

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

April 2011

Volume 54 Number 4



"The value of your life can be measured by how many times your soul has been deeply stirred."

- Soichiro

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Monthly Meeting: Wednesday, April 20 at 6:30 p.m.

Program: To be announced.

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

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

Cover Photo: Dano Michaud and Tom Gillespie approach the Hearth Mountain summit, with the peaks of the Godwin Glacier spread behind them. Photo by Harold Faust.

Article Submission:

Text and photography submissions for the Scree can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 25th of the month to appear in the following month's Scree. 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.

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

On-line? – click me



Hiking and Climbing Schedule

April 12, 6 p.m - Mount Eklutna (4065) Contact Amy Murphy at hayduchesslives@yahoo.com

April 14, 6 p.m. - Mount Magnificent (4272) Contact Amy Murphy at hayduchesslives@yahoo.com

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

For the following after-work hikes, contact Steve Gruhn at sgruhn@clarus-ak.com or 344-1219 at least 24 hours before trip.

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

April 21, 5:30 p.m. - Falls Creek Ridge from Rainbow

April 23 - Navigation Field Training

April 25, 5:30 p.m. - Near Point

May 2, 5:30 p.m. - Falls Creek

May 7 - Bidarka Peak (3835)

May 9, 5:30 p.m. - Flaketop Peak (4510)

May 16, 6 p.m. – Mount Baldy

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

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

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 1st. 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 or donjoehansen@gci.net .

Stephen W. Hackett (1945 - 2011)

Sadly, the MCA has lost one of its early officers and one of its most active, competent, and adventurous mountaineers of the 1970s. On February 26, 2011, Steve Hackett died unexpectedly from apparent heart failure, after skiing his last run of the day at Arctic Valley while training for ski instructor re-certification.

As the son of a National Park Service ranger, Steve grew up in various wild areas in Colorado, Wyoming and Montana. He earned a geophysical engineering degree from Colorado School of Mines in 1968. Soon afterward, he came to Alaska as a geologist with a passion for the out-of-doors that he turned into his life's work, in a variety of permutations. Steve worked as a mountaineering guide on Denali and as a backcountry ranger in that Park, as an avalanche safety instructor, as an avalanche specialist for the Alaska Department of Transportation, as a ski instructor and ski patrolman at Alyeska, and as a home-school math and science teacher for IDEA (Interior Distance Education of Alaska). While operating a dogsledding adventure operation and base camp on the Ruth Glacier in Denali National Park, he met his future wife, Ann Agosti, a daughter of legendary MCA hiking trip organizer Dona Agosti. Steve and Ann were married in 1987, and together they taught at several rural schools before moving to their cabin at the head of Kachemak Bay. Steve's various moves to other parts of the state had taken him away from what had been his dedicated participation in MCA activities and MCA members' expeditions, but Steve's and Ann's move to the Homer area enabled him to become active in leadership roles in a number of Kenai Peninsula outdoor and conservation organizations.

Steve was vice-president of the Club in 1969-70, president in 1970-71, and later a Board member. He was most active as an expeditionary climber in the 1970s. His accomplishments are found in numerous articles in *Scree*, including the following 15 listed first ascents:

Hunters Peak (1970) with brother Jim Hackett (*Scree*, November 1970)
Troublesome Peak (1970) with brother Jim Hackett (*Scree*, November 1970)
Double Mountain (1973) (*Scree*, December 1974)
Double Peak in (1973) (*Scree*, February 1974)
Fang Mountain (1973) with John Bryant (*Scree*, December 1974)
Peak 4350 (Sanctuary River drainage, Alaska Range, 1973) (*Scree*, December 1974)
Peak 6250 (Drift River drainage, Chigmit Mountains, 1973) with Dan Hurd, Toby Wheeler (*Scree*, February 1974)
Peak 6720 (Double Glacier/Drift River drainages, Chigmit Mountains, 1973) with Dan Hurd, Danny Jones, John Samuelson, Helmut Tschaffert, Toby Wheeler (*Scree*, February 1974)
Peak 7382 (East Fork Toklat Glacier/Bull River drainages, Alaska Range, 1973) (*Scree*, February 1974)
Peak 7810 (Easy Pass, Alaska Range, 1973) (*Scree*, December 1974)
Peak 7840 (East Fork Toklat Glacier drainage, Alaska Range, 1973) (*Scree*, December 1974)
Mount Pendleton (1973) (*Scree*, December 1974)
West Summit, Redoubt Volcano (1973), with Dan Hurd, Danny Jones, John Samuelson, Helmut Tschaffert, Toby Wheeler (*Scree*, February 1974)
Mount Hecht (1977) (*Scree*, April 1978)
Iniakuk Peak (1977) (*Scree* April 1978)

Steve made the second attempt on Mount Dall (8756 feet), Alaska Range (1970), with Grace Hoeman, Ned Lewis (1971 *American Alpine Journal*, p. 329). Steve and a group of MCA climbers made the first attempt on The Tusk (5730 feet) in the Hidden Mountains, southwestern Alaska Range, in 1971 (*Scree*, February 1972). Steve participated in a joint USA/USSR climbing exchange program in 1973 that included an expedition to the Pamir Range, Tajikistan, USSR (*Scree*, March 1979). Steve also made the second or third ascent (and first solo) of Mount Igikpak (8276 feet) in the Brooks Range in 1976, followed by a solo float of 365 miles in 7-1/2 days down the Noatak River to Noatak (1977 *American Alpine Journal*, p. 166). Steve climbed a new route, the North Ridge of Hess Mountain (11,940 feet) in the Alaska Range (1976), with Dan Osborne, Tom Hillis (1977 *American Alpine Journal*, p. 121). Steve made an attempt on Mount Foraker (May 1977) (*Scree*, March 1978).

What an active climbing and adventuring life Steve led in the out-of-doors! It is really unfortunate that present-day MCA-ers will no longer have the chance to meet Steve and to be inspired by the force of his wonderful, upbeat spirit and his unmatched competence in the Alaskan wild. His stocky, powerful build, his full beard, the twinkle in his eye and his ready smile, and his quiet, modest manner will live on in the memories of those who knew him, and whose lives he touched in his positive, cheerful way.

To close this sad note marking Steve's passing with the salutation that he often used in his correspondence:

"Berg Heil!," Steve Hackett, "Berg Heil!" -- and Godspeed.

--- Tom Meacham



Erica Madison and Luc Mehl snowmachining up Boulder Creek.

Skiing Mount Sanford

By Tobias Schwoerer

It was Thursday, March 17th when Luc Mehl called me to ski Mount Sanford over the weekend. That was tomorrow, but I didn't hesitate to say yes. Being Luc, he sent out a quick email: "planning on one high camp, Saturday night, 12k or so, we should bring up all our food, cram into the 2-man. 4 canisters of gas (8 oz) should be totally overkill, but if we spend an extra day there weathered in...."

I had heard of Luc's previous attempt on Sanford the week before when he and John

Sykes skied from Chistochina to 15,100 feet on Sanford and back – in an impressive time of just over 72 hours. Luc was up for another try, improving the chance of success using snowmachines for the approach.

Our team consisted of Erica Madison, Luc Mehl, and me. Erica is also known as "MADISON" like the famous places in New York City or Wisconsin, but in Alaska she is a household name for female toughness -- spiced up with outgoing fun and a light-hearted can-do attitude that makes you want to be on her team.

Luc is of the quiet, well-thought-out kind; an excellent strategist and planner whose talents and experience in the outdoors have led him to win the Winter Wilderness Classic several times. Luc is also an excellent videographer. For those interested, Luc's films regularly appear on YouTube under lucmehl.

We started at a pullout near the Chistochina River bridge on the Tok Cutoff, and followed the Chistochina River to the Copper River. We then turned up Boulder Creek to the southeast. As three recreationists who usually rely on our legs to get us places, we came to a new realization: snowmachining is stressful! After rolling one of the machines while sidehilling, it was difficult to restart and then spun out on slick river ice.

At several times we all thought we'd be better off on our skis. But, thanks largely to the trail breaking done by a team of riders ahead of us, the hassle of the snowmachines paid off in easy miles and fresh legs for the weekend. We stopped about 22 miles from the trailhead. Our gas tanks were less than half full, which made the return trip stressful as well.

Luc had a camp site in mind with open water and firewood, which turned camping in minus

ten degree weather into a simpler matter. The night was beautiful with clear skies and an almost-full moon illuminating Sanford's flanks. The top of Sanford was visible, and from below it looked not intimidating at all; more like a ski hill that should be easily skiable within a day. On a map, though, the 17 miles and 12,000 feet of elevation gain looked a bit more daunting.

We woke early the next morning to a cloudless sky, psyched to start a long day of climbing in perfect conditions. Our route followed Sheep Creek to the Sheep Glacier, first ascending along the northern moraine and continuing on the Sheep Glacier forming the first part of the nine-mile-long north ramp. We navigated through the first crevasse field with care at 7,500 feet. It had a few monster-sized crevasses, providing a humbling view to even an experienced climber.

The next landmark was a large nunatak at 9,000 feet, where we met a guided group of climbers returning from their high point at 13,380 feet. They were en route on a 12-day trip. It was about the same time when Erica started experiencing flu-like symptoms. By



Luc Mehl and Erica Madison skiing up Sheep Creek.



Luc Mehl skiing through sastrugi.

11,000 feet, her "flu" had advanced into a back-bending, stomach-grinding illness, which had come on surprisingly fast. Thinking back to the climbers who took 12 days on this mountain, our top speed attempting to climb within two days may have resulted in some relatively unexpected altitude sickness for Erica. So we decided to set up camp. With three-foot high sastrugi covering the whole upper mountain, it wasn't hard to hollow out a dwelling.

"These large sastrugi weren't much fun skiing down in!" said Neil Waggoner, Michael Burmeister, and Graham Kraft when they showed up at our camp just as the sun set. The three of them tried to get to the summit from their camp at 7,000 ft. and decided to turn around at 15,000 feet. Thanks to them, we had enjoyed a broken snowmachine trail on the way to the base of Mount Sanford, and it turned out they later left some beer for us with our snowmachines.

Just before 6 a.m. the next morning, Luc and I got an alpine start under a full moon. Erica stayed in camp to recover. The rising sun slowly changed the sky in the east to orange

and pastel tones, and the moonlit slopes of Mount Drum to the west made for an unforgettable scene. Despite the beauty, the climbing was tiring and cold in minus 20 with wind. From high camp, the last 5,000 feet of climbing was stretched over 5 miles, and with each step, the altitude seemed to move the summit further away from us.

The large sastrugi and icy conditions made skinning difficult. Luc switched to boot packing with crampons, and I was glad he had stable footing. At one point, I slipped and part of my ski crampon broke, demanding a bit more care the rest of the day when placing my left ski. It's situations like these when it pays off to have great partners that you trust.

This trust also means that the team of two is more than two climbers joined by a rope. I felt strong on the first half of our eight-hour push to the summit while Luc had a rougher start to the day. On the second half though, I felt drained and increasingly tired. That's when Luc stepped in without saying much and took the lead.

We finally reached the lip of the last snow slope, crossed some final crevasses, and were left with half a mile of flat before a low-angle ascent of another 300 feet. At sea level, we could have made this stretch within minutes, but with half the amount of oxygen, it took almost an hour to cross this final plateau to reach an indistinctive summit the size of a football field.

Despite having reached the summit, and despite the incredible beauty of the morning climb, it felt somewhat anticlimactic. My motivation was drained. To me, these are familiar symptoms whenever I am at altitude. Luc mentioned dizziness and similar lethargy things. I felt so tired that I fell asleep briefly after taking

a break sitting on my pack as Luc shot some photos. Prior to the climb, he had expressed excitement about looking down one of the world's largest rock faces on Sanford's south side, but on the summit he had little interest to explore.

We were, however, on the sixth-highest peak in the U.S. and it was sunny. We could see Denali 227 miles away, which some claim to be the longest point to point view on earth. The peaks of the Wrangell, Alaska, and Chugach ranges presented themselves all around us without a single cloud obstructing our views.

The ski descent was as straightforward as our climb. However, contrary to the usual ski descents where your legs get more tired the further you ski, we felt increasingly better the lower we got. Skiing through the large sastrugi, we took a few "hard-ass" falls. The sastrugi maze of snow walls also made finding our camp trickier within the large expanse of Sanford's northern flank, which in some places is more than two miles wide.



Luc Mehl skiing along the moraine of the Sheep Glacier with the north ramp of Mount Sanford in the background.



Erica Madison and Luc Mehl descending the Sheep Glacier at 10,000 feet

Luc grabbed his GPS while I watched my altimeter carefully in search of Erica and our camp. We didn't want to have to re-ascend. When we finally found her, Erica had diligently dried our sleeping bags and made enough water for us to get resupplied. Erica had also fully recovered from her "flu" (altitude sickness). We packed up and descended to our snowmachines, completing the longest ski runs of our lives. It was a 17-mile 12,400-foot run.

After spending another night in the upper Boulder Creek drainage, we returned to the highway the next morning by snowmachine.

It was then that I finally started to realize the magnitude of our accomplishment.

Thanks to great partners (and Erica's dad and David Bacon's snowmachines), we pulled off skiing a 16,237-foot peak in just one weekend. Even though we felt a bit like cheating by using the Ski-doo's, we sure appreciated the support of internal-combustion-powered travel to make a dream come true in skiing Mount Sanford light and fast.



Amy Murphy and Rick Hagen on Bench Creek. Photo by Ray Nabinger.

Skiing Johnson Pass Trail Times 3

By Amy Murphy

"Sunny bluebird skies, smiles reflected in eyes, deep untracked powder snow, no particular place to go," sounds like words for a song, and accurately describes three backcountry ski trips near the Johnson Pass Trail on the Kenai Peninsula. It was hard to find good powder conditions in the Chugach Mountains this past winter, but the Kenai Mountains were blessed with outstanding powder snow conditions and we enjoyed fun forays there.

February 26, 2011

Our first trip on February 26 was a backup plan for a backup plan for an Indian to Arctic ski trip that got postponed. Rick Hagen, Tom Dolan, Ray Nabinger, and I decided to head to Center Ridge since snow and weather conditions were sketchy in the Chugach. Strong winds were howling all over Turnagain Arm and Turnagain Pass, so our alternate backup plan was to head for the trees at the Johnson Pass Trail if Center Ridge conditions weren't good. Fierce winds immediately assailed us at the Center Ridge parking lot, making it a no-brainer consensus to drive down the road to the Johnson Pass Trailhead.



Tom Dolan, Ray Nabinger, and Rick Hagen.

Upon arrival we were pleased to find sunshine, deep powder snow and no wind! We headed out with huge smiles, enjoying the opportunity to break trail through fluffy powder. We quickly left the main trail and made first tracks until we came to Center Creek, which was tracked up by snowmachines. We skied up the creek a way, trying to decide which drainage to explore – either Center Creek or Bench Creek. Decisions, decisions... We headed toward the actual Johnson Creek Summit, as we agreed it could be fun to do as a future ski traverse.

Bench Creek was nicely frozen and we happily broke trail up the scenic creek, meandering through gorges most people don't see in the summer. We stopped for lunch at a big

meadow about a mile or so past a bridge, enjoying warm sunshine while watching strong winds blow snow all over the mountains surrounding us. After eating we turned around and headed back down Bench Creek, exploring farther down the creek to see where it goes. We eventually left the creek and headed through the trees to the trailhead, reveling in deep untracked powder.

March 5, 2011

The ski conditions were so outstanding I led another backcountry ski trip there on March 5, joined by: John Recktenwald, Marcy Custer, Lawrence Armendarez, Tom Dolan, Charlie Sink, Rick Hagen, Qianyu Sun, Karlene Leeper, and Leslie Robbins. Once again we were blessed with bluebird skies and great powder snow conditions. The goal was to scout out conditions for a ski traverse while having fun exploring the beautiful backcountry with pleasant camaraderie.

We headed straight for Bench Creek, following our previous tracks. We learned to our dismay that snowmachines had found our nice ski tracks and rode over most of them. They even followed our “shortcut” tracks into the woods, darn it! When the creek turned into a canyon with steep rock walls and narrow, thin, snow bridges that weren't safe for snowmachines, they left the creek and we enjoyed our nice ski tracks again. We skied farther up into the valley, staying on the creek.

We stopped at a place where a huge, fallen tree blocked the creek. The intrepid Tom Dolan skied past the tree to scout out conditions, followed by Charlie Sink. The rest of the group decided that was their turn-around point as the creek conditions looked a little sketchy after that point. After a pleasant lunch, soaking up good vibes, sunshine and

laughter, we regretfully returned to the trailhead under a light snowfall.

March 19, 2011

On our first trip Rick, Ray, Tom, and I agreed we would like to return some weekend and ski up the other drainage that none of us had yet explored, so I posted a trip up Center Creek on March 19. I was joined by Justin Wholey and these cantankerous codgers: Tom Dolan, Charlie Sink (Buttercup), and Ray Nabinger.

Well, the snow was still deep, but wasn't the nice powder consistency to which we were accustomed. Waxless skis were great for the conditions – a light crust covering corn snow. We headed up Center Creek, once again enjoying bluebird skies. We occasionally asked Justin which way to go as he has been in that drainage before. He got out his map and gave some suggestions on the best way to go, but of course we decided to “Lewis and Clark it” and do our own thing, making interesting scenic detours.



Skiiing up the valley toward Johnson Creek Summit.

The creek was nicely frozen and curiosity caused us to continue skiing up the creek to see how far we could get. Tom Dolan took the lead a lot, checking out ice bridges, assisted by Ray and Buttercup. As usual, some places had a minimal amount of ice that barely allowed safe passage, always causing a pucker factor. Some open areas of water had deep holes, up to my hips. We sure didn't want to fall through.

We enjoyed a sunny lunch in a big meadow and continued up the well-frozen creek, now covered by deeper, untracked snow. The creek turned into a narrow, steep canyon and became an obvious terrain trap, with some not-real-recent sloughing. However, we assessed conditions and decided it was safe to continue. We eventually came to a dead-end with a huge pool of water and frozen water cascades blocking further, safe progress.

After turning around we explored another creek tributary before calling it quits and heading back to the trailhead. We noticed tracks from some other skiers who had followed us, but didn't go as far as we did. At one point we took an alternate route off of the creek and enjoyed a couple of steep, fast downhill sections.

Charlie took the lead the last few miles and set a blistering pace back to the cars. Even though I didn't want another amazing ski trip to end, I kicked into high gear to keep up, reveling in the grace and fluid beauty of fast-paced Nordic skiing with fully extended arms and legs, rarely done on heavy backcountry skis.

Photos on this page by Justin Wholey.



Center Creek gets steep and narrow.



Tom Dolan and Ray Nabinger exploring Center Creek.



Amy Murphy, Ray Nabinger, and Charlie Sink ski back down Center Creek.



Hearth Mountain from near Primrose.

Hearth Mountain Traverse – April 2008

By Harold Faust

Hearth Mountain (6,182 feet) forms the central core of a glacial massif between the North and South Forks of the Snow River, east of the Seward Highway at Mile 13, north of Seward. The name was proposed by Vin Hoeman in 1960. Its summit is just visible from our hometown, looming above and behind Tiehacker Mountain. From the south end of Kenai Lake at the Primrose Campground, Hearth is seen as a symmetrical, gorgeous pyramid, calling with strong force to any and all who love the challenge presented by fine high places.

Willy Hersman and his party made the first ascent of Hearth Mountain in March 1989 (see April 1989 *Scree*) by climbing through a deep

gap onto the toe of the Fireside Glacier on the mountain's west side, camping on the glacier, and then gaining the summit from the north.

Seward lads Tom Gillespie, Brent Mahan, and I made two attempts in the early '80s from a camp in the bowl on the south side, but were stymied by poor weather conditions and a limited time budget.

Many hours were spent in the following years, running fingers over maps and wondering where a new route could be found. An inviting way seemed feasible up the east side on a glacier which arises from near

Nellie Juan Lake. While flying over the area with Bruce Jaffa from Moose Pass, I got a good look at the crux cirque wall at the top of that ice-filled valley. It certainly looked like a reasonable way to get up to the high ground near Hearth's summit, but it would take boots on the ground to really know. Plans to go and try the route began to come together in the early spring of 2008.

In a thick snowstorm on April 9, 2008, four of us plodded up the South Fork, pulling two sleds and wading the open water crossings with trash-compactor bags pulled over our boots. The weather prediction indicated clearing and it seemed a three-day window of fine conditions would begin the next day, so traveling up the known ground of the river valley in a storm seemed like a good plan. What that meant, of course, was that the rest of the trip would involve moving through high country in several feet of new soft snow; there would be no rest for the weary.

We camped the first night in a hemlock thicket, several miles short of our goal of reaching Nellie Juan Lake, but the skies had cleared and the surrounding peaks were turning pink as the sun set. Dano Michaud set up his tent as Tom Gillespie carved our first field kitchen out of a drifted snow bank between the trees. George Peck and I shared another tent nearby. After dinner, too stoked to bed down, I tromped in a snowshoe trail for another mile or so upriver and took pictures of the alpenglow.

As the clear sky brightened the next morning we fueled up on oatmeal and coffee, packed the gear, and set out to reach the head of the South Fork. Taking turns making trail in knee-deep snow ahead of the sleds, we marveled at the views as the valley opened up. At the summit of the drainage, we crossed the foot of a smooth glacier that flows down to the valley floor from near Fourth of July Peak at the top of the Godwin Glacier area. Ahead of us to the east spread the peaks exposed above the huge Sargent Icefield. That is an area that could provide many fine exploration forays, with dozens of untouched peaks in the 5,000 to 6,000-foot range.



Tom Gillespie and Dano Michaud crossing the South Fork of the Snow River.



Approaching Camp Two on the Billiken Glacier.

About a mile west of Nellie Juan Lake we turned north and made slow, but steady, progress up moderate-angle slopes to higher ground. After contouring around several deep ravines, we soon saw the lake below us. There was a line of low clouds lying over the Ellsworth Glacier at the head of Day Harbor to the south, but that later faded away.

Nellie Juan is a very popular snowmachine playground, but on this Thursday the valley was quiet. By the weekend, the fresh snow would attract strings of happy throttle-fingers. Our march upslope progressed through the day; we continued to trade trail-breaking duties and made regular water and snack stops to keep our internal motors running strong. With the heavy snowpack it was impossible to tell when we first got onto the glacier itself, but we could see its upper bowl with the barrier cirque we would have to cross.

Camp was made at about 3,300 feet on the north side of the glacier. We enjoyed another

beautiful evening and slept soundly after our day's efforts: 6 miles traveled and about 2,000 feet up through the soft stuff.

In the morning we geared up for glacier travel and moved in pairs – George and I with our sled, Dano and Tom with their gear. It was smooth going; no serious problems presented as we picked our way up past several areas of exposed ice. An amazingly beautiful hanging glacier on our left cut loose with one icefall avalanche as we passed nearby.



Forty-foot ice towers reminded us of billikens, the Alaskan lucky charm figure.

At one point we passed a set of standing ice towers about 40 feet high, their smoothly tapered tops bending over slightly. Tom said they reminded him of billikens, the Alaskan lucky charm figures, so the Billiken Glacier got its name.

Eventually we reached the glacier's top bowl and approached the lowest gap in the cirque wall. It was well-plastered with snow, with no evident bergschrund, and we topped it in several hours of effort, using an anchored pulley and human counterweights to haul the sled loads up the wall. By then it was 6 p.m., but we were back in the sunlight, with nearly all the uphill hauling behind us.

As we traversed a steep side-slope over to the pass at the head of the Hearth Glacier, the sun-lit views of Mount Godwin and Fourth of July Peak to the south and Resurrection Bay and the Harding Icefield to the west were incredible.

That night, from our camp at 5,300 feet, we could see lights from fishing boats out in the Gulf of Alaska. The north wind rattled the tents all night and it was a cold morning. Our kitchen area had drifted in and had to be re-cleared. Across the pass west of camp was the final 800 feet of the summit of Hearth Mountain, with a nice snow route to the top evident in the pink light.

We broke camp and moved everything to the other side of the pass, then left all except the summit gear on the crest of a huge drifted bank at the base of the slope. No protection was needed to get to the final push, just ice axes and crampons. The first crest revealed the true top another several hundred yards to the west and we were all on the summit just before 1 p.m. The visibility was perfect, and the views world class.

This high point is nearly central to all the wondrous country we love, and every high detail was revealed. From the Gulf of Alaska, to Seward, the Harding Icefield, Lost Lake, and Kenai Lake, peaks across Cook Inlet, the Sargent Icefield, and even a glimpse of Denali

and Mount Foraker. The wind was coming up, so we hurried to bury a Nalgene bottle with our summit note, snapped the last photos, and headed back down our route to the sleds.

Our route home would take us north down the massive Hearth Glacier to Paradise Valley. We stayed roped-up and strode down that great slope, headed into a persistent wind that drifted our trail in behind us. It was not difficult to pick a nearly straight line for a bit over five miles down to the nose of the ice, but dropping down to cottonwood level over the bedrock cliffs presented us with some unexpected challenges.

We made Camp 4 in sheltering trees along the North Fork and built a fire. As much fun as glacier travel can be, it's always great to be back in the woods.

Our hike out to the road took nearly all the next day to cover the 7 miles of forest and stream bottoms. The weather was finally thickening; our beautiful weather window was sliding shut. The route out of Paradise is one we have explored a number of times, so it was just a matter of working in pairs to get the sled loads down the hills and over the creeks and through the woods.

On this our fifth day, we actually felt stronger than when we started. When the last water crossing was completed and we reached the highway, we were sorry the trip was over. It was a bit over 30 miles on a route that covered ground we have dreamed about for a long time, with one more sweet summit we can look up to with a smile, remembering our steps to the top.



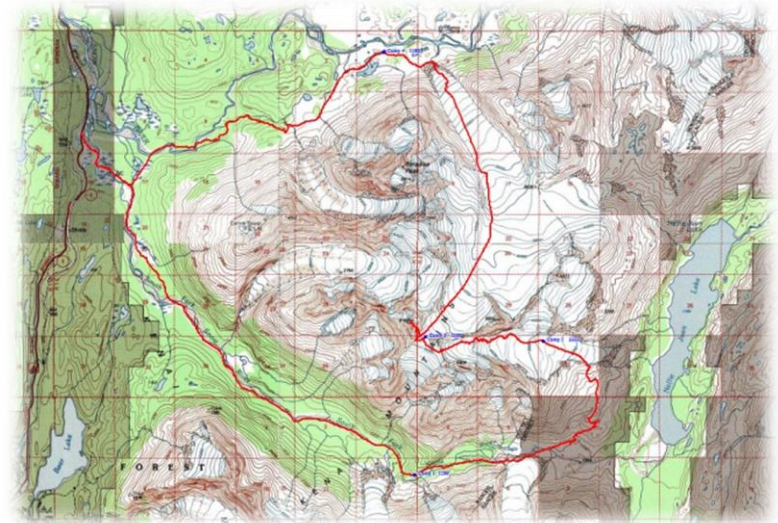
The summit of Hearth Mountain above camp at 5,300 feet.



Michael and Gillespie break trail up the Billiken Glacier.



Dano Michaud, George Peck, Harold Faust, and Tom Gillespie on the summit.



George's Five-Day GPSr Track. We traveled counterclockwise on this loop.

Peak of the Month: Marie Mountain

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Brooks Range; Romanzof Mountains
Borough: North Slope Borough
Adjacent Pass: Jaeger Pass
Latitude/Longitude: 69° 24' 21" North, 143° 41' 55" West
Elevation: 4350 feet
Adjacent Peak: Peak 7640 southwest of Jaeger Pass
Prominence: 600 feet from Peak 7640
Distinctness: 600 feet from Peak 7640
USGS Map: Demarcation Point (B-5)
First Recorded Ascent: Late August 1967 by Kenneth Brower
Route of First Recorded Ascent: Northeast slopes to the east ridge
Access Point: Ambresvajun Lake

The final summit on the west side of the Jago River as it braids its way to the Beaufort Sea, Marie Mountain rises Gibraltar-like above the tundra plain that extends to the north. Charles M. Keeler first named it in an article entitled "Notes on the Geology of the McCall Valley Area" on page 87 of the June 1959 issue of *Arctic*. While working as part of the 1957 International Geophysical Year McCall Glacier Expedition, Keeler had conducted geological studies on the slopes of Marie Mountain.

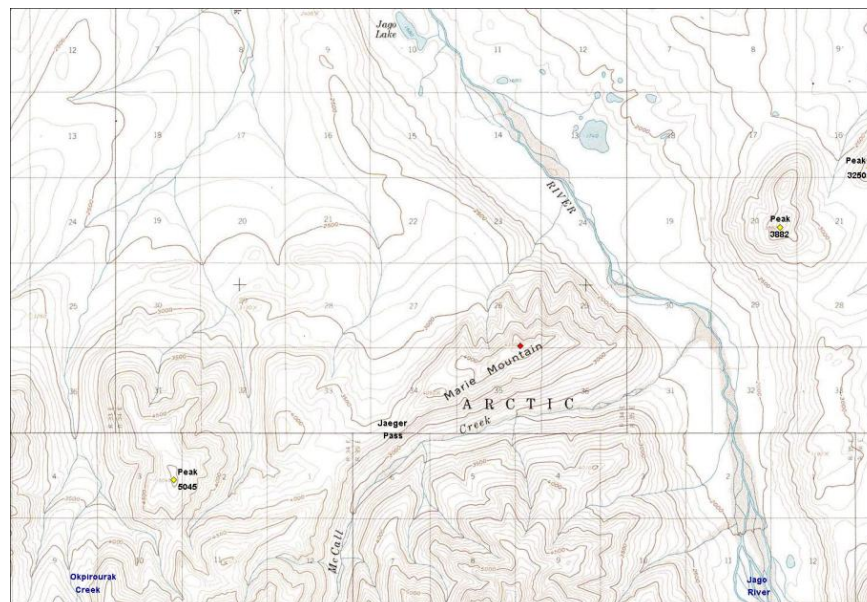
In late July 1967 Kenneth Brower, John Milton, and Steve Pearson flew from Fairbanks to Ambresvajun Lake (also known as Last Lake) east of the West Fork of the Sheenjek River to begin a five-week traverse of the Brooks Range to Kaktovik.

In late August, from a camp on the west side of the Jago River, Kenneth Brower left his companions to make a solo day hike up Marie Mountain. In fog, he ascended a talus chute on the northeast side of the mountain to the east ridge and then followed caribou trails along the ridge westward to the summit. He described the footing as "a mosaic of thin flakes of rock, covered with a brittle black lichen."

Brower's ascent is described on page 160 of his 1971 book, [Earth and the Great Weather: The Brooks Range.](#)



McCall Creek flows from left to right at the base of Marie Mountain and then hits the Jago River, near the center of the photo. --Photo courtesy of ipy.arcticportal.org blog site.



Map created with TOPIC® ©2003 National Geographic. (www.nationalgeographic.com/topo)

MCA General Meeting Minutes February 16, 2011

1. Huts Committee Report (Greg Bragiel): Please let us know about anything that needs to be repaired. Human waste status report requested for Eklutna Traverse Huts. Need help to check Mint Hut toilet (fill level)
2. Library (Tony): Getting close to having new permanent location
3. Calendar (Stu): Only a few copies are available of the 2011 calendar. Next year's calendar will have vertical format.
4. Announcements: March 4 – 6: AK Ice Climbing Festival (www.akicefest.com)
5. Hiking and Climbing Committee (Vicky): Brooks Range trip in the works in late July (Don). See the events calendar at www.mtnclubak.org for upcoming trips.
6. Club Survey: Thanks for feedback, analyzing info to improve club. Need more volunteers to organize more trips.
7. Peak Registers: **Need new committee chair**
8. Awards: **Need another committee volunteer**
9. Website (Tim Silvers): The redirect from www.mcak.org to www.mtnclubak.org is working again.
10. Training: Basic Mountaineering School successfully completed. Over 40 participants. Big thanks to all instructors!
11. Slide Show Presentation by Chris Flowers: Skiing Alaska's volcanoes.

MCA Board Meeting Minutes March 9, 2011

Board Members Present: Tim Silvers, Randy Plant, Brian Aho, Vicky Lytle, John Recktenwald, Jim Sellers

1. MCA had an overcapacity turnout for the February general meeting, which caused some issues with BP Energy Center policies. In order to prevent these problems in the future, we will try to run the general meeting on a tighter schedule and make sure presenters know when their presentation is scheduled to start and end. Also we'll have a volunteer keep an eye on the hallway outside the meeting room to make sure that people aren't congregating in the exit area.
2. AMH gift card drawings planned for March general meeting. Jim to coordinate drawing and gather names of instructors, Scree contributors and trip leaders.
3. Vicky will write an article for the Scree summarizing the feedback received from the survey and also email trip leaders to plan more trips of the type members are requesting.
4. Continued discussion about potential liabilities for the club and for directors and officers. Jim Sellers will continue discussions with insurance brokers that have experience with mountaineering clubs, then report back to the board.
5. MCA library - Jim will know more next week on potential space for the library in his new office building.
6. Monthly Mountain Skills Workshops - First workshop in March had a good turnout and people practiced knots and ropework and learned how to sharpen ice screws and ice tools. We are trying to make this a monthly event with dates confirmed through the end of May. Check the MCA website events calendar for details.
7. Two features of the old MCAK.org website are no longer available on the new site: 1) List of active/inactive members - The webmaster or membership committee can continue to generate these on demand for

MCA volunteers that need this information. 2) Contact sharing tool - Suggest instead to use the MCA Facebook or MeetUp group for social networking and sharing your contact information with other club members.

8. While discussing insurance and liability issues with other mountaineering clubs, Jim found that several large clubs in the US are interested in a potential benefits sharing relationship with the MCA. Board will investigate this and see how it could benefit our membership.

Next board meeting: Wednesday, April 6 (location TBA)

---Tim Silvers, MCA President

Monthly General Meeting Minutes March 16, 2011

1. Treasurer was not present. No budget report was given.
2. Parks: The Chugach State Park Management Plan will be available for public review soon.
3. Huts: Greg Bragiel suggested consideration be given to locating a new hut in the area north of Bird Pass. This is a remote area above treeline with ready access to numerous peaks, yet accessible in one day.
4. A drawing was held for \$50 gift certificates for volunteers from the last six months. Winners were: Scree contribution – Keith Sanfacon, Visit to the Neacola Mountains; Volunteer – Jesse Lind; Trip Leader – Tom Dolan, Ship Lake.
5. 5) Lonnie Dupree gave a captivating presentation of his expeditions, including kayaking and dog sledding the entire coast of Greenland, Prudhoe Bay to Churchill, Siberia to Kotzebue, the North Pole, and his attempt to solo Denali this past January.

---Mark Smith, MCA Director

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	Jayme 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

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. Articles should be submitted by the 25th of the month to appear in the following month's Scree.

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

Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008

Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127

Scree Editor: MCAScree@gmail.com Steve Gruhn (344-1219) assisted by Amy Murphy (338-3979)

Web: www.mtclubak.org (change your address here)

Mailing list service: MCAK@yahoogroups.com

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