

## ISSUE INCLUDES

Brooks Range  
East Summit of Jezebel Peak  
Chigmit Mountains  
Pioneer Peak  
Peak 107

# the SCREE

Mountaineering Club  
of Alaska

May 2018

Volume 61 Number 5



### May Meeting

Tuesday, May 15, 6:30 p.m.,  
at the BP Energy Center at  
1014 Energy Court in Anchorage.  
Rusty Meyer will give the  
presentation.

“

We look up. For weeks, for months, that is all we have done. Look up. And there it is—the top... Only it is different now: so near, so close, only a little more than a thousand feet above us. It is no longer just a dream, a high dream in the sky, but a real and solid thing, a thing of rock and snow, that men can climb.

- Tenzing Norgay

”

# The Mountaineering Club of Alaska [mtnclubak.org](http://mtnclubak.org)

*“To maintain, promote, and perpetuate the association of persons who are interested in promoting, sponsoring, improving, stimulating, and contributing to the exercise of skill and safety in the Art and Science of Mountaineering.”*

**Cover Photo:** Nearing the top of the East Summit of Jezebel Peak. Day 2. Uisdean Hawthorn

**Scree Editor:** Dave Hart

**Scree Layout/Design:** Paxson Woelber

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## CHOATE’S CHUCKLE

### Inflicted by Tom Choate

**Q:** *Several important Yosemite climbs have what in common with most cabins in the woods?*

**A:** Good chimneys.

## CONNECT WITH THE MCA

*meetup*

Check the Meetup site and Facebook for last minute trips and activities.



**Article Submission:** Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to [mcascree@gmail.com](mailto:mcascree@gmail.com). Articles should be submitted by the 19th 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. 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 submit captions with photos.

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# Brooks Range

17 June - 6 July, 2017

Text and photos by Paul Michelson

**E**ight of us spent three weeks in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge during June and July 2017 where we rafted about 80 miles along the Hulahula River from a gravel landing strip at Grassers Landing to a tundra pickup point near the Arctic Ocean. During the trip we also hiked over a 100 miles in the Romanzof Mountains and on the Arctic Plain.

We had remarkably good weather during our trip and completed all of our hiking and climbing objectives including summiting Mount Michelson (8852 feet), which we climbed from the north via a high camp above Esetuk Creek below the terminus of the glacier (69.34505° North, 144.36069° West). We also hiked up Kikiktat Mountain and Kingak Hill on separate days under blue skies to enjoy the limitless views.



**Mount Chamberlin Panorama  
from the hike up Kikiktat Mountain**

Early in the trip we spent several days hiking south from Grassers Landing to Guilbeau Pass, where we made an ascent of an unnamed peak (Peak 7424, 895 foot-prominence) located along the Continental Divide two



**Hiking up Kikiktat Mountain. Mount Michelson behind and camp below on the large gravel bar on left of photo**

miles north of the pass. We found no evidence of prior visitation on top and proposed the name Anastasia Peak for this peak after Grand Duchess Anastasia Nikolaevna of Russia, who was the youngest daughter of Nicholas II Romanov, the last Tsar of the Russian empire. We also proposed the name Alexei Peak (Peak 7401, 2501-foot prominence) for the impressive-looking summit guarding the south side of Guilbeau Pass. Alexei Nikolaevich, was the youngest child and only son of Tsar Nicholas II.

The route up P7424 (“Anastasia Peak”) followed the scree ridge generally north along the Continental Dive to the summit. No difficulties. The peak was climbed on 19 June, 2017 by Don Beavon, Jeff Hancock, Bill Harrison, Joe Anderson, Mike Collins, David Diehl, and Paul Michelson.

Additional information and pictures of our trip can be found here: <http://www.nwhikers.net/forums/viewtopic.php?t=8024779&highlight=michelson>.

*Paul Michelson lives in Maple Valley, Washington.* 



**Mount Michelson Panorama from Kikiktat Mountain**

# “Fun or Fear” on East Summit of Jezebel Peak (9450 feet)

Text by Uisdean Hawthorn

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“We will not leave until we ‘ave the chairs!” said the Frenchman, “and the table outside, the black one, is for rent, no?”

I stood in the Talkeetna Air Taxi office, watching with great amusement as the American staff tried to communicate with the French: a table really wasn’t necessary. I did think it would be good to see the French lording it up on the glacier with kilos of bread, garlic, cheese, and wine. Fortunately, the French were going to a different part of the Revelation Mountains, so we wouldn’t get jealous of their luxuries. Compared to them, Tom Livingstone and I had very basic supplies for our base camp setup, with mainly freeze-dried meals and bagels.

A few hours later, we were crammed into a tiny plane with all our gear packed around us. Paul Roderick, our pilot, kept saying, “Try not to let your knee hit that lever too much.”

“Ok,” I said, trying to act relaxed – but I probably failed when I noticed a label above it that said “THROTTLE.” After over an hour of flying, Paul said, “OK, I’ll just whip it around to give you a good look.” We both stared intently at the north face of Jezebel Peak, our main objective of the trip. “Looks steep, cold, and cool,” I thought.

From the plane we could see a line up the center of the face, which was the only one without big seracs above it. Ten days later, Tom and I stood on a snow patch a third of the way up the route. We looked up an overhanging 10-meter-wide chimney, with a massive snow mushroom blocking it. Below was 40 meters of vertical sugar snow, with not a drop of ice in sight. “Bugger! I guess it’s not possible then,” we grudgingly agreed. We began the horrible process of abseiling down the eight pitches we

had just climbed, most of which were 70 meters long, with bad gear and worse belays. We eventually made it down to the glacier, skiing back to base camp on the east side of the mountain later that night.

Base-camp life resumed over the next few days, with excessive amounts of lying down and eating; and small amounts of skiing in between. The amount of butter being used to toast the bagels meant they were deep fried rather than toasted. I started to feel lethargic. All the lying down just made me want to lie down more.

The weather looked to be clearing up over the next few days, so we packed our bags and set the alarm for 3 a.m. The alarm sounded – but when we looked outside and saw it was still snowing hard we said, “Well ... bugger that,” and went back to sleep. We didn’t bother getting out of the tent until 10 a.m., and spent the rest of the day killing time as snow continued to lightly fall.

The next day, the alarm sounded at 3 a.m. again. That time the stars were on show. Then came the usual faff and attempts to eat breakfast without feeling ill. By 6 a.m., I was following Tom, stepping over the bergschrund and onto the route. I tied in, racked up, and started climbing up 85-degree névé for 30 meters. Thankfully it had two runners in the rock at 15 meters. After 30 meters it steepened and quickly became vertical sugar snow and quite serious. I inched toward some rock in a corner below a roof. Eventually, after thinking light thoughts and digging lots, I found some good runners under the roof. I climbed the rocks on the right of the roof and shouted,



East Face of the East Summit of Jezebel Peak. Photo: Uisdean Hawthorn

“Watch me!” before climbing out left to step around the roof. As I moved my feet around, the snow under the roof all collapsed, and I hung off my axes. I quickly pulled up and campussed, but with my body smeared on the ice. I took a moment to relax once established on the ice. “Well, that was a bit of a rude awakening,” I thought as the flash pump slowly disappeared.

The next two pitches weren’t as hard, but had a total of four runners and some worryingly steep sections of névé. Tom took over the next pitch, which had some hard digging up vertical snow chimneys with some interesting moves, but thankfully there were more runners. Tom’s third pitch looked like a wide icefall. However, it turned out that although the middle section had two inches of ice, five inches of air separated it from the rock. Tom tried to mixed-climb the wall to the right, but couldn’t, so he dug deep, found his big balls and stupid brain, then committed to the hollow section. I belayed below listening to the horrible noises while the ice creaked and boomed as only rotten ice can. Thankfully the upper and steepest section had good ice and screws.

From there a 150-meter snow slope led to a junction of the gully. The right-hand branch looked like a good direct way upward, but had more steep snow, which would be time consuming. The left looked much easier, apart from one pitch up what appeared to be an overhanging chimney. We decided to try the left and were rewarded. I got into the chimney and found the left wall to be covered in excellent ice that even took screws. It felt weird to be climbing such secure ice. It really made me realize how hard and really quite serious the lower pitches had been. We nicknamed this pitch “The Gift,” as it was such a surprise. A long snow slope led to a gully and that led to the main ridge. After a few hours of alpine style ridge climbing, we found a good, flat spot just before dark and settled in for the night. By the time we had melted water and eaten food it was after 1 a.m. Despite only having one sleeping bag made for two people with only a wind shield as a backboard and a two-man bivi-bag, we were quite warm and slept reasonably well. I woke with the sun already in the sky, and after stuffing some porridge down, we continued traversing the ridge, dropping onto

the left side and doing some ledge shuffling to reach a col. Just above the col we found two wires equalized. These belonged to Pete Graham and Ben Silvestre who first told us about Jezebel Peak and who were the first people to climb the east face [Ed. note: See the September 2015 Scree].



**Uisdean Hawthorn on the ridge. Photo: Tom Livingstone**

From there we soloed up the easier ridge to the summit, where we sat in the sun for a while, enjoying the warmth and the fact there was no wind. For the descent we down-climbed back to the wires, but instead of abseiling down the gully on the east face – which Pete and Ben had climbed – we went down the west side. Three long raps later we were in a broad gully that could be down-climbed to reach the massive southeast couloir, which we walked down in 40 minutes.

This left us at the base of a col which blocked our way back to our skis and base camp. It looked quite big; we guessed six pitches. It didn’t have one obvious way up. After a bit of debate and using the last of our gas to melt some water, we decided to try the steep-looking gully on the left. I sat, thinking that we had made a big mistake and that we were about to have to do more run-out steep-snow climbing.

In the end the thought of getting going was worse than the actual effort of climbing. The snow getting to the base of the gully was the worst bit. It had been fully thawed by the heat of the sun and felt like trying to climb up the inside up of a Slush Puppy machine. Once on the steeper sections, the ice was surprisingly good and after two pitches Tom arrived at my belay. Thinking we were





**Good bivi scenes. Photo: Tom Livingstone**

about half way up, I turned to him saying, “Tag! You’re it!” Tom set off and tried to make his way up the side of a roof, which had a small snow mushroom underneath. After some digging he down-climbed and looked around. Spotting a crack on the right wall, he aided his way up it. Eventually he reached some slabby ground and quickly found his way back into the gully. A pitch later and we were at the top of the col – much to our relief.

I took the rack and, looking down a gully, found an anchor to abseil off easily enough, but I could also see the top of what appeared to be a massive snow mushroom. “I really hope we don’t have to touch that,” I thought as I started abseiling. Fifty meters later, however, I saw that the mushroom was set on a massive chockstone and we could just abseil straight under it. The second ab was very pleasant – for the first 15 meters until I came to an overhang. I looked down to see a huge slot. I started abseiling, hoping my ropes reached something at the bottom. After a wild 45 meters I realized my ropes were about 3 meters short of a ledge system. I climbed back up 10 meters or so to a chockstone and, as I couldn’t find anything else to ab off, I threw a big loop of tat round the chockstone, bounce-tested it, and then shouted, “Rope free!” Tom didn’t seem too concerned when he arrived,

but wasn’t overjoyed to join me and just free-hang off the chockstone. However, all went well and we abseiled to the big ledge 20 meters down. From there it was only two more abseils down to the glacier. We trudged back to our skis and were soon celebrating in base camp by eating deep-fried wraps with cheese.

We flew out to Talkeetna a few days later, the French team that I had met on the way in were on the plane

when we got in. We all celebrated in the Fairview Inn over beers, talking about our climbs and all the funny things we had seen in Alaska.

Thanks to the Mount Everest Foundation and the British Mountaineering Council for their grant support.

*Tom is sponsored by: Petzl, La Sportiva, Julbo, Mountain Equipment, and Tent Meals Expedition Food.*

*Usdean is sponsored by: Mountain Equipment, OTE Sports Nutrition, Scarpa, Edelweiss, Grivel, and trac. 🇮🇪*



**The pair climbed the thin couloir streaks just left of center. To the right of the large grey rock scar is “Hoar of Babylon.” Photo: Tom Livingstone**

# Chigmit Mountains: Redeeming the '16-'17 Season in Four Days

**Text by Dante Petri**

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**T**he short: We won the glacier lottery. Four days of crystal clear skies, spectacular terrain, a great group, and good snow and stability. The only thing that could have been better: more time, but you gotta take the wins when they come!

The long: Phil Hess asked earlier this winter if Meredith Noble and I would be interested in joining Natalie Osborne and him on a ski trip in the Western Chugach Mountains. There wasn't much hesitation on my part: exploring a new zone, and a first glacier-camping experience for both Natalie and Meredith.

Anyway, the set up for this trip had some definite bumps. One was the lack of snow, and excessive wind the mountains of Southcentral experienced this year. What was already a cool and dry winter took a shot at the record books for drought when the region failed to see a single measurable flake of precipitation from February 27 to March 27. It looked like we might spend our trip looking for warmed sunward slopes or hoping to find some sheltered chalk in the chasms.

Then, on cue, the biggest, wettest storm of the season rolled in and dumped for a little over a week. At mid-alpine elevations (2000 feet upward) the snow pack increased from 60 inches to 90 inches in Turnagain Pass in a matter of days.

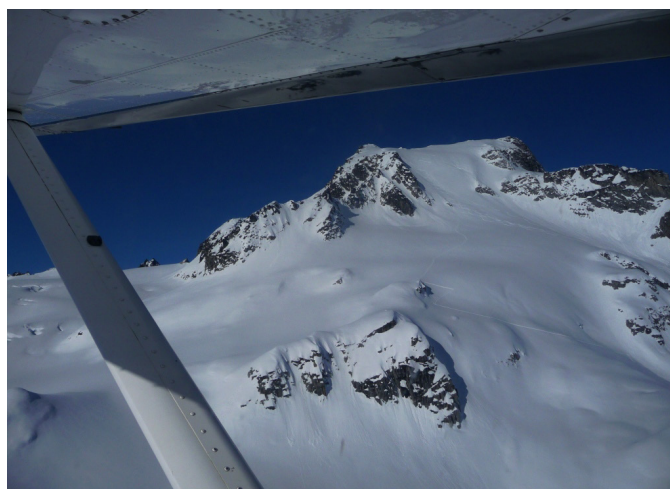
The snow that fell in that time likely packed more water volume than all the previous storms that winter combined.

The avalanche cycle was massive, with sheets of snow ripping out multiple layers, sometimes to the ground.

In general, big spring storms are not a good thing, but, on the flip side, the alpine snowpack that season lacked a single, stout bed-surface layer anywhere: it was just cold, wind-affected, complicated, and dry.

Amazingly, that storm saved our skiing bacon.

Next bump: the logistics of getting into the



**A view of the upper two-thirds of the easterly face of Camp Peak. Photo: Dante Petri**

Western Chugach became an issue.

As the title of this post indicates, that's not actually where we skied.

Long story short, Phil made a last-minute call to Doug Brewer of Alaska West Air in Nikiski to see if he could take us to the Neacola Mountains, and we were in luck; he was available.

Phil had been to the Neacolas a couple times before and already had some ideas for spots. The range had been high on my list for a while, and while it had been a dry year, I was more optimistic the snowpack would be stable closer to the coast. The idea of pot-shooting in a completely new zone with a potentially weird snowpack didn't sit well.

As one final, though minor, set of bumps, despite generally clear skies everywhere else, high clouds parked themselves over the west side of Cook Inlet on our scheduled departure date. Oh, and my sinuses decided they wanted to party with the latest cold virus.

Doug called off the flight early Sunday afternoon as the clouds continued to cling thickly to the glaciers, so we moved the trip back a day. Fortunately, the weather looked good for the rest of the week, and I instead got to spend the day hanging out in Soldotna and reconnecting with the Peninsula Posse, a real bonus treat, having not seen many of them in a really long time.



I hoped the extra day would also let me fight off the impending cold, but that night, it decided to stop sniveling about, and go full throttle.

Monday morning, the clouds were still lingering, and all the Sudafed in the world didn't seem like it could clear my sinuses or the high stratus. We hung around Doug's lodge, discussed some possible landing spots with him, and waited. My Nyquil hangover was thick, and all I really wanted to do was curl back up in bed and sleep. Then at 2, Doug jumped, as the remote webcams in Lake Clark Pass showed clearing blue skies. We headed to the back of the hangar to load the waiting Beaver.

Despite some idea Phil had, Doug had two spots of his own in mind, and offered to fly us over both and let us decide.

I'd heard that not only was Doug a heck of a pilot, but that he had a great eye for ski zones.

It doesn't hurt to be familiar with your zones, but when we explained to Doug the group's abilities and motivations, you could practically see the light bulb go off as he identified where we'd be happiest.

I want to underscore this next part: He absolutely nailed it.

The first zone was at a glacial pass at the headwaters of Blacksand Creek in the Chigmit Mountains, the second was a bit farther west. The westerly zone, though offering bit more steep terrain, was notably drier, and the decision was unanimous to set up at the head of Blacksand.

A few hours later we had a comfy camp set up, including an incredible kitchen/dining area dug out expertly by Phil, and a luxurious bathroom excavated by Natalie.

A few hundred yards south of camp was a nice, mellow, 750-foot ( $\pm$ ) slope that formed part of a 5000-foot peak I called Camp Peak, since it overlooked our campsite, and beckoned us to ski.

We headed up and enjoyed two leisurely evening laps overlooking our new home!



**Back at camp. We had a nice, mellow slope right next door. This is a nice amenity on trips like this to start feeling out snow conditions.  
Photo: Phil Hess**

The next morning, the high clouds had returned, but the sun was already burning through them, and by the time we were breakfasted (dang, did you know that's a real word?), coffeed (that's not a real word), and geared up, they had rolled off.

We headed down-glacier toward Blacksand, and then cut right to climb the 2,000-foot easterly face of Camp Peak. The slope was largely glaciated. We circled some chutes that would be fun on the descent, up some glacial ramps, navigating around an ice hole, to a bench about a third of the way up. The next two-thirds was steep and broad, but we eked out the protection of a large rock ridge that blocked the sun on the steeper face and kept the snow cool and dry, top to bottom. The run was excellent, and the exit chutes were a great way to end the run.

Next up, we skied a bit farther down-glacier to a much lower, stegosaurus-looking, northerly-facing ridge, that sported 750 feet of steep, super playful terrain, complete with pillows, drops, and 50-degree entrances.

We debated re-climbing our first skin track up Camp Peak and wrapping around the summit cone to ski back to camp, but instead opted for another lap on the stegosaurus ridge, before making the incline back up to camp to finish off a perfect day.

Day 3 dawned clear and a little nippy thanks to





**At the top of Camp Peak, looking westward. Photo: Dante Petri**

clear skies overnight.

We headed to the gradual ridge north of the camp, and climbed for about an hour or so on firm crust until we were set up atop a 2,000-foot glacial gully leading north. There was some hesitation, as the gully rolled over midway, and it wasn't clear if it went, or if it was an ice cliff midway, but we were stoked to find it went clean to Blockade Lake.

We rode out toward this glacial/geologic absurdity until we reached the mouth of a second valley.

Skins back on, we climbed a moraine into new territory.

The siren call of steep, north-facing lines, cut out from the stout granite above, beckoned.

I found myself pleading between breaths that we would find a majestic line carved free and clear through the stone.

Two options immediately met the eye: One slanted into the rock with a deep inset, and appeared to get so steep at the top it looked more like a waterfall at the top out (it probably went just fine); a second more straightforward line dumped out right next to an ice cliff, but looked manageable otherwise.

We were worried there might be a people-eater

crevasse at the base of the apron, but as we lifted a bit above the deteriorating glacier, it became apparent we were in luck.

The apron was a chore, sun-affected, and still crunchy. Phil and I conferred as we pushed the skinner toward the entrance: If conditions didn't improve once we got into the hallway, that would be a no-go.

We staged up under the line and began the boot.

Meredith took the first crack, and churned like a Rototiller up to her waist in settled piles of slough as we left the apron and entered the hallway.

A little poking around on the old slough deposits revealed a buried density change underfoot that provided perfect support for boots.

We tapped this sometimes-meandering buried vein of firm snow like miners chasing the paystreak for several hundred vertical feet upward until we hit the source, a trough about a foot deep and maybe 18 inches wide where the slough had been running a light, but continuous, train from above.

The channel was firm, just perfect for toeing in. Just outside the channel, the snow was soft and unaffected, with only a very faint crust over it that became ever the more faint as we climbed.



**Meredith Noble takes the first run. Our camp is below, in the center of the plane's ski tracks. Photo: Dante Petri**

We'd left the Verts at camp, a gamble that rarely pays off, but that time, we were in luck: that line had a narrow, naturally preset booter the entire way with tons of good snow on either side.

As Phil said: "If couloir skiing was always this easy, everyone would do it."

We all went through several rotations, and 1,500 feet later, we were topped out.

To our surprise, we didn't have to cram onto the knife-edge ridge we all expected to find, but instead found an expansive glacier.

Yup, we could have gone for a couple-mile skin from camp and cruised right into the top of this line!

Oh well, in country like that, I'd rather know what's below before diving in. There were plenty of lines that didn't go out there, especially in a year like the one we'd had.

As for the descent ... C'mon, it was awesome.

I got to go first, and ran it out to the apron. The line kicked out a ton of slough, but was so wide I rode high above for the majority, other than a quick crossing near the bottom as the slope changed aspect, to tap into

a lower pocket of soft snow. Meredith, Natalie, and Phil followed suit.

Down on the apron, the afternoon sun had warmed the previously breakable crust back into two inches of corn, and we were rewarded with a few more warm wiggles back out to the upper glacier, and then a long pillow-studded moraine cruise back to the lake.

The long skin home took a while, and we had to ski a short, 400-foot sun-soaked southerly slope that expectantly wet-slabbed beneath about midway, providing an unnerving few seconds of straight lining

to the safety of the flats below. After that, it was smooth skinning back to camp.

It was hard to think about having to fly back home already!

We enjoyed our last evening at camp, though, and counted our blessings. Only a few years ago some mutual friends had been camped in that exact spot and been nuked on with 10 feet of snow, spending much of their trip digging around the clock. Those trips can go sideways a lot of different ways, and the last few days were just a gift.

I couldn't wait to go back.

A big thanks to Phil for doing the pre-leg work of making that trip happen. Trip planning was a tough gig; doing so from 1,500 miles away even more so!

Some things about that trip I really liked and wanted to write down for the future.

A smaller group: four people was perfect.

Having a wide diversity of terrain to choose from: I'd rather spend a couple days in a place with multiple options (at least one nearby mellow run, and a few different aspects and pitches), to account for weather, ski



abilities, motivation, and most importantly, stability. I'd rather ski, even if the lines aren't the biggest in the zone, or even in the top 10, then spend the trip looking at lines that aren't in, pose too much objective hazard, or are out of pay grade.

**WAG bags:** You win, Phil, they make for a tidy, less odoriferous camp.

**Light is right:** big group tents are nice, and had we been stormed on, light weight personal tents and the Mega Mid cook tent might have been uncomfortable and unusable, but I'll take that tradeoff, especially given some points below.

**Mountain House:** Pick your brand, but fast food equals faster nutrition and less wasted time and water. Pre-made, hearty meals are a luxury, but they take up more time and fuel. Get everyone fed, get to sleep, get fed again, and get back on the skin track.

**Flexibility:** First, is time. Take the whole week off, or better yet, just schedule two weeks with no critical meetings or deadlines; let your colleagues know you will be gone for four to seven days in that time frame, and deal with Momma Nature and her mood swings. Forecasting there was difficult, but I would probably err on the side of

caution before flying into a coastal mountain range if I saw a sizable low-pressure system careening toward Alaska. Better to be stuck in the office than stuck in a collapsing tent, in my opinion. Try again next week. Second: range and zone. Barring a specific mission or objective, be flexible on your range. Feel out availability with air charters mid-winter, watch the snowpacks, use your sources and your own knowledge to figure out how winter's stacking up, or not. In the weeks in advance, start to dial, and be ready to move to a Plan B, or C. The quality of that trip was dictated by a storm that had hardly wrapped up a few days prior. Most times, that won't be the case, or if it is, it will work the other way around, like, last year, where an absurdly warm storm nuked the snowpack to 6000 feet. We got lucky this time; otherwise we could have been dealing with an aged and wind-hammered snowpack, or worse yet, super-touchy avalanche conditions. I'd say in general, you can get a feel for most the ranges by late February, and should have alternative plans lined out with the group ahead of time if a last-minute weather event changes the game.

**Trust the pilot:** I can't stress enough, Brewer matched us to the terrain perfectly, and I've heard plenty of similar stories. Unless you have a friend with a plane

willing to take you on reconnaissance flights, the reality is, your Google-Earth-and-Topo-map-perusing probably won't mean a thing compared to their experience, unless, again, you have a specific objective or goal. What I can say, is that, at least for the Neacolas and Chigmits, there are a lot of places to go, and I think that overall, it would be harder to pick a bad spot from a terrain perspective, so, local av conditions, prevailing winds, objective hazard levels, and even camp options, figure more highly. 🕒



**Re-grouped on a ridge, Blacksand Creek below us. Photo: Dante Petri**

# Pioneer Peak (6398 feet), North Face

## Western Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Nathan Hebda

**B**y 6:45 in the morning of Sunday, April 8th, Alex McCreedy and I were parking at a small Old Glenn Highway pullout right below Pioneer Peak's northern slopes. Pioneer had struck me when I first put eyes on it, but for years any ridge or face route to the true northern summit was outside of my skill and confidence level. Alex and I had now been climbing rock, ice, and mountains together for over a year and were finally feeling ready to put it all together on the north face.

There were two cars there already with another team of two just finished getting their gear on when we arrived. We recognized Katherine Cooper and got to meet her partner Kakiko Ramos-Leon. They reported a third team was already 30 minutes ahead of us. They were thinking of just scouting things out for a while and then spending the afternoon skiing at Hatcher Pass.

The toe of a large path of avalanche debris was easily seen from the road, truly making for a near lack of bushwhacking and virtually zero approach. The two teams took turns passing each other up large chunks of frozen debris until reaching a fork of waterfall ice. The WI3 to the left looked like a worthy destination in itself, but to save time we all soloed the short, but fun, WI2 to the right.



**Kakiko Ramos-Leon and Katherine Cooper on the lower snow slopes. Photo: Alex McReady**



**Kakiko Ramos-Leon starts up the second pitch of WI3. Photo: Katherine Cooper**

Steep snow over ice and a mercifully short alder tunnel then led us into a wide gully of smooth snow. Almost the rest of the route was now clearly in view, towering above us. Katherine and Kakiko led for a while over moderately steep snow that was fun to climb, passing by interesting rock and ice bulges. Alex and I caught up in time and took our turns breaking trail in the soft, but supportive, snow. By 11:00, we had reached where they gully was pinched tight by steep rock ridges and took a break.

The teams split there as Alex and I started up the rock ridge to the right and Kakiko and Katherine headed left up steepening snow to a narrow pitch of WI3 ice. The ridge involved a few exposed moves with holds made invisible by powdery snow. Soloing it saved us time and we were deposited above the ice climb before the other team. We traversed past a two-nut anchor and continued up the widening and steepening snow gully.

We took turns kicking steps, at first making switchbacks, but then climbing straight on as the slope continued to steepen. There the snowpack became much more variable, sometimes deep and soft and other times with layers too hard to plunge an ax through. Progress



slowed as we dug hand pits and stopped to discuss our avalanche hazard. At times a quality in a layer would concern us, but could be avoided with a few steps in either direction. We stepped up slopes over 50 degrees for a few hours without the other team in sight. We figured they had headed to Hatcher by the time they popped out over the ice climb and started up our steps.

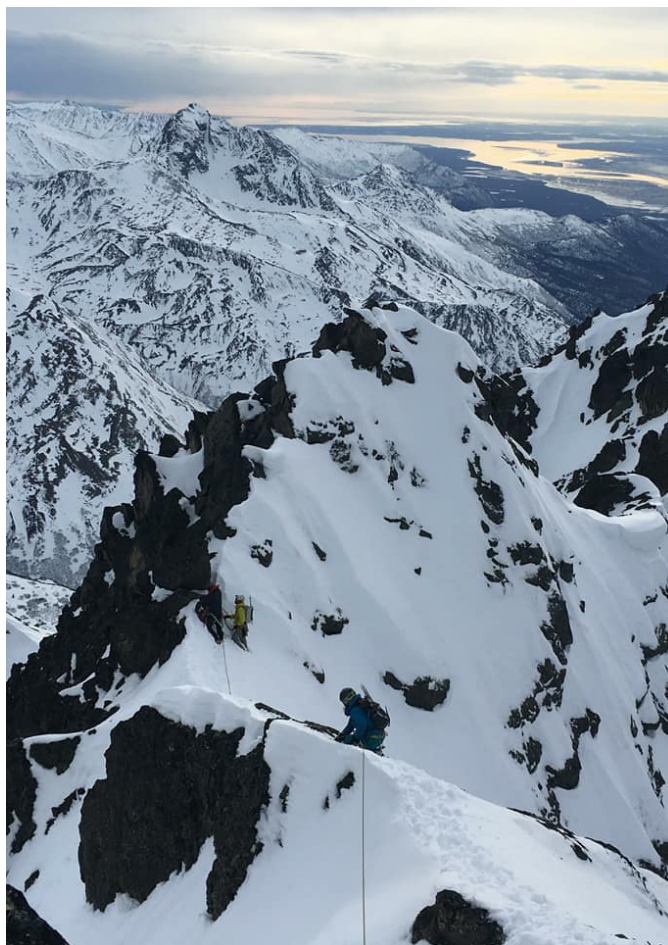
The slope pinched tight again, this time with steep walls to either side. We took a left at a fork in the snow and again lost sight of the other team. We both needed a break, but as the slope continued to steepen, there was no secure place to rest. As angles approached 60 degrees, the snow turned to sugar, forming hollow pockets around the occasional hidden rock features. At one point I was unsure if I would be able to follow Alex, stuck at collapsed and completely unresponsive junk snow.

Finally we crested over the ridge, but we weren't quite sure where we were. To our right on what we had thought was the false summit was an inexplicable set of tracks in the snow, inaccessible from our position. A rock sling found nearby gave us hope that we were on route. We turned left and climbed up a short bit of exposed ridgeline and at last found a small and exposed spot where we could at least get our packs off to hydrate and eat. It was then 4:00, and though we were at that point primarily concerned with our descent, the GPS confirmed the summit was directly behind us and we pressed forward.

Still unroped, we continued up the ridge and then

traversed exposed snow into a gully of fun, but exposed, rock, featuring a few tricky moves over a boulder. That led to a final, exposed ridge traverse and then at last to the summit, which to our great relief was a comfortable place to rest. We had great views all around with some oncoming, but relatively benign looking, weather stirring about.

"This is the safest I've felt in hours," Alex said, and I knew exactly what she meant. There was a challenging down-climb of soft snow ahead of us with the worst of



**Kakiko Ramos-Leon. belays the teams to the rappel anchor.**  
**Photo: Katherine Cooper**

it right at the start. With our single 70-meter rope, a rappel from the ridge would not get us past the very hardest parts. We were heading down the rock gully and considering our options when again to our relief we caught site of Kakiko on the ridge belaying Katherine up with their own 70-meter rope.

They reported that their ice climb was in two pitches, the second of which was thin, steep, and falling apart at the top, requiring slow and careful movement to pass through. They climbed the steepest parts of the snow roped to each other, but were unable to find any protection in the sugary garbage or adjacent rock walls. They passed us by

on the ridge and belayed each other to the summit setting rock protection plus one very questionable spectre along the way. After their return Kakiko led out to the rock anchor and provided a belay to the rest of us. We all went in direct, tied our two ropes together, and rappled right past the steepest and loosest of the snow.

Still, the ropes deposited us on very steep snow,



**Nathan Hebda on the North Summit. Photo: Alex McReady**

sun in the middle of the day and were glad to be higher up the mountain at that time. At last we stumbled down the original avalanche path, through a final patch of devil's club, and across the street to the cars. It was 4:00 Monday morning.

Having never seen the party that was supposed to be ahead of us, we were relieved to see their car gone and didn't have to worry whether they were caught in the avalanches of the lower slopes. The teams parted ways again seated in warm vehicles. Alex and I were both fortunate enough to have Monday off and took

and we would continue to down-climb very steep snow for the next 2,000 vertical feet. A slip there could not be arrested, and we moved slowly and carefully, each plunging an ice ax with one hand and a tool with the other. I was surprised that I was able to find a comfortable rhythm while facing the snow relatively quickly. The sun set as we were still down-climbing, and as the last light faded, we finally were able to turn around and plunge-step to the ice-climb anchors. Two rappels off of fixed nuts and pitons got us to the lower slopes, and for another few hours we continued to plunge-step downward.

We were disturbed to find large, wet, fresh avalanche debris most of the way back down to the alder tunnel. All quite tired and thoroughly worked, we rappelled again off of the WI2 ice and found that the new debris continued directly over the lower WI3 pitch and for a distance after that. We did notice these lowest portions of the route getting a few hours of direct

advantage of a day full of potential for napping and eating burgers. The north face of Pioneer Peak made for a very long day, the vast majority of which was spent on route over attention-demanding terrain. Alex and I agree that this was a new, but exciting, sort of challenge for us, and that we were fortunate to have friends backing us up on it. ①



**The teams descend in failing light. Photo: Kakiko Ramos-Leon**



# Peak of the Month: Peak 107

By Steve Gruhn

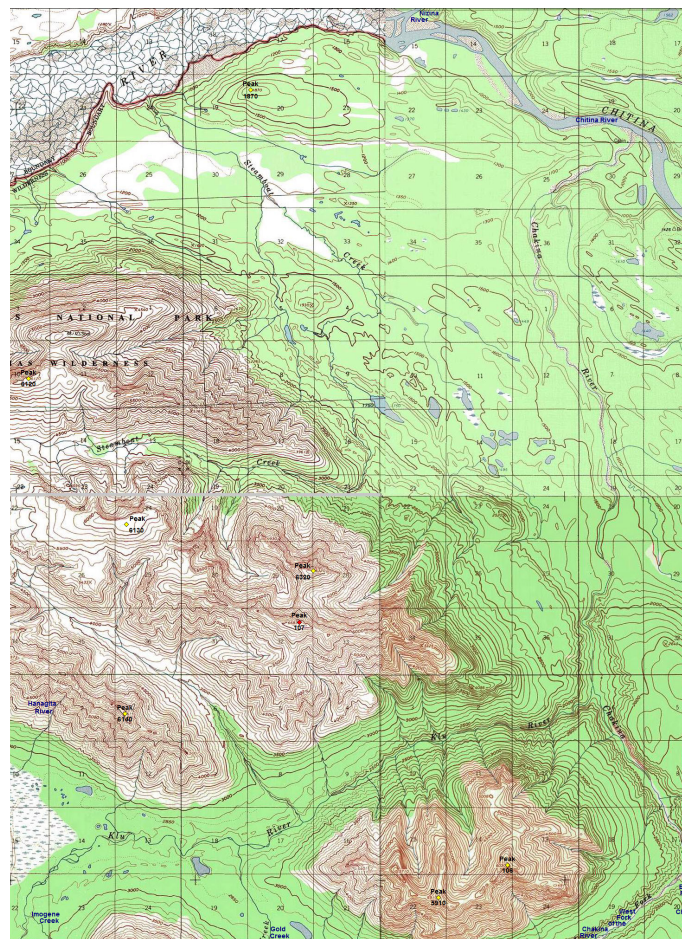
<b>Mountain Range</b>	Eastern Chugach Mountains; Steamboat Hills
<b>Borough</b>	Unorganized Borough
<b>Drainages</b>	Steamboat Creek and Klu River
<b>Latitude/Longitude</b>	61° 13' 20" North, 143° 17' 12" West
<b>Elevation</b>	6683 feet
<b>Adjacent Peaks</b>	Peak 6320 in the Steamboat Creek drainage, Peak 6130 in the Steamboat Creek and Klu River drainages, and Peak 1870 in the Steamboat Creek drainage
<b>Distinctness</b>	993 feet from Peak 6320
<b>Prominence</b>	3858 feet from Peak 6795 in the Larsen Creek and Klu River drainages
<b>USGS Maps</b>	1:63,360: McCarthy (A-7); 1:25,000: McCarthy A-7 NE
<b>First Recorded Ascent</b>	This peak might be unclimbed.

In 1953 a U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey party led by Howard S. Cole performed survey work in a region of the Eastern Chugach Mountains that contained several peaks with prominences exceeding 3,000 feet. As part of the survey work, the team identified and labeled one such prominent peak as Peak 107. With a prominence of 3858 feet, Peak 107 is the eighth-most prominent peak in the Chugach Mountains east of the Copper River.

I don't know of any ascents of Peak 107.



**Southwest aspect of Peak 107. The peak is on the left end of the distant sunlit skyline left of center. Photo: Danny Kost**



The information for this column came from U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey field notes available at <https://www.geocaching.com/mark/details.aspx?PID=UV3830> and from my correspondence with Albert E. "Skip" Theberge, Jr., and David Grosh.

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*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](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com). Articles should be submitted by the 19th 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](mailto: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.

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**Climbing the East Summit of  
Jezebel Peak. Pitch 6 - The  
Emotional Pitch. Not a slab. Not  
attached either. Photo: Uisdean  
Hawthorn**

*Uisdean Hawthorn*

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