we returned to our hotel room to find a new lock on the door. We would have to come up with another plan for defense.

The festival had arranged an all-you-can-eat spaghetti feed, which we did full justice to. Waddling back to our room, I magnanimously elected to take the cot this time, fearing a replay of the near-bloodshed that ensued as we fought for the two more-comfortable beds the night before. After several attempts to resolve the matter in an orderly fashion: paper-rock-scissors, Japanese line-drawing, and the Biggest Ice Tool, alas, no clear loser was found; we had each lost once. That's when things got ugly. Helmet-fights, swinging ice tools, and all manner of pandemonium broke out until Mark finally resigned himself to the cot.

The next morning, we snuck out early for breakfast, returning to find all of our gear intact. Another close call, but the crooks had probably slept in. We scouted out a few climbs until settling on one with a healthy approach to warm us up. Uphill through the alders and devil's club we went in search of Purina; so named for an enthusiastic dog who had scrambled up to a ledge near the start of the climb and had to be rappelled off. Aze finally got his chance to lead, showing some of the lesser-known tricks for dealing with soft snow at the top of each vertical section. Mark had volunteered to carry food and water in his pack for a lunch at the top of the climb, so naturally I contrived a plan to get him to carry my ice tools back down. The scheme almost worked too well, as he nearly convinced me I would have to prussik up from the first rappel station to retrieve them. We arrived at the bottom of the climb, packed up, and hiked back to the car (a bit easier on the way down).

You'll notice that we didn't spend much time doing Festival activities; I suppose that's one of the great things about Valdez, there's plenty of ice to go around if you want to do your own thing. It would have been nice to check out the bonfire on the beach Friday night, or maybe sign up Mark and Aze for the speed climbing competition on Sunday, but with all the nefarious ne'er-do-well's lurking about, perhaps it was better that we didn't.

With a heavy heart and a heavier duffel bag, I knew that my time was up; I had to catch the evening flight to Anchorage to be at work Monday morning. Aze and Mark stayed with hopes of climbing one more day, relieved that they wouldn't have to fight over the cot anymore. They never did reveal the ultimate solution to the crime problem, I guess I'll have to return next year to find out.

ADZE

Washington State Peaks

Any MC Aers coming down the east side of the Cascades can stop over/in when coming through Yakima. Mt. Ranier and Adams are nearby.
Chris Tomson 509-697-5556

