



MARCH MEETING
Wednesday
March 17, 7:30 pm
Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets
Downtown Anchorage

Slide Show: Dan Boccia, slides of a 6000-foot deep
canyon in *Mexico*.

Preview April: Makalu.

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

Mar 14 Williwaw Lakes
 Class B. Day ski. Bring a lunch and a camera.
 Leader: Matt Nedom 278-3648

Mar 13 East Twin Peak
 Class D. 5000 feet elevation gain. 5 miles total.
 Great views. Participants are required to bring ice
 axe, crampons, helmet, harness, prussiks and a
 rappel device. Knowledge of basic belay techniques.
 Leader: Richard Baranow 694-1500

Mar 20 Caribou Creek Ice Climbing
 Noninstructional. Come for one or both days. WI
 3-5 and 1-3 pitches. Bring all ice climbing gear,
 overnight gear for those who stay.
 Leader: Richard Baranow 694-1500

Mar 27 O'Malley Peak
 Class C. 2500 feet elevation gain. 8 miles total.
 Climb one of the most impressive peaks on
 Anchorage's eastern skyline. Ice axe, crampons,
 helmet, avalanche beacon and shovel required.
 Leader: Todd Steele 563-4645w

Mar 27 Eagle River S. Fork Ski
 Strenuous tour and traverse of prime back country
 terrain. 12-13 miles 500 feet of climbing or
 traversing and another 500 feet up a pass and a 2-
 mile downhill ski. Forest to tundra to forest
 terrain. Metal edge backcountry skis or metal edge
 touring skis and climbing skins. Touring pack
 should be able to carry skis while climbing. Self
 arrest grip poles useful but not required. Shovels,
 beacons and avalanche probes or probe poles
 required (and training for using these). Leader
 will check gear and beacons at the trailhead.
 Leader: Scott Bailey 696-7250

TRIP REPORTS

Talkeetna Hut Traverse

by Wayne L. Todd



On February 12, Cory and Elena Hinds, Michelle Potkin, Paul Templeton, and I began a four-day ski hut traverse from the Mint trailhead.

We enjoyed great vistas, sunshine and balmy temperatures on our ski in. The trail was broken for about 6 miles, a bit further than usual. After that we were in unmarked territory. The late evening sun lit up the granite on the mint peaks as we approached the hut. Our group became separated on Heartbreak Hill. The lead group made the Mint hut just before dark. The second group was persuaded not to bivvy and we soon had a major brewfest at the hut.

The next day we headed for the Bomber hut via Back Door Gap. The group had a snack break halfway up the slope. Spearmint, Troublemint, Sentry Spire, Doublemint and Triplemint peaks, and the Mint Glacier were all laid out before us in full glory. (We plan to come back in summer for climbing!) The snow pack was boilerplate hard in places as we approached the pass. One of the party was found dangling from an axe unable to get a ski edge. After our lead dog took a 50-foot slider, we opted to kick steps the last 200 vertical feet.

The views on the Penny Royal Glacier were excellent, the skiing was not. We enjoyed Paul's "human meteor" ski technique. This involved skiing in a straight line at ludicrous speed then falling back onto his pack and creating a crater with a fallout of snow. Miraculously, he escaped serious injury. We arrived together at the silver Bomber hut. The hut was difficult to see from afar in the white environment.

On Valentine's day we headed for the Snowbird hut with the wind to our back. With the group of five, trail breaking wasn't too painful. We made reasonable progress and arrived at the hut in about five hours (same time as to the Bomber). We enjoyed our stay at the new and extremely reasonable \$5 a night Staeheli Hotel. Five people are a comfortable size group for this

hut.

Monday we headed out via Glacier Creek with the wind to our face. The wind was a bit intense, a refreshing 40-50 mph in the pass. The skiing turned from quasi-fun to survival mode by the time we intersected the old house on the Reed Lake trail. However, everyone made it down safely. We were blessed with a packed trail from there on out. A one-skin technique worked well to Archangel Valley. From there skinless skate skiing worked best. The visibility and weather worsened during our ski back to the Mint trailhead, the closure to our trip.

Valdez Ice Climbing

by Cory Hinds



The group of ten climbers that made the pilgrimage to Valdez was rewarded with blue skies and fat ice. On the way down, the weather deteriorated as we approached Thompson Pass and it was snowing hard by the time we reached Keystone Canyon. But even through the blowing snow, the views of the ice in this canyon were spectacular. Ice was dripping everywhere. Commanding attention were *Bridalvail Falls* and *Keystone Greensteps*: the two giant grade V climbs that drip from the lip of the canyon six hundred feet above our heads. On the other side of the road, *Horsetail Falls* looked fat as ever. Still further on the left was the grotesque *Hung Jury* with its characteristic "bells" caused by the winds ripping up the canyon. One "bell" stuck out horizontally 20 feet from the pillar like a giant cobra waiting to strike.

Plans and destinations were solidified as tools were sharpened and gear was sorted. With four people and all the toys, our hotel room looked like AMH. After several margaritas and much talk, we turned in at a reasonable hour and hoped that the snow would stop. The final party of three arrived during the night.

Saturday morning dawned clear and quiet; mountains were everywhere! The Chugach near Valdez appear to be mature version of the species found in back of Anchorage. Climbs done on Saturday and Sunday included *Greensteps*, *Bridalvail*, *Hung Jury*, *Horsetail Falls*, several climbs in the Mineral Creek area, and several climbs in the Hole-in-the-Wall Canyon area. Sev-



eral of the gang even snagged a 4000-foot ski-descent in *between* climbs. Later we learned that the group who drove all night to get to Valdez had no car trouble on the way to Valdez, but their car broke down on the way to the climbs on Saturday morning! Fortunately they found the parts, fixed the car and still managed a climb or two late on Saturday. Last we heard they were planning to call in "sick" on Monday. That climbing bug is going around.

While climbing the "killer pillar" on Bridalvail, we were startled to see a climber solo climbing up beneath us. As if soloing weren't enough, he apparently liked the additional hazard of the ice we had been breaking off! As I crested the pillar, he was calmly sitting below at the belay, smoking a cigarette. Must be one of the new hardmen of Valdez, I thought to myself. He caught up to us at the next belay and stated in very broken English "I from South Korea, have no partner, so I climb solo. ...hysterical laughter... You know walk-off?" So we walked off together and learned that where Han lives, there are "many people, small ice." If we understood him correctly, they climb so close together that they sometimes stick each other's hands with a misplaced swing. I think he IS one of the new Valdez hardman. He was spending a few weeks at Casa Embick then planning to hit Red Rocks and Yosemite.

Participants on this trip were Cory, Andrew, Paul, Bryn, Jim, Djar, Amy, Kevin, Linda, and Brian.

Exploring the Bird Country

by Tom Choate



Saturday June 14 was 'it's about time' good weather, and two companions didn't show up, so Steve Gruhn and I set off walking (he didn't have a bike) through the maze of muddy trails up Bird Creek. The lower Penguin Cr. bridge was washed out, and the upper one nearly so, with floodwater squirting through the floorboards as we crossed. An hour later, as we neared the bank above Bird Cr. we were passed by 4-wheelers, and I was wishing again for my bike! Some two miles further up the trail gets rough and winding, and not recommended for bikes (you can walk faster!), and in a half mile it terminates where the main

route crosses Bird Creek to the NW side.

The water was way too high for us, so we continued on the old trail (now mainly used by moose) to the stream from Bird Glacier. This still didn't look like a great crossing, and to the right old hunters flagging led onward. This trail comes and goes, and we lost it a few times before it emerged into the valley some 1500 feet higher. Here it appeared to be an old horse trail, sometimes cut deep, elsewhere filled with recently invaded brush (does anyone know the pre-park history in this area?). Patches of alders for the next two miles led to several dams and ponds where I caught two beavers out of the water and got to within three feet of them. We found a campsite (they are scarce!) and enjoyed the view (contemplated our navels?) instead of making an afternoon climb of the peak opposite us.

This meant a very big day for Sunday: up at 6, we were across the beaver dam by 7:30 am and starting up around patches of alders toward a prominent gully. Halfway up we encountered three mountain goats who moved away slowly, seeming to stare at the strange old goat climbing up. Crossing some snowpatches helped relieve the strain of climbing the steep and slippery tundra, and soon we were enjoying the breeze at the pass, looking down into the long west fork of Bird creek. The ridgewalk was easy as we walked the mile over spot height 3795 feet to the twin summits (about 4050 feet) which were within a foot of equal elevation by water bottle level. We put a cairn on the northern one (there were no signs of humans anywhere) with a register suggesting the name Esbay peak because the natives called Bird Creek Esbay tnu (Mt. Goat Cr.) and because of the three we saw on its flanks.

We were back in camp by 10:30, making breakfast and packing up. The plan was to carry packs over Pt. 4370 above camp and see how hard the ridge was to Peak 5030. The alder bashing on steep terrain was no fun, but within an hour it gave way to patchy tundra at about 2700 feet. Sunshine and lots of flowers made it hard to keep going at a good pace, but we needed to get the ridge checked out by 2 PM in case we had to do a return descent (we carried no technical gear). The last 150 feet on the north ridge of Pt. 4370 was steep, rotten and slippery with snow, and turned out to be the hardest scrambling of the day.



The view from the summit was good while we ate lunch, but even better was the discovery of a mountain goat route along the narrow ridge to 5030. They showed us the way to bypass a couple of gendarmes on the left and to go over others. As I reached the false summit, there on the true peak was one of the goats I had been following, looking back to see what had been making rocks fall off the ridge. She ran off down the SW ridge, only to run into a rare sight: another party of climbers.

Poking around the cairn, I could find no register, though that doesn't surprise me, as I understood Jim Sayler was there first many years before, but it was also rumored that it had been named Nest Peak by later climbers. Just as I was completing my register note, over the horizon pops Wayne Todd, climbing at his usual fast pace. Steve played a trick on him by announcing "gee, Wayne, you missed the first ascent by 40 minutes!" The reaction was hilarious.

Soon there was an amazing summit party of seven, but we withdrew early as rain was coming and we had heavier packs. The long scramble down the SW ridge should continue over a couple of rocky pinnacles, but Steve, unappreciative of rock climbing, elected to make an early descent. So we glissaded a snowpatch and slid down vegetation to the trail near where the MCA usually camps for Bird Peak climbs. Easy walking led to the 4-wheeler trail which this year wasn't even suited to Mt. bikes (Wayne's party pushed theirs) due to steepness, loose rock, streams running down the middle, overhanging alder, and one big fallen tree. But we couldn't complain after a triple summit day!

MINUTES

FEBRUARY MEETING

The meeting was called to order at about 7:45 PM. Total of 100 people in attendance. Approximately 15 new members or visitors introduced themselves.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The budget was printed in the December Scree and approved at the January meeting. 1999 calendars and patches are available.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Hiking and Climbing

There were 4 trip reports and 10 trip announcements. A list of upcoming trips was published in the February Scree. Chairperson **Wendy Sanem** reviewed the list of trips and various trip leaders described the trips. Sign-up sheets were available for the upcoming trips. The chairperson was commended on an excellent job lining up trips.

Huts

Chairperson **Mark Miraglia** is climbing in New Zealand.

Geographic Names

Chairperson **Tom Choate** announced that the committee is currently working on the Girdwood-Portage section. Anyone with information regarding peak names in this area should contact Tom before the heli-ski gang names them all.

Parks Advisory

Chairperson **Scott Bailey** announced that on March 11 there would be a hearing on the proposed trail from Anchorage to Eagle River. National trails day is approaching; the trail to our Mint Hut is this year's focus. See Scott if you are interested in helping clear this trail. Keep an eye out for recent articles on organochlorines (PCBs) in the arctic environment.

Equipment

Chairman **Dave Hart** reports that the club equipment is alive and well at AMH. Equipment owned by the club includes 4 pairs of Sherpa snowshoes, 5 beacons, axes, and strap-on crampons. Ropes are for club trips only.

Training

Avalanche beacon training is still on the horizon. Stay tuned. **Gary Runa** is continuing with Basic Mountaineering Skills, Expedition Mountaineering Training, and Glacier Travel & Crevasse Rescue. See Gary for details and check the Scree.

OLD BUSINESS

Reminder that a permit from the Alaska Railroad Corporation is required for ice climbing at **Candyland**. Obtaining the permit is quick and painless. Go to the front desk and the receptionist will direct you to the right person. Say hello to member Elena Hinds who works there.

The Mountain House **food order** is in. See Dave Hart.

The new **voice-mail** system for getting latest news on club



trips will be up and running within the month. The phone number will be published in the next Scree.

NEW BUSINESS

We have lost our contact at BP for **printing of the Scree**. Anybody with contacts at BP should see Richard Baranow. The prospect of e-mailing Scree was discussed. This will be discussed by the board later.

Artist renderings of the proposed **Eklutna cabin** were shown. The construction of this hut is a joint project between MCA, AAC, and the State Park. Volunteers will be needed for construction (hopefully this summer).

There continues to be rumors of a **spring club trip** in the works to the Scandinavian Peaks area continuing with an ascent of Mt. Marcus Baker from the north. Contact Richard Baranow and Wendy Sanem for details. The timing on this will be coordinated with Gary Runa's Glacier Travel and Crevasse Rescue training on the Matanuska Glacier.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cory Hinds
Secretary

