

SCREEN

MOUNTAINCLIMBING CLUB OF ALASKA
Vol. 8, No. 7
May, 1966

MAY MEETING: Monday, May 16, 8 p.m., Willow Park Community Center, 9th and Fairbanks Streets. Dr. Bill Long will give a slide show on "Twenty-One First Ascents in British Columbia and Climbing in the Himalayas".

ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

- MAY 15: MOUNT MAGNIFICENT, 4204' peak at the end of Eagle River State Road. Access to timberline via a homestead road. Helen Wolfe 272-7698.
- MAY 21-22: MUKLUTNA CABIN, Gayle Mienhueser, leader; register with Leo Hannan, 277-4748. Dedicatation Trip: erect a plaque in memory of Joe Pichler; clean up the cabin, do some painting and repair work.
- MAY 28-29-30: HOPE TO KENAI LAKE, Leo Hannan, 277-4748, leader. Encouraging information from the Forest Service has put this trip back on the schedule; a 30-35 mile hike, high point about 2700 feet.
- JUNE 4-5: MARY'S MOUNTAIN-----need a leader
- JUNE 18-19: CRESCENT LAKE, Leo Hannan, leader, 277-4748. Above Kenai Lake, 1-2 days
- JULY 2-3-4: PIONEER PEAK/BOLD PEAK TRAVERSE, John Wolfe, leader, 272.7698
- No date: PENGUIN RIDGE TRAVERSE, Dave DeVoe, leader, 333 5492. Probably 3 days.

4th WINTER ASCENT OF MT. RAINIER (14,410') Mar. 26-28, 1966 Helga Bading

Historically Mount Rainier has been closed for climbing between Labor Day and Memorial Day, but, as of last year, the Park Service opened up Mount Rainier for winter climbing to provide training grounds for expeditions, etc. Parties must apply to the Park Service several weeks in advance, and each individual application is thoroughly scrutinized. Many applicants are turned back each year. A minimum of six members in a party is required, and much excess baggage has to be carried to satisfy the stiff requirements.

Winter storms on Mount Rainier are notorious and continuous....but usually sometime right along in March comes a cold clear spell. The objective is to be "all set" when it comes. We were.

Many of the original applicants were unable to take off just then, so the Seattle contingent of our summit team consisted "only" of three ICA'ers, Bob Byhre, Hans Van der Laan, and myself. We joined forces with a five man Lazama party (Oregon) at the foot of Mt. Rainier on Friday night. Saturday morning, under brilliant skies, the Park Rangers checked our equipment,...every single piece was spread out in the parking lot and turned upside down, ice axes were jumped upon, and crampon fit was inspected. We had six days worth of food and the usual cold weather gear---Korean boots to be worn with snowshoes (Ugh!).

The route to Camp Muir can be quite a trudge, especially when the sun beats down warmly. The steeper spots brought the usual grunts because snowshoes still haven't adapted themselves to mountain climbing! But with the stiff requirements for cold weather boots the Korean-Snowshoe combination is still the cheapest and easiest to obtain for a winter climb.

At Muir we found another party who had beaten us up by one day. They were just coming down from their summit climb (in dusk). Among the party was the first woman ever to make a winter ascent of Rainier, an honor I had been trying for. Usually Camp Muir hibernates under huge snowdrifts, but this year the winds had taken a different direction, and it was easy to get into the stone hut, which saved us the trouble of putting up the tents and cooking while lying flat on our stomachs.

At 4 a.m. Sunday we roped up in two four-man teams. It was pitchdark and extremely windy. We chose the Gibraltar Route, too dangerous to climb in the summer when rockfalls threaten the narrow ledges, but the most direct route in the winter. It goes up pretty steeply.

Altitude and lack of sleep caused me to feel pretty poor at 12,500 feet, and I felt all the symptoms of hypoxia (again), but since the party itself moved rather slowly, I had no problem keeping up. The snow was crusty and we cramp oned all the way. Despite bright sunshine we wore down parkas all day, and I even kept my down pants on without being unduly hot. About 1 p.m. we arrived at the Crater Rim. I have yet to reach a summit plateau where the summit itself isn't on the other side...in this case a full mile away. Puff, puff - the thin air up there is also mixed with sulfur fumes! At this point the temperature was about 10 degrees, and we judged the wind to be gusting up to 50 mph. It was strong enough to pick up a full pack and blow it up a hill.

At 3 p.m. we left the summit to stumble downward rather tiredly. We left our original ascent route at 'Camp Comfort' and "dropped" onto the Ingraham Glacier quite literally --- it is very steep there with a gaping crevasse at the bottom. One member of the party had to be coaxed down as much as he had to be belayed. In the lee of Gibraltar Rock we found the snow deep and powdery which slowed progress enough to prevent us from getting back to Camp Lair until 8 p.m. --- one hour and a half after darkness. Gosh, we were tired! Some (including myself) sacked out immediately, enjoying the luxury of supper in bed (after a snooze). It is nice to have such companions!

What a glorious feeling it was not to have to hurry in the morning. No summit that "had" to be climbed, no darkness to beat. It was a beautifully sunny and leisurely trip down to Paradise. On the steeper spots we practiced our sitting glissade technique. And then there was the steak dinner! Gateway Inn, near the Park Entrance, had promised us a dollar off on steak...it and the beer proved extremely tasty.

The Lazamas will write up this trip in their official booklet as a joint "Lazama - Mountaineering Club of Alaska" effort. So there! And I am glad I climbed Mt. Rainier in the winter. In the summer it's just too crowded.

CLIMBS IN THE SUN

Vin Hoeman

The aim of the Alaska Andean Expedition was a reconnaissance of the whole mountain system by climbing something in each Andean country, the highest point when feasible, seeing and photographing much of the rest. Weary of Central America's heat, we reached Columbia in February and chose to climb Nevado del Ruiz, 5400 m., because a road to a government-built ski lodge reaches the edge of the ice cap at 15,500'. The lift no longer works, so not much skiing takes place, but many Columbians bus up to the edge of the ice on holidays to see snow. We traversed the easy 17,700' volcano our first day, climbed a 16,000' cindercone, "El Volcan" on our way back around it the next, and were joined by Nancy Child (former Colorado schoolmate of ours, now a Peace Corps volunteer) and her dog for another ascent of Ruiz on the third day.

Leaving Columbia and the Northern Hemisphere, our next goal was 20,574' Chimborazo, highest point in Ecuador and furthest point from the center of the earth due to our globe's unspherical shape. But sunblistered lips from the previous equatorial climbs had spread infection that kept me in the 16,000' shelter hut March 3 when Dave and Pete went to the summit, and when I tried to follow in their tracks the next day bad weather turned me back at 17,000'.

Peru's high point is the South Peak of Huascaran, 22,205', in the rugged Cordillera Blanca, and we expected it to be the greatest challenge of our trip. We were told it couldn't be climbed at this season. Nevertheless, we started backpacking in from Lanco (8500') on March 12, not using the burros or native porters that groups customarily employ in this area. We had 16 days food we'd purchased and packaged in Lima, and the next day we cached part of this at the edge of the ice (15,000), camping that night on the glacier at 16,800'. On the 14th we made our way up the Marganta Icefall to establish our high camp on the lower lip of a great crevasse at 19,000'. The weather had been deteriorating daily from the crystalline brilliance that had greeted our arrival in the Santa Valley, and on the 15th of March as we made

our summit bid great thunderheads were rising out of the Amazon basin, soon to engulf us. We started at 0545 lightly laden and picked our way up the steep slopes south of Garganta Pass between precarious seracs, finally reaching the gentler upper slopes, and at 1110 hours struggled onto the sastrugied summit dome in a very strong wind at 18 degrees F. Though no rock was in sight, there were chips of granite up to an inch in diameter on the snow surface, blown there by the winds. A few summit photos of spectacular, cloud-decked lower peaks and the blue haze of the Pacific over the Cordillera Negra before whiteout enveloped us; still it was over an hour before we began our descent. Some difficulty was experienced retracing the route we hadn't wanded, but we reached camp at 1530 hours. We wanted to climb the sharper North Peak, too, but March weather now closed in in earnest, holding us in camp (two 2-man tents) in a terrific wind and snow storm the next day, and on the 17th it was only good enough for us to manage our descent to the edge of the glacier. The following day we walked out a different route to Yungay, stopping to swim in the Quebrada, much to the amazement of Indian spectators. We think ours was the 17th ascent of Huascaran and the first outside June, July, and August.

The overland route to Bolivia is long and hard; we even had to get out of our buses and walk a couple of places, but Cuzco, Machu-Picchu, and Lake Titicaca make it well worth while. Our first day in La Paz we learned of their ski area at 17,000' with a road to it only 10 or 12 miles above the city, so we went there and found a cosmic ray laboratory as well. 2-4 April we climbed the five named summits over 5000 meters within reach (the highest, Cerro Chacaltaya, is about 17,700') and watched the skiing on Sunday. The tow (you attach to the cable with a belt-hook) runs up the glacier from 16,800' to 17,500', and fifty of so active skiers did not by any means crowd the slope. We were interested to observe a species of finch nesting under a snow bridge in a crevasse.

A word about the sun, our seasonally benevolent friend of high latitudes. Here in the tropics "el Sol" may still be the provider of all we cherish, but bare-skinned worship up where atmospheric buffer is thin is not to be recommended. Particularly is this true where snow reflects those direct rays up onto tender skin not accustomed to receiving them. It's no fun, for instance, to be sunburned inside your nostrils, and even a parasol doesn't protect from this reflected light. Be prepared with plenty of ointments and cream and doubly-dark goggles in the tropics.

PALMER'S CREEK HOMESTEAD ROAD

Sunday, March 27

John Wolfe

This was a short "exploratory" trip on snow by Tony and Betty Bockstahler and myself. I had learned of the road from Ray Bean of Ptarmigan Ski Area and wanted to investigate.

It leaves the Palmer Highway north of Peter's Creek at Chugiak, where a very small log cabin is right alongside the paved road. At first, it is level through several homesteads. Where it hits the steep hillside of the Mt. Klutna ridge, there are two approaches. Both are connected across a long level "bench" of land which appears to have been cleared years ago for homesteading.

Above this "bench" there still are two roads. Both climb very steeply--apparently 4-wheel drive is advisable all year. The two join near the top of the ridge, so it doesn't matter which approach is used. We only went some three miles. The road's reported length is 6 miles, so it would be both interesting and worthwhile trying another time this summer.

HOMESTEAD ROAD -- EAGLE RIVER

April 3

Helen Wolfe

On Sunday, April 3, Iarge Prescott, Steffen Saagoe, Tony Bockstahler, and I "discovered" another homestead road. To our delight, it does what we had hoped--offers access to ridge walking above timberline.

At about 10 a.m. we parked our car at the turn in Eagle River Loop Road and headed north on the homestead road (for a short distance paralleling the Palmer Highway). Though the road was bare, we optimistically carried skis and snowshoes for use at higher altitudes. I should say Steffen and Tony carried them--such chivalry! We kept to the right until we were almost at timber line, then took a left turn,

traversing away from Meadow Creek and Eagle River and back toward Ptarmigan Ski Area, again more or less paralleling the Palmer Highway. This road leads to the two homesteads belonging to the Wallace brothers. We met one of them plowing his road; he was friendly and expressed an interest in ICA which lack of time prevents him from following up.

Shortly before the first Wallace homestead we left the road and, donning skis or snowshoes, headed up a wide bowl to the ridge. We found the crust very hard, and, one by one, we gave up our winter feet. The ridge proved to be mostly windswept and provided easy access to our "peak", the first high point on the ridge north of Meadow Creek, a shade over 3000 feet.

Tony traversed the ridge to the northeast to get a look at Ptarmigan Ski Area at the headwaters of Little Peter's Creek. He rejoined us at the homestead road for the downhill trip. We reached the car about 6 p.m., pleased with our first hike of the season and our "new" access to timberline.

MT. GOODE AND MT. MARCUS BAKER

April 20-28

Art Davidson

Eventually the clouds do clear over the Chugach. Eric Barnes says, "Let's go fly". And you go.

On April 20 Eric Barnes, flying for Alyeska Air Service, set Helmut Tschaffert and Art Davidson down at 8000 feet on the Knik Glacier between Marcus Baker, 13,176', and Goode, 10,610'. In the following eight days of excellent weather they climbed these two peaks, skied down the glacier, and walked out the Knik River gravel bars to the highway bridge.

The afternoon of the 20th and the 21st were spent carrying food and equipment toward Marcus Baker. High camp was at about 10,500 feet. The next day crampons replaced skis at about 12,000 feet. The summit was reached via the snow and icy crust of the west face. The Chugach lay clear and white all around in the bright sun.

The afternoon of the 22nd and 23rd were spent approaching Mt. Goode. On the 24th skis were used up the east side of Goode to within a few hundred feet of the summit. Crampons and a few kicked steps completed the ascent.

The trip out the Knik was over varied and exciting ground. The first day and a half provided long ski runs going down the right hand side of the glacier. At Grasshopper Valley Helmut walked a while along the Glacier Fork of the Knik, then took to the glacier again, and finally walked out the left side of the Knik River. At one of the many stream crossings he made the water rose a little above his waist.

From Grasshopper Valley Art followed the canyon of the Glacier Fork to where it joined the Metal Creek and then came out onto the gravel bars. Goats were down to about 5000 feet, and Art came across a golden eagle lying on the grass, his head feathers torn off, very recently killed. This little canyon is charming and haunting.

Descending to Metal Creek required two rappels. The second dropped onto a snow bridge across the creek. The right side of the Knik River bed has numerous shallow streams that must be crossed, and at the bend where the river turns toward the bridge there is a surprising amount of quicksand which must be navigated.

The week of sun and shirt sleeve climbing ended with one more bit of luck. Drivers on their way to Anchorage were both brave and kind enough to give Helmut and Art rides into town.