

the **SCREE**

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

April 2012

Volume 55 Number 4



Monthly Meeting:
Wednesday, April 18 at 6:30 p.m.

Program:
Recurring Revelations:
Mount Mausolus and other first
ascents in Alaska's hidden range,
by Clint Helander

Contents:

Spinal Tap!

Peak of the Month: Mount Lee

Trip Report: 1991 Waterman Grant

Mount Monarch Loop, Part 2

"Life has no smooth road for any of us; and in the bracing atmosphere of a high aim the very roughness stimulates the climber to steadier steps, till the legend, over steep ways to the stars, fulfills itself."

--W. C. Doane

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

March Program

April 18 (6:30 p.m.): Recurring Revelations: Mount Mausolus and other first ascents in Alaska's hidden range by Clint Helander.

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Cover Photo: Harold Faust reaches high ground. Peak 3768, the toe of the Spine, and the Bear Glacier are in the background. Photo by Dano Michaud.

Article Submission

Text and photography submissions for the Scree can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 18th of April to appear in the May 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. Please submit captions with photos.

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

The following trip (FULL) is being led by Greg Bragiel. For more information, contact Greg at unknownhiker@alaska.net.

April 15-22: Eklutna Traverse (mandatory training session on April 7).

Don't forget to check the Meetup site and the Facebook page for last minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

Geographic Names

At its February 9 meeting, the USGS Board on Geographic Names' Domestic Names Committee approved the name "Murphy Ridge" for the ridge between The Pinnacle and Gold Cord Peak in the Talkeetna Mountains. At its March 8 meeting, the Domestic Names Committee approved the renaming of Negrohead Creek in the Dugan Hills to "Lochenyath Creek."

On-line? – click me



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



Above and below: Chuck Kennedy, one of our "senior" members, shows he can still get out and enjoy backcountry skiing! He participated in the recent MCA ski trip up the Twentymile River Valley. Thanks, Chuck, for being inspirational! Photos by Lawrence Armendarez.





Viewing Point 4770 from across the Bear Glacier at the north end of the Spine ridge. Photos by Dano Michaud.

Spinal Tap!

By Dano Michaud

I had to put a name to this trip and it sure seems to fit, as this was all about a long ridge walk, yet it took on a little different twist. This ridge is approximately 6 miles long, 6 miles of hard-rock terminal moraine. This baby runs parallel to the Bear Glacier and gives a traveler the opportunity to have spectacular high-elevation views, Bear Glacier on the right, the back side of Seward's Front Range on our left, and the scattered islands and peninsulas that end the landmass and begin the Gulf of Alaska.

So the plan was to travel for three days, starting at Paradise Creek, which intersects with the Resurrection River. We would go up Spiral Mountain, drop down into Paradise Creek valley, cross over and get up on the 6-mile-long ridge (the

Spine) take it to the end, drop down to the lowlands, and bushwhack our way up and out. We would pop out this notch we knew would give us access across the Callisto Icefield and out to Baby Back Ridge...voila! And thus Spinal Tap!

George Peck, Tom Swan, Harold Faust, Kia, and I started this trip on August 10, 2011. The forecast was for sun for the next three days and that meant possible high water, so we started out early hoping to avoid potentially hazardous creek crossings. With breakfast and plenty of coffee in our systems we were dropped off our starting point. Off we went on our way up the wide, gravel creekbed from the trailhead at the Exit Glacier Campground parking lot.

The first objective was to travel south up Paradise Creek, a wide, gravel creekbed that is littered with braids in the creek as it splits and reconnects and changes seasonally. These crossings can be challenging with the opaque waters testing the skills of the traveler; what seems like a fairly simple crossing can have deep holes and strong currents. The morning was beautiful and we moved up the stream, passing the where Blackstone Creek intersects with Paradise Creek. We turned southwest and stayed on Blackstone Creek. With less than a ¼ mile left we reached our access couloir, a stream gully named by Harold as "The Stairways to Heaven," and for good reason. In this part of the country getting above timberline can be half the battle. The desire was that this particular stream would do just that, in fact it provided an excellent array of mixed scrambling situations requiring solutions that had us

boulder hopping, crawling on slopes with moss mixed in knife-shape shale, chimney sweeps, and of course the snow slope. These slopes always seem inviting, but pose the possibility for an unexpected drop. We found one hole that looked as if it peered into the Beelzebub's crib. With crampons on and a steady pace, we made it up and to a beautiful col. This is where the country opened up, we had Paradise Creek valley below us, Phoenix Peak and her icefield tucked to her base, the Bear Glacier to the south, behind us the Harding Icefield, and to the very distant south we could view our prospective goal – the Spine, the ridge that called to us on many trips up to and around some of these peaks. But it was not to be ours today; we had to turn our thoughts up and to the southwest – there lay Peak 4272, or what Harold and George had named Spiral Mountain.

Leaving the col, we started for the peak. This was our first series of ridges that we would encounter on this trip and it was nice, classic, Class 3 scrambling. The peak was reached an hour later with all the summit rituals, including a summit register and 360-degree photos of the



The Spine as seen from Spiral Mountain (4272).



One of the many Class 3 ridge scrambles experienced on this trip. Cerebrum Creek is in the distance.

surround beauty. We donned our pack and headed back down to a high alpine bench, which was probably blanketed by the glacier a few hundred years ago.

We dropped down onto the bench. At the 2500-foot elevation this was fabulous traveling after a great day climbing. The terrain was a mixture of mostly rock, moss, and lichen, gullies, boulders that have released from some high mountain perch from the last earth shake.

We picked our way along until we found a nice tarn for a tranquil campsite and great water source. These tarns and alpine creeks are clear and headache cold. We found a nice semi-exposed area opened to the views. Up until now, the weather had held great, so we set accordingly. This was not to be the case, as later that night a high wind out of the north would blow all night. It shook and rattled the tent all night; sleep was sporadic.

Morning started out a bit brisk; sleeping at 2600 feet and less than a half mile from an icefield, this must be expected. The stove flared the coffee water to boil. We stuffed our guts, busted camp, and were moving fairly early.

This was some of my favorite traveling condition with a high alpine bench, rolling hills, and a scattering of tarns from glacier passing. With astonishing views to tantalize the mind, one can get lost in imaginations of possible climbs or more exploring adventures. As we traveled due south, the view of the Paradise Creek valley laid below us and to the east; to the west Peak 4223 and Point 4181, seemingly just within reach ... another time maybe. Due south was the Spine. We would be on the ridge by noon, but first we had to make our way across the bench, drop down into the creek valley, cross over, and up onto the route.

We crossed the valley floor, an area where two creeks coming off the Phoenix Glacier, running parallel just a few meters apart then splitting direction. One is the headwaters of Paradise Creek and the other flowed south into a huge canyon dropping off the bench and into a glacier and land-locked lake.

On the other side we picked a nice-looking snow-choked couloir with a stream bursting out from the base. We scrambled up the gully to a point where the snow ended and moss-covered rock began. It leveled off to a point we could jump out and start scrambling through a mixture of low-Class-3 conditions.

As we topped out, we could see a part of the world we had viewed many times before, but from a more distant perch. This was indeed an “in-your-face” look at the Bear Glacier and all the surrounding characteristics of ice-age markings, rock formations or debris piles, split earth, and chasms with clear streams rumbling into the abyss between the ground and the ice. The beauty from the harsh environment can overwhelm the senses, but this is why we came – to explore, to see, and to be a part of this.

We were now on the snout of the Spine. At 2500 feet the landscape was a mixture of broken rock, boulders, and all the natural conditions that make up most high alpine ridges. We had a goal and it

lay due south. We stopped for a lunch break, taking it all in. After pounding down some carbs, we donned our packs and moved on.

The previous night an unusual high wind (for this time of year) had been hitting us from the north; it was hammering our tents all night and finally slowed down in the morning. As we made our way down the Spine, the wind slowly started up again and intensified as we moved along.

The ridge was a challenge to scramble along. On our right steep scree slopes that dropped down to the glacier below; on the other side it dropped into an alder and devil’s club jungle with a braided stream below that made up the valley floor. Within four hours on the ridge route, George predicted the wind speed at 40 to 50 knots, so the trekking got tricky in some spots with one small pass having us on our knees to keep stable.

To our delight we witnessed a high-altitude and high-speed pursuit, as an eagle made a midair kill on a ptarmigan. I would have never believed that the ptarmigan could go for such a long distance flight as it had, but the consequences were obvious.



Harold Faust waits for George Peck, who is working his way down from a bump on the ridge.

It was a hard choice, but taking in the time factor, the distance needed to reach our goal, and the condition of one of our members, it was decided to drop off the ridge and make for the creek below. We knew what was in store, for this was a 1500-foot drop with a 50+° grade of bushwhacking and backsliding where the ground drops from under your feet, but you can't see it until it's too late.

Making it to the valley floor, a fire was built, and tents set. Water going, we sat and relaxed. Looking across the valley to our tomorrow's route, sleep came easily.

We woke up to a nice bluebird day; three in a row, it can't be so. Tom stoked back up the fire to help ward off the morning chill. After chowing down some breakfast grub and a cup of joe, we busted camp and headed out. This wide-open creek, which I'll call Cerebrum Creek, was fabulous for travel and a casual way to start out our day. It was mentally noted that this area was definitely in need of future exploring, with its untapped beauty, open traveling, and countless possibilities of different ridgelines that ended or started from this valley floor.

Unfortunately this casual creek side stroll was to end quickly as we approached a small tributary. This sweet mountain stream trickled down from the height we were seeking, so our draw to it seemed only natural as it held the key elements to accessing this golden mountain ridgeline.

Making our first, last, and only stream crossing of this final leg of the trip we once again broke out our light-weight waders, which in my mind once again validated the conveniences these minimal-extra-weight items made. After we were all across and had climbed up the steep alder and brush-choked bank, we all stopped to take in the view of our camp area from a better height and perspective. Just as we were about to turn into

our direction of travel, Tom said, "Would you look at that?" It was a medium-sized blacky cruising straight up the valley floor to our campsite. Since we left no trace, he had little to concern himself with other than that nasty smell humans seem to leave behind.



Bear Glacier Lake, formed by the receding Bear Glacier, with Cerebrum Creek in the foreground, as seen from the Spine.

With a full day of scrambling ahead of us, we turned east and up and started to bust our way through the alders, salmonberries, and devil's club, knowing that in another 1000 feet we would be in an alpine bliss. It wasn't long before we were in this upper mountain glory, walking to our prospective ridgeline with wildflowers like monkshood, geraniums, and arctic cotton to name a few. The higher we got the more the world and its beauty opened itself to us. This was a natural glory in its finest form.

There were many fine ways out of this valley, but our planned ridgeline was right in front of us and

it wasn't long before we were on it. From the start this ridge was a classic Class-3 scramble with exposure on both sides. It was very important to pay close attention to what was grabbed and weighted and on foot placement. The consequences could be serious, which added to the excitement, yet the need to pay close attention to detail, bordering on the need to set protection or use rope.

This type and level of scrambling to me is a kick; traveling in this fashion reminds me of my childhood and recess on the jungle gym. It's like a primeval instinct to stalk our prey, and in this case a summit or another destination.

This ridge was laborious due to the poor condition of the rock. Picking and choosing our way around, up and over, then backtracking and around, we finally made our way to the top of this ridge and stopped for a well-deserved lunch. We were seated in a nice alpine pass, with views of Resurrection Bay in our main sight. Looking due east Tonsina Creek was below us. The Resurrection Peninsula and the mountain chain that make up her land mass were in full glory. Mountains like Mount Alice, Mount Ada, Likes Peak, and of course, Mount Jerry Dixon were all visible.

We snacked up, watered the horses, and then got moving. We had another smaller ridge that would take us to our highest point of the day – Peak 3185, or what we call Bench Mark Peak. From our quaint lunch-break alpine pass, we climbed up to the summit. After descending down the north side of Bench Mark Peak, we traveled for about another ¼ mile then turned our efforts east with a plan to once again get on a "ridge," with the final push to be traveling down and out what we call Spruce Mountain. [Ed. note: In his unpublished manuscript on Alaskan mountains, Vin Hoeman called this peak Foundary Peak,

commemorating the establishment of Alaska's first foundry nearby in 1793 to aid in the construction of the *Phoenix*, the first ship built in what is now Alaska.] The travel conditions were fine until the ridge would just give out to some nasty "goat-only" route. As in any case, it's all about perseverance and just re-routing it looked and seemed too good to be true when we viewed this route earlier from on top of Bench Mark Peak.

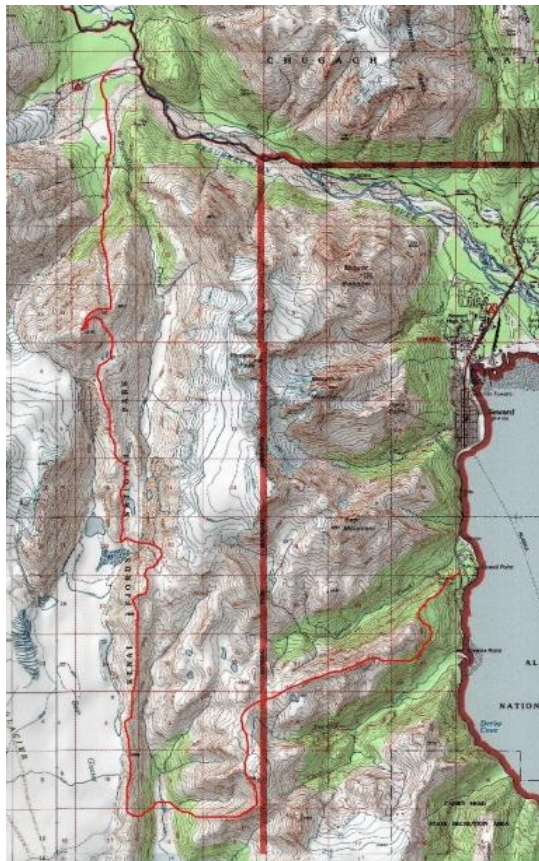
After a long ridge scramble, we were on our final descent off the mountain and the last daylight was not far off. We bumbled, stumbled, and mumbled our way through the high hemlock and then into the spruce forest with a scattering of alpine marshes and ponds. By now the light of the



Harold Faust takes in the majestic views of the Bear Glacier.



Oblique aerial photograph of the northwest aspect of Mount Lee from above the Fake Peak Glacier. Leech and Shergold climbed to the col at left and then ascended the face left of the ridge to the summit. Fletcher and Griffin ascended the large central couloir directly to the summit. Photo by Lindsay Griffin.



residences of Lowell Point were in view. As we got close to the road, you could hear cars passing and campers enjoying their summer fun from the Miller's Landing campground. Day and trip done, it was 11:00 p.m. We lay on the side of the road exhausted, yet overwhelmed with gratitude of a trip well done, waiting on our ride home.

George Peck writes in his journal:

As we got close to the road at Lowell Point at 11 p.m. in the dark, a lady from a house down below began yelling at us to get off her property. When Harold politely yelled back we have come a long way and just wanted down, she yelled to get off her "trail" or she was going to call the cops, to which Harold responded, "Great, we could use a ride." When it became clear we were not going to get off her "trail" she started using the F word. We were too tired to do anything but ignore her. It was so dark you could barely see where to put your feet, much less get off anything resembling a "trail."

Peak of the Month: Mount Lee

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Alaska Range; Sleuth Peaks
 Borough: Matanuska-Susitna Borough
 Drainages: Fake Peak Glacier and Coffee River
 Latitude/Longitude: 62° 53' 30" North, 150° 30' 27" West
 Elevation: 6350±50 feet
 Prominence: 1100 feet from Mount Mazama (6860)
 Adjacent Peaks: Mount Glisen (6250±50) and Peak 5750 in the Fake Peak Glacier and Coffee River drainages
 Distinctness: 600 feet from Mount Glisen
 USGS Map: Talkeetna (D-2)
 First Recorded Ascent: June 5, 2001, by Mike Fletcher, Lindsay Griffin, Richard Leech, and Oliver Shergold
 Routes of First Recorded Ascent: West-northwest couloir and north face via the northwest couloir
 Access Point: 5000-foot level of the Fake Peak Glacier

In 1910 Claude Ewing Rusk led a team of mountaineers from the Mazamas (the mountaineering club based in Portland, Oregon) to investigate Dr. Frederick Albert Cook's claim to have made the first ascent of Mount McKinley in 1906. In search of physical evidence that would contradict Cook's claim, Rusk's team ventured up what is now known as the Fake Peak Glacier. Finding ample evidence to dispute Cook's claim, Rusk penned a lengthy article entitled "On the Trail of Dr. Cook" that documented the experiences, observations, and discoveries of their expedition and was published in the October 1910 *Pacific Monthly*. In that article Rusk also named Mount Lee to commemorate John A. Lee, a Portland attorney and 1910 Mazamas President. Rusk described the peak as follows: "On Mount Lee, in the early part of the season, is a wonderful cross of snow." In the 1960s Vin Hoeman unofficially named the group of small granitic peaks on the east side of the Fake Peak Glacier the Sleuth Peaks, likely in reference to Rusk's and others' detective work to disprove Dr. Cook's claim.

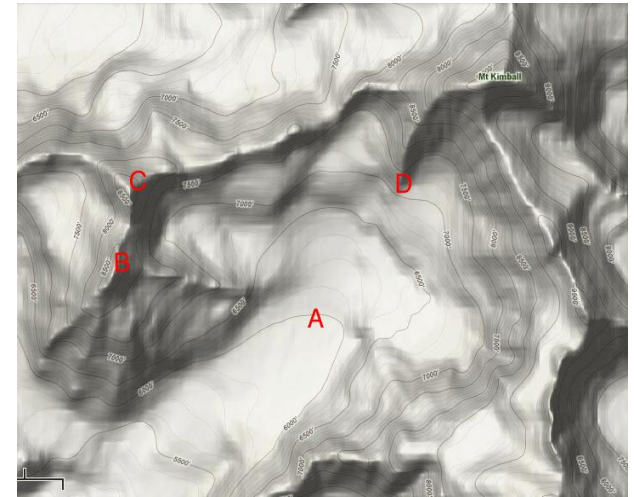
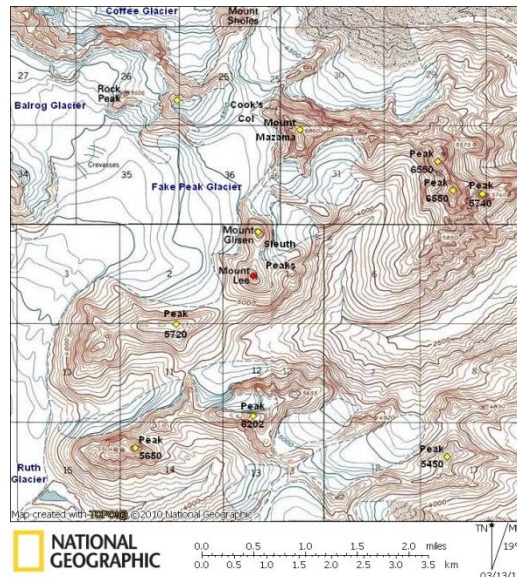
On June 1, 2001, Talkeetna Air Taxi flew Fletcher, Griffin, Leech, and Shergold to a spot on the Fake Peak Glacier southwest of Cook's Col. The next day the party ascended the southeast face of Mount Sholes (6250) to its summit. On June 4, the party ascended the 4950-foot col between Mount Lee and Peak 5720. From that vantage point the south face of Mount Lee appeared broken, slabby, and not at all appealing. However, a direct west-northwest couloir appeared enticing for an attempt the next day.

A little before 3 a.m. on June 5, the party split into two rope teams – Leech and Shergold on one rope and Fletcher and Griffin on the other. On skis Leech and Shergold headed for the northwest couloir leading to the broad col between Mount Lee and Mount Glisen, from where they would climb the center of the north face with a steep exit onto the summit ridge. On foot Fletcher and Griffin made their way to the

base of the west couloir. The west-northwest couloir was about 1800 feet, but never more than 45 degrees. They took the left fork to the summit. All four climbers reached the summit within five minutes of each other. All four descended the west-northwest couloir that Fletcher and Griffin had ascended and returned to the tents at 10 a.m.

On June 9 Griffin and Shergold climbed the west face of Mount Glisen. On June 20 all four members of the party ascended the northwest face of Mount Sholes. On June 22 they departed the glacier in TAT's de Havilland Beaver and returned to Talkeetna.

Information for this article came from Rusk's aforementioned article in the October 1910 *Pacific Monthly* (which was reprinted on pages 8 through 31 of the 1945 *Mazama* annual), from Fred Beckey's 1993 Mount McKinley: Icy Crown of North America, from Griffin's report on pages 238 and 239 of the 2002 *American Alpine Journal* entitled "Glacier 1 (Fake Peak Glacier) Peaks," from Bill Ruthven's Mount Everest Foundation Expedition Reports summary on pages 298 and 299 of *The Alpine Journal 2002* entitled "01/25 Alaskan Fake Glacier 2001," and from my correspondence with Griffin.



Chistochina Glacier:

- A. Basecamp; approximate landing strip
- B. White Noise (8,854)
- C. Peak 8800 (+/-50). Randy muttered a vague rumor that a Fairbanks party (maybe Dick Flaherty after an unsuccessful attempt on Mount Kimball's southwest rib) might have climbed this peak. Whether from the Chistochina Glacier or the Robertson Glacier, I'm not sure .
- D. Mount Kimball's southwest rib.

Trip Report: 1991 Waterman Grant

By Ian McRae

Fairbanks. Doug Buchanan, Treasurer of the Alaskan Alpine Club, presided over the interrogation. The officers had to decide whether our party of three merited bestowal of the 1991 Waterman Grant for a "significant winter climb in Alaska." Randy Waitman, Paul Turecki, and I must have presented a disappointment to Doug:

we were more interested in mountaineering than mountaineering freedoms. However, the Waterman Grant seemed also to come with the stipulation that the mountain be given every possible advantage by ensuring that the faculties of the climbers be significantly impaired, and on this latter count, our qualifications were robust. Following various rituals, in which an air of unreality hung over the proceedings like schizophrenia, and in which we were required to sign up for the Club's brainchild, the Mountain Rescue Expense Fund, we were duly awarded the Waterman Grant, supplied with copious tools for impairment (in order to give the mountain every possible advantage), and sent home to begin late-January preparations for the Southwest Rib of Mount Kimball in the style of Johnny Waterman.

A week later.

Harvey Wheeler, elder of the legendary Wheeler Boys, crop-duster of the Delta Ag fields, and glacier pilot for eastern Alaska Range mountaineers, was about to crash his Cessna 180 into an icefall. The aircraft was bounding like a snowmachine down the North Fork of the Chistochina Glacier, and Harvey was choosing at the last minute to gun it in a do-or-die effort to lift free from mashed potatoes. Hours earlier, he had been able to land us directly at our base camp near 6,000 feet, but the plane sagged in the unexpectedly warm snow. Harvey's horror at the prospect of spending the night on the glacier with climbers prompted us to dig him out. Now the plane was gaining power as it taxied lower into oxygen-rich elevations. We saw Harvey's 180 bounce off a hummock, skim the top of some seracs, dip below the icefall... and reappear! Harvey was headed home to Saw Mill Creek, probably swearing off climbers for good this time.

Mount Kimball.

We had given the mountain every advantage by obliterating our faculties, including that of memory. The only image that penetrates this sieve of forgetfulness is that of the "coffins," our individual snow caves at the bivouac the first

night, when the moon had turned the mountain into bright Milky Way bars. Turecki's coffin was particularly artistic: dollops of sculpted snow pasted onto the mountainside with arcs of anchor rope threaded through portholes. The next day, Paul led a hard mixed pitch up high. Randy tunneled through the summit cornice on Kimball's distinctive summit tower. Descent took us long into the night, in and out of moonlight. We were grateful to wriggle back in to our coffins.

White Noise.

After Kimball, we climbed an 8,000-foot peak on the west side of the cirque, just above base camp. I remember snow slopes, and a spectacular, but easy, summit ridge. We made our snow cave halfway up the route an immense chamber to make up for the recent horror of the coffins.

Much later that year, long after the Kimball expedition was over, long after the trip had profoundly changed each one of us due to "Mountain-Caused Refraction of Life-Vector Force Syndrome," I asked Turecki to supply a name for this second mountain we had climbed. But Turecki by then was dazed. It was spring. He had just come from the warm lake on Mount Spurr, skiing up there even as it was getting ready to erupt. He reached into his mind for some remembrance of the peak we had climbed back in February. Nothing but snow, static. We had all lost our girlfriends. "White noise," mumbled Turecki.

Skiing to the Richardson Highway via Yeti Pass.

The moment of maximum danger undoubtedly came the night we skied down off the snout of the Chistochina Glacier to the gravel flats below. That same morning we had suffered such huge impairment with the tools borrowed from Waterman's file that the psychological flux of the landscape was completely out of control. The crevasses raced perpendicularly under our skis; the rope was a tendril of ectoplasm connecting our thoughts; the one-to-one correspondence between map and territory had become

depolarized, rendering speech impossible. We had surrendered every possible advantage to the mountains, and were now at their mercy.

In the descending icefall, Turecki became separated from Randy and me. At the foot of the glacier rested a pocket of super-cooled air; my nostrils informed me the temperature had dropped past 45 below. Clothes and gear were frozen solid, crammed into packs after a five-day storm at base camp. We had banked everything upon reaching the miner's cabin at Slate Creek, but now Turecki's light wandered randomly above us across the two-dimensional screen of echoing blackness. By the time he emerged at the cabin into the third dimension, Randy and I had a roaring fire going. (Thank you, whoever suffered our intrusion.)

"Yeti Pass" denotes the corridor between the aligned glaciers, the Canwell and Gakona. Doug once told me that a "heterodyne" exists somewhere in this area and is responsible for some of the spooky phenomena attributed to the Delta/Tok/Glennallen triangle. I pressed him at length, but he would not reveal what type of signal was involved, only that my suspicions that we had been subtly changed, Randy, Paul, and I, over the course of the expedition, were not unfounded. [Ed. note: The source of the phenomena won't soon be revealed; Doug Buchanan died on February 7, 2012.]

A more significant account of Kimball's Southwest Rib would be Jeff Benowitz's untold story about his and Bethan Gilmartin's second ascent of the route in the 2000s, the "blind-date" climb. I have evidence to believe a similar life-warping effect like the one experienced during our 1991 Waterman climb had its effect upon them as well.

[Ed. note: To listen to Ian McRae's entertaining description of his February 1991 trip, check out parts 6 through 10 at <http://jukebox.uaf.edu/denali/html/iamc.htm>.]



Skiing across the flats. Photos by Wayne Todd.

Mount Monarch Loop (Part 2)

By Wayne L. Todd

In waning light we reach Chitna Pass, de-skin, and confirm our location on the GPS (fairly often now). The uphill work flows to downhill fun on ideal 6-inch powder over a firm base. We get squeezed between a mountain on the left and a knoll to our right, but backtracking even a short distance is not appealing. With headlamps and a tailwind, we boot down a 10-foot section. Soon we have a steady inclining slope on our right and a high mountain ridge on our left. Our original plan was to descend the direct, but steep, slope to Boulder Creek. With darkness, no avalanche gear, and unknown snow stability (though there's been neither settling nor avalanche sign), we instead opt to descend the 3-mile streambed that flows southwest. This route looks like a gentle, consistent decline on both the GPS and USGS

map. We are aware of the consequences if this route fails.

We drop in and both sidewalls quickly steepen. Ideal snow conditions persist as we swish back and forth down the ravine. At numerous corners, we peer ahead by headlamp, relieved to see the route continue for a few hundred more yards (and then adrenaline ski again). A few steep sections require boot hiking or side-stepping (the sled adding a bit of complexity), but the weather is with us.

As we spread out, a caving scene comes to mind, with bright lights sweeping back and forth in front and occasionally up the steep sides. The half-pipe ski is quite exhilarating, but also scary as even a small avalanche in here would be deadly. We fantasize how much fun this would also be during the day with a good alpine touring setup and known snow stability. A bit lower, occasional ice and water holes become avoidable hazards. We acknowledge a retreat would be exhausting, and camping in the ravine would be fool-hardy. Luckily the route keeps going.

Around a gentle corner old snowmachine tracks are illuminated. We are somewhere and most likely have made it down! Without any obvious

intersection we are on Boulder Creek with a warm tailwind and stars above once again. Soon we have a suitable campsite with water hole along the vacant snowmachine highway. We neither saw nor heard any machines during the day.

A routine is already established and the tents go up smoothly and properly. Much warmer temperatures (10° to 20°F) lend to more pleasant viewing of stars and northern lights. Occasional ghost moose flick into people's eyes and minds. A tired crew makes it to bed before midnight after a solid ten-hour travel day, without celebrating Tim's birthday.

2/20/2012

With a 9 a.m. start, we hope to make it out by the afternoon, though there are many miles to cover. We fantasize about kite skiing with the 10-mile-per-hour tailwind in the broad valley. Prominent ridges border our route under grey skies. We swap stories and learn people's passions and livelihoods as we pass a cabin here, a moose skeleton there (not enough, I say). The river trail exits onto a bluff by open water. Folks disperse to find a dry crossing. Tim, skijoring with Innoko and the sled, sends him across a promising looking section of ice that sinks as he crosses. Tim and Innoko tug over the lead as the sled is suspended in air. Innoko hears commands from too many people, turns about, and leaps back over the water, without getting wet.

Snow blows in hard from the left as we enter a sparse spruce forest. Our route passes by sporadic trees and alongside small ice pools. Below a cabin with a machine trail, we debate whether to try the trail or the creekbed (a trip write-up says the creek is a viable route). We briefly follow the machine trail and then deviate down the creekbed. The creekbed is gorgeous with thick snow blankets overhanging boulders and trees, occasional clear open water pools, a meandering gentle slope, and quiet skiing. It is not a direct route, though, and requires an exit at some point to reach our car.



Skiing down Boulder Creek.

At a pinch point Wendy checks a snow bridge that collapses and she falls in the creek. We quickly lend a hand and pole and after removing her pack and skis, she's on the snow again. Luckily only a foot is wet. Someone scouts ahead and someone behind. After a report, we cut alders at the pinch point so everyone can safely pass. After a few more slow bends, we decide to exit the creek and try the high ground. Traveling is firmer and faster on the high ground, plus we have great views of Castle Mountain, other nearby Talkeetna Mountains, and the Chugach Mountains way across the valley.

At the west end of Rush Lake, we encounter machine tracks and have learned to follow them. We de-skin and some opt for the fast-and-wild ride down hard-packed trail and others ski amongst the trees in nice snow. Tree skiing with a sled doesn't work, so I walk down a few hills. A few hills are walk-ups as well. Unfortunately, somewhere along the way Innoko goes missing. After brief searching and yelling, we continue as Wendy is confident he'll show up. We are covering the miles, but only slowly gaining ground toward the car as the trails, working with the

terrain, run parallel to our final destination. The appointment slips away.

We cross Bonnie Lake to the summer parking lot and now have a snow-covered road to the car. We're certain we'll be at the car in minutes, but we trudge up the first hill, then have a blast skiing down the road, then trudge up another hill, then "wheeeee" down the road to "eeeeerrrrttt," panic stop at the car.

But still no dog. We think dark thoughts about having two wonderful dogs die in the same week. Plans are made for a dog search the following day while the vehicle shuttle is ongoing. A couple on snowmachine that had been ice fishing volunteer to haul someone back up the trail. The generous offer is declined at this late hour. No machines were encountered en route this day either. We are glumly entertained by a small mouse/vole that darts in and out of our gear spread on the ground. Wendy yells, "Innokol!" as he races down the road.



Tim Griffin, Tony Perelli, Becky King, and Wendy Loya.

A glorious finale to a wonderful trip, although we then gorge ourselves at the Valley Hotel in Palmer and save some steak for Innoko.

Many thanks to the trail breakers, water makers, stove tinkerers, Beast masters, story tellers, food sharers, positive energetic people (who are Tim Griffin, Becky King, Wendy Loya, and Tony Perelli, and Wayne Todd) who made this a fantastic trip. And the dog, Innoko.

February 18-20, 2012

Day 1: 14 miles, 2,200 feet of elevation gain.
 Day 2: 16 miles, 2,800 feet of elevation gain.
 Day 3: 18 miles, 600 feet of elevation gain, 2,000 feet of elevation loss.



Becky King and Innoko on Boulder Creek.

MCA Board Meeting Minutes March 7, 2012

Note: Tasks to be completed in **bold**

Members Present: Tim Silvers (President), Galen Flint (Vice President), Randy Plant (Treasurer), Mark Smith (Secretary), Greg Encelewski (Director), Jim Sellers (Director), Vicky Lytle (Director), Brian Aho (Director), and John Recktenwald (Director).

1. Beckey Presentation – Galen reported that Beckey will definitely be coming to Alaska, time to be determined. Discussed requesting donations from nonmembers to help defray expenses. **Vicky** will look for an alternate venue.

2. Library – Vicky proposed developing a list of all possible candidates who might house the MCA library, sending letters to them within about one month, and establishing a deadline for either having identified a location or beginning to implement plans to otherwise disposition the collection. All agreed to a deadline of July 2012. **Brian** offered to begin inventorying the collection.

3. Equipment – Due to Troy Rhodes moving, a new location is needed for the club equipment. **Tim** will try to procure an additional storage unit at the same location where the library is currently stored. Purchase of shelving may be required.

4. Insurance – Jim resubmitted the application, but had not heard back at the time of the application.

5. Benefit sharing with other clubs – Jim reported that the “Alpine Six” have not decided on their next meeting.

6. Hatcher Pass – Tim reported that comments were being sought on a plan to expand snowmachine parking.

7. Last Frontier Adventure Club – **John** will check their website to see if we might have any

interest in being listed.

Next meeting April 4.

---Mark Smith, Secretary

MCA General Meeting Minutes March 21, 2012

Library: The MCA library has been in storage and not very accessible for a number of years. We pay monthly storage fees. The board has decided on a timeline to mid-summer for finding a new home or its disposition. Volunteers are encouraged to help Brian Aho inventory the library. Organizations who may be interested in housing the collection will expect some idea of its size and content. Please volunteer if you would be willing to store the library in a place accessible to MCA members.

Equipment: Troy Rhodes, who has generously stored the club’s equipment for years, is moving. MCA has rented another storage unit where the library is stored. While there is a cost, equipment should be more easily accessible for trip leaders and training instructors.

Trips: Greg Bragiel’s Eklutna Traverse trip has a waiting list. Vicky Lytle is seeking volunteers to lead another Eklutna Traverse trip. Greg Bragiel and a representative from American Heritage Girls, a Christian group of high-school-age girls, asked for trainers of basic rock climbing. Instructors are needed for two or three days during July 6 through 15, 2012.

Training: Upcoming basic winter mountaineering seminars are being planned for glacier travel & crevasse rescue, winter camping, nutrition, navigation, and equipment. Visit the MCA website. There was interest in Greg Bragiel’s idea of a beginner’s summer mountaineering school.

General: Carlene Van Tol will be deleting inactive MCA members from the Listserve.

Slideshow Presentation by Ralph Tingey: “Winter Climbing in the Desert” highlighted rock climbing in the southeast Utah desert and other places, as well as a few slides of the Tetons.

---Greg Encelewski

MCA members skied to the Skookum Glacier on Saint Patrick’s Day. Travis Taylor brought an Irish top hat! L to R: Travis Taylor, Meg Inokuma, Katie Hahn, John Recktenwald, Marcy Custer, and Karlene Leeper.



**The Skookum Glacier is in the background.
Photos by Amy Murphy.**



Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Tim Silvers	250-3374	Board member	Greg Encelewski	360-0274
Vice-President	Galen Flint	650-207-0810	Board member	Brian Aho	360-4671
Secretary	Mark Smith	868-3155	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@mtnclubak.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 emailed to MCAScree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 18th of April to appear in the next 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. Ads can be emailed to vicepresident@mtnclubak.org.

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@mtnclubak.org
Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008
Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127
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