

SCREE

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MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA
Box 2037
Anchorage, Alaska
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MEETING, MONDAY, APRIL 15

MCA will meet henceforth on the THIRD Monday of each month which is Monday next, April 15th same time 8 p.m.; same place Willow Park. We will see you there for the slides of Mt. Gerdine.

We were saddened to learn of the accidental death of Jake Breitenbach on March 23 while climbing with the American Everest Expedition. Jake and his then future wife attended some MCA meetings while in Anchorage several years ago. He will be remembered by a number of us with fondness and respect.

PRESIDENT SECTION: will meet Friday, April 12th at 8 p.m. at the home of Dave DeVoe: 311 South Park. At this time plans will be made for the ski trip from Independence through Stetson Pass to Willow; slides of the Burns Glacier Trip will be shown; and there will be discussion of possible future hikes and climbs. Do bring your ideas!

MARINES?! = Under the banner of the Chester Creek Outfall Sewer Yacht Club Marines two members of the MCA took part in the recent assault on a certain Point Woranzoff. Details are lacking at the present moment but all accounts indicate that our members comported themselves in the high traditions of our organization, leading a landing party up a cliff that is reported by reliable sources to be in some places steeper than 89 degrees. We hope that these unknown heroes will step forward to receive their deserved accolades.

SECOND ATTEMPT OF MT. GERDINE (12,600') by Rod Wilson

The first try at Mt. Gerdine, a peak 100 miles west of Anchorage and the highest unlimbed peak of the Alaska Range south of McKinley Park, didn't really get near the peak itself (Scree, Sept. 1961). This attempt was stopped by steep ice and lack of daylight about 500' from the summit.

Weather was perfect for the five days of the climb, March 18-22, 1963 with clear or gray skies, little wind, and temperatures from -6 degrees to +20 degrees F, but the party of six (Paul Crews, Leader, Dave Kimball, George Wichman, Paul Crews, Jr., Lowell Thomas, Jr. and Rod Wilson) made some tactical errors which contributed to the failure to find the top. The first was a false start up steep snow gullies on the right of the large ice fall which runs off the east face of the mountain between 6000-8000 ft. We thought the way was safe, but when on a rock spur at the end of the first day's climb we were sprayed with clouds of ice particles from ice avalanches roaring down the gully, we had to dig in. We spent an uncomfortable night in a 3-room snow cave and retreated about 800' down the 40 degree slope the next day. We then wound our way on skis with climbers up across the ice fall to the east (south) side of the fall and found an easy route up to a bowl above. Here we optimistically made our "high" camp at about 7500', thinking the top would be ours the next day, March 21.

It went well for most of the day. We cached our skis at about 10,000, put on crampons and kicked up a steep wall due east of the peak and topped out much to our surprise in a field of crevasses, a bergschrund and ice cliffs, in the area between the lower south peak and the higher, elusive north peak. After fumbling about for a way up, we turned back at 5:30 p.m. at a point on the north peak higher than the south peak. It was 0 degrees and we didn't relish the thought of a bivouac. Back we went to the skis and then a cable attempt to ski in starlight down our willow wand trail to camp. The experts fell landing stock still thinking they were moving! Flashlights helped in this hazardous exercise. Fortunately this area was not much crevassed. We were almost too tired to eat that night and slept so late the next morning, we decided not to try to move camp up for another attempt.

So, down the south side of the ice fall we went on March 22. At the bottom we strapped the skis onto our Korean boots and slid on down the gentler part of the glacier to Lowell's plane at 5200'. George and Lowell had not done this kind of climbing before and proved apt students. They should join the club! Lowell's glacier flying in his Cessna 180 was, as usual, faultless.

BYRON GLACIER AREA

by Gregg Erickson

Our one day climb in the Byron area March 23rd was blessed with excellent weather from the start. Those readers who were lucky enough to be outside that day will remember it as one of blinding sun and moderate temperature. At least that is the way my companions: John Walkup, Mike Hopkins, my brother Tryg, and I saw it as we started from Anchorage at 7:00 a.m. The master plan, formulated the night before over glasses of Scotch, called for a 5:30 a.m. departure. Saturday morning I was ready (believe it or not) at the appointed hour but John slept through his alarm. Notwithstanding, the good weather and the extra hour and a half of sleep put us in excellent spirits as we started down the Highway toward Byron.

Arriving at our jump off point, the end of the Portage Glacier road, we debated the various possible routes. Not being equipped with snowshoes or skis we started directly toward the right, or west, ridge where hopefully the snow would be wind packed. For the first two hours we battled moderately detestable alder and increasingly deep snow, gaining less than a thousand feet. In our struggle with the brush we'd worked our way slightly to the left (SE). As we broke out of the thicket we could look down at the snout of Byron, looking sleepy in its blanket of snow.

Judging from the depth of the snow we had encountered everyone was glad we hadn't chosen the normal route. But new problems confronted us; ahead was a huge pile of avalanche debris. What lay above? More of the same? While thinking the problem over we drank from the grape juice jug, munched on sandwiches, and listened to Mike grouse about the disutility of knickers for winter mountaineering. His complaint was at least partially justified for he surely presented a sorry sight as he stood there with socks bunched over boot tops and a liberal amount of saturated longjohns showing between ankle and knee. A dry pair of socks, however, considerably improved his disposition.

The avalanche fan, however, remained foreboding. A short traverse to the right, toward the ridge, seemed to put us on solid footing, so solid that we found it necessary to rampon up. After about twenty minutes of steeper and steeper slopes and ice chutes, confidence got the better part of valor: We broke out the ropes. Precipitous ice can sometimes make for hair raising horror, or it can endow an otherwise merely pleasant climb with a bit of true adventure. It is hard to say what makes the difference between the two conditions. The enchantment of the risk? The expanding view? Or merely sunshine so bright that it assumed a liquidity on which our confidence seemed to float higher and higher? What ever it was it was there for us. As we neared the crest of the ridge, the bugach seemed to burst toward the sky in a cataclysm of light. Needless to say we ate our lunch at the top enjoying the view.

To say much more would be anticlimactic. The long slide down ends all too soon a perfect day. And as we drive toward the city I remember the words that impressed me so in an English classroom long ago forgotten:

I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me: and to me
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture.

Byron knew what he was talking about.

The MEMBERSHIP LIST, following this page, is the work of Lloyd Morris. NCA is indebted to him for this needed roster.

Usual and popular route to the summit.

Group: A.L. (Pert.) Parks. Leader, Karl Henter. Winzenz Bauer. Paul Nielson. Pomm