

# the **SCREE**

**Mountaineering Club of Alaska**

**March 2011**

**Volume 54 Number 3**



*"The will to do, the soul to dare." --Sir Walter Scott*

**Mount Alice**

**Granite Tors**

**Mount Jerry Dixon**

**POM – Mount Alice**

**Tonsina to Red Line**

**Alaska Trails – Trail Rondy**

**Monthly Meeting:**

**Wednesday, March 16 at 6:30 p.m.**

**Program: Denali in January by Lonnie Dupre**

# The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

[www.mtnclubak.org](http://www.mtnclubak.org)

*"To maintain, promote and perpetuate the association of persons who are interested in promoting, sponsoring, improving, stimulating and contributing to the exercise of skill and safety in the Art and Science of Mountaineering"*

Join us for our club meetings the third Wednesday of the month at the BP Energy Center, 900 East Benson Boulevard, Anchorage, Alaska  
[www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC\\_map\\_06-04-03.pdf](http://www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC_map_06-04-03.pdf)

**Cover Photo:** Dano Michaud and Harold Faust are climbing up Mount Alice. Photo by Matt Faust.

## Article Submission:

Text and photography submissions for the *Scree* can be sent as attachments to [mcascree@gmail.com](mailto:mcascree@gmail.com). Do not submit material in the body of the email. 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.

**For best viewing of the Scree on a monitor using Adobe Reader, click on 'View' and 'Full Screen.'**

**On-line? – click me**



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## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

### **March 19 - 27 Scandinavian Peaks Trip**

Fly into Scandinavian Peaks Hut (fees apply). Ski and climb as conditions dictate. Contact Stan Olsen, ([stan1olsen@yahoo.com](mailto:stan1olsen@yahoo.com)) for details.

### **March - April**

For these mostly after-work trips, contact Steve Gruhn at [sgruhn@clarus-ak.com](mailto:sgruhn@clarus-ak.com) or 344-1219 at least 24 hours before trip.

March 22, 5:30 p.m.

Rainbow to Windy Corner

March 24, 5:30 p.m.

Rainbow to McHugh Creek

March 28, 6 p.m.

Tit Mountain (2831)

March 31, 5:30 p.m.

Bird Creek Waterfall

April 2

Mudflats from Potter to Campbell Creek

April 4, 5:30 p.m.

Rainbow Peak (3543)

April 7, 6 p.m.

Peak 3980 (Ship Creek and South Fork of the Eagle River drainages)

April 12, 6 p.m.

Mount Eklutna (4065)

## Trips – continued

April 14, 6 p.m.  
Mount Magnificent (4272)

April 19, 6 p.m.  
Peak 4009 (Four Mile Creek and Thunder Bird Creek drainages)

### April 19 - 26 Harding Icefield Ski/Climb

Dates Approximate. Fly into the Tustumena Glacier and traverse over to the Exit Glacier. About 30 miles +/- . Probably try to ski up or climb up something, conditions permitting. Will try to be out Friday or Saturday. before Easter. Requirements: good glacier travel experience, winter camping, ability to appreciate tent days, and a strong snow shoveler. Contact Stan Olsen [stan1olsen@yahoo.com](mailto:stan1olsen@yahoo.com)

### June 24 - 26 Kenai Peninsula - peaks less traveled

SAVE THE DATE - exact details to be decided later. This will be the traditional solstice weekend trip to the Kenai Peninsula. Destination undecided, but we usually hike in two hours Friday to a basecamp. Climbing Saturday and Sunday on less-traveled walk-up peaks. Option to do one-night or even day trips with the group. Exact valley will depend on depth of snowpack, and determined about May meeting time. Leader: Tom Choate, [mtngoatc@gmail.com](mailto:mtngoatc@gmail.com)

### July 09 Mystery Mountain

Tom Choate will resurrect his 1990s tradition of 'Mystery Mountain.' He will lead a trip to a peak within 75 miles of town that no one can tell him about (no name?). Details to come! Tom Choate, [mtngoatc@gmail.com](mailto:mtngoatc@gmail.com)

Late July or early August – Gates of the Arctic. Two week backpacking trip in Gates of the Arctic National Park. Class B/C trip, \$200 air charter deposit per person due by May 1<sup>st</sup>. Party is limited to five or six. Drop off and pick up at Chimney Lake and return to Bettles. The plan is to backpack from Chimney Lake, cross the Clear River, go through Holmes Pass, and possibly hike up Boreal Mountain. Backpack down to the North Fork of the Koyukuk River. Visit the Gates of the Arctic (peak formation) along the Koyukuk. Pick up food cache at Bombardment Creek airstrip along the North Fork of the Koyukuk River (USGS maps Wiseman D-2 , D-1). Backpack loop back to the Clear River and Chimney Lake. Information on specific dates and costs will follow. Leader, Don Hansen (907) 243-7184, e-mail [donjoehansen@msn.com](mailto:donjoehansen@msn.com) or [donjoehansen@gci.net](mailto:donjoehansen@gci.net) .

**Trip leaders** – Please volunteer a few hours of your time to plan a trip, whether it's hiking, skiing, backpacking, or climbing. It would be great to see more club involvement and going on trips is a great way to meet some of our new members and renew acquaintances with old members. Trips posted in the Scree are official trips, but if you want to lead unofficial trips, it's quick and easy to post your trip on the Alaska Mountaineers Meetup calendar. Let's take advantage of the longer hours of daylight to go play in the mountains!

## Letter to the Editor

### Thank You!

I am extremely thankful to the MCA for allowing me to make this event [Skiing Alaska's Volcanoes - February meeting presentation] a fundraiser. Alaska Airlines is donating \$320 as payment to Big Brothers Big Sisters for my work, so the event was a great success as a fund raiser with \$1,041 raised and quite a bit of interest and awareness raised for BBBS as well.

I would like to express sincere gratitude to everyone from the MCA that came, and that I hope some may find a nice volunteer fit with BBBS and pass their outdoor skills and passion on to a child.

Thank you. ---Chris Flowers

**On behalf of MCA's members, I would like to express a big THANK YOU to John Recktenwald for his many years of dedication producing the Scree and taking it to a higher-quality level. His efforts will be hard to live up to, but he left behind a great template and a knowledgeable committee member in Steve Gruhn. Now John has more time to devote to his retirement dream of "napping his way through the Chugach." Thanks John – enjoy your double retirement!**





On the Ascent. Photo by Matt Faust

## The Wonderland of Mount Alice – May 2, 2009

by Dano Michaud

The plan was simple: start at 1:00 a.m. under headlamps to get the best snow conditions. For early spring travel on Alaska's mountains and glaciers, this is a plan for success, and it was our plan, too. Harold and Matt Faust worked out the details for time departure and route selection; all I had to do was tag along. Harold's route selection was similar to the one that most folks use to gain Mount Alice's 5318-foot (1621-meter) viewing perch, but it was Matt's timing that I believe tipped the scales for our successful trip. An early May morning with long daylight and deep snow provided the opportunity for us to take advantage of the glorious weather that day.

Mount Alice has always intrigued me, even before I moved to Seward in 2005. I believe the first account I heard of this beauty was at a MCA meeting where Wayne Todd and Paul Andrews did a slide show presentation featuring their successful efforts to gain her summit. They did a great job with their digital images, which at the time was in the early stages of the new digital age.

This was, for me, a classic unaided alpine route, right on the edge of my comfort level. We did bring the basic snow travel gear, with harnesses, rope, pickets, and a few odds and ends. But as it turned out, the snow conditions would in our minds justify moving along without the need for any pro. It's a calculated risk every mountaineer makes, and hopefully one is aware of the consequences if mistakes are made.

Unlike Wayne's and Paul's trip, which was a bushwhack from the base (see "Alice's Wonderland" in the November 2003 Scree), our route began on the established Mount Alice Trail which rises from near sea level on Nash Road to gain access to this mountain area massif playground. The trail is well-used

wilderness access for hikers, trail runners, skiers, and 'boarders. It follows a beautiful ridge that is chock-full of huge spruce at the lower elevation and then tops out to hemlocks near the tree line. Above the trees there is an alpine trail along cliffs on the left and nice rolling slopes on the right. At an elevation of approximately 3,000 feet, snowshoeing with headlamps, we turned left and dropped down several hundred feet into the glacial bowl that rests at the base of Alice's south face. We proceeded across this bowl to the base of the couloir that would provide our access to the upper slopes.

As we switched from snowshoes to crampons, we seized the opportunity to get a bite to eat and to re-hydrate. We finished our task of changing hardware, and then proceeded to head up the couloir that necked down just before we popped out onto the first of three steep snowfields. We kicked steps, our boots making good purchase in the crisp cold snow. Another rock gap, this one wider, but very steep, took us to the central, long, frozen slope. We carefully proceeded, kick step by kick step, to a hidden rock band.

This rock band was the crux; although it wasn't a significant obstacle, it took some fancy footwork and some ice ax placement on rock (Seward shale) that was hidden underneath a shallow layer of snow and ice. I mentally crossed my fingers as we moved up and across it, entering onto the steepest and last snowfield to the summit. I brought up the rear as Harold took the lead and the last push for the summit. Here, a solid kick step meant everything as never before.

This was a peak both Harold and Matt grew up looking at across the bay from Seward every day that the clear sky graced her pinnacle. For

many reasons we tend to put off for the right moment a certain climb, but the time had come where father and son could summit this beauty in perfect fashion. I was fortunate to accompany them, for this peak makes up the main view from my kitchen window and I had dreamed of the day that the view would be in the opposite direction.

The summit was reached at 7:00 a.m., with spectacular views all around. As we celebrated our success, the coats were donned, but the weather was in unbelievable condition with sun, no cloud and just a trace of wind. We did

our summit rituals, starting with a 360-degree verbal sound-off of any visible earth formations. Facing directly west and going clockwise we had the following: of course, at sea level the town of Seward at the base of Bear Mountain, Marathon Mountain, the Harding Icefield in the far distance, Mount Benson (aka Iron Mountain), the Resurrection Peaks (South, Middle, and North), Mount Ascension, Lost Lake, Kenai Lake, Mount Eva, Sheep Mountain, Paradise Peak, Hearth Mountain (6182 feet), Mount Godwin (5860 feet), Kindling Mountain (5550 feet), the Godwin Glacier, Fourth of July Peak (5397 feet), the Sargent Icefield, Likes Peak (4199 feet [1280 meters]), The Watch Tower (3186 feet [971 meters]), Resurrection Bay, the Chiswell Islands, Callisto Peak, and, of course, the numerous unclimbed, unnamed peaks scattered in every direction.

We dug for the summit log without success near some exposed rocks on the north, and then I pulled out a small prescription bottle with a piece of paper and a small cut-off pencil. We entered in our names and a brief description of our views and the climbing conditions. Something like "Beautiful day, great climb, life is good." It was rolled up tight and put in the bottle and stashed in a findable spot. Hopefully, a summer traveler will combine the two and remove the prescription bottle from the summit. Then we brought out the cameras, documented our accomplishment, and took shots of everything we could. Many climbs and exploration trips have been planned and assisted by images from the library of past summit shots.

We checked everything and prepared for the descent, which we knew would mean back-stepping,

each man relying on his ice axe, crampons, and his own concentration. We spaced ourselves out evenly and kicked our way down about 1,600 feet, a long process. At the base, on the rocky outcrop that was our staging area, we soaked in the sun that was now in full glory. We switched from crampons to snowshoes, drank up and headed out south across the glacier bowl. The temperature was showing signs of rising, and the 'shoes got heavier from the clinging snow. As we exited the bowl, gained the ridge and continued down to timberline, the 1.5-mile walk was a slog; what was sweet travel 11 hours earlier was now like walking in wet concrete. All part of the game I told myself, moving on. We were back at the truck after 12 hours of travel, almost to the exact minute.

With all climbs, timing, weather, proper route selection, and gear are all major factors for a successful summit bid, but one cannot discount that a good attitude and a desire to view the world from an ultimate location play a large role as well.



**This way to the top! Photo by Dano Michaud.**



**Summit Shot: Harold Faust, Matt Faust and Dano Michaud. Photo by Matt Faust.**

# Granite Tors

By Marcin Ksok

Why drive eight hours to top-rope a boulder, you might ask? Because it is Labor Day weekend and we have never climbed the Granite Tors northeast of Fairbanks. The outcroppings were formed by a granite intrusion that eroded over a very long time, leaving behind the most resilient bits.

Equipped with a Fairbanks Area Climbing Guide by the Alaska Alpine Club from Beaver Sports, Kate Yenik and I headed up the maintained trail which followed a creek valley full of blueberries.

The trail featured boardwalks through the boggy sections and gained a few hundred feet of elevation over a rolling hill. Two hours later we pitched the tent by a granite outcropping called Rock 1. The wet fog, which the guidebook warned us about, started to roll in. Nevertheless, I scrambled to the top of the feature and set up an anchor that allowed for some short top-roping.

Before rain drove us into the tent, we also got a couple of enjoyable and easy trad routes on the Lizard's Eye, the next closest rock formation. The rain put a stop to our climbing conquests, so we resorted to hiking around and exploring the area. Now the eerie fog provided a great setting for a trek through the lands of Mordor. At one point we even ran into some local hobbits from Fairbanks on a backpacking trip.

The Tors are reached by a loop trail and most can be accessed by scrambling to set up traditional top anchors, but there are also plenty of cracks, flakes, and features on which to lead. Water is the only scarce commodity, but it can be found in rock pools and depressions.

The area offers other climbing, camping, and hiking opportunities among the granite features and is a short drive from Fairbanks on the way to Chena Hot Springs. We highly recommend it for those in the vicinity.



**Matt Faust and Harold Faust. Photo by Matt Faust.**

# Mount Jerry Dixon

By Matt Faust

On September 12, 2010, my dad (Harold Faust) and I made an ascent of the north ridge of Peak 2904 on the Resurrection Peninsula, south of Seward. Geologically, the area is unique. Rather than the typical Kenai Peninsula marine sediments (shale and sandstone),

the Resurrection Peninsula consists of the pillow basalts and other igneous rocks of an ophiolite sequence.

We took a skiff out to Kayaker Cove (located northeast of Fox Island's Sandspit Point). From the cove, we followed a trail behind the cabins up through the forest onto talus. Once on the talus, we continued up and east to a notch on the peninsula crest at an elevation of about 1750 feet.

From the notch, we dropped a bit to the east and traversed for a while before regaining the ridge at another notch at 1850 feet. From there we headed south and stayed on the ridge crest until Point 2562. As we had hoped, the volcanic rock made for more secure scrambling than is common elsewhere on the Kenai Peninsula.

The ridge between Point 2562 and the summit is jagged and would have been time consuming. Running short on time, we followed a scree gully down to the west a few hundred feet, traversed south until we were beneath the summit, then regained the ridge via another gully. From here we scrambled up wonderful pillow basalts to the summit.

Our climb was the day of the remembrance service for adventurer Jerry Dixon. We decided to informally name the peak in his honor.

# Peak of the Month: Mount Alice

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Kenai Mountains

Borough: Kenai Peninsula Borough

Drainage: Godwin Glacier

Latitude/Longitude: 60° 8' 7" North, 149° 16' 30" West

Elevation: 5318 feet (1621 meters)

Adjacent Peak: Peak 5380 in the Godwin Glacier  
and Kindling Glacier drainages

Prominence: 1,234 feet from Peak 5380

Distinctness: 1,234 feet from Peak 5380

USGS Map: Seward (A-7) NE

First Recorded Ascent: 1940s or '50s by Ray Billings

Route of First Recorded Ascent: Unknown

Access Point: Nash Road

Mount Alice dominates Seward's eastern skyline, yet until 1983 it remained without an official name. Known unofficially as Mount Alice since 1908, its now-official commemorative name honors Alice Lowell Scheffler, the daughter of homesteader and long-time



Photo courtesy of Wayne Todd.

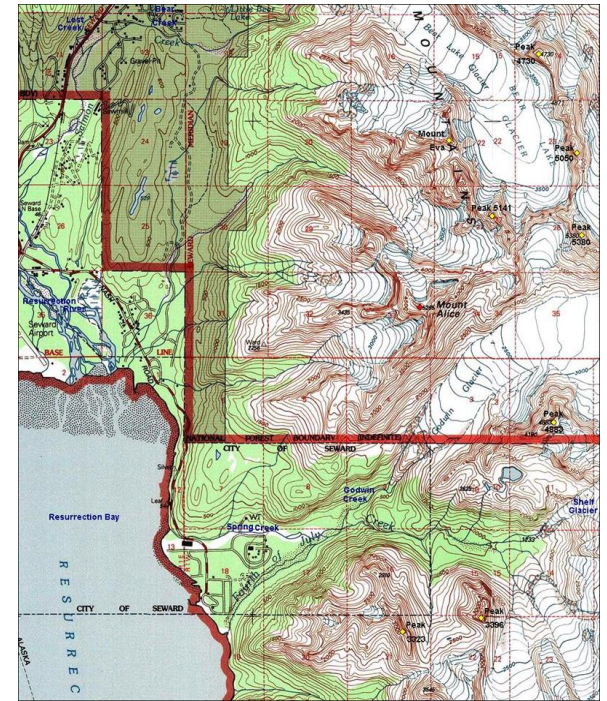
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Seward resident Captain Frank Lowell, who settled in the area in the 1880s.

Vin Hoeman maintained meticulous records about Alaska's mountains, including Mount Alice. His records, archived at the UAA Consortium Library, indicated that sometime in the 1940s or 1950s Ray Billings, a Seward longshoreman and Cordova Airlines agent, made a solo ascent of Mount Alice. Hoeman's records did not contain any additional information about Billings' ascent.

Mount Alice has been the scene of more than one tragedy. Dennis Hitt fell to his death while on the ascent at the 4800-foot level on July 1, 1963. Richard Wise slid off a cliff to his death while descending the west ridge from the summit on October 27, 1981. Wise's partner, Adam Gardner, was injured in a separate incident while on the descent. Hitt's accident was documented on page 11 of the July 4, 1963, *Petticoat Gazette*, the July 1963 *Scree*, and on page 246 of the 1964 *American Alpine Journal*. Wise's accident was documented in the October 29, 1981, *Seward Phoenix LOG* and in the November 1981 *Scree*.

Louis Dupree and Brent Mahan climbed Mount Alice on June 19, 1979, as recorded in the June 28, 1979, *Seward Phoenix LOG*. Greg Higgins reported in the September 1985 *Scree* that he climbed the south ridge of Mount Alice on June 26, 1985, and exited via the Godwin Glacier to the southeast. Paul Andrews and Wayne Todd hiked the southwest ridge to the south bowl and climbed the south ridge to the summit on September 12, 2003, as recorded in the November 2003 *Scree*. Each of these accounts included phrases like "lousy shale rock," "some of the most atrocious rock I have



ever seen," and "poor by any standard. If you stared at a hold too long it fell apart."

Mount Alice is now most commonly climbed via a trailhead off Nash Road. The established trail climbs the southwest ridge, but access to the summit is gained by crossing the pocket glaciers in the southwest bowl and ascending a couloir on the south face.

Eric Parsons and Dan Olsen climbed Mount Alice via the southwest-ridge-to-south-face-couloir route on July 10, 2008, as recorded on Alaska Mountain Forum at:

<http://www.alaskamountainforum.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=2708>.

Harold and Matt Faust and Dano Michaud climbed the same route on May 2, 2009, and recorded their trip at:

<http://www.alaskamountainforum.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=29&t=2941> and on page 4 of this issue of the *Scree*.



Red Line Ridge, by Harold Faust

## Tonsina To Red Line

By Dano Michaud

I went onto my National Geographic topo software and made up a travel map of an area I had wanted to travel for some time – the backcountry behind the Front Range of Seward. If one is familiar with that mapping, one knows that using a pen icon one can draw a route in the color of red. This *Red Line* would be part of some of our trail jokes and evidently play into why we named the last peak we summited the *Red Line Peak* and the title to this short story “Tonsina to Red Line.”

It was late August 2010 and about the only good summer weather break we had, so Harold Faust, Tom Swann, and I took advantage of this weather hold by breaking away from the daily grind and took the three days needed for this trip. We started out at the Caines Head State Recreation Site Trailhead. This mile and a half trail took us to Tonsina Creek and the start of this glorious trip. We crossed Tonsina Creek and then on a hunch took to the first ridgeline.

As it turned out, it was a game trail from the start, possibly made by goats that come down in the spring and bears that go up in the fall. Either way we were on it, but after not too long it disappeared and it was a brush scramble to tree line. Once on top the world came alive; we were where we wanted to be. The views were stunning. To the east were Resurrection Bay and all the mountains that border her eastern shore; Fox, Hive, and Rugged Islands lay to the southeast and Callisto Peak, icefields, and snowpacks were directly south of us.

As we moved along the lower part of the Callisto snowpack, staying just on the rock side of the edges, our two dog companions, Geo (Harold’s dog) and Kia (Tom’s dog) stirred up

some goat activity. Out of sight and just above us, the dogs sprang into action. Our halt commands slowed the dogs down and the goat took refuge on a large rock outcrop. Gathered in the defense mode was a cluster of six or seven by my count.

I was lower in position than the other two and before I could get in position to pull out my small binoculars, the herd was set in motion. Like cattle running from a coyote, the group bolted across the icefield with a total of 27 counted, nannies and kids. Even though this sight was impressive, a sense of ill was felt for disturbing these mountain monarchs in their home setting. The pleasure of watching these magnificent creatures maneuver along sheer cliffs with such ease is a joy that seems to get better each time I view it. The herd gathered at a distant spot out of reach of danger and we moved along, scrambling the cliffs and ravines that are the results of any receding glacier.

As we neared the far side of the large cirque, a notch appeared on the ridge line. It was the same ridge line that would lead us to our first objective: those twin peaks that had held my curiosity from the map I drew up earlier. The notch we approached was obviously the dividing point, the keyhole from one area of distinct beauty into another. As we walked through, we could see the giant Bear Glacier.

The glacier’s size relating to other Alaskan glaciers might be considered dwarf in comparison; it is nonetheless one of the larger descending features of the Harding Icefield. As it cascades from the icefield above, leaving behind the neve, the blue ice reveals deep cracks and dark caverns. The snout calves off ancient ice into a lake clustered with icebergs of many sizes, held in this freshwater suspension by a large sand spit at the opposite end with a small drainage creek.



Turning north, the route on the ridgeline to the two peaks that make up Peak 3218 (981 meters) was pretty obvious; it was there and we were on it. The traveling was the standard ridge scramble, following the dogs that seemed to know the route as if it were the way home. We reached Peak One and looked for signs of possible past visitors, but none were located. The two peaks are very close in elevation and there were questions and concerns about my claim that Peak Two, the north peak, possessed ownership as the highest. So the water bottle was pulled out and Harold put the controversy to rest using the water level technique: Peak Two it is.

Leaving Peak One, we scrambled down the gradual slope finding a small meadow and pond at the pass; we skirted around and made the easy walk to the top of Peak Two. We doffed our packs; sat down; and took in some fluids, food, and the spectacular view. We now had in our possession two views: on our right, the Resurrection Bay area, and on the left, the Bear Glacier and the Harding Icefield.



**Dos Peaks Summit, by Harold Faust**

We pulled out the cameras and shot the necessary summit pictures and a few extra just in case. I also brought along a small prescription bottle for a summit log; in it I put a small pencil and a sheet of rolled up paper. We signed it, dated it, and put a name to the peaks, calling them “Dos Peaks.” We then stashed it among some rocks at the summit proper. We then looked to our next goal, the following summit on our Red Line route.

The next peak calling to our attention was Peak 3185 (970.8 meters); this goal was 1 mile northwest as the raven flies. We were hoping we could continue our trek by following the ridge northwest from the summit. It was looking grim with the ridge dropping out of view on cliffs, so we turned back and scouted the surrounding area ever so closely for a route on the west face of the ridge, hoping for a scree slope that would take us down and around so that we could get back on the trail to Peak 3185. Tom dropped over the edge on a slope area that went into a nice couloir, shouting up to us, “Here is a nice exit!”

Harold and I turned and followed, leaving the ridge and slowly dropping down into the scree-choked gully. We kept close so when the rocks did kick loose, the impact would be minimal. As we walked down the slope, the scree started to slide like volcanic magma during an eruption. Our couloir opened up into a nice area where we turned north and started our side-sloping until we were back on the goat trail, heading up the summit of Peak 3185.

Once on top, we again did the summit ritual; looking around, we found a benchmark. We took numerous photo shots of the area, optimizing the advantage of recording images



**Ridgeline to Peak 3185, by Dano Michaud**

we will often refer to while planning future trips. If it is within your objectives and means, this reference option is invaluable information for the next flight from society.

Our view north was as I anticipated – rolling high plains, knobs, and hills with snow pockets and drifts that stayed year round. There were numerous tarns dotting the landscape and creek drainages that run as long as the warm temperatures allow. This high elevation bench-like terrain would be our route for the next day’s travel.

The travel had thus far covered a considerable amount of terrain, so we took advantage of our high perch to look over the area for a possible campsite, as daylight was limited, and we were, too. So we looked about as we descended from the top of Peak 3185. The traveling was casual as we picked our way through the snow patches and hard rock ridges and gullies that resembled recessional moraine forms from a glacier of years past.

We found the ground that would be home for the night and laid claim by scattering gear as we set up our tent and started the stove for brew. This spot was as glorious as any I have spent time in; we were in the wide open and for good reason – view, view, and more view. For we were now at 2,500 feet and at the headwaters of Tonsina Creek; looking down her valley we could view boats passing by in the calm waters of Resurrection Bay.

The next morning we woke early, filled our guts with grub and brew, broke camp, and began to move fairly early. We knew we had some objectives we wanted to knock off and that would require a good start.

Our route (the Red Line) was to stay on the nice large bench that would make up our entire day's travel. It was above timberline and provided spectacular views as we trekked along this alpine wonderland. Our movement went over snow patches that never melt, around high mountain tarns of aqua blue, and around rock formations that held their ground as the glacier passed by, with some showing signs of their weaker layers.

We enjoyed it all, for this was traveling an area seldom seen; this was a hiker's dream with elevation that would fluctuate from 2,200 feet to 3,700 feet over a 6-mile stretch. The only time we relinquished our bench-top traveling was to gain an alternative route to one of the three summits we had planned visiting.

Three miles into the day we came to the east base of a mountain we were to call Mount Kenny Baker (3550 feet [1082 meters]). I had viewed this mountain from the east while on the summit of Bear Mountain some years ago; I

was intrigued about the top that looked as if it were flat. At the base of the mountain's east side there is a large flat area. At ¼ mile wide and almost a mile long and completely flat, this is very unusual for this prodigious landscape.



**Mount Kenny Baker, by Dano Michaud**

I had yearned to climb her flanks and view the world from there. I had no idea I would be doing just that, but accessing her from the other side. As for the name, well that came from Kenny's son and MCA member Frank Baker; I'll let Frank tell that story, but we honored it just the same. We had used our only summit log on Dos Peaks, so we were unable to lay name and claim it as Mount Kenny Baker.

*(Ed. note [courtesy of Frank Baker]: Mount Kenny Baker was named after former Seward resident Kenneth D. Baker, who operated a hardrock gold mine on the North Fork of Spruce Creek from 1947 to 1950. The name is unofficial, but seems to have been commonly*

*accepted in recent years by local mountaineers.)*

After our summit we reversed our steps back down the wide snow-packed couloir to our gear cache of items that we had dropped for this summit bid. At the cache we watered up, once more donned our packs, and moved along. We kept our crampons on, for they added much needed stability, as our Red Line route was now on the Phoenix Icefield. This high alpine snowpack is on the west side of Seward's Front Range and it just adds to the ease of travel, that is if the temperature keeps it cool and rigid, as was the case.

Now our ambition was to move northward and gain the next pinnacle, which Seward locals call Lowell Peak (4416 feet [1346 meters]). This mountaintop is usually accessed from the Lowell Creek canyon, with the creek being the trail proper. Prospective summiteers will battle numerous creek crossings, alder, and the infamous devil's club. So even though this creek is accessed from the middle of town, because of the aforementioned trail conditions, it has little visitation.

This Red Line route was proving to be a good path for a group of old wanderers like us, with no major thinking involved, just some desire and imagination. I was hoping what looked good on a topo map would play out in real life, its high alpine fabrication in my mind and by luck it was paying off.

We had one more peak on our tick list before day's end, and we were feeling really good about the ground we had covered and the views seen. As we glissaded down the west slope of Lowell Peak to our gear stash, we laughed and carried on, for we were alone in the best place on earth, at least on that day.

The Harding Icefield was in our frontal view, with the Bear Glacier peeling away from the grips of the Harding as it made its escape and headed south to the Gulf of Alaska. To the north and, of course, back on Red Line, we faced Phoenix Peak, named by the late great Vin Hoeman, after a Russian ship, the first ever built in Alaska, which was constructed in nearby Resurrection Bay in 1794.

We wasted no time moving across the dome of rolling permanent snow. The sun was giving us no mercy and we gladly accepted the mild punishment for the summer had been a pitiful one. Our choice of decent days was what distinguished between a good trip and a great trip and we were sucking up on the latter. When we got close to the small couloir that gave up the access to the anticipated rock scramble, we came upon the first noticeable bergschrund of the trip.

With due respect we traveled above the crack that divided the snowpack from the mountain, sidehilling and keeping a watchful eye as if it would suddenly move up to us. We passed with ease and entered the gully with a

continuous movement. Grabbing rock and picking up speed, a sense of comfort came over me, and we moved with a constant pace as we scrambled through the rock and light snow that made our direct path to the highest, and last, peak of the day.

The scramble from the couloir to the ridge was the most consistent-angle slope I have ever scrambled. The pitch had very little, if any, change. And it was a smooth, comfortable grade of 30 degrees, plus or minus. I took advantage of a cool mountain steam percolating from the rocks as the available fresh water was not prevalent, due to the higher elevation and snowpack.

On the ridgeline to the summit, we could look over the edge onto the Japanese Creek Glacier separating Phoenix Peak from Marathon Mountain. We turned north and followed the ridgeline to the top; with a knife-edge ridge on our right, we traveled a few feet downslope of the ridge with a huge snowdrift providing a nice swale in which to travel.

At the top we found our first sign of prior travelers: a summit log stuck underneath some rocks, somewhat protected, yet filled with water from the relentless storms that hammer this peak. The plastic Gatorade jug was no real barrier against the elements of this magnitude. We pulled the paper out and could actually make out some of the writing; it turned out Tom's son had been there on a solo trip a few years earlier, which was pretty cool.

We made a decision that this peak was worthy of a new log container, so we gave up one

of our Nalgene bottles. We returned the old writing after drying them in the sun and added our own to the bottle, found a good rock outcrop and stashed it so future travelers could document their experience for others to enjoy.

Phoenix Peak was indeed the highlight of the day; from this perch the world unfolded with peaks, vistas, distant lakes, and rivers. So as we normally do, we named off the ones we knew of; up close there were Marathon Mountain, Bear Mountain, Mount Benson (aka Iron Mountain), Mount Ascension, and the Resurrection Peaks, across the bay there were Mount Alice, Tiehacker Mountain (4436 feet [1352 meters]), Paradise Peak, Hearth Mountain (6182 feet), Peak 4883, and The Watch Tower (3186 feet [971 meters]).

To my delight, looking down toward Seward I could see my workplace; the fun, of course, was knowing that I often looked out my office window and wondered about the very peak I was perched on; retreat would be bittersweet. The day was drawing to an end and it was getting time to find another campsite. The descent would be a retrace to where we first hit the ridgeline, but the rocky slope that we came up was flanked by a snow slope. So, of course, we glissaded the entire distance down to the couloir that got us off the mountain and onto the snowpack.

We had just finished our third ascent of the day and it was time to relax and enjoy a nice brew, so still on Red Line we went due north and trekked parallel to the western base of Phoenix Peak, descending as the snowfield dropped in elevation. We could see a set of field- or bench-like areas that were scattered about the mountainside, all at different levels and sizes, and it was a matter of picking the most comfortable looking area with plenty of water. And sure enough, the closer we got, the pickier we became. But we made a choice and it



High alpine zone, Phoenix Peak poking out, by Harold Faust



**Camp behind Phoenix Peak, by Dano Michaud**

wasn't too long before the gear was laid out and the tents were going up.

Our nighttime ended with dinner and a discussion of our next day of travel. The original Red Line route had us dropping farther down from our alpine bench campsite into the bed of Paradise Creek 2,000 feet below and then climbing back up the other side to a peak that Harold calls Spiral Mountain (4288 feet [1307 meters]). The plan was to climb this last peak, drop into the next western valley, and then return to civilization on a wide gravel creekbed that would complete our route.

The more we talked about it while viewing our other options, Tom pointing due north and said, "Why don't we just follow that ridge line, grab that peak, and then just drop down into the Resurrection River drainage and the road home?" Tom was right; I was so focused on the original route I never gave this option much thought. We ended the night with an agreement of the next day's travel plan.

Morning had us traveling on the new revised Red Line and we were all in sync with the plan. From our campsite we stayed at elevation and

as we sidehilled, we came upon one of the many glaciers that depart from the Phoenix Icefield. Not an obstacle, but a travel route; we donned the crampons and grabbed the ice for a direct line to our ridge, poking and prodding our way across the ice, over crack and hole. Making our final step from ice to rock we were on the ridge we were to name, of course, Red Line Ridge.

This was nirvana; no exaggeration I'd say, it was a mile and a half of the best show on earth. From here we could view all the aforementioned peaks, icefields, and lakes and now we could also see the Resurrection River and the snout of the Exit Glacier. This was a typical ridge walk where the traveler finds the goat trail and follows the masters, exiting only when the sure-footed creature's path requires hooves to maneuver around an outcrop or overhang.

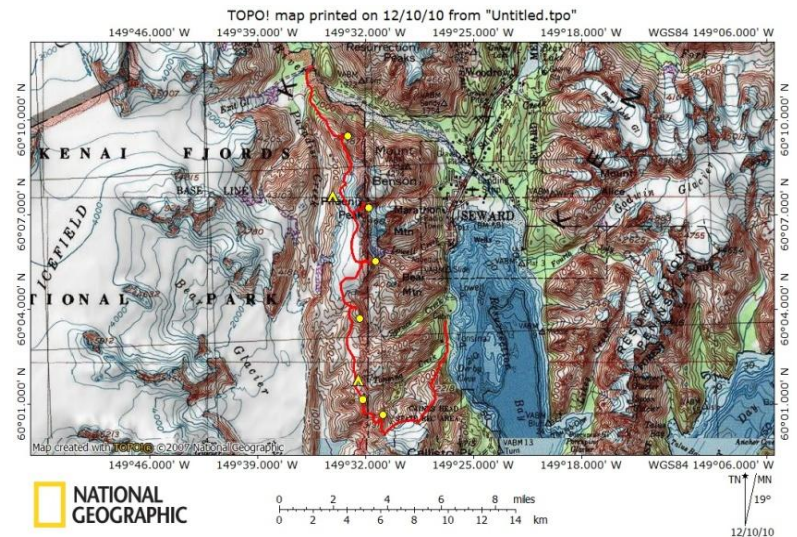
This was a bad time for my mind to wander, as it usually does; as I planned out future possibilities, I looked out over the surrounding country. What was next?

We got to the summit (Point 3924 [1196 meters]) in typical fashion, with gratitude of our goal and respect for our surroundings; it's hard not to be moved in some way while viewing from these heights. We took our break, with water and the last of the nutrients that remained. Pictures were taken and we surrendered another water bottle for a summit log; this peak indeed needed to be named and it was unanimous: "Red Line Peak." We did the deed of signing and dating and left a little trinket for the next visitor. But loafing around was not an option now; the clouds were moving in from both sides. Not that we were really too concerned of possible problems, it was just too nice of a trip to have it end in rain.

Back on track and with our new revised Red Line route we picked our way down and through the typical brush that prevents the average wanderer from venturing out and up to this alpine wonder. Surely the verbal worst in us came out as we plowed our way through the alders and devil's club, cliffed out, and re-tracked around the cliffs, avoiding the urge to go where we knew from past travel the devil's club was the thickest.

What seemed like hours later we heard the sound of Paradise Creek, our indication of finalizing this venture. Not out of the woods yet, as the saying rightfully goes; we had to cross this braided creek and the Exit Glacier drainage channels a few times to reach the road and call it a success. We did our best as we crossed and avoided vertigo, a few slips and one of us dropped into the rushing water; we managed to get ourselves across the five braids.

Once on the road we activated our SPOT device, sending a message to our chauffer. As we walked Exit Glacier Road concluding our third day, my heart felt heavy with gratitude for friends and high places.



## MCA Board Meeting Minutes February 2, 2011

Board Members Present: Tim Silvers, Randy Plant, Wayne Todd, Vicky Lytle, John Recktenwald, Jim Sellers, Mark Smith.

1. Motion passed to post board and general meeting minutes on the Website in addition to publishing them in the Scree.
2. Continued discussion about potential liabilities for the club and for directors and officers. Jim Sellers will continue to contact insurance brokers, gather information, and report back to the board.
3. MCA advertising brochures now at ARG and AMH. Tim Silvers to work on new MCA business cards. Also we should look at developing an MCA logo patch and/or sticker for sale.
4. How can we get younger people and kids involved in the MCA? Someone would have to volunteer to organize that.
5. Why do people join the MCA and how can we make the club better? Vicky to develop a short survey and Tim will email it to past and present members. Also, we need to make sure that new

members feel welcome at the club meetings.

6. There was a discussion about pros and cons of making the Scree freely available to the public. It would not be easy to change the website design to do this. At some point in the future we'll need a policy decision whether or not to pursue making the Scree available to non-members.
7. We are investigating two potential options on a location for the MCA library and a plan should come together later in the month.
8. Discussed potential safety issues on club trips and training and a reminder that leaders, instructors and officers should speak up if they see any unsafe acts.
9. Some preliminary feedback has been received on the BMS course. Tim to follow up with Jayme on feedback received from students and instructors.

Next board meeting: Wednesday, March 2 (location TBA)

Tim Silvers, MCA President



## Alaska Trails - Trail Rondo!

### First Biennial Trail Rondo April 15-17

Join us in Palmer this April 2011 for training, discussions, hands-on demonstrations and vendors focused on the needs of Alaska's trail community. This will be a great opportunity for all the trail enthusiasts, planners, and builders to learn new skills and techniques, test out the latest equipment, network, find opportunities for future employment, and share ideas about how we can all work together to make Alaska's trails the best they can be.

Of course, everyone is welcome! Hikers, bikers, 4x4ers, canoeists, ATVers, skiers, kayakers, snowmachiners, horseback riders, mushers, skijorers... you get the idea. If you use trails in Alaska, this is for you.

Early registration starts now and continues until April 1st. After April 1st, registration is at the door only. Each registration item increases by \$25 dollars after April 1st.

For more information, to view the tentative agenda, or to register for this event, visit the Alaska Trails Website at:

<http://www.alaska-trails.org/>

**SIGN AND INITIAL THIS RELEASE OF LIABILITY— READ IT CAREFULLY**

I \_\_\_\_\_ (print name) am aware that mountaineering and wilderness activities (including hiking; backpacking; rock, snow, and ice climbing; mountaineering; skiing; ski mountaineering; rafting and packrafting, kayaking, and use of remote backcountry huts) are hazardous activities. I wish to participate and/or receive instruction in these activities with the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc. (“MCA”). I recognize these activities involve numerous risks, which include, by way of example only, falling while hiking, climbing, skiing or crossing rivers or glaciers; falling into a crevasse or over a cliff; drowning; failure of a belay; being struck by climbing equipment or falling rock, ice or snow; avalanches; lightning; fire; hypothermia; frostbite; defective or malfunctioning equipment; and attack by insects or animals. I further recognize that the remoteness of the activities may preclude prompt medical care or rescue. I also recognize that risk of **injury or death** may be caused or enhanced by **mistakes, negligence or reckless conduct** on the part of either my fellow participants; MCA officers, directors, instructors, or trip leaders; and the State of Alaska and its employees regarding MCA backcountry huts. I nevertheless agree to accept all risks of **injury, death, or property damage** that may occur in connection with any MCA activity, including use of MCA furnished equipment and MCA backcountry huts. **(As used in this agreement, MCA includes its officers, directors, instructors and trip leaders.)**

\_\_\_\_\_ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

**GIVING UP MY LEGAL RIGHTS** I agree to give up for myself and for my heirs all legal rights I may have against the MCA; my fellow participants in MCA activities (except to the extent that insurance coverage is provided by automobile insurance policies) and the State of Alaska and its employees regarding MCA backcountry huts. **I give up these legal rights regardless of whether the injury, death, or property damage results from mistakes, negligence or reckless conduct of others.** I understand this agreement shall remain in effect until I provide a signed, dated, written notice of its revocation to the MCA.

\_\_\_\_\_ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

**MY PROMISE NOT TO SUE** I will not sue or otherwise make a claim against the MCA; my fellow participants in MCA activities (except as noted above for automobile accidents); and the State of Alaska and its employees regarding use of MCA backcountry huts, for **injury, death, or property damage** which occurs in the course of my participation or instruction in mountaineering and wilderness activities. Any lawsuit relating to MCA activities or this release shall only be filed in Anchorage, Alaska. The provisions of this release are severable and if any part is found unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall remain in effect.

\_\_\_\_\_ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

**MY RELEASE OF LIABILITY** I agree to release and discharge the MCA; my fellow participants in MCA activities; and the State of Alaska and its employees regarding use of MCA backcountry huts, from all actions, claims, or demands, both for myself and for my heirs, dependents, and/or personal representative, for **injury, death, or property damage** occurring in the course of my participation or instruction in mountaineering and wilderness activities.

\_\_\_\_\_ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

**MY PROMISE TO INDEMNIFY** I will pay all expenses, including attorney fees and court costs, that the MCA; my fellow participants in MCA activities; and the State of Alaska and its employees may incur as a consequence of any legal action arising out of **injury, death, or property damage** suffered by me in connection with any MCA activity or the use of any MCA backcountry hut.

\_\_\_\_\_ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

**MY CONSENT TO MEDICAL TREATMENT** I consent to any hospital or medical care that may be necessary as a result of my participation in MCA activities. I understand and agree that I am solely responsible for all charges for such medical treatment, including evacuation and/or rescue costs.

\_\_\_\_\_ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

**I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THIS AGREEMENT, UNDERSTAND ITS CONTENT, AND RECOGNIZE IT IS A BINDING LEGAL AGREEMENT**

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if under 18): \_\_\_\_\_

**Revised 2/19/09**

## General Rules for Participation on MCA Sanctioned Trips

1. Participants shall familiarize themselves with the *physical demands*, *anticipated terrain* and *potential hazards* associated with the proposed trip. Examples include, but are not limited to:

**Physical Demands:** Estimated elevation gain, distance and duration.

**Anticipated Terrain:** Trail hiking; bushwhacking; off-trail hiking on tundra, snow, ice, scree, talus or boulders; exposed hiking on steep slopes covered with snow, ice, slick vegetation, scree, talus or boulders; scrambling on loose rock; exposed scrambling on loose rock; technical snow, ice, rock and/or mixed climbing; stream crossing; glacier travel on snow, ice and/or scree.

**Potential Hazards:** Avalanche; falling while skiing, hiking or climbing; falling into a crevasse; being struck by falling rock, snow or ice; attack by a bear, moose or insects (bees, wasps, mosquitoes, biting flies, etc); lightning; fire; carbon monoxide poisoning; suffocation; frostbite; hypothermia; drowning from falling through snow, crossing a stream, packrafting or kayaking; injury from use/ misuse of equipment. Note that it is impossible to predict all potential hazards that may be encountered while participating on MCA sanctioned trips.

2. Participants may be required to demonstrate the skills and experience necessary to participate on any given trip.

3. Participants shall sign-up on the club sanctioned trip sign-up sheet.

4. Participants shall read, initial and sign the Release of Liability Agreement prior to departing on the trip.

5. The trip leader may refuse participation to any member for any reason. If someone feels that they have been discriminated against or treated unfairly, they may present their case to the Hiking and Climbing Committee and/or the Executive Committee.

6. Proper clothing and equipment is required to participate on club sanctioned trips. The trip leader can require special equipment and refuse participation to any person that is ill-prepared (e.g. inappropriate clothing, footwear or gear). See recommended equipment list at the end of this policy.

7. Participants shall follow the leader's instructions. Participants shall not go off alone, return or rush ahead without permission from the leader. Participants shall not ford a stream before the leader assesses the situation. Remember, this is a club trip and the leader must know where all participants are. Anyone intentionally separating from the group without the leader's

approval shall no longer be considered a participant on the club sanctioned trip.

8. The trip leader has the authority to split the group (fast and slow), dependent upon current conditions and experience level of the participants. The leader must appoint a qualified co-leader to lead the second group using the guidelines specified under Trip Leader Responsibilities.

**9. Glacier Travel:** For trips requiring roped travel over glaciers, knowledge of crevasse rescue, and ice axe and crampon skills are required. A basic understanding of ice and snow anchors is also required.

10. Participants who in the leader's opinion, put themselves or other members of the group in danger, shall be subject to sanction by the club. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, reprimand at the general meeting, exclusion from future trips, termination of annual membership, or lifetime exclusion from the club. The Executive Committee, and only the Executive Committee, shall have the authority to issue sanctions.

11. Number of people on club trips:

Minimum: For safety reasons, three people minimum. Trips undertaken with fewer than the minimum required participants shall not be considered club sanctioned trips.

Maximum: Registration on any particular trip must be restricted to a safe and manageable number of members. The Leader and/or Hiking and Climbing Committee shall determine the maximum number of participants. In trail-less areas or State and National Parks the maximum number depends upon the trail and campsite conditions, but will generally be limited to 12 people.

12. In general dogs are not allowed. Among the reasons are bear problems. Well behaved, bear savvy dogs may be approved at the discretion of the trip leader and all trip participants. Approval must be unanimous and must occur prior to meeting for the trip.

13. Firearms are not allowed on club sanctioned trips, unless approved by the trip leader and all participants. Approval must be unanimous. Aerosol bear repellent is preferred in lieu of firearms.

14. If you find you cannot participate after signing up on the roster, please let the leader know as soon as possible, for transportation and gear-planning and so someone else can go. If you are the leader, help find a replacement.

**Revised 6/18/10**

# Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Tim Silvers	250-3374	Board member	Wayne Todd	522-6354
Vice-President	Jayne Mack	382-0212	Board member	Mark Smith	868-3155
Secretary	Brian Aho	223-4758	Board member	Vicky Lytle	351-8246
Treasurer	Randy Plant	243-1438	Board member	John Recktenwald	346-2589
			Board member	Jim Sellers	360-2560

Annual membership dues: Single \$15, Family \$20

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address at right. If you want a membership card, please fill out a club waiver and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter or have questions about your membership, contact the Club Membership Committee at [membership@mtclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtclubak.org)

The 'Scree' is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be e-mailed to [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com). Articles can be submitted anytime.

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.

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: Yukiko Hayano and Randy Plant - 243-1438  
Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vicky Lytle - [hcc@mtclubak.org](mailto:hcc@mtclubak.org)  
Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008  
Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127  
Scree Editor: [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com) Amy Murphy – 338-3979  
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