



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 2037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

MAY 1982

Volume 25, Issue #5

### MAY MEETING

The meeting will be held Wednesday, May 19, at 8:00 p.m. on the top floor of the Pioneer Schoolhouse, Third & Eagle, Anchorage, Alaska. After the business meeting, Tim Byrnes will present a slide show on trekking in Nepal.

### MCA GENERAL MEETING MINUTES - APRIL 21, 1982

The April meeting of MCA was held on Wednesday, April 21 on the top floor of the Pioneer Schoolhouse at Third & Eagle, Anchorage, Alaska. President John Dillman called the meeting to order at 8:09 p.m. March meeting minutes were corrected to read: Treasurer's Report Money Market Funds \$3,557.76, Total MCA Funds \$4,130.04; otherwise the March meeting minutes were approved as published in the SCREE.

#### Treasurer's Report: Reggie Buchanan

Checking Account	\$ 496.68
Petty Cash Fund	82.32
Money Market Funds	<u>3,628.92</u>
MCA Total	\$ <u>4,207.92</u>

#### Guests and New Members:

Sue Olson, Tom Meekin, Brian Williams, Peter Flournoy, Robert Cadieux, Jane Slaughter, Will Nicholson, Annette Juliussen, Marty and Karen Mulholland, Rudi Bertsch and family, Ruben Dunagain and family, Elizabeth King, Gwynn Goble, Peter Holman, Brenda Davis, Phil Bigsby, John Strassenburgh, Thomas and Tina Faulkenberry, Dennis and Penny Wood, Peter Crimp, Erick Kuntz, Douglas Wilson and the Foxworth family.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS

##### Conservation Committee - Mike Frank - 243-7645

CSPTA trail maintenance for Bold Peak is scheduled on May 15 and 16. Contact Tim Neale at 274-4952 or John Lohff at 276-8714.

A discussion was lead by Pete Panarese (279-3413) regarding the State Land Selections. A motion by John Lohff "That MCA send a letter on behalf of the club members supporting legislation to endorse the State policy" was seconded and passed.

Public access to Eagle River South Fork Valley is in question due to private blocked corridors. Persons having entered this area before 1963 are requested to contact Pete Panarese.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Memorial Day hike to Chickaloon has a correction on the departure time. It is 7:30 a.m. Contact John Nevin at 276-6665.

May 1 & 2, an overnight trip to Mint Glacier. Contact John Dillman at 279-1246 or Graham Macdonald at 345-5791.

May 9, Sunday, a hill walk to Knoya and Tikishla Peaks. Contact Ernie Borjon at 344-8661 or Graham Macdonald at 345-5791.

The Beginners Basic Rock Climbing Class is scheduled for May 22 & 23. \$5.00 class fee. This is a two-day event, but not overnight. Contact Graham Macdonald at 345-5791 or John Dillman at 279-1246.

There are still several registers to be placed on local mountain peaks. Contact Tim Neale at 274-4952 for Peak names and general information.

If you have slides you would like to present at an MCA meeting, please contact Rick Severn at 344-7269.

A letter of resignation was received from Peter Sennhauser regarding his seat on the MCA Board. His resignation and recommendation of Ernie Borjon to replace him for the balance of his term which expires at year-end was accepted by the MCA Board. A BIG Thank You to Peter for all his past assistance with club business.

A welcome to Ernie Borjon as new Board Member. Ernie has been very active as an instructor of MCA classes and a generally helpful club member.

Thank you to Martha Severn for the delicious cookies at the April meeting. What a great and good surprise!

The slide shows tonight will be presented by Graham Macdonald on climbing and hill walking in Scotland; and Valdez ice climbing by Ernie Borjon.

If you missed these, you missed two great presentations, judging by the appreciative comments by the audience.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted: Sandi Macdonald, Secretary

LET'S SUPPORT THE LANDS SWAP

The MCA Board has endorsed the recent Eklutna Village Corporation/Municipality/Chugach State Park agreement settling Eklutna's land selections. Among other things the agreement ensures State management of Eklutna Lake and its environs. The Legislature must approve the agreement before it becomes final. It is important, therefore, that you send supporting messages this week to the following key legislators:

Senator Bettye Fahrenkamp  
Representative Kenneth J. Fanning  
Representative Richard W. Halford  
Representative Eric G. Sutcliffe

Pouch V (M/S 3100)  
Juneau, AK 99811

TREK FOR LIFE AND BREATH

The Alaska Lung Association would like to invite members of MCA on the 1982 trek. Date of trek will be from August 7 - 14. This year's trail will start at Lost Lake and end at Devil's Creek trail head. Interested members should contact Marc Phillips (276-2341), Keith Rizer (344-7553) or the Alaska Lung Association (272-2332) for meeting times and location.

NEW STOVE FOR MINT GLACIER HUT

John Dillman reports that a brand new gasoline stove is now in operation at the Mint Glacier Hut. Bring along some white gas and keep warm on those frosty nights.

BEGINNERS' ROCK CLIMBING CLASS - 22 & 23 May Boy Scout Rock - Seward Highway

To provide the beginner with the essential of safe rock climbing, the Club will teach a few basic knots, safe rope work, and rock anchoring technique. Rappeling.

You will need boots or "tenny runners."

There will be plenty time to discuss climbing gear and a good selection of equipment will be displayed.

Instructors: Graham Macdonald (345-5791) and John Dillman (279-1246)

## HIKING SCHEDULE

May-June 1982

MAY

Sat. 15 Bodenburgh Butte, Palmer (elevation 800'). This is an easy beginners's hike designed to loosen up those winter-weary muscles. Meet at UAA Sports Center parking lot 10:00 a.m. and we'll have lunch overlooking the Matanuska Valley. Leader, Dona Agosti (248-0089).

Sat/Sun 22-23 Slaughter Gulch, Cooper Landing. Trail leaves near Kenai Lake Bridge and climbs steeply to high viewpoint, then levels to a small lake and long valley where there is excellent camping and good climbing. May be some snow this time of year. You can make this a day hike or overnight. Okay for families. Leave UAA Sports Center parking lot at 7:00 a.m. Two hour drive to Cooper Landing. Leader, Pat Klouda (243-3216).

Sat/Sun/Mon 29-30-31 Memorial Day Chickaloon, Knik-Nelchina Trail. This trip is a long-time MCA tradition. The trail begins at Mile 89 Puritan Creek on the Glenn Highway, then climbs about 800 feet to a ridge. It then turns west to the Simpson Cabin site on Boulder Creek where we have camped in the past. (This site has been claimed, but we have permission to camp here for two nights.) The second day is usually spent exploring places like Anthracite Ridge and the Boulder Creek forks. The third day, we hike downhill about 12 miles along the Chickaloon River to the Glenn Highway. Leader, John Nevin (276-6665). Meet at UAA Sports Center parking lot at 7:30 a.m.

JUNE

Sat/ 5 Bird Ridge, near Bird Creek bridge, Seward Highway. High point 3205. This is a trail which climbs steadily to its high point, but can be done by beginners. There may be some snow on the ridge at this time of year. Meet at UAA Sports Center parking lot at 9:00 a.m. Leader, Roger Kennedy (243-6105).

JUNESat/Sun  
12-13

Caribou Creek Trail. Leaves Glenn Highway at Mile 106.4 near the Caribou Creek bridge. There is a gap in the trail about two miles from the beginning, so the general course of Caribou Creek is followed for about 3 miles to mouth of Bitter Creek, where the trail resumes. Sheep, moose and caribou may be seen. Rockhounds might find agates, jasper and other mineral rocks. Leave UAA Sports Center parking lot at 7:00 a.m. Leader, Dona Agosti, (248-0089).

Sat/Sun  
19-20

Flat Top Sleepout, Annual Solstice event. Leader, President John Dillman. Come up the mountain anytime Saturday afternoon. If we get a fire permit, bring a log for the fire. Enjoy the long hours of daylight on this longest day of the year.

Sat/Sun  
26-27

Ptarmigan Lake - Kenai Peninsula. Good views, good climbing in Paradise Valley beyond the lake, but trail is badly overgrown. See Hike #12 in 55 Ways to the Wilderness. Some may wish to camp near the lake, others will want to explore Paradise Valley. Okay for families. Leave UAA Sports Center parking lot at 6:00 a.m. Leader, Greg Higgins.

AVALANCHE WORKSHOP LEVEL II - Mark Skok (344-2789)

As avalanches continue to fall, the standard of State-funded avalanche-hazard studies continue to rise. In March and early April, two groups of mountaineers, backcountry skiers, and other snowflakes, contemplated loaded slopes during well-executed Level II Workshops sponsored by the State Division of Parks.

The first was conducted March 25-28 at the Forest Service Kenai Lakes work camp. Twenty-two students, including several MCA members, attended. The second was conducted at Thompson Pass the following week.

Speaking for myself, upper-level instruction brought home just how much I didn't know about snow slides. I recall Level I as a torrential presentation of concepts regarding snow metamorphism, snow pit technology, a prolonged search for a particular PIEPS (rest its soul; turned off before burial, it didn't peep and never was found); and a healthy injection of awe regarding avalanches.

Level II opened with an assumption the students knew equi-temperature snow from temperature-gradient snow. Classroom instruction was minimized, though there were discussions, accompanied with slides, of snow crystals and aspects of metamorphism. There were talks on meteorology, rescue and route finding. The point wasn't so much to present new information as to have students assimilate what they had been introduced to previously.

The core of the course was found in the Kenai Mountains. Telemarking won't be discussed here, though that activity captured the skis of many; a few had a tough time examining the snowpack at a depth greater than the prevailing upper 3" layer, which was unscientifically labeled "powder."

But a trip up Taylor Creek, where four MCA members died in an avalanche January 21, 1978, was sobering. That journey was an emotional hammer that knocked home four days of academic and field instruction on proper backcountry behavior.

In one seminar on rescue of avalanche victim, Tim Neale and I discovered that the proper use of beacons requires a fair amount of practice -- which we hadn't had. In the same seminar, students were buried in a shallow trench. They felt the claustrophobia and tremendous weight of a foot of snow packed over them. One can only imagine the pressure of the tons released by even the smallest slides.

Still, said instructor Jim Hale, "If you're buried, make one mighty effort to push free. Though you might feel inundated, you might be just a few inches under. Following the first shove, relax and black out to preserve oxygen."

Doug Fesler, snow ranger and head avalanchaholic for State Parks, demonstrated methods for triggering mini-avalanches, which go beyond snow pits in providing clues to slope stability (such slides also can be dangerous if not handled properly).

But the key theme presented was, don't get caught. "A beacon is the best thing in the world for finding another beacon," Fesler said. "But it doesn't ensure life." He advocated a cautious approach: Retreat if in doubt.

Group dynamics, instructors said, are as important as knowledge of snow dynamics when trying to avoid avalanche hazards. Communication within a group is the major key to safe travel, Hale said. "But the way our society is, it's hard for people to express fear, or look stupid. Still, I'd rather look stupid than be dead."

Jim Hackett, boss of the big guns that guard the Seward Highway, said, "Just because somebody tells you something and he's the boss doesn't mean you should do it." Don't let the leader be the biggest avalanche hazard.

Colorado avalanche consultant Don Bachman said, "In any group you get a bunch of egos. Egos aren't always bad. And you get a lot of macho. Macho is always bad. It's always hard to jump that gap and say, 'Uh-uh.'"

The course was relaxed, but informative and invaluable. The Legislature now is paring budgets; the Parks Division won't be spared. Express the need for continued avalanche hazard awareness courses. They provide a ripple effect: one person takes the course, then teaches others the rudiments of safe backcountry travel. Those people are winter travelers the State's Department of Public Safety won't have to track down at a cost of thousands.

The total cost for educating the students comes to about \$100 each. Students paid \$40 to take the course. It's a bargain for them and still a bargain for the State.

## TRIP REPORTS

### SPURR OF THE MOMENT

On the morning of March 30, a light plane piloted by Lowell Thomas brought us across Cook Inlet to the base of the southeast ridge of 11,070-foot Mt. Spurr. We had talked of Spurr since October. Our party included three MCA members, Doug Van Etten, Dan O'Haire, and me, Willy Hersman, along with Mike Tumey and Todd Miner. The weather, very encouraging, did not change, as it turned out, for the entire climb --sunny with only light wind and cold nights. We felt confident of being the fifth party to the summit.

Progress was slow from the beginning. Eighty pound packs on soft snow, but the route was pretty straightforward, and the main concern was to lighten the loads by eating the extras and drinking the summit beer. By the second night we had found a secure camp for our tents and watched the lights of Anchorage while the cocoa brewed and we sat with our down wrapped about us at 4900'.

Next day brought us to the first of two difficulties on this first ascent route, a series of gendarmes about one-half mile long on the ridgetop. The pace slowed measurably. Cliffs of rotten lava topped with cornices and 2500' of quick slope below made us assume care with each step on the soft snow. Occasional protection allowed us to use a cache of polypropelene line left by a previous party for our planned return, but darkness forced a bivouac among the rocks.

The gendarmes were passed the next morning and we slogged our burdens up the ridge to an easy berschrund and dug a nice cave at 7000'. Next morning we topped the ridge for a good look at Spurr. The crux, just ahead, is a 60-degree ice slope descending to a plateau where the route becomes a cake walk and a high camp is easily placed. What should have been a straightforward descent on the ice slope was complicated by heavy packs,

differences of opinion and ability, and lack of team effort. Twelve hours on the slope brought moonlight and a poor bivouac only 600 feet down at 7200'.

On Sunday, then, Doug Van Etten and I roped up for an early start to pick up an airdrop from a friend out on the plateau. It never came, but encouraged by good weather and light loads, we decided to go for the summit. Doug broke through a bridge in front of me at the 9500-foot level and fell 30' into a big crevasse.

Before I had the anchors secure and reached the lip, he had called Anchorage on his radio from the crevasse, fearing he might pass out. A half hour later he was pulled through the hole, after ascending with a broken ankle and a cut on the head. The other three lounged below on the plateau, unaware of our situation and unaware that within three hours all of us would be whisked away to streets, neon signs, and pizza deluxes after coming so close on such a beautiful April day.

Willy Hersman

PROBE OF POTHOLE GLACIER, TORDRILLO RANGE, USGS TYONEK B7  
March 5-8

There is an easy way to the 9,000' snow plateau in the southern part of the Tordrillo Range, 80 miles west of Anchorage. From the plateau, there is relatively easy access to Mt. Spurr, 11,070', and several other peaks.

Early in March, Rod Wilson, leader, John Dillman, Hans Metz, Tom Meacham, Paul Crews, Sr., Dean Rau, Dave Thomas, and Lowell Thomas tried to approach the plateau from the Nagishlamina River Valley on the west side of the range. Lowell landed us all on frozen Pothole Lake, 2,440', 5 mi NW of Chakachamna Lake. We secured the plane on the edge of the 2,000' lake. Weather was good for the entire trip with temperatures from 2-20°F, little wind, and generally clear skies.

Pothole Glacier begins within  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile of the lake and courses NE toward the high mountains. We went up the glacier for 6 miles but could not find a safe route up through the major jumbled and pleated icefall between 5,500-6,500'. John, Dean, and Dave did negotiate an exposed sidehill route to 6,500' to the left of the icefall, but we decided that it was not secure enough from rockfall, avalanche, and slips to ascend with heavy loads or descend fatigued. The bowl above appeared feasible onto the 10,000' skyline ridge NE, but the way directly to the plateau to the right (SE) was heavily crevassed.

This was the first approach to the Tordrillos from the west.

Rod Wilson

HISTORY CORNER

Easily seen from Anchorage, the pointed summit behind O'Malley Peak known as the Ramp is ranked 4th or 5th among the skyline 5,000-foot peaks. Its top is surveyed at 5,240 feet while that of West Tanaina is listed as over 5,200 feet. Its name is unofficial and was derived from the suggestive shape of its upper regions. Originally, it was referred to as the "mountain behind O'Malley Peak."

Three ridges form a tripod that supports the summit. The West Ridge eventually links to Hidden Peak (5105') via some difficult 4th class terrain. To the northeast another rugged ridge connects to the south side of Mt. Williwaw. The gentle South Ridge leads to the beautiful pass overlooking Ship Creek Lake; most people approach the mountain from this side.

The Ramp was trip #4 in the old 30 Hikes in Alaska, and has been a popular family goal since the 1960's. Vin Hoeman had reported that the first recorded ascent was probably by Ted Rust, Dixie Pierson, Clark & Pat Phillips, and Gary Hansen on August 16, 1964 (SCREE:6:11:3). However, Jon Gardey described a trip in 1960 that could have been this peak (SCREE:3:4:1). Likewise the trip described by Irma Duncan in 1961 may have been the Ramp, and if so it represents the first known Winter ascent (SCREE:3:5:2). Joe Pichler, Elinore and Howard Shuck, and Jim Messick were with Irma.

My most recent trip to the Ramp in 1980 revealed no records of ascents earlier than 1976. Near the register were shards of glass so it is assumed that all the old records have been lost in the demise of the original container. An ABS pipe now houses the present register.

Greg Higgins