

MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

SCREE

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1215 - 8th Avenue
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BR 2-6153
Vol. 2, No. 8

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May 1960

MEETING, MONDAY, JUNE 6

The MCA will meet at the Willow Park Recreation Hall on Monday, June 6th at 8 p.m.

CLIMBING SCHEDULE:

Johnny Johnston would like to see more trips scheduled with more leaders participating. It would be nice to have a trip every weekend.

June 4-5 - Peak behind Eagle River. Norm Pichler, leading. BR 8-7951.

June 19 - Exploratory Trip: from Girdwood over Eagle glacier onto glacier leading toward Lake Eklutna and Lake George. Johnny Johnston, leading. DI 4-1603.

ROCK CLIMBING:

Rock Climbing at Mile 22 Seward Highway was initiated for the 60 season on May 12th. A sizable group assembled to work on both easy and harder pitches. Johnny Johnston emphatically ruled that anyone climbing without a belay would be expelled from the Club.

Rock Climbing, Thursday, May 19th by Helen Wolfe

It was Thursday, time for the second evening at the rocks of the 1960 season. But it was also the Thursday after THAT Tuesday and the town was almost entirely devoid of rock climbers of any description. But in the interest of keeping tradition alive a few of the MCA members still in town tore themselves away from their radios and headed down the Seward Highway.

Norm Pichler's presence gave legality to the outing, and we were delighted to find, when all noses were counted, that we had a grand total of ten members and guests. The weather was much milder than it had been the previous Thursday.

As a number of the group were new to climbing, Norm instructed all in the art of tying into the rope, the proper calls, and belaying. Intermingled with this was a timely lecture on mountain safety, with a few pointed remarks on what not to do. The evening ended with instruction and practice in rappelling, and all headed home around ten p.m.

Present: Norm Pichler, Al Fugimoto, Lois Willard, Helen & John Wolfe, and guests.

Rock Climbing continued on Thursday, May 26th. A special effort is being made this year to get down to the Rocks as near 6 p.m. as possible to make the best use of the daylight.

NOTES:

Howard Schuck has started a project for us. He has maps of our area and is compiling information concerning trails, roads, routes, etc. All members are asked to relay available data to Howard for plotting on the maps.

The Alaska Rescue Group invites all MCA members to join their group. Contact Jan Koeberle at FA 2-4089. All MCA members are invited to attend the training classes regardless of membership in ARG.

The amended constitution is in the hands of the Secretary, and members desiring copies may obtain them upon request.

TRIPS:
Tincan Vicinity, April 24th by Helga Bading

Spring is late and avalanche conditions still acute ... so there was no Carpathian trip for us.

Ambitious as ever, Andy Brauchli, Chuck Metzger and I met on Sunday morning, skis tucked into the jeep, and after an hour's delay (one couldn't wake up) we headed toward the only patch of clear sky down the Seward Highway. Arriving in Girdwood it rained and gladly we followed Andy's advice and kept right on going.

Tincoan at 8:30 a.m. - lo and behold- brilliant sunshine poured down on us. We parked the jeep, much to the distress of a State Patrolman who made us dig it right into the snowbank, and clambered up the 8 ft. wall of snow. Skis strapped to the skis we headed into the beautiful morning. We followed a ridge uphill, luckily so, as an avalanche popped off right in front of our eyes and more could be heard. Lunch was had on a high spot of the ridge where we sunbathed, happy as clams. Listening to the stillness and watching a flock of snowgeese wing northward we reflected that this is the kind of day one needs more often.

But time won't stand still. We climbed the peak (don't know exactly which) without skis and afterwards skied down in wet heavy snow. It was very tricky and at one point I thought we'd lost Chuck. As he lay motionless I visualized unpacking one fifth of the oatmeal out of 28 packaged food bags. But back to life he came and despite a twisted ankle his rate of descent was still better than average.

Back to the car and then towards town where we arrived - sunburnt and happy - at 5:30 p.m.

Bird Creek Ridge, Sunday, May 15th by Helen Wolfe

A beautiful spring day ... the leaves almost out, the snow almost gone.... just right for the first "on foot" hike of the season. At 11 a.m. six of us gathered at Indian House: Judy and Bucky Wilson, Margaret and Murray Benyon, and Helen and John Wolfe. Also with us was Fiona, the Benyon's dog. It was 11:30 or later before we started up Bird Creek Ridge at a slow and easy pace.... but despite that the three gals, at least, were soon huffing and puffing and begging for a rest. Fiona, meanwhile, was running circles around all of us, much to our disgust.

We stopped for lunch about one, at the first snow patch. I can remember thinking that we were almost at the top, but of course we were only about one quarter of the way -- if that. It is perhaps just as well that some of us do not realize these things, for if we did we would not go another step. The thought that the top is just over the next rise is all that keeps us going and then the next and then the next

Bucky and Judy had to turn back shortly afterwards to keep an evening appointment, but the rest of us struggled on. (You'd think this was a big mountain, wouldn't you?) Fiona was still running in circlesand up and down each snow patch innumerable times. What is it about dogs?

Margaret was having a great deal of trouble on the slippery cranberry bushes with her leather soled shoes. She tried it barefoot for awhile, but finally gave that up, too, and found a sunny, sheltered hollow in which to wait. Fiona, to her disgust, was made to stay too.

As we approached the top (the real top) the ridge narrowed. Bare rocks fell away to the south, deep snowdrifts to the north. On the highest point we saw what we decided was a Polar Bear, or at least a mountain goat. It refused to move, and as we came closer it dwindled in size until it became a pure white ptarmigan. It was lovely, and it stayed perched on its rock until we were about six feet from it, then fluttered down the mountain on the other side.

I hate to mention the time, but it was about 4:15 p.m. when we reached the top. Another time record set!

We lingered momentarily on the peak, absorbing the magnificent view. Then we hurried back to Margaret and Fiona, who would have nothing to do with us since we had abandoned her. We reached our cars at seven, all dead tired, but pleased with the day's accomplishment.

MEETING, MONDAY, JUNE 6th

James Morris, a reporter who accompanied the successful expedition on Everest but who did not climb it because it was there, recently wrote an article for the New York Times about mountaineers entitled "Why They Climb and Climb and Climb" in which he remarks:

"To give their expeditions respectability, nowadays they drag

along a physiologist or two, a zoologist, a botanist or even a skeptical reporter; but they really have not a single practical intention in their heads, and their objectives are totally unnecessary. They are much more artists than scientists. They believe in Height as an end in itself, Danger as an honorable destination, The Mountain for The Mountain's sake.

Long may they survive, with their tin mugs bouncing at their hips, and their books in countless paperback reprints! It is all too easy to scoff at the mountaineers; to wonder if the Seventh Highest Unclimbed Peak is much different from the Sixth, or will be changed itself if they climb it.

But once you have sampled the temper of this wide, supranational, apolitical fraternity, you will realize that there is a purpose to it all, and a noble one: the purpose of having no ordinary purpose, the truth of outdistancing banal truths, the right of a free man to do (if you will forgive an old-fashioned Anglicism) what he bloody well likes.

As G.K. Chesterton wrote in another context: 'I think the immense act has something about it human and excusable; and when I endeavor to analyze the reason of this feeling I find it to lie, not in the fact that the thing was big or bold or successful, but in the fact that the thing was perfectly useless to everybody, including the person who did it.' "

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Glad to have you back Helga, Andy, Chuck, Paul and Rod.