

"Don't be pushed around by the fears in your mind. Be led by the dreams in your heart."

- Roy T. Bennett

the **SCREE**

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

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Number 4



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APRIL MEETING: Wednesday, April 3, at 6:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center at 1014 Energy Court in Anchorage.

Lisa Roderick and Mark Westman will present managing the National Park Service's Denali Base Camp and gettin' after it in the Alaska Range.

"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."

This issue brought to you by: **Editor**—Steve Gruhn **assisted by** Dawn Munroe

Cover Photo

Cory Hinds leads the first pitch of "Emerald City" in The Gorge above the Lake Fork of the Knik River in the Western Chugach Mountains.

Photo by Wayne Todd

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For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit <http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?useaction=members.form>.

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

March 31 - April 6: Eklutna Traverse. Type: Glacier travel. Trip Leader: Greg Bragiel, huts@mtnclubak.org.

March 31: Arctic to Indian Ski Traverse 22 miles, 8 to 12 hours through the beautiful Western Chugach Mountains! Moderate pace needed to complete in a day. Must be confident on skis and have metal-edged skis. Full skins are not suggested. Email Jen Aschoff for details or to sign up [jlaschoff@gmail.com](mailto:jaschoff@gmail.com).

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 11th of each month to appear in the next issue of *the Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. Do not submit photos embedded in the text file. Send the photo files separately. Send high-resolution file photos separately, including captions for each photo. 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 at least one vertically-oriented photo for consideration for the cover. Please don't forget to submit photo captions.

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Online? Click me!



Check the Meetup site and Facebook for last-minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

Peak 1716, Coast Mountains, Juneau Area

Text and photos by Ben Still

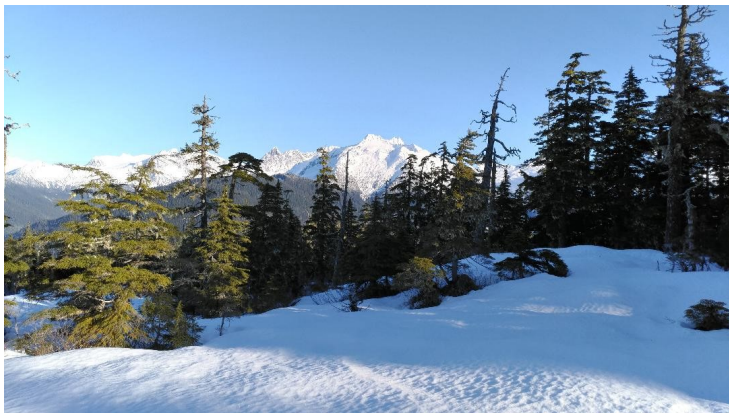
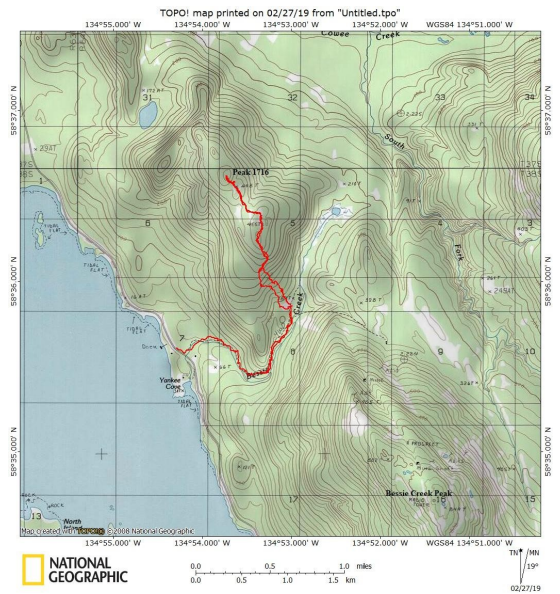
Sunday, February 3rd, 2019, Dylan Miller, Mike Miller, and I went for a little adventure on the northern part of the Juneau road system starting at the Bessie Creek Trail-head. A sunny winter day without much snow was perfect for this small bushwhack peak, Peak 1716. We started up the unmaintained trail and passed by a trapper's sign and many traps along the way. Not too far into the hike we passed by an old rail car made by Ingersoll, all rusty and abandoned after the Bessie Mine shut down in the early 1900s.

We continued up the trail for 1 mile into a nice muskeg meadow blanketed with a foot of hard-pack snow. This was our diversion point from the trail and the last traps we saw. We headed north uphill toward Peak 1716 in relatively open mossy forest and a little bit of the fun stuff, devil's club. Near the meadow we passed by a large grouping of bear poop and a big hollow under a tree. We did not take the time to look into the den to see if the bear was present, but one of the poops was not frozen and the temperature was in the teens. We moved up the mountain, quickly gaining the ridge, which became a little brushier with highbush blueberries, and continued over the false south summit and down into a series of snowy muskeg meadows with beautiful views of the surrounding mountains. We crunched along on top of the hard-pack snow, admiring the awesome views of surrounding mountains.



Malted Milk Ball Spire (4897 feet) on the left with Forgotten Peak (5894) feet on the right.

that was the case because now this peak can be promoted to a 1000-foot prominence peak. We retraced our steps back down to the meadows and had a snack break. I dreamed of climbing some of the distant peaks I have yet to explore, imagining myself climbing up the snowy ridges. After break time we followed our up-route back down, but gave the bear den a wide berth.



Meadows with a view.

We dropped down into the saddle and continued up through open meadows until the final 100 vertical feet. We re-entered the spruce-hemlock forest and followed a game trail up a steep mossy slope to the summit. The summit mound was a lovely mossy forest of 150-foot-tall trees. My GPS read 1716 feet on the summit, which was consistent with the old 100-foot contour maps and 100 feet higher than the newer metric maps indicated. I was happy

Ben Still (left), Mike Miller, and Dylan Miller on the summit of Peak 1716.



North Suicide Peak (5065 feet), Suicide Peaks: Winter Assault

Text by Wayne Todd

January 26, 2019



North Suicide Peak as viewed from Rabbit Lake.

Photo by Wayne Todd



Meg Inokuma ascending the upper part of the North Suicide Peak ridge.

Photo by Wayne Todd

Meg Inokuma plummets to her waist, launches out of the hole and wipes her wet boot in the snow. A road crevasse! That's a new one. We are just walking parallel up Canyon Road. We investigate the hole and find a stream running underneath. By chance, I barely stepped over the "chasm." Her two-foot hole seems like an obvious warning to other recreationalists.



Meg Inokuma above the road crevasse.

Photo by Wayne Todd

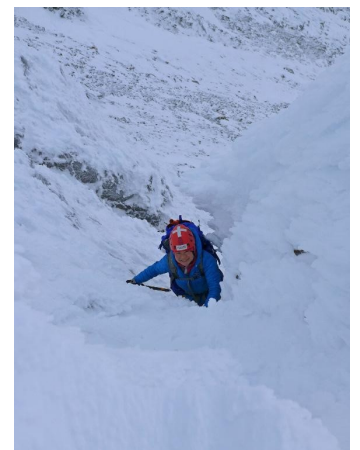
While mostly-firm snow walking, drifted snow areas cause some post-holing, but also good photo opportunities. We're pleased with the calm and blue skies, contrary to the forecast. We're teased by sunlight on the ridge above and on North Suicide Peak. By Rabbit Lake, though, the sky has grayed a bit and a slight wind blows down valley (i.e., in our face). I've a good inkling what we're in for on the saddle between the Suicide Peaks. An odd single pole along the lake is a "No Bicycling" sign intended for the McHugh Trail.

From below, the standard North Suicide gully (north) looks to be continuous snow. Coupled with the recent high winds, we take the conservative South Suicide Peak gully (southeast), which only has snow on the bottom third. Now cramponed up, we try to remain on snow wherever possible to avoid the frozen talus jumble.

As we ascend, the entire North Suicide gully presents, which is snow free for the middle third. Toward our gully top, we exit early up a short, fun sastrugi chimney.

The wind is fairly intense in the saddle, so we gear up, which for me includes my skirt (I'm not ashamed). The sky is now fully clouded, though we still have great views to the east below the ceiling, even including Carpathian Peak. Down the south saddle and up the north saddle, we go in the predicted crosswind, dang those accurate forecasters. (Actually, thank you very much!). Ravens play on the wind. What do they think of bipeds being out here on such a day?

Above the standard gully exodus, I know a crux lurks which skunked a friend and me last winter. The crux looks a lot like the year previous (?). In summer this is a non-issue and people easily pass over, as I've done numerous times. The same scouting reveals the same situation: the easiest route is a mild-angle chimney, which sits above a much steeper and longer gully on the east side. I scramble up sans crampons and settle on a hip belay with 25 feet of rope. Meg lightly uses that with her left hand and tools with her right. The couple hundred yards of sastrugi remaining to the summit are fairly innocuous, as long as



Meg Inokuma climbing the sastrugi gully.

Photo by Wayne Todd

we stay away from the vertical east side.

We're excited to be on top with good wintry views, though a little surprised at the sinking sun's position. No loitering today, nor other fellow mountaineers. Back at the crux, a slow light-tension belay is utilized and then I very carefully down-climb the few moves. The practical and safer method would be to use 100+ feet of rope for a leader belay (maybe with a stopper or pecker to place in the chimney) and then belay from the ridge top. And then have enough rope to rappel that section on descent.

Knowing the major gully is not so threatening, we descend that direct route, which does have a few 45-degree+ short sections. To avoid the nasty rolling talus, we utilize snow, even where just a few feet wide at the gully edges. The snow varies from very hard, worthy of crampon front points, to breakable crust and wind-created slabs. For extra safety, we descend the last gully section individually.

At our snowshoes stash spot (yes, we brought them instead of skis L?), crampons are exchanged for Kahtoolas, at least by the younger smarter one. Semi-darkness settles in, but with the Anchorage glow, headlamps are not needed. Judging by tracks, it looks like only a few people ventured out to the lake for the day. After the valley crest, the Anchorage lighting is more prevalent. The road crevasse grew much larger during the day; guess the initial hole was not sufficient warning.

We note all the equipment we're carrying and didn't need: snowshoes (thank goodness), shovel, beacon and probe (serious, yes), Kahtoolas for me, headlamps, outer puffies ...

I am fantasizing about a late Fred-Meyer-dinner food stop as the day took a bit longer than expected, not due to the spunky mountain runner. Just above the uppermost "summer" (that's a hint) parking area, I stop to finally don my Kahtoolas, as the road was quite slick. We notice vehicle taillights and guess as to the occupants' activity.

Upon reaching said vehicle we discover a large Ford truck (brand irrelevant) very stuck in snow and very high centered. We lend assistance, now utilizing our shovels and headlamps, quite useful as the driver doesn't have any. Though he does have a number of jacks. Long story short, after an hour of helping, and the obvious action thought of rather late, and then implemented, amazingly he is out of there. I debate if assistance will be loaned if he gets stuck again. Now the only items not used are snowshoes, probe, and ...

I carefully drive down from the lowest* parking area and really enjoy the extra late dinner. Though we had no direct sun for the day, a frequent, beaming smile was close.

*Confession, just a few years ago I attempted to drive to the mid-

dle parking area on a late winter day and subjected a friend and myself to a terrifying backward sliding ride back to the lower area. I've also assisted another driver that lost forward momentum just shy of the middle lot ...

Advice: don't drive above the lowest parking area unless it's snow and ice free, unless you're "pretty sure" it's not slick all the way to the next spot (and factor in the conditions you might encounter after your outing).



*Wayne Todd appreciating the "kilt."
Photo by Meg Inokuma*



*Cheerful Meg Inokuma on the summit of North Suicide Peak with a
Western Chugach Mountains and Kenai Mountains backdrop.*

Photo by Wayne Todd



Meg Inokuma descending the North Suicide Peak gully.

Photo by Wayne Todd

Byron Peak

Text and photos by Marcin Ksok

Researching Byron Peak will only create confusion. Overnight attempts, huge days, roped climbing, crevasses and an actual deadly accident will come up, therefore going for the peak I didn't quite know what to prepare for. The east ridge seems to be a standard route, although others exist. We started early anticipating a long day, I brought Greg Encelewski, a rope and some gear, there is nothing like taking your rope for a walk after all. The forecast was optimistic and we made rapid progress on the trail and glacial out wash. Sticking to the right side of the valley we gained ice proper just to descend back into boulders and scree. We kept close to the right side of a stream and soon came to steeper terrain which necessitated some scrambling to gain grassy shelves and top of prominent rock bulge. Shortly we were back on a small ice field and approached a death gully leading to the east ridge. In retrospect I believe the gully to be most hazardous section of the trip. Helmets went on and we made careful upward progress, sometimes scraping our way up rocks covered with loose scree, sending down a constant stream of projectiles. Upwards Greg and I stayed closely together as not to allow the debris to gain momentum before striking. Retreating we opted for one at a time solution. On previous, spring attempt the obstacle still held snow and was much safer, but now, in August things were quite different. East ridge started out wide and mellow but quickly narrowed and steepened. We moved quickly, scrambled through some sections and ended up in a notch below a steeper slab, after some looking around we opted right, but on descent we accidentally choose opposite and both side go, north side being easier. Unexpectedly quickly we reached the high point of lower east summit and took in the bluebird views on offer. A bit more ridge walking brought us to the west summit, being well ahead of schedule we took a long break and stared all around. Summit was broken by interesting erosion cracks, inches to feet wide, they split apart the ground, the slopes seeming to be ready to peel off and tumble down the snowfields. The retreat was mostly uneventful, we made a stop at ice caves and watched boulders tumble off the lip, tempted to enter for a picture but



Greg Encelewski on a scrambly section.

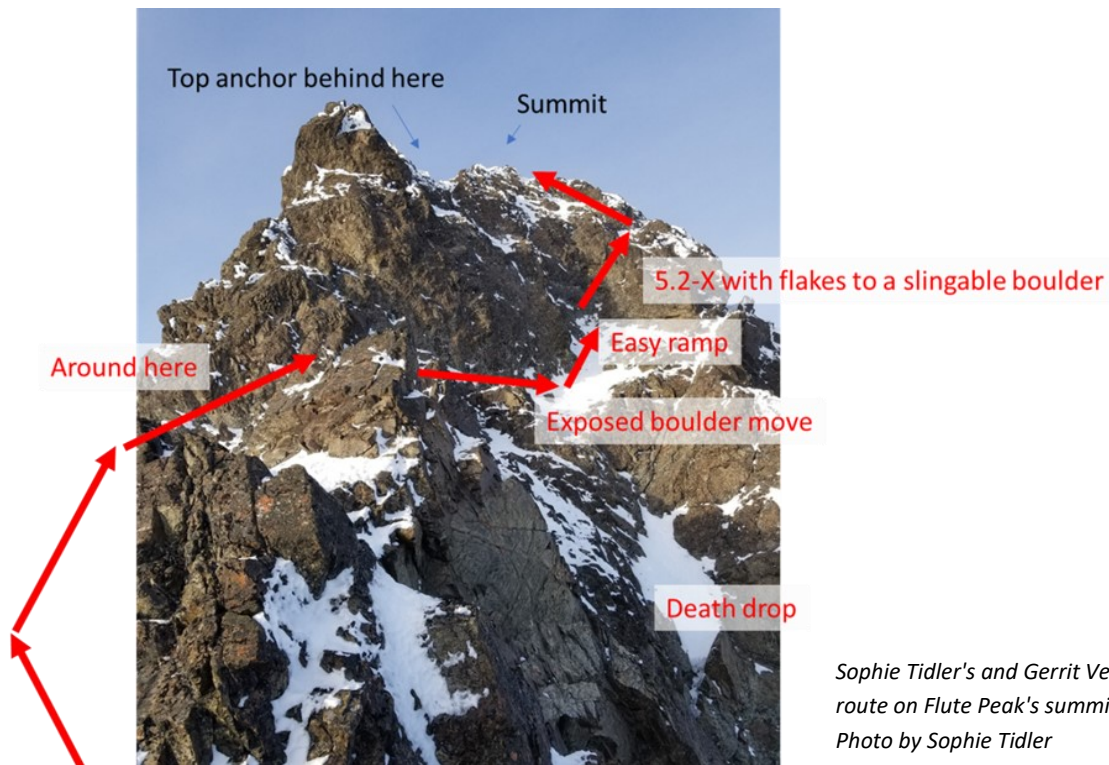
wisely both of us resisted. Large number of walkers were present at the toe of the glacier, unaware of our adventure. I often wonder what goes through their minds when they look up towards a peak such as Byron. Walking by I feel as if possessing a secret, "I know what is up there and you don't". How many would set out for the heights if they realized the possibility?



Greg Encelewski in Death Gully.

Flute Peak (6634 feet), Western Chugach Mountains, in February

Text by Sophie Tidler



Sophie Tidler's and Gerrit Verbeek's route on Flute Peak's summit block. Photo by Sophie Tidler

When Gerrit Verbeek invited me on a Sunlight Mountain/Moonlight Mountain attempt, based out of Pichler's Perch for two nights with a party of six, I was instantly stoked. Once again, the mountains were singing from afar. However, we should have known this music was coming from a different Western Chugach peak, one surrounded by musically themed rock giants. In a strange turn of events, two days prior to taking off, all party members other than Gerrit and me bailed, leaving us two to quickly figure out "Plan B." We danced around with options and swiftly decided on Flute Peak, which clocks in at an elevation of 6634 feet.

The trip itinerary involved a 26-mile traverse from the South Fork of the Eagle River Trailhead to the Eagle River Nature Center up the Flute Glacier, onto the Organ Glacier, summiting Flute via the North Couloir, then out to the Crow Pass Trail near Heritage Falls. With three full days to complete the traverse and summit, we were set to experience the adventure.

As a disclaimer, I must admit I have no technical mountaineering training (yet). Additionally, prior to this trip, I had never camped in a tent in winter, led a climb, or toyed with homemade, dehydrated food. Ohh, and I've never written an article for *the Scree*. All of which, I can now add to my list of "still learning." (Got to

start somewhere.) Okay, glad we got that out of the way. Now, back to the adventure.

Our pack weights were set to max, including a four-season tent, snowshoes, crampons, 70-meter rope, climbing gear, glacier gear, and warm spirits (no, not alcohol). We set off around 10 a.m. on Friday, February 1st, at about 15 degrees Fahrenheit. We walked to where the flowing South Fork of the Eagle River met the frozen Eagle Lake and were greeted by something I am still in disbelief in having seen, and am hesitant to share for the sacredness and security of the little fellow. At the confluence of the lake and river, a river otter was perched on the ice, observing us observing it, until it entered the water.

The otter sighting was magical and so was the frozen lake that allowed us to walk easily back to the snow-covered braided creek system/marshland.



Sophie Tidler on Eagle Lake. Photo by Gerrit Verbeek

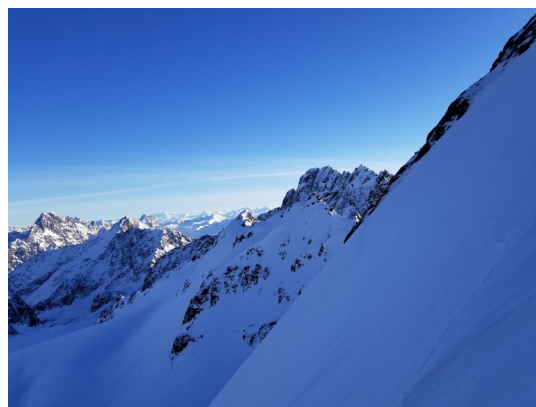
Gerrit and I had both ventured in this valley in summer to climb neighboring peaks and were praising the frozen ground, while reflecting on previous bushwhacking and stream hopping. As we began gaining elevation through the valley we spotted many animal tracks; one of which we convinced ourselves were wolf tracks, but later discovered at the Nature Center were, in fact, wolverine. The tracks led us to the toe of the Flute Glacier. We ascended the glacier unroped, reached the top of the col near Allegro Point at dusk, descended, and probed a campsite on the Organ Glacier. In the morning we were greeted with a view of the snow ramp up to Flute Peak and began in its direction around 9 a.m., leaving camp fully assembled for safety measures.

We began in snowshoes and switched to crampons at the base of the ramp. Within minutes of leaving camp, I knew my feet were in trouble. I had to stop four times between camp to the summit block to take off boots and rub my toes to avoid frostbite. Although time was on our side, I was quickly questioning my sanity for pushing forward, while literally combating cold feet. In retrospect, I believe the socks I wore that morning were too thick and constricting, in addition to my not being excessively hydrated. Also, I'm a woman with constant cold feet and hands; what did I expect?

I climbed the snow ramp in the shadow and was welcomed by the warm sun and a patiently waiting Gerrit on the ridge crest. We traversed a few hundred feet until we were under the summit block. Flute Peak has an intimidating summit block and proved to be a technical climb. As I was giving my feet their final rub down, soaking in the sun and view, and putting on my climbing helmet, Gerrit was unsuccessfully looking for an expected anchor and trying to figure out the way up. We began discussing the prospect of turning back even though the summit was looming about a hundred feet above us. I scouted around the side for another way up, only to be greeted by a stacking series of cliff edges. Gerrit came down from the only approach we thought was feasible, seemingly defeated. I examined it and mentioned the rock I believed might work as an anchor and felt willing to approach it, as long as Gerrit agreed to provide technical instructions.



*Sophie Tidler taking off toward Flute Peak.
Photo by Gerrit Verbeek*



*View from Flute Peak's north couloir.
Photo by Gerrit Verbeek*

(Mom, don't read this next part.) The rock edge was highly exposed and the anchor would only be dependable for a downward force. However, I was feeling faithful and confident upon the approach and quickly found myself clinging to that rock and having rope, slings, and belay devices handed to me from Gerrit's hands onto the tip of the ice axe I stretched in his direction. After I slung and tied into the anchor, I hoisted myself up and over to the next grouping of crappy rock, where I managed to make another anchor with similar limitations as the first. At this point, I looked to my left and saw the trustworthy pre-existing top anchor at eye level, roughly 30 feet away from me. I navigated a steep side slope to the anchor and clipped in. The crux was over and calm breathing commenced.

I belayed Gerrit up my same route, as he collected the makeshift anchors and made his way toward the peak. The summit was a 50-foot walkup at that point and we met at the windy top. We took in the views, captured a few photos, marinated in feelings of fortuity, and began to discuss our way down. Gerrit lowered me and rappelled himself. As I was being lowered a picket (which had previously been strapped to my back by a carabiner now attached to my har-

ness) slipped out of my pack and bounced until it pierced into the snow three feet from a vertical drop off. It taunted me like a sword in stone. I explained my predicament to Gerrit, already knowing I was going to ask him to lower me farther to grab it and climb back up. After I retrieved the picket and got to level ground, Gerrit rappelled down as I waited, fighting the increasingly cold wind.

My feet and hands were warm, and head was blissful, while walking the mile down the rolling slope of the Organ Glacier back to camp. It was 3:30 p.m. by the time we returned. Gerrit and I agreed to move camp off the glacier, only after I warmed up some bean soup. We packed up and walked down the glacier roped together, until we got to a ledge where we knew we were off the ice and unroped. I dreaded switching from snowshoes to crampons, as I watched Gerrit un-begrudgingly do so. I took off down the steep slope in snowshoes with an ego soon to be tested. (Mom, don't read this next part either.) I began sliding uncontrollably and getting

pulled down by the weight of my pack. I quickly caught an edge, unstrapped my pack and unclipped my ice axe to anchor into the snow. Without thinking, I let my backpack tumble down the slope hoping all I'd need was the axe to hold me in place as I lowered down. Thankfully, my pack stopped a couple hundred feet below, at an easily retrievable spot, and I was able to carve my way down facing the mountain. Lesson learned: take off the damn snowshoes and put on the crampons!

The rest of the trip involved Gerrit and I making camp at about 3000 feet, taking off at dawn in wind and snow, following a trail down to the North Fork of the Eagle River for a barefoot river crossing, walking the five miles of icy trail back to the car at the Nature Center, quickly putting on the ABBA song stuck in my head during the walk out, finding a celebratory cold beer in an empty brewery back in town, discovering that it was Super Bowl Sunday, and parting ways for me to catch the last half of a boring game with some loved ones, with ears still ringing from the sound of Flute.

I want to thank Gerrit for his planning, teaching, and patience; and for boiling me all the hot water I could ever ask for. I want to thank you for your interest and attention. And, mostly, I



*View from the top of the north couloir on Flute Peak.
Photo by Gerrit Verbeek*



*Sophie Tidler on the summit of Flute Peak.
Photo by Gerrit Verbeek*



*Sophie Tidler preparing the rappel anchor.
Photo by Gerrit Verbeek*



*Gerrit Verbeek
rappelling from the
top anchor on Flute
Peak.
Photo by Sophie
Tidler*



*Gerrit Verbeek on the summit of Flute Peak with Organ
Mountain behind him.
Photo by Sophie Tidler*

Notes on Flute Peak

Text by Gerrit Verbeek

This year's low snow and warm weather meant our ascent of Flute Peak via the North Couloir was straightforward until the crux just below the summit. Only 10 feet of technically easy climbing to what looked like milder terrain. Dry, good feet and solid-looking flakes up a steep, narrow ramp to a rock large enough to sling. All in all maybe 30 feet of 5.2 as reported by Billy Finley's excellent <http://akmountain.com/> blog, not even a warmup in the gym, but right over a 400-foot vertical drop back to the couloir. No bottom anchor to be found, no good options for rigging an anchor or roping up. I was wavering hard.

First, a mild brush with death on Class-4 terrain while descending from Rook Mountain in July reinforced that Chugach handholds and I are both impermanent. Billy has since reminded me that anchors are, too, but at the time not being able to find the reported bottom anchor was concerning. What if Sophie and I were off route and climbing to a rubbly false summit with no top anchor? We had screws and pickets but there was too little ice or snow for either, and slings, but no rock hardware. Attempt to down-climb? Lower one climber using the other as a meat anchor, then try to pry up enough rocks to fill a backpack for a counterweight rappel?

Sophie stepped up, borrowed a sling and some gear, calmly climbed the crux unprotected, slung the boulder, and then we tied in. A bit higher a foot Prusik loop was used for another sling, and then she spotted the top anchor, traversed over, clipped in and belayed me up. First lead climb and first trad climb, high up and in style! Congrats, Sophie! And thank you for taking the lead where I was afraid to. The top anchor was beautiful: fresh-looking redundant tat and rap rings tight around a solid block. Thank you, too, whoever rigged that! All concerns evaporated; cameras and smiles came out.

As Sophie mentioned we spotted a set of large tracks in the South Fork, headed up toward the Flute Glacier, which we believed were wolf, but turned out to be wolverine tracks. At the toe of the Organ Glacier, we spotted a second set of large tracks, also headed uphill. Evidently there was a wolverine convention in the heart of the park that weekend! We learned at the Eagle River Nature Center that wolverine tracks (and all mustelids including badgers and ermine) have paw prints with five digits, where canines including wolves and coyotes have

four-digit paw prints.

Yet one mystery remains: Flute Peak received its name and first recorded ascent from Hans Van der Laan on "some weekend in July 1968 (can't remember which one)." He suggested the name Flute for both the peak and the nearby glacier to fit "with the musical theme followed by other features in the area and it reflects the music which abounded there during the summer of 1968 as both members of the glacier research team headed by Dr. William E. Long were flutists" (*the Scree*, March 1969).

Dr. Bill Long was pleasantly surprised to learn this purported fact during a personal conversation in 2018 because his memory is still extremely sharp and he did not have any recollection of flute music that summer. Dr. Long was one of the original homesteaders in the South Fork of the Eagle River and remembers putting in the first trail back to Eagle Lake with a Bombardier tractor and the summer spent with assistants Mitch Henning and Rob Retherford, who have since gone on to full careers in Alaskan geology. Mitch Henning also denies ever having played the flute, does not recall that Rob did either, and notes that no other people frequented the area that summer! At the time of writing Rob Retherford has not yet responded, so there is still some hope of a satisfying answer and unmasking the mystery musician!

This article is turning into a jumble of loose facts, but that's fitting for a publication named *the Scree*. While we're in the area and contemplating mysteries, the origin of the hexagonal cabin remains on the moraine field have been speculated about by MCA members for years. This is a good opportunity to note in *the Scree* that it was clarified on the MCA's Facebook webpage in July 2017 by Steve Gruhn and David Horst. The structure was begun by homesteader Joe Janke in the 1960s, who slung in 10 loads totaling 10,000 pounds via helicopter to develop a five-acre lease from the Bureau of Land Management. Slow progress and the formation of Chugach State Park disrupted those plans. Thank you to Phyllis Janke, Joe's widow and still living the Eagle River area, for filling us in. Dr. Long has since added that the Janke's lease on the land was for recreational use, not a homestead, and the intent of the cabin was to form part of a lodge or resort.

Social and Solo Mountaineering Abroad and on Denali (20310 feet), Churchill Peaks

Text and photos by Dan Koepke



Panorama of Camp 4 on Denali.

After skiing and hiking out, I rested beneath California's Mount Shasta (14162 feet) on May 26, 2018, listening its mystical melodies and messages. Spring breezes blew and warm sun shone through trees. Thomas (Tom) Lone FaceTimed just after climbing Mount Rainier (14411 feet) and we confirmed plans to drive together from Anchorage to Talkeetna May 31. Connecting via Rainier immediately infused our conversation with extra exuberance and enthusiasm.

Date with Destiny June 5, 2016

Attributing my fascination with mountaineering to my father's ascent of Mount Rainier in the 1980's when my family lived in Seattle, climbing Mount Rainier was an inherent, lifelong destiny. As my Dad became gravely ill around 2009, I began considering climbing it in his memory. Fortunately he recovered, so while developing my mountaineering skills, I aimed and prepared to climb Rainier as a living tribute honoring my father and my unique heritage.

I finally solo-summitted Mount Rainier 30 years after my Dad on a perfectly clear June 5, 2016. A novice buddy bailed around 12500 feet and, with no advance plans whatsoever to climb solo to the summit the day before when beginning to hike together from Paradise (5400 feet), I simply felt comfortable continuing alone on the Disappointment Cleaver's moderate route in ideal conditions. It all worked magically like the story you always dreamt coming true in the most sensational way imaginable – as if I was aligning with my destiny or creating my own reality. I took ownership of my individual existence, as some mountaineers have put it. *We always determine our own personal success by our goals and our capability to overcome obstacles in order to achieve our objectives.*

Contacting a journalist in my parents' hometown, I shared the story about what Rainier meant to my father and me to pitch a perfect Father's Day Tribute article. Then I flew straight to my ex-hometown of Bozeman, Montana, after being gone six-plus years, drove to Jackson, Wyoming, and solo-summitted the Middle Teton (12804 feet) June 8, only 72 hours after standing atop Rainier. I looked west to Idaho where I first saw the Tetons in 2001, and recognized much bigger challenges and summits were coming fast when looking north toward Montana and measuring a decade's progress since climbing Montana's tallest, Granite Peak (12799 feet) with a friend in 2006. I scouted proud Grand Teton (13770 feet) routes to solo next, but snow conditions were rotten, I started feeling sore, and I had a big weekend ahead of me. *Live to climb another day.*

Our family celebrated and shared Father's Day weekend together, perhaps for the last time ever, and we will always dearly remember that 2016 Father's Day – a heartwarming mountaineering story for anyone alive enough to read it and anytime I recall it, like while congratulating Tom after he successfully ascended Rainier about two years later.



Grand Teton from Middle Teton (12804 feet)



Sunrise from the summit of Pico de Orizaba.

Pico de Orizaba (18491 feet) Solo December 2016 before Denali 2017

Thomas Lone and I connected April 2018 via mutual friend Matty Knarston about both transportation for Denali 2018 and the idea of teaming up on a permit together for Mount Everest in 2019 via Tibet. I first met and proudly passed Kiwi marathoners and mountaineers Matty Knar and Van Loral on the steep, snowy volcanic cone above the icy Labyrinth en route to the summit of Pico de Orizaba (18491 feet), or Citlaltepētli, for sunrise at the top of Mexico December 26, 2016. The next day the Kiwis and I crossed paths again on the bus to Puebla and shared excitement about Denali 2017. Matty Knar immediately climbed Aconcagua next, where he first met Tom.

After initially helping them with basic logistics, the Kiwis and I teamed up on the mountain as friends for Denali 2017 Expedition Alaskan International Ohana starting May 16, 2017. That 24-day expedition is another story I will weave in a future issue of *the Scree* about returning to Denali. Simply put, our fantastic Denali 2017 expedition incited my first considerations about returning to climb Denali on a solo permit.

Launching Denali Solo June 2018



Flying into Kahiltna International with a flattop lenticular atop Denali.

Permitted on Denali before, the seven-day rule and my acclimatization in the Sierras enabled me to rally spontaneously for Denali 2018. Leaving Alaska early May 2018, I initially planned on continuing to the Cordillera Blanca in Peru via California, but poor weather around Huaraz convinced me to play longer in California's sunny Sierra Nevada. Attempting Denali solo crystallized more and more while skiing Lassen Peak (10457 feet) and Mount Shasta, and I

cherished Shasta's lucid message: *Do not let fear of failure limit opportunities to grow and succeed.*

Embracing the chance to climb Denali with a solo permit, I climbed sunny North Tahoe granite again with legendary pal Jim Sweeney and refreshed my soul's midnight lightning overnight in Yosemite's Camp 4 before flying back to Anchorage, driving Tom and his partner to Talkeetna, and landing on the Kahiltna Glacier on June 1, 2018.

Standard crevasse danger motivated us to team up as friends for three on a rope from base camp (7200 feet) to Camp 1 (7800 feet) and then intermittently as high as Camp 4 (14200 feet). I had experience climbing and skiing unroped above Camp 4 toward the summit and was comfortable skiing back to Camp 1, where I would socialize and hope to tie in with another group on their way back to base camp when crevasses would be gaping most. Definitely not a true "solo" summit to purists, but more than contrived bragging rights, I simply care about enjoying the experience, reaching the summit, and making it home safe and sound.

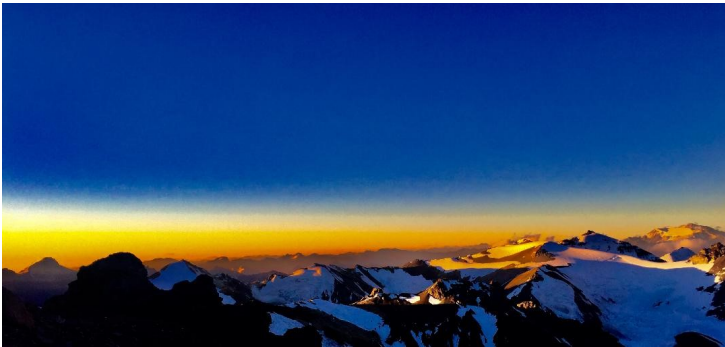
Both my acclimatization and conditions felt great the next day hiking a load from Camp 1 to Camp 3 (11000 feet), and I enjoyed casually skiing 3,000-plus feet back to Camp 1 in 10 minutes or so. Two-way radios proved priceless because, so excited to fist-pound and fly skiing down the mountain from Camp 3, I forgot my backpack with my skins! Fortunately Tom grabbed my backpack after I caught him on the radio while snacking. *Helpful people gotta ask for a little help in return every now and then.*



Denali's upper West Rib from Camp 4.

The day after we hiked back up to Camp 3, we ascended to Camp 4 with loaded sleds, but without skis, and quickly returned to Camp 3. The next day I loaded my 105-liter pack, left the sled at Camp 3, and hiked solo above Squirrel Hill before skinning to Camp 4 again from there – where people were returning after skiing perfect powder from the summit. The stoke was real, alive, and well.

Soon I was sharing food and shooting the breeze with new Mexican friends, Carlos Petersen and Max Alvarez, even before amigo Daniel Araiza could introduce us when he returned from Camp 3 where he and I had reunited earlier while he convalesced and recovered from upper respiratory crud. Over and over I still hear Daniel say, “*Ocho horas, gey. Eight hours, bro.*” Max had just summited Denali (20310 feet) via the West Buttress from 14000 feet in eight hours round trip – impressive – and now they were prepping for the Cassin Ridge. In January 2019 Max summited Cerro Aconcagua (22841 feet) from Plaza de Mulas (14340 feet) in less than six hours – keep your eyes on this young phenom.



Aconcagua photo from Camp 2 (18370 feet)

Cerro Aconcagua (22841 feet) Solo "360 Route" January 2018

Daniel Araiza, my *tocayo*, or twin, via our first name, and I met at Aconcagua's Camp 2 (18370 feet) on January 6, 2018.

I had just bailed on the idea of climbing the "Polish Glacier Direct" solo after looking from beneath it at 19000-plus feet and finding a section of nearly vertical glacier ice at the bottleneck, which up to 17000 feet looked like steep snow. Too much exposure and altitude with hybrid crampons and ice tools motivated me to just aim for the summit via the "360 Route" by meeting the "Normal Route" from the west at Colera Camp (19685 feet). *Must be able to make some conservative decisions.*

“*Como va?! How's it going, Danny?!*”, the Mexicans sincerely asked, shouting across camp when we awoke with about six to eight inches of fresh snow. I sat up, shaking the snow off as I peeked out of my -30-degree Fahrenheit synthetic sleeping bag in a bivy sack, and with a wild, yet rested, grin replied, “*Otro dia en paraiso! Another day in paradise!*”

Sleeping beneath the stars and going tentless meant carrying less weight and avoiding both damage to my tent and persistent, disturbing noise. Leaving my tent earlier at Plaza Argentina (13400 feet) seemed so reasonable after carrying a load to Camp 1 (16400 feet) and scouting above 17000 feet. I continued utilizing melatonin as a high-altitude homeostatic agent particularly for quality sleep, and I felt fantastic in my heavy, huge sleeping bag comfortable like a fat aunt's cozy, loving bear hug. [*Scientific evidence includes remarkable results from a research study at Denali's Camp 4 in 2013 conducted by Dr. Christopher Jung in the Department of Biological Sciences at the University of Alaska Anchorage.*]

Wet snow fell in the afternoon January 8, 2018, at Colera Camp as I bided my time cooking and stretching. I planned to crash early and soon employ my gear, which remained in my waterproof backpack. Felt like an Alaskan spring evening at altitude. Plotting my strategy for a summit bid in the morning, mountaineers began appearing while descending toward camp. For the past few days up high, Aconcagua's mornings were clear with clouds moving in and eventually bringing precipitation in the afternoon with *el blanco viento*, the whiteout "white wind." As a solo climber I keenly perceived how disoriented and scattered everyone was due to the low visibility and their fatigue.

I recognized one or two Americans descending that I had met the day before we started at different trailheads because they were climbing the "Normal Route." I melted more snow for hot water, then greeted and congratulated them for ascending to Aconcagua's summit and making it back safely! I assisted one out of his crampons and boots so he could crawl into the tent and his sleeping bag before trying to help the other guys a bit, too, then leaving them to crash. Because every teammate in this Fantastic Four summited, I should, too.

After discussing the weather in Spanish with a passer-by, next thing I know he leads me to the rangers for an update. They had just returned from afternoon patrol closer to the summit and seemed frustrated. Then somehow they learned I was not using a tent and immediately began threatening to escort me down the mountain if I did not find one to share. I explained as clearly as I could in Spanish that I was comfortable using the bivy sack, this was no emergency, and they could carry on without worry: I was from Alaska, and intentionally left my tent at Plaza Argentina. Suddenly I had three minutes to find a tent or the rangers would seize my permit!

I humbly asked the Fantastic Four if I could crash with them explaining the urgency due to the rangers' threat. Compassionate Brandon Calhoun and Shane Duffy were so wiped out after summiting they said it would not matter much in their Trango-3 tent. Rangers confirmed plans asking me to radio tomorrow about my

ascent and safety. This ordeal really shook me up mentally and emotionally; yet physiologically that night at 19685 feet, I felt amazing.

Climbing solo slowly compared to Max Alvarez, but rapidly compared to most others on routes, only 3,000 feet of climbing to Aconcagua's 22841-foot summit seemed straightforward, particularly because on Orizaba in December 2016 I had climbed 4,400 feet at altitude, feeling much less acclimated. Using past climbs as standard examples like this, I planned to use the same tactics I had for Rainier in June 2016 and Mexico's Pico de Orizaba in December 2016: let all the big, slow groups clear out of camp first while I rest in peace before exploding out of the gates, passing the big slow groups en route, and trying to enjoy the summit as solo as possible before the circus arrived. Strategizing about how other teams impact climbing the mountain proves helpful in the modern age of crowded summits and dangerous bottlenecks on classic routes. Very rarely are climbs only a matter of a team and a mountain, and in 2013 Ueli Steck and Simone Moro provided another relevant case-in-point on Everest regarding their dangerous interactions with Sherpas while trying to climb independently.

Hearing the guided groups gather at 2.30 a.m., I snuck out of the tent at 4 a.m. to begin preparing. Crystal clear and frigid, stars twinkled as I layered up my boots over down liners and prepared to don overboots and start. Now my fingers and feet were too cold from exposing them and preparing everything away from my sleeping bag I would have used had I slept outside instead of in the tent. I was way too cold to focus and needed to get back in my sleeping bag and warm up to avoid frostbite, especially since I had hours to rest before sunrise.

Eventually Brandon quizzically asked if I was ever gonna go for it, and I bolted out of the sleeping bag and tent again at 7 a.m. with the Mexicans barely in sight. I caught them at the top of the Canaleta by the cave (21300 feet), and after asking Daniel, he recognized my pace and let me lead from there. Slower South Americans asked us where we were from in Spanish as we passed, and after the Mexicans replied I added enthusiastically, "*Alaska y Mexico! Hermanos del Norte! Brothers of the North (America)!*" This non-technical, but steep, snowy terrain where crampons were essential did not seem to be the mundane, cruiser "trek" I dreaded when hearing about the "Normal Route."

Suddenly a client's crampon popped off ahead and the guide and the client sat blocking the established trail while the guide unsuccessfully fumbled with the crampon the client did not even try to re-attach himself. At an awkward, steep position in the snow at 22600 feet, they were not making any progress whatsoever with a large group waiting and growing. I veered off trail and found myself stemming up loose, rotten, mixed terrain using my ice axe's

pick and loose rock handholds while praying my crampons would not pop off, too, and a few big moves got me back on the trail with no one between me and the summit. I snapped incredible pictures of the Mexicans as they hugged and celebrated making it to the summit. Daniel and I hugged and congratulated each other, and everyone was psyched.

I waived a pink "I love you" buff from the summit honoring my dying Aunt JoAnne and friend's wife, LJ, battling cancer. This solo, yet social, climb celebrated everyone's life and health, including my father's and my own, and meant so much to carry that love up there and send my support to family and friends around the world afterward. LJ eventually beat that cancer, and I modestly gifted her the pink buff as a memento from her successful battle.

Visibility was already bad by 1 p.m., and I did not want to get stuck descending behind big groups. (A European died on the ridge a couple days later getting pinned late high in the whiteout after ascending late.) The two French guys who broke trail to the summit headed down and we began descending together, but I started feeling my achy knees fast and their trekking poles helped them blow me away. The wind blew footprints away quickly beneath the Canaleta, but the whiteout, while growing, was not too bad. A Nepali greeted me with tea at Camp Colera as I realized maybe I should not bivvy there, remembering the Rangers.

I continued enjoying descending west down the "Normal Route," planning to camp soon – until I was quite fatigued after climbing 3,000 feet, descending 3,000 feet, and descending another 2,000 feet from Colera without eating. I stopped by the rangers to let them know I was okay en route to Plaza de Mulas, and they generously offered to guide me in the whiteout for the last 3,000 feet. Not a matter of an emergency, they essentially chased me after I declined their initial invitation! We selfied and one even offered me his trekking poles, which I regretted not accepting as I limped into Plaza de Mulas with severe lateral knee pain from covering over 11,000 feet in less than 12 hours. Soon I ran into the Fantastic Four; they invited me for a social \$40 spaghetti dinner, and I ravenously finished what they did not eat on their plates. I sighed and smiled falling asleep beneath the stars after a big, long day at the top of the Americas and the Western Hemisphere.

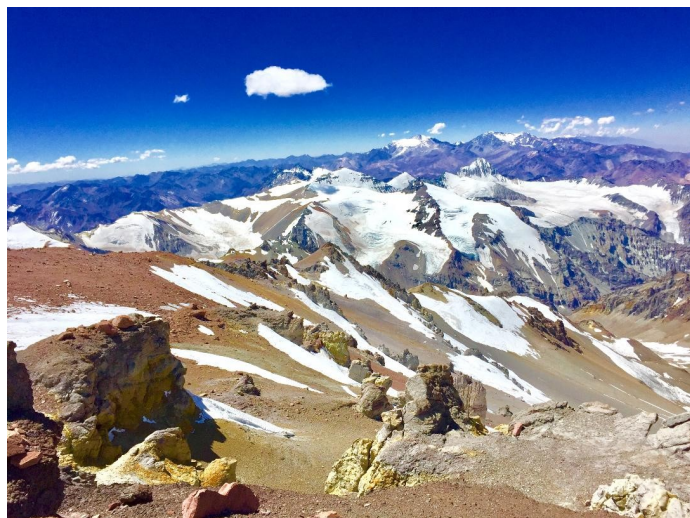
I wanted to hike out as soon as possible to rest and eat; in hindsight, the more prudent decision may have been not painfully hiking all 18 miles out the day after 11,000-plus-foot vertical above an altitude of 14000 feet. I must have looked rather rough and ragged: only a couple miles from the trailhead a sweet French young woman, Krystina Marcoux, touched my heart so deeply approaching and offering her family's extra water and snacks – I will always be grateful for her caring kindness and never forget that. Then in polite Argentinian form, like sugary icing on the cake

of my summit, when I checked out at the rangers' office they shared tea and cookies, generously refilling both my cup and plate. Krystina reappeared and we shared contact information; we remain friends to this day and look forward to climbing together in the Alps soon. I pursue international mountaineering objectives for these precious cultural experiences, as well, because I simply love discovering different lands and people through exploring the mountains around the world.

Catching the very first bus back to Mendoza that evening, I asked the bus driver for the best restaurant open so late and with good steak: Don Marino's. It was all I could do to keep myself inside the bus as we passed small *empanada* stands and convenience stores, and I salivated thinking about the celebratory feast in store at Don Marino's. I had to work for a cab at the bus station and finally pulled up to the Promised Land of Don Marino's at 12.40 a.m. Entering the front door it felt like a swanky Italian restaurant with bottles of wine lining the walls.

I was greeted with the unfortunate news that the kitchen was closed! I enthusiastically explained that I had just climbed their beautiful country's tallest mountain – the highest outside the Himalaya – and had come immediately (without showering for two weeks) to Don Marino's because it was recommended to me as the best restaurant with steak in all of Mendoza *open* at this time of night. I realized perhaps expressing my disappointment in such an animated way might cross the line if I pushed much more for some chow. I sighed and apologized for my timing.

The owner instructed me to take a seat. He generously poured me a glass of wine and brought me a plate of roasted beef, apologizing that it was not cooked completely fresh for me. I tried but he would not accept any cash, even as he worked on balancing the day's books. Cherishing the blend of grapes and protein on my palate, I raised my glass and proclaimed a cheers to their wonderful country. With a few more bites, I repeated the cheers



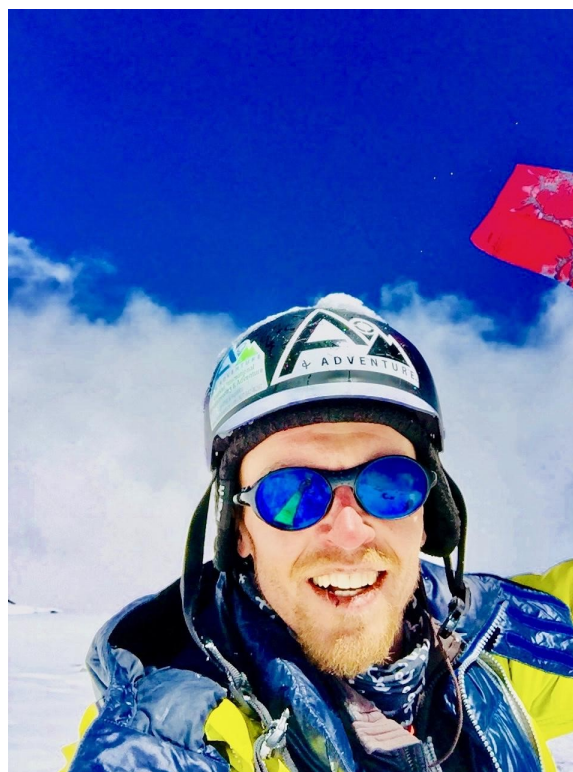
Andes as seen from 19000 feet on Aconcagua.

to the land which provides such treasures like this delicious beef, grapes, and mountains. With a clean plate, I finished my glass with a cheers thanking these and all Argentinian people for their generosity and hospitality before bidding them adieu. *Hasta pronto.*

Read about Koepke's return to Denali in a future issue of the Scree.



A selfie of Dan Koepke at 17000 feet on Aconcagua.



Dan Koepke on the summit of Aconcagua with a little pink buff.

Bear Mountain (3140 feet), Western Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Brendan Lee



Dan Glatz and Cody Klingman walking off the summit and down the trail, a perfect day with great company.

For years, my attention has been drawn to the steep couloirs that run down Bear Mountain's northwest face. Anyone in the car with me while passing Mirror Lake on the Glenn Highway has listened to my rambling time and time again as I pointed out the lines and pondered on what the climbing was like.

On Sunday February 3rd, conditions seemed perfect and I convinced Dan Glatz and Cody Klingman to give it a go with me. There was an obvious line that ran from Mirror Lake to the summit on the northwest face of Bear, but our plan was to climb a line farther to the north that ran from Edmonds Lake to the summit. That line from Edmonds Lake had at least three variations; we elected to climb the left variation as we confirmed the presence of ice with binoculars. We pre-positioned one vehicle at the Peters Creek Trailhead for the walk off, then we drove down to Mirror Lake to start our climb.

A moderate 'shwhack through the frozen forest with the occasional post-hole led us to the base of the couloir. We started up the couloir on a bluebird morning as the sunrise illuminated the Alaska Range behind us. We noticed an abundant variety of large rocks laying in the gully that appeared new; we wondered if they were from the November 30th quake or perhaps the several months of constant earthquakes that followed. We climbed steep snow past the fork for the right-hand variation of that line and

climbed onward, that right variation appeared to be the steepest of all. Eventually we arrived at an obvious rock wall on climbers' left that we called the decision rock. At that rock we could continue up the main couloir toward a large amphitheater or climb a left couloir with an inviting runnel of ice; we chose to head left for the

Some interesting lines on Bear Mountain's northwest face. The team climbed the yellow line. The green line appeared to be the steepest with mixed sections. The red line led to an amphitheater with various options to the summit.



ice. We racked up the rest of our gear at the base of the short ice pitch, which went at WI2 for 15 meters, and Cody charged up in fine form. Dan and I belayed that section as we're old and fragile compared to Cody. At the top of the ice pitch, we got our first look at what would turn out to be the crux of the route, a large chockstone wedged in the gully that we would have to climb up and over. Cody took the first stab at the chockstone, which involved a full stem on the walls of the narrow gully and hooking any moss/rock/choss he could get his ice tools on. Eventually as he worked up, he could hook his ice tool on the backside of the chockstone and pull his body up and onto the chockstone. Dan and I applauded Cody and busted out the rope again. Upon topping the chockstone, I placed two pitons, pounded a spectre into some frozen turf, and brought Dan up. The ice and chockstone can be climbed without a rope, but don't fall as a long pinball ride to Edmonds Lake awaits. For me, it's worth belaying as time is not an issue on the route, and who knows, maybe you could even find an excuse to put that spectre on your rack to work. After the chockstone, the route was fun and straightforward snow climbing. The route felt steepest toward the top. Eventually, we topped the line out and wallowed over to the summit of Bear Mountain. A swift glissade down the standard Bear Mountain Trail brought us back to our pre-positioned vehicle at the Peters Creek Trailhead; job done, we'd be home in time for dinner!

I really enjoyed this route as the narrow walls of the couloir and steep snow climbing gave it a backyard alpine feel, and as a bonus there is even a runnel of WI2 ice; the chockstone crux is a fun problem to solve. The line is about 2,500 vertical feet of climbing. I would imagine earlier in the season there would be more ice in this couloir. The far right line I referenced looked especially intriguing and I would love to check it out in the future.



Dan Glatz mid-route.



Dan Glatz working up the fun WI2 ice section.



Cody Klingman trucks through the occasional snow slog.

"Emerald City," Knik Gorge Ice Climb, Knik River Valley, Western Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Wayne Todd

January 19, 2019



Cory Hinds biking onto Knik Lake.



Cory Hinds negotiating the pressure ridge by the ice climbs in The Gorge.

Cory Hinds and I are relieved to see the snowmachines on the other side of the open water as that confirms we are on the right trail. The open water, on the other hand, is a surprise to both of us. Though the water is less than a foot deep and the crossings short, wet feet at this stage would sabotage the ice-climbing day.

To regular form, Cory confidently bikes across, plants a foot on the opposite ice shelf, dismounts, and pulls his bike up. I follow. We repeat this three times. Amazingly, we still have dry feet. We note the bike brakes are now frozen and inoperable. Fortunately this is a mostly flat ride, so onward ho.

Earlier, we met up with quite a crew at Travis and Elissa M.'s place. Travis is also headed for The Gorge climbs, but via snowmachine, and volunteered to haul our equipment to The Gorge.

Between fog and ridge-blocked sunshine, the temperatures seem colder than actuality, so we make occasional layering breaks as we bike the 10 miles to The Gorge.

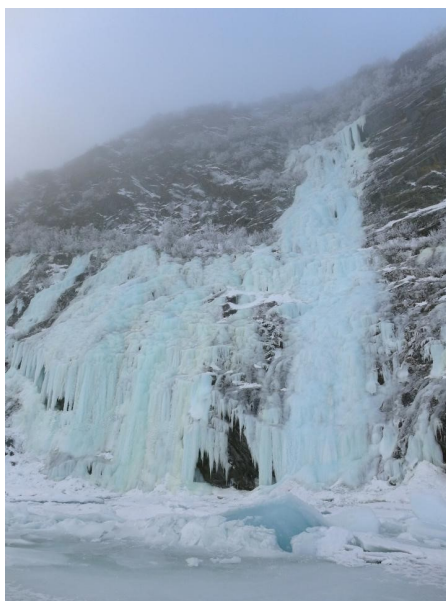
As I recently started biking for the winter, my nether region (perineum, specifically) is a little sensitive so I watch carefully for bumps in the trail. After a bit, we get a top glimpse of The Gorgemeister, giving our location. We deviate off a main trail to the south, looking for another trail. The off-trail riding mostly

supports our biking and is quite fun.

We now have a glowing light curtain to the east, which seems to draw us in. (What's the saying about "don't go to the light?") Coupled with frost covered shrubs, this is ethereal beauty. Soon we're biking on river ice, which is even more efficient than the trail, and has the incentive to maintain focus so as to avoid flowing open water.

On the lake and by the bergs, our tires hum on (the studded tires are amazing). Still in fog we're a little concerned about not finding the crew and tent with our gear. No worries, as we spy the large, yellow tent tucked in a cove with machines corralled around. They've quite the set-up, even a propane heater. A few are compelled to photo my almost ever present mous-tachecicle (sounds better than snotcicle).

We gear up and bike tour the myriad ice climbs, whilst avoiding an open lead. "Emerald City," one of the longer, fatter, and easier (?) climbs, is our choice. After negotiating the fairly active pressure ridge, we're set to climb. For efficiency, Cory leads the first pitch. This is a straightforward, WI2-3, with fairly sticky ice. The grinding ice from the pressure ridge is a fairly constant backdrop. I lead Pitch 2, which is another WI2-3, with slightly brittle ice toward the top.



"Emerald City" ice climb.

Cory leads again for Pitch 3, which looks a bit steeper toward the top, especially to the right alongside some free-hanging pinnacles. He makes the usual quick progress until – "thud" – a tool plant sounds quite hollow and some cycles above break loose. He moves right and then progresses much slower, placing numerous screws. From previous experience, I know this is a bad sign, regardless of how it looks from below. A benefit to belaying with iced ropes is the extra effort keeps the body warm, albeit with extra hand fatigue.

At the slow section, I'm quickly puckered for ice-screw removal, despite being belayed. The ice is near vertical, brittle, hard, and comprised of numerous small bulges with the recessed areas open to rock. I'm relieved to be off that, not sure about the "rope guns" thoughts, other than mentioning he thinks that's more like WI4. I strongly concur. We slightly break above the fog with sun-kissed views of peaks in the deeper Chugach.

V-thread with back-up, and Cory's rappelling to set the next V-thread rappel station. I hear one comment about daylight from below J. Obviously it's time to go, but disappointing to rap back into the fog.

He's off again from the second station and reports that fortunately the ropes make the ground (rope stretch and the extra 30-foot balance from each pitch). We're a little stunned that it's already 4:30 and obviously not going to meet Dave L. at the Knik restaurant at 4:30.

Cory takes most of the gear in his paniers and I almost immediately wipe out on the ice. For the cold temperatures and dullish ice, it's bizarrely slick. Wanting to get afar before darkness, we just wave at the overnight crew.

Biking even farther along the river, Cory takes a spill; I take another one. The ice is so slick it's difficult to just stand over the bikes. We're soon cruising by headlamp even after exiting the fog with moonlight backlight. My added pack weight doesn't help the saddle sensitivity and I much appreciate Cory's occasional breaks.



Cory Hinds on Pitch 2 of "Emerald City" with the noisy ice below.



Left: Cory Hinds at a belay station.

Below: Cory Hinds (left) and Wayne Todd after the bike-ride exodus.



I recognize the Knik Hale-Bopp Peak dark shadow, which counters my progress estimation. The ride out is definitely longer than the ride in, even with making all the correct trail changes. Back at the open water, Cory rides off the abrupt ice shelf and makes it across. Repeat. I actually go first at the last crossing. Amazingly, we both again make it without wet feet, but the bike tires seize up. With forced rotation they spin, but with a bit more resistance. I lose my gear shifting, but at least I'm in low gear. We're soon biking down the correct street, find the correct residence, and finito, about 6:45 p.m. (about nine hours). After a visit with Elissa, we're on the road back to town, albeit somewhat later than both of us expected.

Should you find yourself on a Cory adventure, you'll pleasantly experience a person very skilled in many outdoor disciplines with appropriate confidence, but also with humility and patience, interwoven with altruism and perpetual optimism (an unusual combination these days).

Peak of the Month: Whitecrown Peak

Text by Steve Gruhn; photos by Wayne Todd

Mountain Range: Western Chugach Mountains

Borough: Municipality of Anchorage

Drainages: Sparrow Glacier and West Fork of the Twentymile River

Latitude/Longitude: 61° 4' 15" North, 148° 50' 2" West

Elevation: 6390 feet

Adjacent Peaks: Sparrow Peak (6635) and Peak 4380 northeast of Bagg Pass

Distinctness: 1540 feet from Sparrow Peak

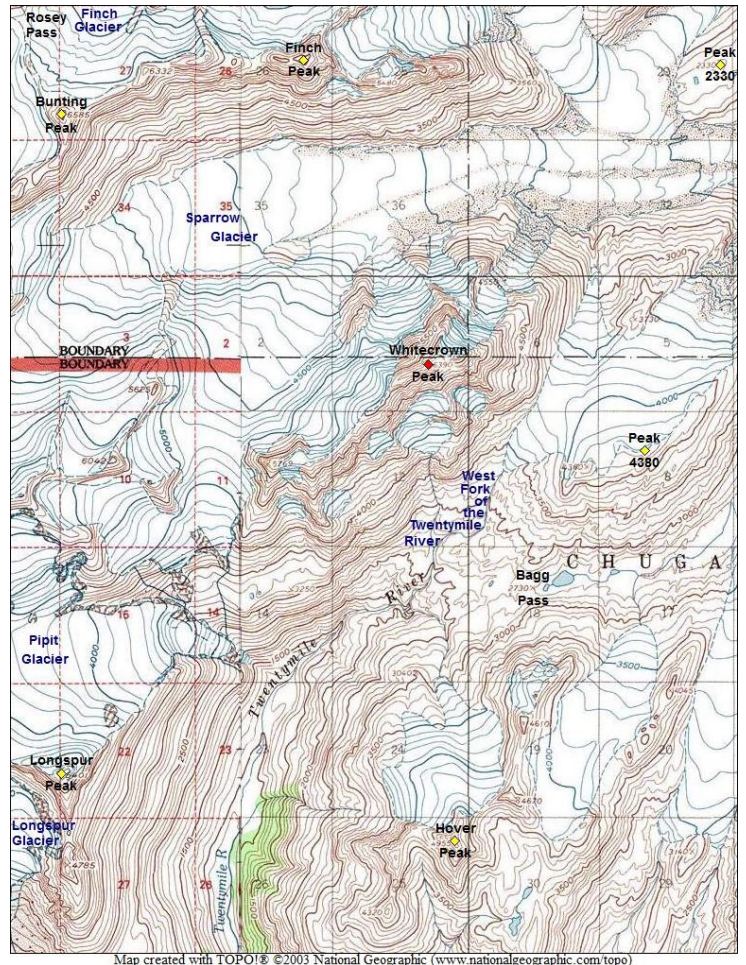
Prominence: 1540 feet from Sparrow Peak

USGS Maps: 1:63,360: Anchorage (A-5); 1:25,000: Anchorage A-5 SW

First Recorded Ascent: March 22, 2014, by Wayne Todd and Carrie Wang

Route of First Recorded Ascent: South-southeast buttress

Access Point: Unnamed lake at 2650 feet a quarter mile east of Bagg Pass



The area in the vicinity of the southeast corner of Chugach State Park had received little mountaineering attention until 2000, when Imus Geographics published a map of Chugach State Park that included several unofficial geographic names – both inside and outside of the park – that had been obtained from a variety of sources, including the MCA. The MCA's Tom Choate supplied several of the names on the map, including a toponym for a 6390-foot summit south and east of the Sparrow Glacier and just south of the southeast corner of the park. In maintaining with a bird theme in the region, Choate had applied the name "Whitecrown" to the 6390-foot summit in honor of the white-crowned sparrow that breeds in the area. The name is also a play off Golden Crown (also named after a sparrow) above the west end of the Sparrow Glacier.

On March 21, 2014, Wayne Todd and Carrie Wang took an Alpine Air helicopter flight from Girdwood to an unnamed frozen lake about a quarter mile east of Bagg Pass at an elevation of 2650 feet. That afternoon they set out exploring the area north of their

camp. The following day they crossed the upper reaches of the West Fork of the Twentymile River and ascended the south-southeast buttress of Whitecrown Peak. They retraced their tracks on the descent as they returned to their camp. The next day the duo ascended Hover Peak (4955 feet) and Peak 4578 between the East and West Forks of the



Oblique aerial view of the southwest aspect of Whitecrown Peak.

Twentymile River. On the 24th they skied to the West Fork of the Twentymile River and on the 25th they made their way to the Seward Highway bridge over the Twentymile River.

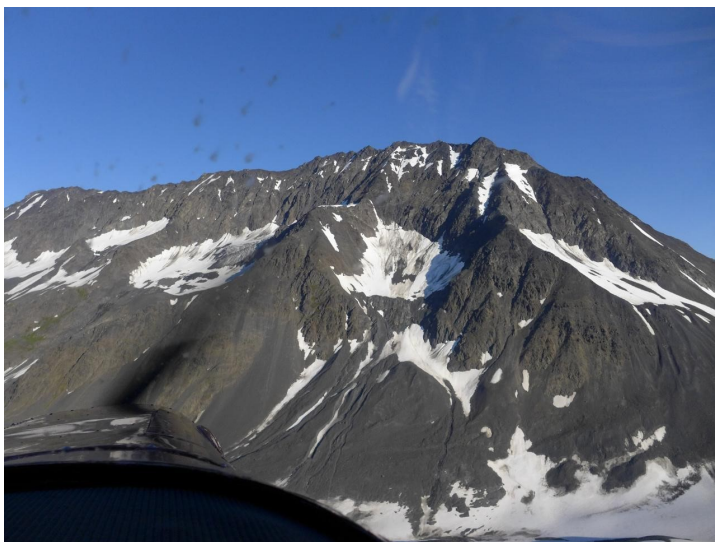
On April 26, 2015, Richard Baranow, Max Neale, and Ross Noffsinger hiked and snowshoed up the Winner Creek Trail from the Alyeska Prince Hotel through Berry Pass, arriving at Bagg Pass on the 28th. After some climbing northeast of their camp on the 29th, Neale left to return to Girdwood. Baranow and Noffsinger climbed Whitecrown Peak on the 30th. On May 2 Baranow and Noffsinger returned to Girdwood via the Winner Creek Trail.

I don't know of a third ascent of Whitecrown Peak.

The information for this column came from Imus Geographics' 2000 "Chugach State Park, Chugach Mountains, Alaska" map; from Todd's three-part article titled "Twentymile Transect," which appeared in the July, August, and September 2014 issues of *the Scree*; from Baranow's article titled "Peak 4380± ... Which is the True Summit?", which appeared in the July 2015 *Scree*; from Todd's report titled "Peak 4,360', First Ascent; Whitecrown, First Ascent," which appeared on page 162 of the 2015 *American Alpine Journal*; and from my correspondence with Choate, Dave Imus, Noffsinger, and Todd.



Northwest aspect of Whitecrown Peak as viewed from Bunting Peak.



Above: Oblique aerial view of the southeast aspect of Whitecrown Peak.



Left: North-northwest aspect of Whitecrown Peak as viewed from Finch Peak.



Southeast aspect of Whitecrown Peak showing route of Wayne Todd's and Carrie Wang's March 22, 2014, first recorded ascent.

Roll Call

Michael Meyers (President) - Present
 Charlie Sink (Past President) - Absent
 Gerrit Verbeek (Vice-President) - Absent
 Jen Aschoff (Secretary) - Absent
 Katherine Cooper (Treasurer) - Absent
 Max Neale (Director) - Present
 Tom Meacham (Director) - Present
 Lila Hobbs (Director) - Present
 Jonathan Rupp (Director) - Present
 Visitors: None

Scribe: Mike Meyers

Call to order 6:14 p.m.

Committee ReportsPresident (Mike Meyers)

- Create slideshow
- Calendar Committee meeting March 11 at 6:30 p.m..
- David Hart— Chugach State Park trail maintenance program / he is getting together a plan.

Vice-President (Gerrit Verbeek)

- Eagle River Alehouse for 2019 filmfest possibility.
- Sam Galoob/Jessie Haffener will present Rapids and Rappin' - March 6th
- Lisa Roderick/Mark Westman will present gettin' after it in the Alaska Range - April 3rd
- Serenity Falls Ice Climbing trip February 9-10, eight people stayed the night.
- Summer solstice is 21 June (Friday) - MCA campout will be on 22nd (Location to be determined)
- July/August events-meetings conversation

Secretary (Jen Aschoff)

- Designate a scribe for the general meeting.

Treasurer (Katherine Cooper)

- Audit finances.
- Non-profit incorporation status, complete Biennial Report every odd year.
- Job Descriptions - Katherine

Training (Gerrit Verbeek)

- Crevasse-Rescue Class - pursuing Old Knik River truss bridge. Putting together a permit application on the Department of Transportation's recommendation. Also contacting Chugach State Park.
- Photography Class - Andrew Holman (Max Neale)

Strategic Plan Task Force (Max Neale)

- Membership fee schedule and determine final fee schedule to propose to membership. Student/Military/Senior: \$25, Individual: ??, Family: ??

Liability Committee

- New MCA Waiver unanimously approved by board, going in *the Scree* in April.
- MCA proposed Youth Policy change to accept 14-year-olds for low-risk trips.

- By-Laws: Rewrite two-year terms for board members.
- Letter to the state about Hut Liability.

Parks Advisory (Tom Meacham and Ralph Baldwin)

Nothing to report

Trips (Jen Aschoff)

- Hiking/Climbing: Trips planned - Gerrit's sled-haul up Ship Lake Pass and Jen's Arctic to Indian.
- Trips Committee met on February 20; all committee members were trained as leaders, began discussion about changes to rules/regulations for trips and trip-leaders, a master list of potential trip leaders was compiled and placed on google docs. To get more trips the committee thinks we need to 1) remove impediments to trip-leaders in terms of trip-leader training and organizing trips, 2) make liability issues clear, and 3) offer incentives. First-aid training for trip leaders is a hurdle; many potential leaders don't have this training. The trips committee recommends offering incentives for training to trip leaders who lead two or three trips per year - unclear what we can afford to offer. Committee is writing up a few "canned" descriptions that we could find leaders to run, and help them organize. We are also desperately seeking leaders. Board members, can you please help us out?
- A motion was passed so that trips do not have to be printed in *the Scree*. This will make it easier plan for weather.

Scree (Steve Gruhn and Dawn Munroe)

- 11th of the month to get stuff in.

Huts Committee (Jonathan Rupp, Greg Bragiel, Cory Hinds, Vicky Lytle)

- Hut master planning meeting on February 26th went well, a 10-year master plan draft should make it into *the Scree* by April.
- Board approved \$300 limit for design and fabrication of signage for Mint Hut toilet system usage.

Awards Committee (Tom Meacham, Charlie Sink, Steve Gruhn)

- Calling a meeting in the next couple weeks to decide awards
- Hoeman Award / Honorary member selection / President's Award

Communications Committee (Lila Hobbs)

- Website update coming in March
- We have a donate button on the MCA website for those who would like to give more than a membership fee. You can find it clicking the "About Us" tab at the top of the page and then find the "Donate" tab on the left about halfway down.
- Finalizing a promotional procedure checklist for events and such.

Mentorship (Alexandra Janczewska)

- Looking for a volunteer to take over as a Mentorship Coordinator.

Library (Charlotte Foley)

- Library is at the Hoarding Marmot; ask employees to lead you there.

Unfinished Business

- Matanuska Glacier deal for MCA members.

New Business

- Nothing new to report.

Time and Location of next Board Meeting

March 27, 2019, at 6 p.m. on the UAA Campus, ConocoPhillips Integrated Sciences Building, Room 105A (main floor by the coffee stand).

MCA LIABILITY RELEASE AGREEMENT

READ THIS LIABILITY RELEASE AGREEMENT CAREFULLY.

THEN SIGN, INITIAL AND DATE IT IN THE BLANKS INDICATED.

I _____ (print name) am aware that mountaineering and wilderness activities (including without limitation hiking; backpacking; rock, snow, and ice climbing; mountaineering; skiing; ski mountaineering; snowshoeing, iceskating, mountain-biking, using watercraft of all types, access by aircraft, and the use of remote backcountry huts) ARE INHERENTLY HAZARDOUS ACTIVITIES WITH THE POTENTIAL TO CAUSE DEATH, BODILY INJURY AND/OR PROPERTY DAMAGE. I wish to participate in and/or receive instruction in these activities with the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc. (MCA). I RECOGNIZE THAT THESE ACTIVITIES INVOLVE NUMEROUS RISKS, which include, by way of example only, falling while biking, 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; asphyxiation, hypothermia; frostbite; defective or malfunctioning equipment; and attack by insects or animals. I further recognize that the remoteness of these activities may preclude prompt medical care or rescue. I ALSO RECOGNIZE THAT RISKS OF DEATH OR INJURY MAY BE CAUSED OR INCREASED BY MISTAKES, NEGLIGENCE OR RECKLESS CONDUCT on the part of my fellow participants; or by MCA officers, directors, instructors, or trip leaders; or by the State of Alaska and its employees regarding MCA backcountry huts. As used in this Liability Release, "MCA" includes its officers, directors, instructors and trip leaders. 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, and all risks of third-party negligence, in conformity with Alaska Statutes 09.65.290(a) and (d). _____ (initial here that you have read and understood this paragraph)

GIVING UP MY LEGAL RIGHTS: I hereby give up, for myself and for my heirs, dependents, and/or personal representative, all legal rights that I might otherwise claim against MCA, my fellow participants in MCA activities (except to the extent that insurance coverage is provided by automobile insurance policies), and against the State of Alaska and its employees regarding MCA backcountry huts. I GIVE UP THESE LEGAL RIGHTS KNOWINGLY, AND REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THE DEATH, INJURY OR PROPERTY DAMAGE RESULTED FROM MISTAKES, NEGLIGENCE OR RECKLESS CONDUCT OF MYSELF OR OTHER PERSONS. I understand that this Liability Release agreement shall remain in effect unless I provide to MCA a signed, dated, written notice of my revocation of this Liability Release, concurrent with the mandatory relinquishment of my MCA membership. _____ (initial here that you have read and understood this paragraph)

MY PROMISE NOT TO SUE: I will not sue or otherwise make any claim against the MCA, my fellow participants in MCA activities (except as noted above for automobile accidents), and/or the State of Alaska and its employees regarding use of MCA backcountry huts, for any death, injury or property damage which occurs in the course of my participation or instruction in mountaineering and wilderness activities. The provisions of this release are severable, and if any part is held unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall remain in effect. Any lawsuit relating to MCA activities or the validity of this Liability Release shall be filed only in the Alaska Superior Court in Anchorage, Alaska. _____ (initial here that you have read and understood this paragraph)

MY RELEASE OF LIABILITY: I hereby 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 any and all actions, claims, or demands, both for myself and for my heirs, dependents, and/or personal representative, for any death, injury or property damage occurring in the course of my instruction or participation in MCA mountaineering and wilderness activities, and the use of MCA-furnished equipment and backcountry huts. _____ (initial here that you have read and understood this paragraph)

MY PROMISE TO INDEMNIFY: I will pay all expenses, including attorney fees and court costs, that 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 death, injury, or property damage suffered by me in connection with any MCA activity or the use of any MCA-furnished equipment or backcountry huts. _____ (initial here that you have read and understood this paragraph)

MY CONSENT TO MEDICAL TREATMENT: I consent to any hospital or medical care that may become necessary as a result of my participation in MCA activities. I agree that I am solely responsible for all charges for such medical treatment, including evacuation and/or rescue costs. _____ (initial here that you have read and understood this paragraph)

I execute this this Liability Release freely and knowingly, and specifically in consideration for my opportunity to participate as an MCA member in MCA-sponsored instruction and activities, and to use MCA-furnished equipment and backcountry huts.

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THIS LIABILITY RELEASE AGREEMENT. I UNDERSTAND AND AGREE TO ITS CONTENTS. I RECOGNIZE THAT THIS LIABILITY RELEASE IS A BINDING LEGAL AGREEMENT.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Parent or Legal Guardian of named individual (if between 16 and 18 years of age):

_____ Date: _____ (Form Approved 2/27/2019).

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President Mike Meyers mcmeyers24@msn.com
Vice-President Gerrit Verbeek 903-512-4286
Secretary Jen Aschoff jlaschoff@gmail.com
Treasurer Katherine Cooper 209-253-8489

Director 1 (term expires in 2019) Tom Meacham 346-1077
Director 2 (term expires in 2019) Max Neale 207-712-1355
Director 3 (term expires in 2020) Jonathan Rupp 202-6484
Director 4 (term expires in 2020) Lila Hobbs 229-3754
Past President Charlie Sink 529-7910

Annual membership dues: Single \$20, Family \$30

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 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 11th of the month 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: Katherine Cooper—209-253-8489 or membership@mtnclubak.org

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Mike Meyers—mcmeyers24@msn.com, Jen Aschoff—jlaschoff@gmail.com or hcc@mtnclubak.org

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Web: www.mtnclubak.org

Find MCAK listserv at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/MCAK/info>.

Marcin Ksok near the summit of Byron Peak with Portage Lake and Prince William Sound in the background.

Photo by Greg Encelewski

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