



APRIL 2004 A Publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska Vol 47 Issue 4

Box 102037, Anchorage, Alaska 99510

## FEBRUARY MEETING

Wednesday

April 21st, 7:30 pm

First United Methodist Church

9th & G Streets

Next to the Phillips Building

(you may use marked parking after hours...)

Downtown Anchorage

**SLIDE SHOW: McKinley Traverse of 1963**

with Updates from the Denali 40 Years Later

Slides of his '63 Climb, Video from 2003 MC Tom Choate

### HIKING AND CLIMBING

#### April 08 **Bird Ridge Point**

Thursday Evening Hike 5:30 p.m. Class C  
contact Steve Gruhn for more info.

#### April 13 **Rainbow Peak**

Tuesday Evening Hike after work.  
Call Steve, 344-1219.

#### April 14 - 20 **Eklutna Traverse**

Good skiing ability, glacier travel experience, and avalanche training needed. You also must be able to ski on a rope team while carrying 50+ pounds on your back. Stay overnight in the MCA huts.  
Class D Leader: Stu Grenier 337-5127

#### April 15 **Four Mile Creek**

Thursday Evening after work. Call Steve, 344-1219.

#### April 20 **Winner Creek Gorge**

Tuesday after work. Call Steve, 344-1219.

#### April 22 **Tokle Creek**

Leave 5:30pm for Tokle Creek and Ship Creek Valley from Arctic Valley. Drop down to the valley floor, then turn around and come back up. Class A - 6 miles, 700 feet of elevation gain  
Contact Steve Gruhn 344.1219

#### April 24 **Bidarka Peak (3835')**

Saturday Class D - 15 miles, 3,600 feet of elevation gain  
Contact Steve Gruhn 344.1219

#### April 25 **Ski The Gully**

I've had my eye on this one and want to ski it. A 2000ft climb on a trail. Bring Rondonee or Tele skis and skins, or a board, and avalanche gear. contact Stu Grenier 337.5127

#### April 27 **Upper Winner Creek**

Tuesday Evening Leave 5:30pm Class B - 9 miles, 600 feet of elevation gain.  
Contact Steve Gruhn 344.1219

MCA membership applications are available on-line at  
<http://www.mcak.org/MCAMembers.htm>

## HIKING AND CLIMBING

### April 29 **Virgin Creek.**

Thursday Night Hike Leave 6pm. Class A - 2 miles, 800 feet of elevation gain. Contact Steve Gruhn 344.1219

### May 02 - 14 **Prince William Sound Kayak-Climb I**

Approximate dates for a paddle-climb trip in Prince William Sound. co-leaders Sean Bolender and Stu Grenier contact Stu Grenier 337.5127

### May 15 **Blueberry Hill (4531')**

Saturday. Come find out why this was one of the last peaks along Turnagain Arm to be climbed. Class D - 7 miles, 4,500 feet of elevation gain Contact Steve Gruhn 344.1219

### May 26 - 31 **Prince William Sound Kayak-Climb II**

Approximate dates for another paddle-climb trip in Prince William Sound. contact Stu Grenier 337.5127

### June 25-27 **Post Solstice Kenai Weekend**

Save the date! With Tom Choate and friends... More in the May edition of the Scree.

### July 13 - 15 **Mt Yukla 7535'**

A beautiful peak with a reasonable back door, and the highest peak in the Eagle River drainage. Come climb with us to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the first ascent. bring: helmet, crampons, ice axe, avalanche gear, glacier travel skills, and maybe snowshoes too. contact Stu Grenier 337.5127

## TRIP REPORTS

### **Mount POW/MIA (4314) Western Chugach Mountains**

*By Steve Gruhn*

Saturday, March 15, 2003, I awoke early and, finding the weather favorable, set out for a morning hike. I had to be in Wasilla for work at noon, so my trip would have to be a short one on the way to the valley. I selected Mount POW/MIA (el. 4314, Sec. 25, T16N, R1E, S.M.). It met all the criteria – short, easy, interesting, and on the way to Wasilla from my house. And I hadn't climbed it previously.

I drove up Eklutna Lake Road to a point about 3 miles after the water treatment plant and found a pullout on the north side of the road. I parked here and began the steep bushwhack up the ridge.

I seem to have a penchant for finding devil's club, and, truth be told, I would have felt that my trip was lacking if I didn't encounter any. But, as luck would have it, my hike didn't lack for anything. So, after battling devil's club, alder, and slopes slickened by the previous night's light snowfall, I maneuvered my way to timberline. Here the route became more straightforward and easy.

As I made my way north up to the rocky skyline at about 4,000 feet I saw a large flock of white-tailed ptarmigan in the valley to the east and a small band of Dall ewes and lambs above and west of me. The air was calm and the sky was clearing. What a gorgeous day!

At the ridge crest I traveled east, staying a little bit to the south side of the ridge to avoid the exposed north side. And, after kicking a few snow steps, I was on top.

The summit is not typical of peaks in the Western Chugach Mountains. A large flagpole was anchored to the ridge and a picnic bench sat on the east slope. A register was buried in a rock cairn and contained quite a few names of Colony High School Junior ROTC students who evidently climb this peak every Memorial Day.

This peak had previously been known as Anvil Peak, but it's name was changed after a man from the Lower 48 climbed it and thought that prisoners of war and people missing in action should be commemorated by naming this peak Mount POW/MIA. When the state legislature and governor agreed, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names approved the name and it became official.

I retraced my steps through a band of sheep to timberline and found that the sun had warmed the slopes and melted the previous night's snowfall. This made the trip down to my truck swift and uneventful. And it allowed me to make it to Wasilla on time.

I really appreciate living so close to mountains that I can still climb them when I have to work in the afternoon.

## No more black and white

(some thoughts from the MCA climb of Madsen Mountain)  
*by Tom Choate*

No more black and white, rock and snow;  
It is solstice time, spring in the mountains.

The view is magnificent; above azure lakes  
and deep green forest, brown and white ridges  
climb, topped by black rocky outcrops.

But today I want more; to be closer to the earth;  
To feel the rough rock edges on my hands  
and the fresh flex of heather underfoot.

To take time to stop and sit on cushions  
of hardy plants, and look closely into  
small cream flowers; To find pink pistils  
and yellow stamens, smelling slightly sweet.

Gold and black, fat and struggling in the breeze,  
A heavy bumblebee visits these flowers,  
And continues the fragile life-line of both.

Farther up our ridge turns to rock and snow:  
Climbing is steeper, footing uncertain.  
Yet in this apparent desolation life struggles on:  
Mosses and lichens, crunchy in wind-scoured drought.

Slow up, quiet your breath; Listen to that wind:  
Whispering in the ground-hugging plants,  
murmuring over rocks, carrying faint sounds  
of humans scurrying far below. But soon  
all sounds are drowned by the calls of ravens,  
soaring over the peaks, taking my soul with them.

At the summit made mundane by man's structures,  
the world expands to drive wilderness into our brains.  
Distant icefields gleam over nearer peaks, and  
lakes big and small shimmer where the sunbeams  
reflect bronze, consuming all their blueness.

Later we descend from rarely trodden summits  
onto untracked soft snow, and speed down  
with whoops of joy into a little spring valley  
where heather abounds: a sea of shy white bells  
spiced here and there with red dots of primroses.

Rest a moment to savor the gentle fragrance,  
And let cool mountain water slip down your throat.

Later, down at the lakeshore, the last sun-blessed peaks  
slowly turn, like autumn leaves dressed in orange velvet;  
Too soon this changes into a royal purple robe that  
creeps gently upward, a momentary mantle on the peaks.

Close your eyes and memorize the shades of color,  
before they disappear into darkening sky.

## TRIP REPORTS

**The Assault on Polar Bear Castle** July 4-5, 2003  
*by Wayne Todd*

Paddle left! Paddle right! Faster! Faster! Watch the  
raft angle in the water!

"What the.....?" The raft is buckling at my knees in  
my kneeling position! Listing to port.....

Frigid, swift, grey water envelopes my gasping  
body. Grappling for the raft I instead grasp my pack and feel  
my feet hit bottom. I can stand! - barely - in the waist deep  
current; made more difficult by the weight of my water-  
logged pack dragging in the flow and still attached to the  
raft.

Out of my innate desire to cling to something solid,  
I refuse to relinquish my pack, and I struggle with it back to  
the near shore.

Fifteen minutes later and still shaking uncontrolla-  
bly from the cold dunk, and having determined the cause of  
the deflated raft was contact with cold water, I'm fired-up to  
try crossing again.

Randy Howell and Ross Noffsinger, my fellow  
soldiers, thought my 'water cooler pack' comical as it slowly  
dispersed water with a visibly declining waterline. The dry  
bag in the pack was a great idea, although next time I'll put  
my boots in there too.

With a now super-inflated Sevlor raft, this crossing  
is less eventful. Exiting the river still requires some form  
though as the one-foot high bank moves by quickly. I have to  
exit the raft in the current while maintaining a serious grip on  
the raft; unclip my pack from the raft, remove my life jacket  
and then attach it to the raft. This is made quite difficult as  
the rope attached to the raft and anchored on the opposite  
shore by Ross, drags through 30 yards of fast moving water.  
It feels much like belaying a 150 pound halibut.

Releasing the tugging monster, I watch as Ross  
reels it back to the other side with concerted effort. Once 'on-  
step', it pulls easier.

Under the beating sun, I set out some wet items to  
dry, like myself and my wrung out socks. Wool is an amaz-  
ing fabric; so is skin.

I'm perplexed when I see Randy paddling over  
without trailing the rope. Upon arrival, he clears this up with  
"Ross won't be joining us today". Hmmm, just from observ-  
ing one rat dunking in a cold, swift river. Good thing I wasn't  
wearing armor.

Once over the moat, we negotiate a side river braid  
and Organ Creek, the latter over a downed log. We begin  
searching for the known trail but after an hour of bush-  
whacking we find ourselves on the bench to the east; having  
given up on the trail.

## TRIP REPORTS

### The Assault on Polar Bear Castle, cont.

Desiring further abuse, we bushwhack for another three and half hours before reaching the sanctuary of Organ Creek valley. Swords, or at least a machete, would have been prudent for this charge. Even I, typically a light prespireror, am very parched having long been out of water. The water we gulp from a spring stream is exquisite, albeit a teeth chiller from the cold.

It may have been the hours of arduous climbing, or the hair-raising river crossing, or even a mild fatigue-induced hallucination, but as we exit the ramparts and enter the palace of Organ Creek valley, it seems magical. The view is stunning. Extensive fields of wildflowers create a mosaic of brilliant colors, punctuated by lush green moss and undergrowth. We are surrounded by numerous gentle streams, which join and rise to cascade as waterfalls over the jagged rock ledges. Steep snowfields and glaciers ascend the rock-ridged peaks of Polar Bear, Organ and Flute against the back-drop of an amazing azure sky. This time of year it is one of a dozen magical places that I've ever found.

On a more sobering note, however, it is already early evening, and we acknowledge an unplanned bivy in hostile territory is in our future as we continue the climb.

Leaving the valley floor, we make our way up vegetated and rock slopes, then a snowy traverse to the steeper north ridge of mixed rock and snow, then onto the predominantly snow-covered north face. The north face is less steep than it appears from Eagle River valley but it is an excellent illusion to keep plunderers away. From there a pitch length scramble on benched rock leads to the throne.

An unwritten rule of climbing, as in life, is that the effort put forth in an endeavor will surely affect the accomplishment. By 9:30 pm after 12 hours on the go, dunked, scratched, scraped, and bruised, we had certainly invested some effort. Our reward? A cloudless calm evening with epic towering views of Yukla and other Icicle peaks east. Organ looms close to the west and our ascent valley to the North (already in shadow), accented with shining orange lakes across Cook Inlet. Chugach peaks to the east transform from rock to snow as they recede in the distance, and well below that, the shadow of PB imposed on a ridgeline shadow. Magnificent.

After a short pleasant hour on top of breathtaking views, photos, reading the register, cell phone calls to avoid worry and a possible rescue call (the connection was most excellent), we descend into the shadowed magical valley. Randy tossed me his running shoes for crossing Organ Creek as I'd had enough barefoot abuse for one day.

Finding a breeze-blocking cushy spot, we began our 'circling' of bedding down. I was a while longer as I had more clothing to utilize. Feeling smug that I had a bug head-net, I settled in, -only to be gang bitten twice where the net collapsed and the skeets congregated. So my jacket went

over my head and I recycled carbon dioxide as I breathed, just like Randy.

Luckily I'd taken a copious amount of food for this quest so I inventoried and rationed to leave some staples for the morning. Good thing as I get cranky when I'm hungry.

Toward the end of our quasi-sleep five-hour rest, we viewed a glowing pink orange band to the north. Time to move.

Up early cold and stiff from our ground warming, we descended back into the brush fortress, sighting a grazing black bear across valley. Early on we found an old six foot wide cut trail through the alders that Devil's Club was only beginning to reclaim. This secret passage had us excited about the descent. Upon entering a clearing though, we were unable to relocate the trail again so back into bushwhack mode we went. The skies became threatening and made us wonder if we'd be wet even before Eagle River.

The damned downed trees! Walking down one log I forcefully pushed one stiff and barbed branch in an effort to break it, but it slipped off my hand and smacked me upside the head nearly knocking me off the log. Oddly, no blood letting occurred.

Once at the flats we thought 'home free' but more devils club and other sentries fought us until we sighted the river. Polar Bear is well guarded.

The skies had turned favorable again and now being seasoned pack rafters, we made it across without incident.

On our march out, we discussed if it would be appropriate to beg a little food from the hikers we encountered. We opted to tough it out as mountain warriors do.



## ADZE

### Wanted

Does anyone know of a Toyota 4x4 extended cab truck (mid 90's ish) for sale? A friend just totalled hers and is looking for a replacement.

Wayne L. Todd    wayne@astac.net    564-2671

### For Sale

Koflach Vario-soft plastic double boots US 7.5. These were a mail order mistake, used once only to find out the size was wrong. NEW conditon. \$100.00

Pat    677-2700

### Partners Wanted

Will be in Alaska for the period of May 15- August 20, 2004 for some Alpine Climbing, rafting, and backpacking. Looking for partner(s) to share the experience with. If you think you might be interested, my e-mail address is jecall2001@yahoo.com. I am very open to suggestions as to fun trips.

Jack Call    1450 Goodrich, Lander, Wy 82520

### For Sale

**Ice Axe:** KONG Raid, 75cm. - \$35 **Metolius Crash Pad:** New, never crashed - \$75 **Backpacks:** Dana Designs Big Sky - \$40 Great condition. Hardly used. Clean. Optional side pockets included. 2700+ cubic inches. Wild Things Andanista - \$150 Never, ever used!! **Boots:** La Sportiva - \$50 Sizes 40 Makalu - Well cared for. Lots of life left in these. Good for scree slopes. Sizes 40. (Women's 7) Trango Plus – Hardly used. Great alpine boot. Crampon compatible. 2 Pair. Sizes 39.5 & 45.5 (Women's 7 & Men's 10.5/11) **Sleeping Bag** Feathered Friends Peregrine. – 25°F. 37 oz 700 fill + 4oz over fill. Gore-Tex. Girth: 64/60/39 \$300 All prices are 'OBO'!!

Kevin    276-6299

### Partners Wanted

Looking for partner(s) to join in non-weekend backpacking adventures. Trips (2 to 10 days length) are to remote or seldom visited areas in the Talkeetna Mountains (May, June), Wrangell-St.Elias National Park (July), and Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (July/Aug). I'll revisit some of my favorite areas (I've spent summers backpacking in Alaska for over 12 years) as well as explore some new places. You must be self-sufficient, with all your own food and gear; trips are free but transportation costs are shared. Please leave message for **Curvin** at (907) 333-8766, as early as possible (I'm not home much after April). For photos of areas, see Backpacking under [www.redundancydept.com](http://www.redundancydept.com) (907) 333-8766

## MCA MEETING MINUTES

17 March 2004

### Introductions of new members

### Treasurer's Report - No Dollar Amount Provided

### Committee Reports:

Hiking and Climbing – Trip leaders wanted. Submit trip ideas to Matt Nedom or Richard Baranow. Upcoming trips listed on the web [www.mcak.org](http://www.mcak.org). Steve Gruhn offering after work hikes starting this spring.

Training – Mountaineering School went well with good participation. Contact Steve Parry with other questions.

Huts - a new hut brainstorming committee will be formed. Contact Huts chairperson Hans Neidig or President Jayme Mack to participate. Call Hans if you're planning a trip to any of the huts. Mike Meekins of Meekins Air in Palmer has best information on who's going into the Scandi Hut. Pichlers perch will be busy this April; be prepared to share the hut or sleep outside.

Library – Vin Hoeman collection moved to Bill Romberg's house. Contact Bill or board member to gain access.

Equipment - New equipment has been purchased for the upcoming mountaineering school. Ropes, helmets, alpine axes, crampons. Available for class use only. Other equipment available for membership use – snowshoes, beacons. Contact Steve Parry Training Chair for access. The Gear Deposit policy is being revised by the Board to reduce stolen and lost gear. MCA will purchase a Personal Locator Beacon (PLB) with integrated GPS this April for use on club trips. Parks Advisory – Eagle River Valley Nature Center has some positions available. Contact them directly if interested. Eagle River Nature Trail design under comment; contact Scott Bailey to provide input or find out more. Contact Cory Hinds for all other Parks Advisory questions..

### Old Business:

The Board is considering the purchase of a digital projector for slide shows.

Club discussed and approved increasing 2005 dues from individual \$10 / family \$15 by \$5 to individual \$15 / family \$20. Paper Scree delivery fees still \$10 annually, electronic version is free.

### New Business:    None

### Announcements:

April 13 American Alpine Club meeting at BP Energy Center 6:30pm. Rod Hancock will show Tordillo Range Climbs, across the Cook Inlet. Will be a great show.

**Hans Neidig showed "the 2003 Alaska Mountain Wilderness Classic Race slideshow". It was a great show.**

Respectfully submitted, Dave Hart

# Mountaineering Club of Alaska

## *Officers*

President	Jayme Mack	694-1500
Vice-President	Carl Battreall	258-0075
Secretary	Dave Hart	868-2673
Treasurer	Joe Klumberton	751-7001

## *Board Directors*

Richard Baranow	694-1500
Matt Nedom	278-3648
Hans Neidig	357-2026
Randy Howell	346-4608
Sean Bolender	333-0213

Annual membership dues:   Single \$10.00  
  Family \$15.00 (one Scree per family)

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the treasurer at the MCA address below. 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 treasurer. The post office does not forward the newsletter.

SCREE is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles and notes submitted for publication and other communication related to the newsletter should be mailed to Scree Editor Box 102037 Anchorage, AK 99510, or e-mailed to mtndamsel@alaska.net. Articles should be received by May 3rd to be included in the May issue. Sorry, no exceptions.

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be "camera ready" and pre-paid. Your cooperation will be appreciated... Amsl Apflauer, Editor.

Missing your MCA membership card? If so, stop by one of our monthly meetings to pick it up or send us a self-addressed stamped envelope and we'll mail it to you.

MAILING LIST/DATABASE ENTRY: don smith

HIKING/CLIMBING CHAIR: richard baranow, 694-1500, matt nedom, 278-3648,

HUTS: hans neidig, 357-2026 or hansn@mtaonline.net

EQUIPMENT CHAIR: carl battreall, 258-0075 or carlbattreall@yahoo.com

CALENDAR CHAIR: stu grenier, 337-5127 or oinkmenow@hotmail.com

WEB: www.mcak.org (go here to change your address)

MAILING LIST SERVICE: mcak@yahoogroups.com

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