

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

May 2021

Volume 64, Number 5



"Make your life a masterpiece;
imagine no limitations on what
you can be, have or do."

– Brian Tracy

Contents

Truth Peak (6860 feet), Wrangell Mountains
Peaks 5120, 5197, 5067, 4754 and Red Mountain
(4845 feet), Fist Range

Traverse of the Talkeetna Mountains
Point 4155, Central Chugach Mountains, 1896
Twentymile River to Palmer, or maybe just Gird-
wood

Peak of the Month: Spyglass Hill (5960 feet),
Painted Hills, Alaska Range

MAY MEETING

Wednesday May 5, at 6:30 p.m. The speaker is T.B.A. This will be our last
meeting before a summer break until September.

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

www.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."

This issue brought to you by: Editor—Gerrit Verbeek assisted by Dawn Munroe

Cover Photo

Renee Ernster below the summit block of Peak 5067 in the Fist Range, Central Chugach Mountains.

Photo by Dave Hart

MAY MEETING

Wednesday May 5, at 6:30 p.m.

The speaker is T.B.A. This will be our last meeting before a summer break until September.

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83674706360?pwd=VUY4VElyVEpqc2xmN29BbG1OKzR3dz09>

Meeting ID: 836 7470 6360

Passcode: 033973

One tap mobile

+13462487799,,83674706360#,,,,*033973# US (Houston)

+16699009128,,83674706360#,,,,*033973# US (San Jose)

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

Contents

Truth Peak (6860 feet), Wrangell Mountains.....	4
Peaks 5120, 5197, 5067, 4754 and Red Mountain (4845 feet); Fist Range	6
Traverse of the Talkeetna Mountains	9
Point 4155, Central Chugach Mountains, 1896.....	13
Twentymile River to Palmer, or maybe just Girdwood	15
Peak of the Month: Spyglass Hill (5960 feet), Painted Hills, Alaska Range	17
March Board of Directors Meeting Minutes	18
The Return of Careless Ev(eryman)	19

Trips

July 16—24th: MCA Summer Mountaineering School – The Bomber Traverse. Hiking, climbing, and glacier travel in the Talkeetna Mountains. Learn: Snow travel, ice tool use, ice climbing, glacier travel, navigation, route finding, rappelling, rock climbing, fun, exploration, leadership skills and confidence building. Basic Mountaineering instruction for accomplished backpackers. No fee for this training. Trip participants share group expenses. Trip Leader: Greg Bragiel, unknownhiker@alaska.net, 907-350-5146.



A leader directs an avalanche probe line on a glorious day.

Photo by Seth Weingarten

Geographic Names

The Alaska Historical Commission has requested comments from the MCA regarding a proposal to make official the name Naqsralugiaq Pass for a 3560-foot pass (68.075°N, -150.444°W) between the North Fork of the Koyukuk River and the Itkillik River in the Endicott Mountains of the Brooks Range. The pass is notable for sitting on the Continental Divide between the Arctic Ocean and Bering Sea. Please submit comments to [Steve Gruhn at geographicnames@mtnclubak.org](mailto:geographicnames@mtnclubak.org) by May 3 so that he can incorporate them into the MCA's formal response to the AHC.

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.

Online? Click me!



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

Announcements

Proposed Changes to MCA Membership Categories and Dues

At the MCA board meeting on February 21, 2021, the Board voted to endorse the following changes to the MCA By-Laws regarding membership categories and fees. The next steps are to print the proposals in the Scree for the membership's consideration, and then to have a vote at a subsequent general membership meeting.

The proposals would, if adopted, take effect with the 2022 membership year.

The proposed changes in MCA annual membership categories and dues are:

(new) Basic ("Dirtbag") Membership: \$20.00

- (open to full-time students, persons under 20 years of age, active-duty military, and persons who believe that they cannot afford Regular individual MCA membership)

(changed) Regular Individual Membership: \$30.00 (increase of \$10.00 over current individual membership dues)

(changed) Family Membership: \$40.00 (increase of \$10.00 over current family membership dues)

(new) MCA Life Membership: \$60.00 one-time payment for a MCA Life Membership.

- Qualifications for MCA Life Membership:
 - a. 30 or more years of substantially continuous membership in MCA
 - b. Payment of one-time Life Member fee of \$60.00
 - c. Review: MCA Board to review each Life Member application before approving it, including review of MCA membership data, to the extent it is available.

Hard-copy monthly *Scree* newsletters for each of the four membership categories above is at an additional yearly fee of \$45.00, at the member's option.

(unchanged) Honorary MCA Lifetime Membership: No annual fee

This category remains unchanged. It is to be awarded, after nomination by the MCA Honors and Awards Committee, at the discretion of the MCA Board, based on existing criteria of outstanding service to MCA and/or to Alaska mountaineering. The Honorary MCA Membership Award comes with a Certificate, a lifetime membership in MCA, and a complimentary lifetime subscription to the hard-copy monthly *Scree*.

Current Hut Needs, Notes & Inventory

Text by Jonathan Rupp Strong and Greg Bragiel

Hut Needs and Notes- If you are headed to one of the MCA huts, please consult the notes below to see what needs to go to the huts or be fixed. All huts have tools and materials so that anyone can make basic repairs. If you have a favorite hut and would like to

take the lead on checking on the hut and organizing maintenance the MCA would greatly appreciate your help!

Mint Hut- Painting exterior with red oil paint. Clean downstairs ceiling. Lantern mantles. Fire extinguisher. Future considerations: Stainless steel counters, replace 32" front door

Bomber Hut – Fire extinguisher. All windows on main floor are boarded up. Scrape and paint outside wood. Clean with TSP and paint inside walls of hut. Supplies are on site. Window replacements with foyer/deck addition are being planned for Summer 2021.

Dnigi Hut – Evaluate hut structural integrity, mold concerns. Future needs: vents- (flies entering)! Bear deterrents in rough shape. Future considerations: Probable rebuild of deteriorated walls.

Holden Hut – Need a window for entry hall or door. Latch on latrine needs attention (freezing closed)

Pichler's Perch – No stove fuel present. Coleman stove working. Door latch needs to be installed. Helo mission planned to change poo barrels out Spring 2021. As of March 16, 2021: Human Waste barrels: 3 empty, 1 full. Supplies to go in: door latch.

Hans' Hut – Install window hold-open clasp. Helo mission planned to change poo barrels out Spring 2021. As of March 16, 2021: Human Waste barrels: Human waste barrel 1/2 full. 1 empty in hut. 1/3 gallon stove fuel present. Coleman stove working. Supplies to go in: none.

Rosie's Roost – 1 gallon stove fuel present. Coleman stove working. Human waste barrels: 2 empty barrels on site. **Alert!!- Bears have been feeding on human waste in barrels and were observed multiple times during maintenance trip.** Securing lids of Human Waste barrels imperative!! **A Word of Thanks. The MCA Board thanks Ryan Stassel for replacing the door latch.**

ALL EKLUTNA TRAVERSE HUTS – ET travelers should take trash compactor bags along. Human waste system WAG bags have been used inappropriately. WAG bags are for packing out NOT placing into onsite human waste barrels. For depositing human waste onsite, use 5 gallon bucket lined with trash compactor bag, place tied bag into onsite human waste barrel.

Scandinavian Peaks Hut – None.

All Huts - The MCA Board of Directors has decided to phase out the Coleman cooking stoves in the huts. In the future, as a stove fails, it will not be replaced. Be prepared- take your own stove. Additional supplies available for placement at any hut: WAG bags (approx. 100) for human waste collection/pack out along Eklutna Traverse. One functional Coleman stove. Tools: saw, pliers, screwdrivers, metal snips, stapler, hammer, paint tray, 2 roller brushes, 4 paint rollers, door lock set, crowbar, caulk gun, socket set.

Summer Business

The days are getting longer, the snow is melting, and backcountry traffic at the hut systems is going to start increasing soon. Please do your part to keep the huts clean, and dispose of human waste properly. Toilet systems vary from hut to hut. The Eklutna Traverse huts use human waste barrels. Use the 5 gallon bucket in each hut, lined with a trash compactor bag and when you leave, place the tied bag into an onsite human waste barrel outside of the hut. 'Wag bags' are for packing out NOT placing into onsite human waste barrels.

Instructions for the Mint Hut toilet are printed below. Enjoy the huts this summer!

EVERYTHING YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT **MINT HUT'S USER-MAINTAINED OUTHOUSE**



ONLY FOR POOP

NOT TRASH, NOT FOOD. IT COSTS \$1,300 TO HELICOPTER A BARREL OUT. WE CAN ONLY FLY OUT HUMAN WASTE. (NO PEE!)



BURN TOILET PAPER

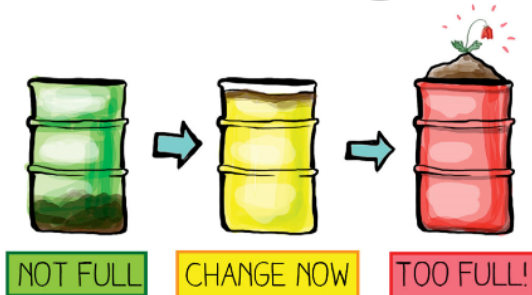
(AND ONLY TOILET PAPER)
IN THE METAL CAN.
SCATTER ASHES BEHIND OUTHOUSE
(AFTER FLAMES ARE OUT).



PEE OUTSIDE

URINE DIVERTER
IS NOT PERFECT.

WHEN TO CHANGE A BARREL:



CHANGE WHEN FILLED TO 3-6" FROM TOP

USE GLOVES & GLASSES
(IN THE MUD ROOM)



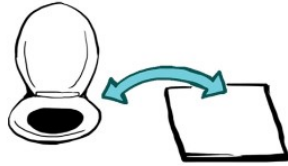
SECURE CHAMBER DOORS PROPERLY, WITHOUT GAPS!

IF THERE ARE GAPS, RAINWATER WILL GET INTO BARRELS.



IF ONE BARREL IS EMPTY:

DISCONNECT DIVERTER HOSE
SWITCH SEAT TO EMPTY BARREL SIDE,
& RECONNECT HOSE



IF BOTH BARRELS ARE FULL:

REMOVE BOTH FULL
BARRELS



PLACE FULL BARRELS TO RIGHT
FRONT SIDE OF OUTHOUSE,
MIDDLE OF MEADOW
ABOUT 60' BEHIND HUT

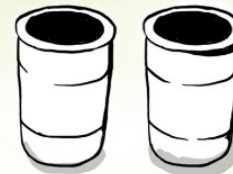


(WHEN REMOVING BY HELICOPTER SLING LOADING THE PILOT
WILL WANT TO BE CLEAR OF ALL OBSTRUCTIONS)



PUT ON LIDS
(MATCH LID COLOR
WITH BARREL FOR CORRECT SIZE)

...AND
TIGHTEN



IF THE HOLDING CHAMBER INSIDE
OR OUTSIDE THE OUTHOUSE
NEEDS CLEANING, PLEASE CLEAN IT!
ALL HUT USERS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL
MAINTENANCE.

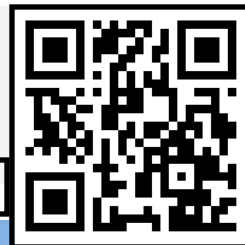
ILLUSTRATED WITH CARE AND WISHES FOR HAPPY POOPING BY SARAH K. GLASER

Truth Peak (6860 feet), Wrangell Mountains

Text and photos by Shane Ohms

March 6 - 8, 2021

62.411, -144.182



Mount Sanford seen from the summit of Truth Peak.

It was a Mount Sanford attempt that fell apart due to an unpleasant weather forecast for the upcoming week. The reality that Sanford wouldn't have happened was later cemented by boot fit issues for 2 out of the 5 in our party. But since we had already ventured nearly 20 miles deep (by snowmachine), Truth Peak made for a fine consolation prize.

On Saturday March 6th we started from the Chistochina River Trailhead on the Tok Highway with the snowmachine support of Gerek Chmielowski, Gerek's dad, Brian Grams, and their friend Bjorn. Gerrit Verbeek and I hopped on the first wave with all our gear while Sawyer Huffman, Sophie Tidler, and Ryan Bish skinned in until their ride would come back. Crossing the Copper River went well because the river had frozen up about a week earlier (crossing the Copper River is sometimes a deal-breaker itself). Some snow bridges in Boulder Creek caused pause to consider if they'd hold the weight of the snow machines - they did. And alas, we made it about 20 miles back to where a good protected spot in the trees was selected for the big wall-tent. We set up base camp while the three remaining skiers were picked up and brought in. That night, our spirits were on varying levels of acceptance concerning how the goal of Sanford was no longer realistic. When I got home from the trip, I wrote a poem poking fun at our defeat.

Scree—May 2021

Oh? So you're here to climb Mt. Sanford?

That is O.K. You are not the first.

But tell me, Hero, what did your friends say of me?

Did they tell you that I'd be a cake walk?

That I'm a non-technical, leisurely skin-up?

Ha! You. Have. NO. Chance.

But go ahead; try me.

That is, after all, what you came here to do. Isn't it?

To ride your cavalry, so valiantly, 25 miles to my base?
To lead your infantry, so powerfully, up my ten thousand foot
staircase?

To endure storms of arrows, so courageously, with a smile on
your face?

To pass over rows of pitfalls, so gracefully, keeping your wits
unfazed?

To breach my highest tower, so boldly, and pillage the entire
place?

And finally, To produce an escape rope, so knowingly, and re-
treat in fashionable haste?

Ha! Ha! Ha! That fairy tale never gets old.

Oh? So you failed to climb Mount Sanford?

It's O.K. You are not the first.

But tell me, Hero, what will you say of me to your friends?

Will you tell them that I'm a massive undertaking?

That I was an unassuming, sobering defeat?

Sunday morning, March 7th, I turned 24 years old. I think Neil Young's song 'Old Man' resonates well with my life: "24 and there's so much more"... The 5 of us on skis set out for Truth Peak. Truth Peak is a name I've given to the 6800'+ point of 500' prominence located 2.5 miles down the west ridge of nearby Capital Mountain. My GPS clocked it in at 6860', so it is a little higher and north of the point some maps show as Point 6818. The name is a play off of the only other named mountain nearby (Capital Mountain) and an impressionable line in a student regent's love letter reading "I am not afraid of Truth-capital-T". (Side note: If someone someday climbs the 6690' peak on the east ridge of Capital Mountain could you please call it T-Peak? Thank you).

Anyways, the five of us hopped on Truth Peak's low-angle north-west ridge as soon as we could. Snow cover was weak in places, but that is what skins are for, right; to protect the bases? At nearly 6000' Sawyer and Ryan couldn't ignore their blisters anymore. They were also out of water. So after a snack break with prime views of Sanford on a splendid day, they would go down to Boulder Creek and then back to base camp. Sophie, Gerrit, and I continued up. I split off at a little col to skin up the west bowl and face because I figured it'd be faster and also because I wanted to feel out how much snow cover we would have for the ride down (it was enough to be playful!). Sophie and Gerrit continued up the ridge which curved into the more scrambley south ridge. As I watched them do some moves with their skis strapped to their backpacks, I was glad to have been able to skin (almost) all the way up. I placed a register and we enjoyed great views. Capital Mountain's full relief was being hidden by some other gnarly blocks on the ridge between us, so what actually intrigued me the most was a spire to the south of Capital Mountain. But that's not to say Sanford and Drum didn't make for the most gaping view - because they did. Two Alaskan giants... for another day.

My skis bumped into few rocks on the way down, but the few they did dealt core shots. Eventually, we made it back into the sun and had a little ski back with snow sparkling in the afternoon light. Sanford could be seen developing lenticular clouds. We'd made good decisions.

Back at the wall tent we swapped tales with Gerek and Brian, who had snowmachined up to 7500' (higher than us!) on the ridge west of the Sheep Glacier. Gerrit had brought some delicious calorie-dense brownies for my birthday and Brian passed two sticks around in circles as we tried to determine whether or not they were crossed or straight (simple games are more entertaining in simple places). Come Monday morning, we packed up so fast we

shocked ourselves and made it back on the road by noon. It wasn't the trip we'd come to Glennallen for, but it was far from a disappointment – and that's the Truth with a capital T!

You can find more pictures from this trip at:

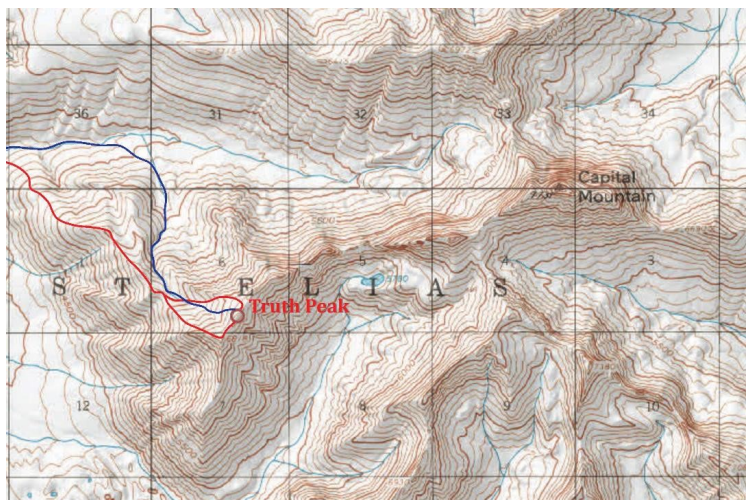
<https://fromrockstorivers.com/2021/04/04/truth-peak/>



Sophie Tidler skis under Capital Mountain.



Ryan Bish, Sawyer Huffman, Brian Grams, and Gerek Chmielowski load up the snowmachine



Fist Range Exploration

Peaks 5120, 5197, 5067, and 4754 and Red Mountain (4845 feet)

Text by Steve Gruhn; photos by Dave Hart

June 5-7, 2020

61.536, -145.168



Renee Ernster peeks out of the tent with the north aspect of the north-northeast ridge of Peak 5120 in the background.

Since 2019 Dave Hart had regaled me with his forays into the Central Chugach Mountains along the Richardson Highway between Valdez and the Edgerton Cutoff. Hearing Dave's tales and reading in the March 2020 issue of *the Scree* of Mat Brunton's favorable opinions of the uncrowded, "high-quality" terrain and minimal brush in the northern part of that region had me primed to experience it for myself.

On the afternoon of Friday, June 5, 2020, I met Dave Hart and Renee Ernster at a gravel pit east of the Richardson Highway at Milepost 73 at an elevation of about 1800 feet. Renee and Dave offloaded two four wheelers and together the three of us rode east up an off-road vehicle trail for my first foray into the Fist Range.

After about two miles of riding, we stashed the machines in the brush northwest of an unnamed lake at about 2500 feet. We hiked up to the lake and then hiked southwest along the ridge northwest of the lake. Dave led us across the path of a large rockslide and then up a short, but quite steep, alder-choked embankment to some less-steep, tundra-covered terrain. Heading south, we came to a ridge overlooking a west-flowing stream and then followed

that ridge uphill to the east. The south slope of the ridge dropped steeply to the creek, which flowed west to the Little Tonsina River.

After gaining about 700 feet, the slope to the south eased and we departed the ridge to the southeast, walking among willows and blueberry bushes toward another unnamed lake. The lake is shown on the USGS maps as draining to the east, but in fact it does not drain aboveground. East of the lake we found a brush-free, level spot at about 3700 feet on which to place our tents. Snow lingered in some nearby locations and the snowmelt provided a rivulet for our drinking water.

The next morning (June 6) we were up and on the move while the snow was still firm from the night's frost. We headed southeast across a north-facing slope, avoiding some steeper terrain to the south as we headed into the Bernard Creek drainage. Rounding a corner and turning to the south, we began gradually ascending the northeast aspect of Peak 5120. We gained the top rather easily and found a cairn on the summit.

We didn't wait very long because we had planned to visit several other peaks that day. As we descended the south ridge I saw a sow

brown bear with three cubs of the year. They were traveling northward on the west side of the ridge and were a couple hundred feet below us. We bunched together, bear spray at the ready, as they ambled downwind below us. I lost sight of them as they entered a gully. And that was the full extent of our bear encounters for the trip.

We descended 800 feet to a saddle and then climbed another 900 feet to the summit of Peak 5197. Again, a cairn awaited us at the summit. We descended the gentle slopes to the southeast to a low point on the ridge and then dropped off the ridge to the south to a 4350-foot saddle. Snow remained there and the area was poorly drained, resulting in a slushy swamp. We were fortunate that this bit of less-than-pleasant travel extended only a couple hundred yards.

Our next objective was the most challenging of the lot. We climbed the north ridge of Peak 5067. It started out easy enough, but got progressively steeper as we neared the summit. I followed Dave's and Renee's tracks up a steep snow chute and then scrambled upward to the summit where another cairn silently greeted me. I could see Dave and Renee descending the southeast ridge well below me. I hastened to catch up, dropping to the south side of that ridge to avoid time-consuming rockwork. But I wasn't fast enough. I caught up to them as I was ascending the northwest ridge of Point 4790 and they were returning from that point. Foregoing that summit, I turned and accompanied them as we contoured across the northwest face of Peak 5067 to return to the slushy saddle.

We ascended the south aspect of Point 4902, followed the gentle ridge northeast over a couple 4800-foot points to Point 4607, and descended a snow slope to a 4200-foot saddle. From the saddle we hiked up a gentle ridge to Peak 4754. We did not find a cairn on that summit, but the proximity of the Kimball Pass ORV trail meant that a prior ascent could not be ruled out.

From the summit Renee spied a moose trail north of the stream that flowed east from our campsite. She led us down the west slopes to cross a stream around 3450 feet, stirring up a few ptarmigan en route. Then she did an admirable job re-finding that moose trail amid the willows, snow, and alders. We reached the tents with plenty of daylight left, but opted to dine and turn in for the night instead of attempting the fifth objective of our trip.

That night I was awakened by a cow and calf moose splashing in the lake to our west. They pranced around for half an hour. But figuring it was pretty neat to have one's sleep disrupted by a cow moose teaching its calf how to play in a pond, I was more awed than disturbed.

After breakfast the next morning (June 7) Dave, Renee, and I headed up the south-facing slopes of Red Mountain (4845 feet), which

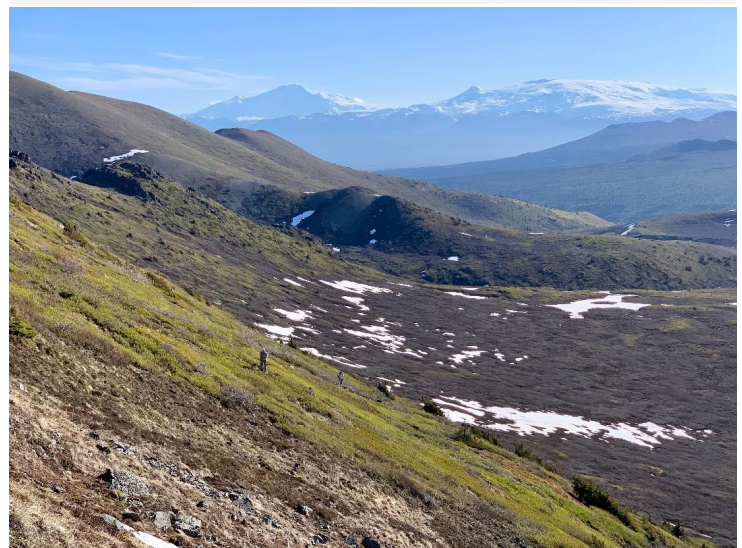
Dave and Renee had climbed in 2019 from the northeast via the Bernard Creek ORV trail. In short order we were looking down at the summit benchmark and the debris left by the 1941 U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey party. The field notes from A. Newton Stewart, who led that 1941 party, stated that the mountain was "locally known as Red Mountain," hence my use of that name in this trip report. The name likely derives from a band of reddish rock on the west face of the peak. Stewart's notes also indicated that his party had accessed the summit via the same south-facing slopes we ascended.

After a short stay on the summit, we returned to our tents, packed up, and departed for the four wheelers. Our route was a little north of Friday's route until we reached the prominent rockslide, the south edge of which we followed down to the ORV trail. Renee and Dave headed off to retrieve the machines and in short order we were riding the trail down to the cars. I found that the terrain and solitude of the Fist Range were of a quality much as Dave and Mat



Top: Steve Gruhn (left) and Renee Ernster on the hike across gentle terrain northwest of camp.

Bottom: Renee Ernster (left) and Steve Gruhn ascend the east slope of Peak 5120.



had described. And with such quality, I was somewhat surprised that I hadn't heard of more hiking and climbing activity in that road-accessible region. I hope to return to the peaks of the Fist Range again.



Steve Gruhn (left) and Renee Ernster hike to the summit of Peak 4754.



Renee Ernster hiking to the summit of Peak 5120.



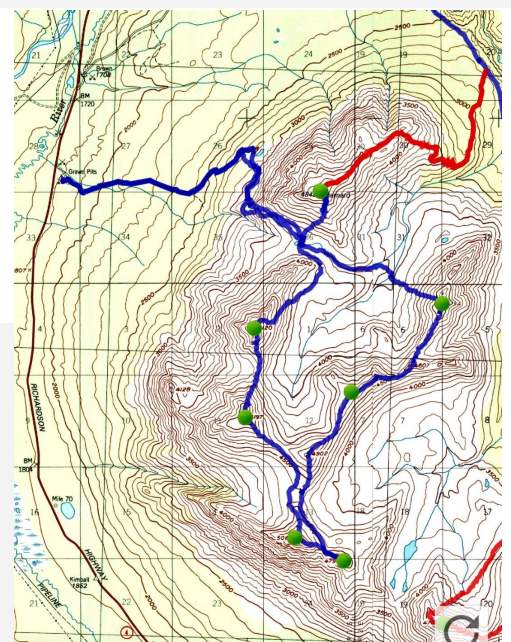
View northeast from Peak 5197 showing (from left) Peak 5120, Red Mountain, Mount Drum, Mount Sanford, and Mount Wrangell.



Renee Ernster on Point 4790 with Peak 5067 at left, Peak 5197 at center, and Point 4902 at right.



Steve Gruhn looking at the benchmark on Red Mountain. The largely snow-free peaks at right are Peak 5120 (right) and Peak 5197.

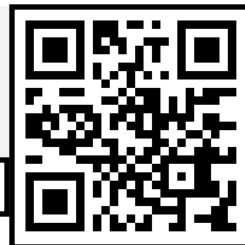


Route map showing the team's 2020 route in blue (the southern line). Other route lines depict Renee Ernster's and Dave Hart's routes in prior years.

Bomber Extreme: Traverse of the Talkeetna Mountains

Text and photos by Colleen Metzger

61.852, -149.074



*Mary Mitchell, Colleen Metzger, Rachel Johnston, and Gloria Rasch near Ozone Pass.
Photo by Rich Rasch*

It started with an amazing gift. Richard Rasch’s dad was an avid outdoorsman and big game guide who dreamed of spending months in the mountains when he retired... but it never happened. His dad was forced into an early retirement due to an illness that left it hard for him to even traverse flat ground. So, Rich and his wife Gloria decided to surprise him with a helicopter drop into the mountains! Knowing he wouldn’t accept, they turned his trip into their own trip: a perfect reason to do an “extended Bomber Traverse.” Now that it wasn’t all about him, his father accepted to be dropped off for a few weeks at an alpine lake on a ridge near the route, and Rich and Gloria promised to “stop by for a beer” while he was camping. Slowly a plan took shape – none of us had ever been to the Seth Holden or Dnigi Hut. Maybe we could hit Lynx Peak near Bomber Pass. Rich and Gloria were asked to help with a Boy Scout mountaineering trip led by Greg Bragiel at the Mint Hut... an epic trip had emerged. We would trek from the Bomber Hut to the Holden Hut to the Dnigi Hut to the Mint Hut. We dubbed it the Talkeetna Traverse, and on July 12 Rich and Gloria Rasch, Mary Mitchell,

Rachel Johnston, and I all hefted our packs and started the hike to Reed Lakes. The water level along the Reed Lakes Trail was higher than I’d ever seen it. Areas that were typically void of water had torrents rushing along. The typically laid-back hike involved some new and challenging route finding as we wove our way through the boulders high above the rushing stream, cursing our heavy Day One packs. When we reached Upper Reed Lake and started searching for an area to camp, we were surprised to find snow still dusting the area, and I crossed my fingers hoping I had packed enough warm layers.

Knowing how cold and shadowy the bowl of Upper Reed Lake is in the morning, we set a leisurely start time, heading towards Bomber Pass around 11 a.m. Mary and Rachel were new to mountaineering, so Rich, Gloria, and I had decided to use our fairly safe route as training grounds for the newbies. The trek up Bomber Pass was a great place to start practicing some strategies – we deliberately travelled on a series of snowfields so we could practice climbing with an ice ax and discuss self-

arresting. When we reached Bomber Pass, we were happy to find a snowy wedge creating a perfect ladder to climb down from the rocky pass onto the glacier. One by one we clambered down the snow.

Once on the glacier, we started working our way towards the plane. Suddenly, the ground dropped out from under me. I was sitting on a ledge of snow, facing the mountain. There was only air below my swinging boots. I could see rocks and snow about ten feet down, and was amazed (and grateful) I hadn't fallen in – my backpack was keeping me wedged on a (sturdy, I prayed) ledge of snow. We were still working our way from the pass onto the glacier, and I imagine we were exactly above the bergschrund gaping between mountain and glacier, devilishly frosted over by punchy July snow.

I sat for a while, trying to figure out the best way to escape. I didn't want to take off my pack, afraid the jostling might weaken my perch. I also didn't want to fold my feet under me, since they were deadly with my freshly sharpened crampons. I could see the giant, airy hole below me and knew going forward wasn't an option. Rich soon came to check on me, worrying I was injured, but I was only puzzling over the best way to escape. I warned him to keep his distance so he didn't fall in as well. I finally managed to slowly turn myself and ease out of the hole, trying to move as delicately as possible, not my strong suit. Once I had escaped, we decided to rope up (better late than never?) so we could demonstrate moving on a rope team to Mary and Rachel. Thus linked, we headed to the bomber and explored the wreckage, then finished the trek to the Bomber Hut. A bear had recently busted

into the hut and broken all the windows, so Rich had generously stopped the helicopter en route to drop off his father to collect and fly out all the broken glass. It was much safer but very dim inside with the windows still boarded over, so we were glad the mild, clear weather allowed us to comfortably camp and lounge outside the hut. We had packed party dresses and champagne and got dressed up and celebrated our journey to the hut with champagne toasts and a ridiculous photo shoot.



*The Prom Dress & Champagne Photo Shoot at Bomber Hut
Photo by Rich Rasch*

We had another leisurely morning, leaving the Bomber Hut around 11 a.m. after many of us took advantage of bathing in the shallow, sun-warmed pools near the hut. The hike to the Holden Hut, around 5 miles, sounded pretty laid-back so we were in no rush. We meandered over

to Wintergreen Glacier, taking a longer route so we could crunch across its icy spill into the valley....and get a better look at the route. On the map it looked like we would need to head due north to hit the Nelteni Saddle, but the more deeply we traveled into the valley, the more forebodingly vertical the route we had been eyeing looked. We paused to consult the map, GPS, and our own instincts before deciding to head towards the much more gradual looking climb to the northwest. We left the icy valley behind and climbed upwards over my favorite kind of scree: boulders the size of soccer balls at a steep enough pitch that I could climb with hands and feet like a monkey. The climb was spectacular; it was a sunny, bluebird day and I was in shorts and a tank top, which I have rarely found to be possible in even the height of Alaskan summer. I did despair at the uncanny ability of mosquitoes to hone in on the only humans in a ten-mile radius, singling us out halfway up a peak and above a glacier where it should be



*Rich Rasch and the gang at Holden Hut
Photo by Rich Rasch*

too cold and inhospitable for any insect life. I swear they have text alerts that ping as soon as I start to climb anything, thus rendering my hands and feet too engaged in motoring me uphill to swat them away without simultaneously causing myself to smash into a pile of rocks. But the sun and the views made the mosquitoes only the mildest nuisance, and we were all eager to take in the view from the top. But when we peeked over to the other side of the ridge, we were surprised to find it thickly frosted with isothermal snow.

We decided this could be a good educational moment, and put on harnesses and roped up: the perfect time to review running belays! We moved along, slowly but very safely through Ozone Pass. As we worked our way out of the snow, we saw another surprise hiding behind the peaks to the north: a wall of dark clouds, boiling towards us...fast. As we moved out of the snow and onto a rocky area, we ripped off our harnesses and swapped them out for rain gear. The wind came hurtling around the corner, frigid and nerve-wracking, blowing away our mellow, sun-kissed day and lazy pace. As the wind and rain whipped us, we scurried down Sobriety Pass, now desperate to get to the hut as rapidly as we could. We made our way down the long, rocky pass and started heading towards the little lakes that dot the route to the hut. By the time we were passing the lakes, the wind and rain were mercifully behind us and by the time we reached the hut the weather was gorgeous once more.

The Holden Hut, fittingly enough, was just as gorgeous as the landscape it was nestled in. It is by far the most spacious and clean hut in Hatcher Pass, and I was glad we got to spend an extra day there. Gloria and Rich decided there was enough time in the day to check in on his father, who was further North on a ridge. They quickly trekked off to visit him while Rachel, Mary, and I unpacked for our stay. When Rich and Gloria returned later that evening, they handed beers around that Rich, brilliant man that he is, had carried in via the helicopter that had dropped off his father.

The next day was a rest day. I did laundry, and it was so sunny and warm that it actually dried. This seemed miraculous after years of dolefully donning damp but clean underpants after laundry day. I picked a book from the small collection in the hut and sprawled on the lawn, reading and sunbathing. It was glorious. In the afternoon, I reviewed crevasse rescue systems with Rachel and Mary, using the porch of the hut as anchors, until it



*Seth Holden Hut
Photo by Colleen Metzger*

started to rain and we adjourned inside to make dinner and continue our lazy day. Rich and Gloria spent most of their rest day with Rich's father, listening as he elaborated on all he had seen with his stellar view over the past few days. They returned later that evening with a few more extra beers to end the relaxing day.

The next day dawned cloudy but dry as we headed for Dnigi Hut, leaving early so we had the whole day to find our way. To make the hike more entertaining, Gloria had presented us each with a balloon, which we were tasked to name and decorate during dinner the previous night. Now, we had to attach the balloon to ourselves and keep it safe for the day's hike – the winner would be granted the last lone beer. A prize to fight for! We agonized over the best place to locate the balloon – it might get scratched on our backs! But we might as easily bump it if we placed it on a front strap or a pole.... everyone was serious and quiet as they schemed for the beer, and affixed their balloons as securely as possible. I adhered mine, the "Wonky Donkey," to a side zipper, hoping for the best. We clambered over a steep ridge that was all snow on the way up, then grassy and rocky on the way down, mentally engaged as we swapped techniques to match the changing terrain. A long meander through large boulders led us to Moosehead Pass, and challenged us to keep our precious balloons safe! The Pass was snow coated for almost the entire climb, but started to thin as we neared the top. There was a thin funnel of mixed snow and rocks that led scarily near a giant, arched cornice...or a steep chute of scree. We spread out, choosing the path that looked optimal for each of us. I

pried my crampons off quickly, finding them a hinderance on the damp rocks, and clipped them to the belt of my pack. Then I headed for the scree chute...only to find it was waaaay steeper than it looked, and the scree was evil tiny rounded rocks on hard packed dirt: my accursed enemy, ball bearing scree! I clambered up slowly, thinking that a giant cornice didn't sound all that bad... but soon popped over the top, and found a verdant valley spread below me. Far in the distance was a familiar form: The Butte. I could see Palmer! That meant cell service! An impromptu break occurred on Moosehead Pass as we all pulled out phones to let family members know we were still alive and having fun.

After our cell phone break, we dropped over Moosehead Pass, down the rocks and onto grass. We started sidehilling, loathe to lose elevation going down to the twining rivers at the bottom of the valley when we knew we would soon have to gain that elevation again. Making it over the pass made it feel like we were almost to Dnigi, when Moosehead is actually only about half-way. The rest of hike stretched out as I realized, hour by hour, that we were not close at all. Clouds started to knit overhead, and we picked up our pace. The worst part of the hike was that I popped my balloon! The Wonky Donkey was no more. There was a creek crossing particularly bristly with spiky trees, and after the creek crossing my poor balloon had a giant gash in his side. The weather mirrored my sorrow, dripping tears of lost-beer regret. Almost as soon as the rain started, we saw a glorious sight: suddenly Dnigi, hidden for so long, was in front of us and closer than we could believe. Sprints instantly lifted as we trotted over to our home for the night.

The balloon game was neck and neck as we hiked out the next morning. Mary and Gloria were the last two contenders, and the tension was high! Especially for Rachel, carrying the beer, who wanted the weight (and dare I say, the temptation) out of her pack. The first part of our hike towards the Mint Hut was retracing our trek from yesterday. The first several miles headed back up the valley, until we turned west in search of Grizzly Pass, which would lead us to the Mint Glacier and then the Mint Hut. We weren't heading all the way to the Mint that day, so we had a lazy morning (still trying to dry out) and tried a slightly different route back up the valley. Rather than side hilling, we aimed even higher and it was so much easier. For future hikers, by staying around 4,000 feet we skipped the bristly water crossing, a myriad of drainage ditches, and so many boulder fields that had been a pain to traverse the day before. There were several tracks saved in Gaia and Peakbagger that encouraged us to keep side hilling, and *they lie*. Once we were close to the turn for Grizzly Pass, we crossed the river winding through the base of the valley, getting soaked from knee-high foliage that was

still damp from the rain last night. We set up camp near the river, right at the base of Grizzly Pass. We would tackle that in the morning. Instead, we enjoyed another lazy afternoon. Mary and Gloria called the balloon game a draw, and generously shared their beer with us. It takes a week in the mountains to appreciate 1/5 of a beer as much as I did.



*Rich Rasch leading the way up Grizzly Pass
Photo by Rich Rasch*

The next morning, we were nervous. We had heard about Grizzly Pass. Big, scary Grizzly Pass. We had saved it until the next day so we had all day for our big push maneuvering up this epic pass. We were all shocked by how safe and easy the climb was. It was a gentle slope that started grassy and studded with rocks and gradually turned into firm, stable snow. Those liars in all the hut log books had spooked us, but we bopped right up the pass and were soon looking down upon the Mint Glacier. Our visibility was great, which the logbook also said was rare. So, it's possible we got very lucky with weather and conditions, making this pass one of the most enjoyable, and easiest, of the trip. The top of the pass featured a large fin of rock with a giant notch clipped out of it, like a giant had grabbed a slice of rocky pizza from it. We paused to snap photos of the amazing views on both sides of the pass, and soon we were on the glacier and then suddenly at the Mint Hut. When we reached the hut, Rich and Gloria went to meet the Boy Scouts to help instruct with their lesson on self-arresting, and I took advantage of the empty hut to demonstrate prussiking to Mary and Rachel. That night Rachel had a surprise for Mary: a dehydrated Angel Food cake she had hauled this whole way into order to celebrate Mary's birthday! That was a fabulous treat for all of us, and for two dudes who had just arrived at the Mint Hut that day and were camped near us, away from the hut (wanted to give the Boy Scouts their space!)

The next morning, we all headed back to the Mint Glacier, where Rich and Gloria would be instructing ice climbing later that day. Mary and I climbed a few laps to test the route, and then headed to break down camp and hike out. Rachel, Rich, and Gloria would spend all day with the Boy Scouts, and planned to hike out the next morning. The longest hike is always the one when beer and pizza are closest, eh? That hike back to the parking lot seemed to stretch on. The overgrown bushes clawed at us, the skies opened and poured on us, and mud started to get plastered around my boots...then my gaiters...then all the way up both pant legs. But the chant *beer! Pizza! Beer! Pizza!* kept me going strong. While we were dreaming of pizza, Rich was plotting of pizza...when he helicoptered back out to pick up his dad, he made a special stop at the Mint Hut, bearing pizza and king size candy bars for the boys, and in return flying out a mountain of garbage that had amassed in the Mint Hut from inconsiderate campers. I'm sure he made the Boy Scouts' year!

When Mary and I finally arrived at the parking lot, we both looked like mud monsters, but we were thrilled to have finally reached our cars. It's possible that the excitement for a shower even (briefly) outshone my desire for carbs and more carbs. I peeled off my muddy boots, gaiters, and pants, wriggled shorts onto my still-damp and sticky legs, and eased into my car. Off towards the comforts of home... for now. As usual, we spent most of this trip planning our next trips. We would be back in the mountains soon.



*From left Mary Mitchell, Rachel Johnston, Colleen Metzger, and Gloria Rasch on Wintergreen Glacier.
Photo by Rich Rasch*

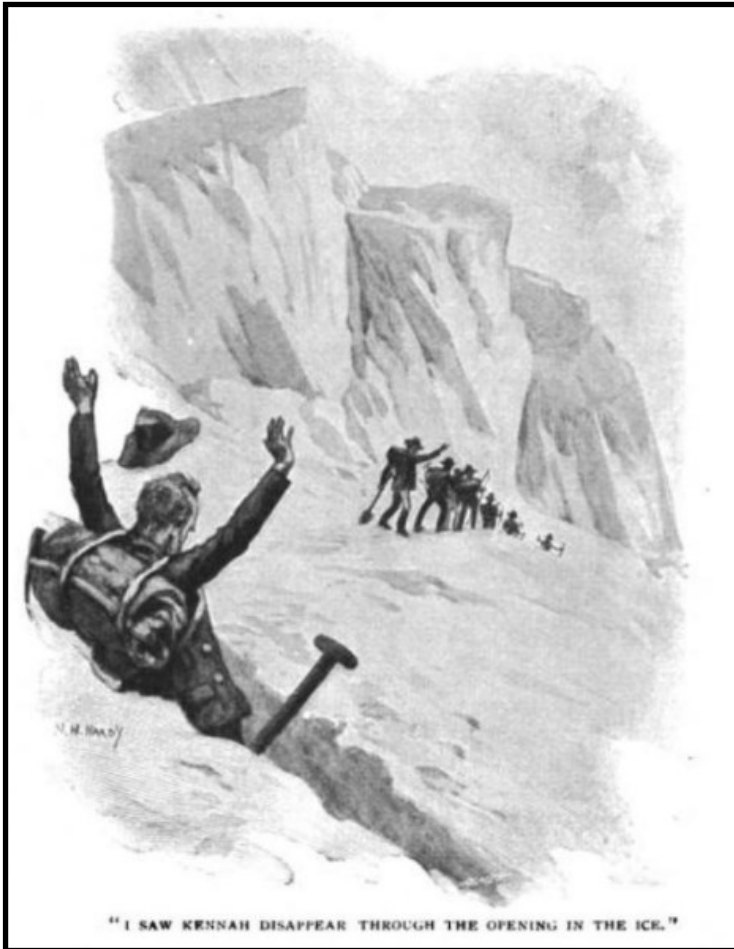


*The Balloon game winners.
Photo by Rich Rasch*

Point 4155, Central Chugach Mountains, 1896



60.980,-148.837



"I SAW KENNAH DISAPPEAR THROUGH THE OPENING IN THE ICE."

Sketch from a later article in *The Wide World Magazine*, 1900.
Credit to Billy Finley for locating this account.

[Ed. Note: The following article was reprinted from the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, August 16 1896]

EDWARD KENNAH'S DEATH

His Companions Tell How He Perished In the Crevice

The *Post-Intelligencer* has received a letter from R. H. Calligan, dated at Sunrise City, July 11, enclosing a signed statement by the men who were with Edward Kennah when that unfortunate man lost his life in a crevice of ice near Twenty-mile river, emptying into Turn-again arm. The letter is addressed "To the relatives and friends of Edward Kennah and to the authorities:

"Following is the way by which Edward Kennah came to his death on July 6, 1896, on a mountain in the vicinity of a stream known as Twenty-mile river. The undersigned, with Kennah, numbering six persons in all, left Six-mile creek on the morning of July 1, 1896, in boats for the purpose of prospecting for gold on the headwaters of Twenty-mile river. We arrived at the mouth of the

river at about 1 o'clock of the same day. We cooked our dinner on the banks of the river, and after an hour and a half's rest we proceeded up stream by means of walking along the banks and towing our boats, there being three of us to each boat, until we reached a point from four to six miles from the mouth. We camped on the right bank, in the edge of timber, for the night, and next day continued our journey until 8 o'clock p.m. when the last boat reached a point of land that separates the west fork from the center branch of the river, and there went into camp. On the evening of the 2d rain began to fall and continued almost without interruption through the 3d, 4th and 5th.

In the meantime we had constructed substantial sheds of poles and hemlock bark for a central camp and base of operations. At this point we found four men who had been camped here for one or more days, three of whom were present when Kennah died. The latter parties had been as far up the creek as the canyon of the west fork, and after consultation we all concluded on the evening of the 5th that on the 6th we would ascend the mountain, cross over the summit and descend into the valley of the west fork, above the canyon, which seemed at the time the most practical way to get to our objective point. So on the morning of the 6th we started over the mountain, and at 12:30 were eating lunch on the summit above the line of perpetual snow. We had, we thought, made the most difficult part of our trip over without any mishap whatever, but just over the summit we found what we thought was a great bank of snow, extending down the north-west slope for a mile or more. We started down this snowbank on a steep decline. The snow was hard enough so that walking was fairly good; we would sink only to our ankles. We descended this slope rapidly for at least fifteen minutes, when we began to see marks in the snow which we thought were merely snow cracks, but which to our sorrow we soon found were dangerous crevices, and that we were traveling over a glacier that proved to be an open grave for one of our most beloved companions. Heidorm, our guide, was ahead perhaps 200 yards, when Albert Pausche cried out. "Look out, boys: there are holes here. He had fallen into a crevice to his knees, but had gotten out all right and started on, when the man next behind him, John Dorbolo, a Venetian, sank down in a crevice to his waist and was saved from death by his Winchester rifle, the ends of which caught on either side of the crevice, which was about two feet wide at the top of the ice.

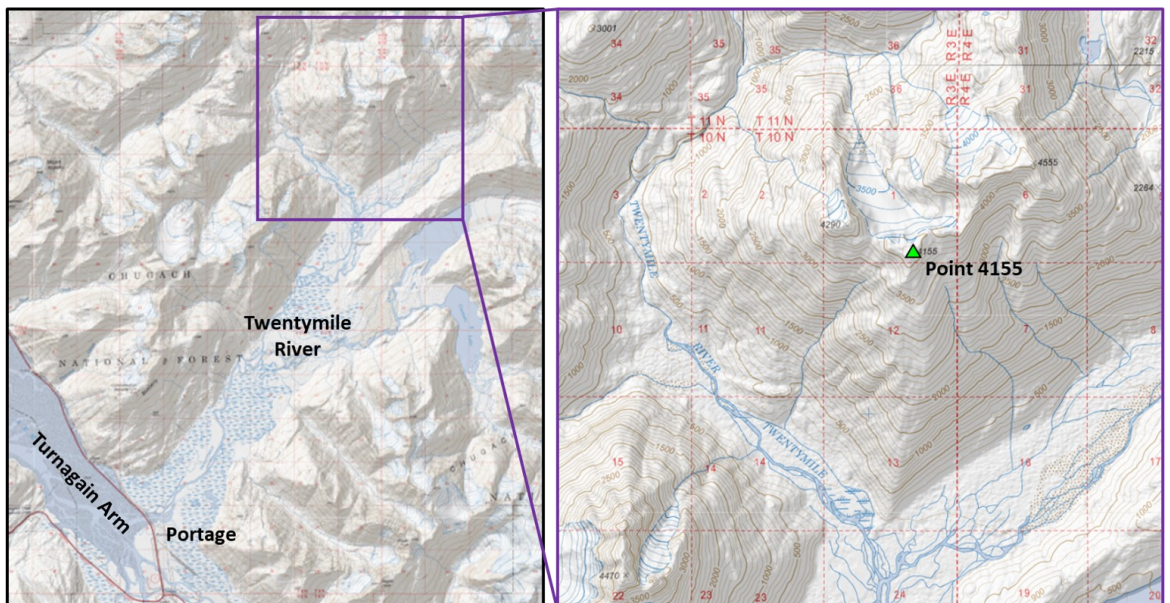
There was about two feet of snow on top of the ice at this point, and the snow formed a rotten arch over the chasm, so that the only indication of danger was a mark in the snow not larger than a man's finger. Dorbolo cried out for help, and the man in front of him had to return to his assistance, probably fifty yards. Anton Pausche returned from the front and gave Dorbolo a lift that put him on his feet out of danger. By this time Fitts, who was the fifth man, and Antonio Durag, the sixth and last man, came to the crevice. We had hardly realized our danger yet, as Darbolo had gotten out all right. In fact, there was no danger at this point, as the chasm had been uncovered. Fitts took a shovel from Kenna and laid it across the crevice for a firm footing. Placing one foot on the handle, he stepped over with ease, and then picked up the shovel and handed it to Kennah, who had not yet crossed, as he seemed to want to go a little higher up the crevice. Fitts turned and started after those on ahead, leaving Kennah and Antonio Durag yet to cross. Suddenly we were startled by Durag's cry that a man was in the hole. So suddenly had the accident happened that Durag, who was very close, did not know how it happened, but he thinks that Kennah's foot slipped off the shovel handle or that the shovel was not laid over the hole properly and slipped in. The latter is probably right, as the shovel went down with him and was seen no more. We all made for the fatal chasm as fast as possible, but we never got sight of Kennah after he fell in, as down some twenty or twenty-five feet the crevice made a curve; in fact, it was something like the shape of an earth shovel laid on edge. We gathered all the rope we had, which was perhaps thirty feet, of half or three-eighths inch cord, and with three pairs of large double blankets stretched out and looped together, all told we had perhaps sixty feet of blankets and rope. When lowered this would reach down to Kennah, but to his horror and ours, in some manner the pack had fastened his hands so they were useless, and he was in such position that he could not take hold of the blankets with his teeth.

We lowered first a shovel, hoping that he could stand on that, but after a long effort with his feet he said that was no use, as he could not fasten to it. Then we gave him a pick fastened securely to the rope, but he could not fasten to that and we could not fasten anything to him, as we had but the one line, including the blankets, so that if a man went down we had nothing to fasten to him. One man descended about thirty feet,

but there was not sufficient room to turn around or use both hands, and there was nothing to hold to or stand on while he untied himself, and even if it had been possible for a man to untie himself and tie on to Kennah it is highly probable that his hands would have been so benumbed that he could not tie the rope to himself after the other man had been saved.

"We did our utmost to rescue our friend and companion, and after days and nights of thought we are yet unable to see how we could have saved his life with the appliances at hand. It was six miles to camp, a day's travel to make the round trip, so after all our resources were exhausted he realized that he was dying. He told us he was going, and then after some conversation he said he was in great pain and that he could speak no more. But in answer to a question he said faintly that he was suffering, and then all was over. We could get no sound from him after that. It was then, and not until then, that we realized that our companion was lost, and that we were almost exhausted ourselves from nervous tension and the cold. When all was over and we knew that we could not get his body we fastened ourselves together with rope and blankets and turned our faces sadly towards the foot of that perilous slope, and at 6 o'clock we reached a flat in the valley at the head of the canyon, as sorrowful a band of men as ever crossed a mountain. On the 8th we returned by another route to our main camp, which we reached after a hard day's travel. To the honor of the deceased we must say that he had such confidence in the justice of his God that he did not think it necessary to call on Him for assistance in his last extremity.

ANTON DURAG
W.B. HEIDORM
J.W. FITTS
A. PAUSCHE
J. DORBOLO



Twentymile River to Palmer, or maybe just Girdwood

Text and photos by Gerrit Verbeek



60.914,-148.962



Pt. 4155, Edward Kennah's last summit, splitting the route to Palmer and the route to Girdwood.

Generally speaking, it takes exceptional success or failure to motivate people to put pen to paper (or phalanges to keyboard, in the modern world). This trip report is a celebration of the happy average: trips where the epic original plan never comes to fruition, but the end result is pretty darn good too.

With a four day weekend available, the temptation was to throw all the chips at something really cool. Nordic skiing from the Twentymile River to Palmer has been on the bucket list for a long time, and seemed appropriate for the weather forecast and avalanche conditions in the Talkeetna and Kenai Mountains. Wayne Todd provided some route information from a six-day trip he had once done, and Chelsea Grimstad and I crossed our fingers that the two of us and our dogs would be able to cover the seventy miles more quickly than that. Starting Thursday after work for a few extra hours, we stepped out of the car at the parking lot on the north bank of the Twentymile River and got that buzz of abandoning civilization and skiing into the wilderness while everyone else confined themselves to the road. A less pleasant buzz was provided by frigid wind and single-digit temperatures, but after a few meanders of the river, the high banks gave us some shelter. We were alone except for the embossed tracks of a party out for a ski maybe a week before. Conditions near the coast of Turnagain Arm were promising – either a skiff of snow on bare ice, or an icy crust which supported skis. Setting up the tent that

first night, the biggest concern was if punching through the crust for miles would wound the dogs' ankles.

The next day the honeymoon ended. The sunny weather was wonderful, except that the snow was soft and sinking into it robbed all the energy from skiing. The river was opening up: old ski tracks blissfully teleported across what was now flowing water, while we had to detour through stands of trees where beavers had been hard at work. Sections of good-looking snow ambushed us by concealing liquid water. The river started meandering broadly, scribbling all over the confident line running straight up the valley on our trip plan. As a small consolation prize, oxbow channels provided parallel alternate routes when one section was open, but the overall trend was movement slower than planned on a route that was longer than planned.

The bargaining and scheming started: we did ten miles today, but maybe we could knock out twenty tomorrow. Maybe we could go to Bagg Pass between the Twentymile drainage and Lake George, and reassess there. Chelsea's work schedule was the limiting factor on this trip; maybe I could take some of her food and finish the trip. Spending the day skiing towards Edward Kennah's fateful point certainly made me inclined to conservative choices, especially ones that avoided even a short solo crossing of an unfamiliar glacier. Stick together, have fun, head for Girdwood. At very least, we were having more fun than dragging boats upstream for three days!

With the decision made, we got to enjoy the upper valley of the Twentymile River. Before the river's forks the main valley is full of open swamps and not-too-dense forests, and absolutely lovely in winter. Mature trees which had been flooded out remained as weathered, limbless obelisks. The second night was spent on a high bank overlooking a snow-covered swamp, with a nice fire and a late sunset.

Heading up the West Fork of the Twentymile the next day we found deepening snow, spruce forests, lynx tracks, and a raven

tearing at prey in a tree high above us. We skied past Rosehip Creek and headed into the slot canyons of the West Fork. Fortunately there was just enough shelf ice (suspended twelve feet above the creek bed) and snow bridges at critical points to make the route interesting but possible. We clambered out of the canyon next to a waterfall at the no-name drainage which headed straight for Berry Pass. Steep banks, moody skies, and deep tree wells felt like skiing through a Japanese woodblock print. The snow clumping to our kick zones killed all glide but made the nordic skis as grippy on the uphill as full skins and ski crampons. I paused to wax mine, which shed a lot of the snow weight but left me unable to follow Chelsea's more aggressive angles. We passed through avy terrain without any gear, but also no red flags and pretty high confidence in the snowpack, and had a brief 'philosophical discussion' about whether responding to your partner's concerns about the slope you're on with "I don't think it will slide" is dismissive, or truly the only rational response for any human currently in the middle of a risky slope.

The nerves subsided once we got over Berry Pass in flat light and set up the tent in the lee of some trees. A storm was supposed to roll through that evening, and we fell asleep listening to the wind howl off the ridgetops, and icy snow pelt the tent fly. I was glad we still had 2 days budgeted, in case we woke up to a foot of fresh snow and had to spend a day waiting for stability. The gods were merciful, and less than half a foot had accumulated in the morning. It was still coming down, and getting wetter, so there was nothing to do except break camp.

We were treated to some truly weird ski tracks to interpret on the way down Winner Creek. First, a set of four downhill tracks grouping up near the headwaters of the creek and then vanishing without a skin track or further progress left us wondering if people heliskiied this close to the frontcountry, or if alien abductions or the Rapture were more likely. Further down, we bumped into more tracks which appeared to be the Upper Winner Creek Trail, until they seemed to detour due south up the glacial valley east of Mount Alyeska. We kept waiting for a sharp turn which never came, and eventually forfeited that game of Chicken to blaze our own trail until we intersected more tracks which definitely headed towards indoor plumbing. We were eased back into civilization by a moose with a hopelessly crippled hind leg, followed by wooden bridges and signage, fat tire bike tracks, and then a young family out for a Sunday stroll.

Finally we popped out of the Winner Creek trail right above the aerial tram: two weirdos with skinny skis and large packs skinning through a flock of gravity-powered resort guests while coaxing along canines who were highly skeptical of the gondola monster swooping down on them. We survived the absurdity and the surprisingly untame walking trail from the hotel to the day lodge, and

unbuckled our skis at the turn into Girdwood Brewing.

As we've done more traverses, we've become increasingly comfortable with hitchhiking back to the starting point to skip the hassle of shuttling cars. To simplify logistics and to improve the odds of getting a ride, one of us usually sticks a thumb out while the other stays behind with two dogs and the pile of gear. On this occasion, Chelsea graciously offered to hitch. I enjoyed a beer at the fire pit with our soggy dogs and some cold rain, and just thirty minutes later was treated to tales of the rides: a young Alaskan and her visiting friend, followed by a family of three who were simply unable to pass by a young lady on the side of a road in the rain, and then downright astonished to learn that her deadbeat partner was enjoying beers at the brewery while she fetched the car! At some Alaskan dinner table, I suspect I am now a nameless example of The Wrong Kind of Man.

Not rad, but not bad.



Top: A jungle gym on the West Fork.

Bottom: Primo Nordic conditions



Peak of the Month: Spyglass Hill (5960 feet), Painted Hills, Alaska Range

Text by Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Alaska Range; Painted Hills

Drainages: Foraker Glacier and Straightaway Glacier

Latitude/Longitude: 63° 8' 17" North, 151° 29' 33" West

Elevation: 5960 feet

Adjacent Peak: Peak 5910 in the Foraker Glacier and Straightaway Glacier drainages

Distinctness: 1110 feet from Peak 5910

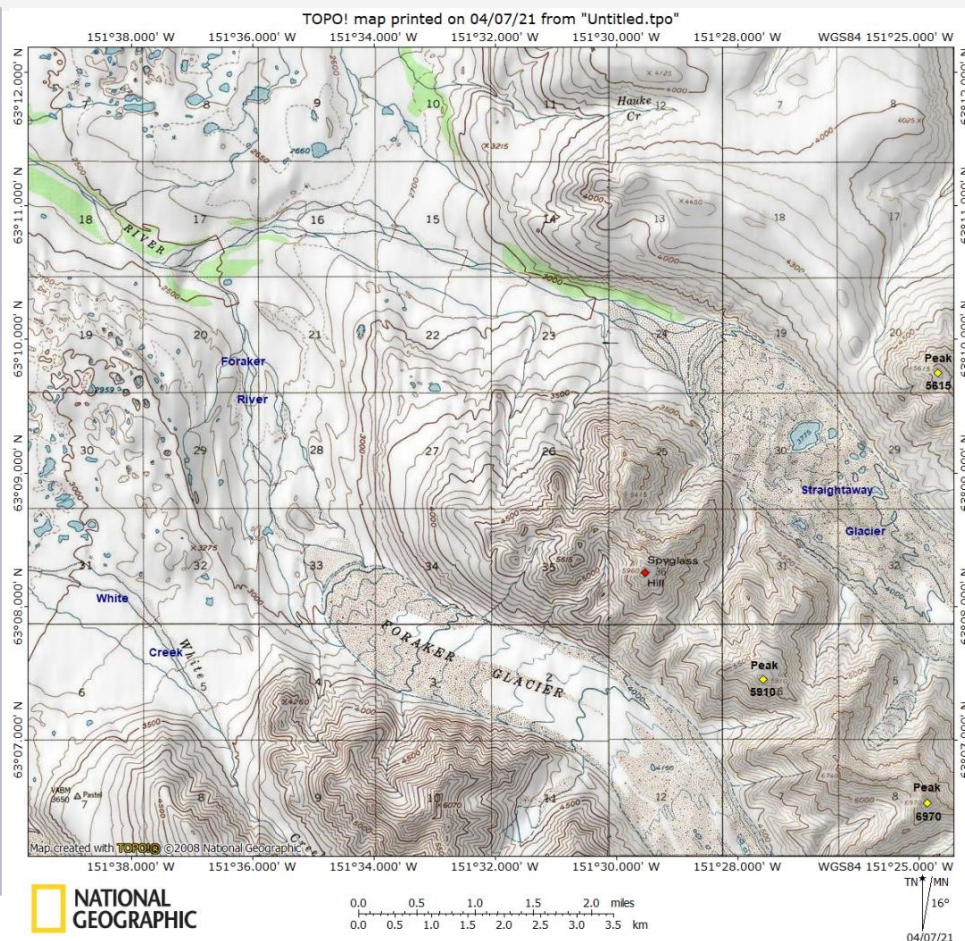
Prominence: 1110 feet from Peak 6970 in the Foraker Glacier and Straightaway Glacier drainages

USGS Maps: 1:63,360: *Mt. Mc Kinley (A-3)* and 1:25,000: *Denali A-3 NW*

First Recorded Ascent: July 8, 1934, by Carl Anderson, Thomas Graham Brown, Charles Snead Houston, and George Chychele Waterston

Route of First Recorded Ascent: West ridge

Access Point: Denali Park Road near Mount Eielson



Having been enticed by Belmore Browne's 1913 book [The Conquest of Mount McKinley](#), Bill Alloway; Carl Anderson; Graham Brown; Charlie Houston (pronounced *HOW-stun*); his father Oscar Rempel Houston; Charles Moorfield Storey, Jr.; and Chychele Waterston set out from the Mount McKinley Park Road (now the Denali Park Road) in the vicinity of Mount Eielson on July 4, 1934, with a pack train of 14 horses in support of an attempt to climb Mount Foraker. En route they established camps at McKinley Bar on July 4, the Muddy River on July 5, and Birch Creek on July 6. They reached the Foraker River early on the morning of July 8 and camped four miles downstream from the snout of the Foraker Glacier at a location with views up both the Foraker Glacier and the Straightaway Glacier.

At noon on the 8th, Anderson, Brown, Charlie Houston, and Waterston set out to climb to a vantage point to plan their route. Brown described their route on the west ridge as a rough scramble with a little rock and acres of scree. After traversing many false summits, the four ascended the steep, but easy, arête to the summit. Brown described the vista as "perhaps one of the finest mountain views in the world" with Denali lying to the east-

southeast and Mount Foraker to the south. From that vantage point they plotted possible routes up the northeast and northwest ridges of Mount Foraker, a departure from their original plan to ascend the Herron Glacier to the southeast ridge. Before leaving, they built a cairn and placed a record of their ascent in it. Later that evening the four returned to their camp at the Foraker River via their ascent route. Due to their intense study of the terrain to the south of the summit, Waterston recorded in his diary that they named the peak 'Spy Glass Hill.' Brown used that name in his expedition report that appeared in the November 1934 *Alpine Journal* and later called it 'Spy-Glass Hill' in his article in the May 1935 *Alpine Journal*. Charlie Houston called it 'Spyglass Hill' in his article that appeared in the December 1934 issue of *The Mountaineer*.

On July 12, via its south ridge from 6950-foot Tranquillity Pass, Anderson, Brown, Charlie Houston, and Waterston made the first recorded ascent of 8050-foot Scree Peak between the Foraker Glacier and the Herron Glacier. Brown, Charlie Houston, and Waterston reached the summit of 17400-foot Mount Foraker via its northwest ridge on August 6, making the first recorded ascent

of the peak.

Alloway left with the horses for McKinley Park Station (now Denali Park) on July 13 and returned to the Foraker River with additional supplies on August 24. The entire party returned to the road via nearly the same route as they had traveled several weeks earlier, placing camps at Birch Creek on the 25th, near the confluence of Clearwater Creek and the McKinley River on the 26th, and on McKinley Bar near the terminal moraine of the Muldrow Glacier on the 27th. On August 28 the party reached the Savage River Camp at about Mile 12 of the Mount McKinley Park Road.

I don't know of a second ascent of Spyglass Hill.

In June 1967 the MCA's Geographic Names Committee proposed to make Charlie Houston's version the official name of the summit. The Alaska Geographic Board approved the name in October of that year. In the spring of 1969, however, the National Park Service, cited that the name had no particular significance and that proliferation of such names would detract from the wilderness atmosphere of Mount McKinley National Park (now Denali National Park). Consequently, on December 9, 1969, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names rejected the MCA's proposal to make the name official. Subsequently, the Alaska Geographic Board rescinded its approval of the name on January 6, 1970. By 1978, however, the name appeared on federal maps and had become official, although the USGS incorrectly altered the name to 'Spygalls Hill' on its 2015 *Denali A-3 NW* map.

In 1927 at the age of 45, Brown had put up the first of his three notable new routes on the east face of Mont Blanc and would go on to serve as the editor of the *Alpine Journal*, the journal of the London-based Alpine Club. At age 20, though, Charlie Houston

was the improbable leader of the Mount Foraker expedition. Despite Houston's young age, Brown would later describe his organization as "beyond praise." Charlie Houston would go on to become one of the famed "Harvard Five" (along with Bob Bates, Ad Carter, Terris Moore, and Brad Washburn), a group of young, ambitious climbers from Harvard University who made numerous pioneering climbs and pushed forward the standards of mountaineering in the mid-20th century. Chychele Waterston would later become the father of acclaimed actor Sam Waterston.

The information for this column came from excerpts of Chychele Waterston's Mount Foraker expedition diary, provided by his sons George Waterston, Jr., and Sam; from Brown's expedition report on pages 393 through 402 of the November 1934 *Alpine Journal*; from Charlie Houston's article titled "The Climb of Foraker," which appeared on pages 17 and 18 of the December 1934 issue of *The Mountaineer*, and an accompanying photograph immediately preceding it; from Brown's article titled "Mount Foraker, Alaska. (Denali's Queen.)," which appeared on pages 14 through 48 of the May 1935 *Alpine Journal*; from Charlie Houston's article titled "Denali's Wife," which appeared on pages 285 through 297 of the 1935 *American Alpine Journal*; from Vin Hoeman's article titled "Mountain Nomenclature," which appeared in the June 1967 *Scree*; from Vin Hoeman's article titled "Names," which appeared in the October 1967 *Scree*; from Grace Hoeman's article titled "News from the Committee on Geographic Names," which appeared in the March 1970 *Scree*; from documents on file in the federal Geographic Names Information System provided by Jenny Runyon; and from my correspondence with both George Waterston Jr., and Sam Waterston.

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

March 31, 2021, at 6:30-8:00 p.m., conducted online via Zoom

Roll Call

Mike Meyers (President) - Present
Nathan Pooler (Vice-President) - Present
Curtis Townsend (Secretary) - Present
Katherine Cooper (Treasurer) - Present
Tom Meacham (Director) - Present
Heather Johnson (Director) - Absent
Andy Kubic (Director) - Present
Luke Konarzewski (Director) - Absent
Branden Lee (Director) - Present
Josh Pickle (Director) - Present

Scribe: Curtis Townsend

Committee Reports

President (Mike Meyers)

- NEW By-Laws are getting a review by Tom
- Tiered membership payments Board approved. After running in Scree it goes for member vote.

Vice President (Nathan Pooler)

- April Speaker is Kakiko Ramos-Leon

Secretary (Curtis Townsend)

- BP energy center is closed through August 2021.

Treasurer (Katherine Cooper)

- Please let Katherine know if anyone has any issues with their membership dues being received or membership being activated.

Liability Committee (Tom Meacham)

- Nothing to report.

Awards Committee (Tom Meacham, Charlie Sink, Max Neale)

- Nothing to report.

the Scree (Gerrit Verbeek, Dawn Munroe)

- Audit of Scree subscriptions possible. Nathan to look into it. Canceling the REI subscription.
- Brendan Lee and Gerrit Verbeek are working on digitizing old Scree editions.

Trips Committee

- Nothing to report

Training Committee

- Recording a trip leader training - Gerrit's outline was great. Gerrit was this outline reviewed by Jen Aschoff?

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

- Bomber Hut window replacements to happen in Summer 2021. Foyer + more to happen if we receive a grant
- The board voted unanimously to approve the MSTPF Grant application that Jonathan Strong assembled.

Mentorship (Lila Hobbs, Katherine Cooper)

- Nothing to report.

Communications Committee (Lila Hobbs)

- New website construction is funded and in progress.

Calendar Committee (Vicky Ho, Lila Hobbs, Heather Johnson, Mike Meyers)

- Nothing to report.

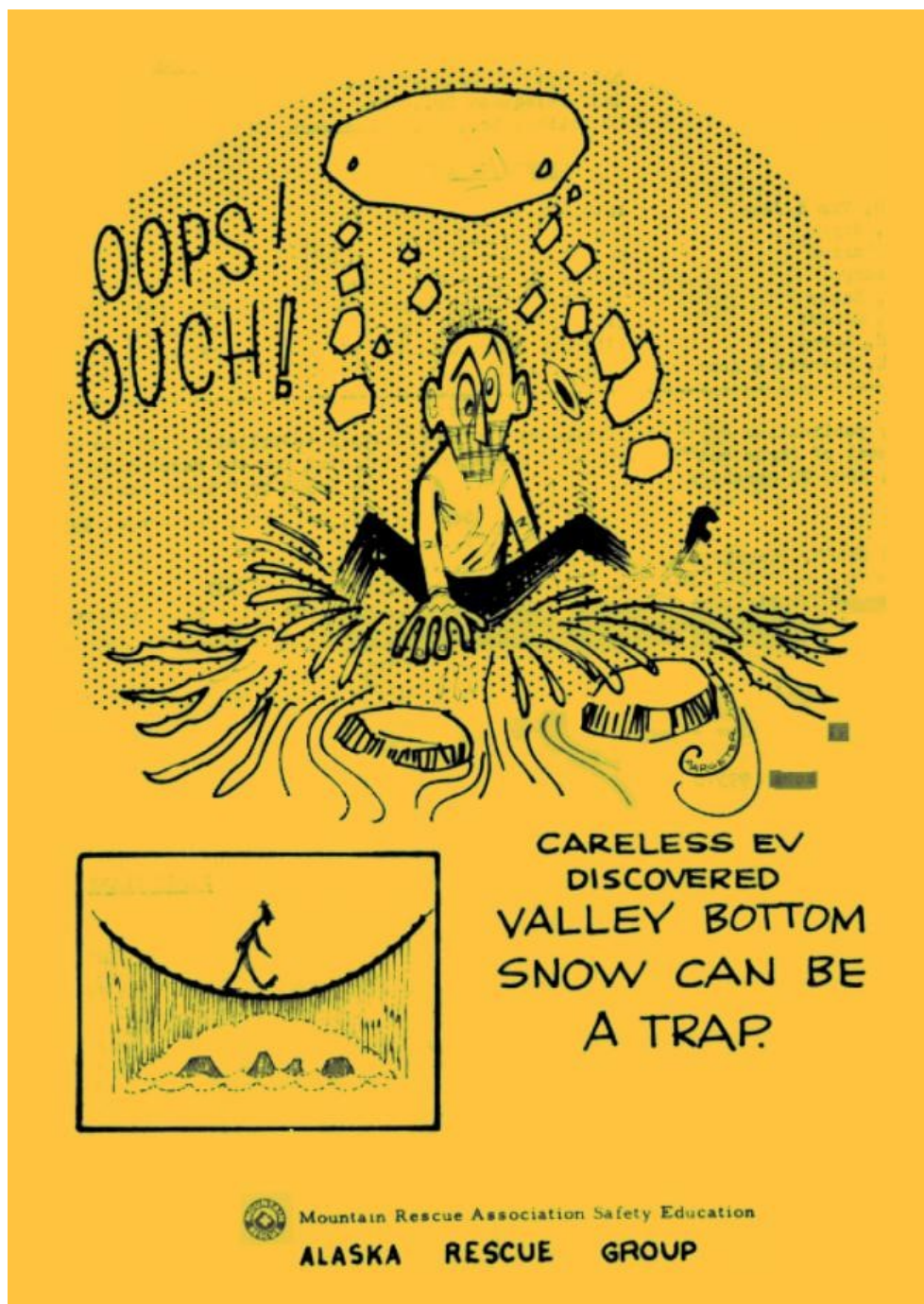
Date and Location of next Meeting

- General Meeting April 7th via Zoom, starting at 6:30 p.m.
- Next Board Meeting on April 28, 2021 from 6:00-8:00 pm via Zoom.

The Return of Careless Ev(eryman)

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska was founded in 1958 to “to encourage mountain climbing interest, to instruct on climbing, encourage exploration and form mountain rescue teams.” (the Scree December 1958, quoting American Alpine News)

In 1971 the MCA-affiliated Alaska Rescue Group published a series of cartoons featuring Careless Ev, drawn by Dick Pargeter. Nearly fifty years later, human nature and natural hazards are still the same. So here are a few again, as they were printed on the Club’s signature goldenrod paper.* Enjoy, and stay safe!



Reprinted from the Scree, February 1972.

**This issue of the Scree was originally printed on white paper, but that’s boring and we have image editing software which can add a color background.*

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Mike Meyers	president@mtclubak.org	Director 1 (term expires in 2021)	Andy Kubic	andy.kubic@gmail.com
Vice-President	Nathan Pooler	vicepresident@mtclubak.org	Director 2 (term expires in 2021)	Heather Johnson	hjohnson2211@gmail.com
Secretary	Curtis Townsend	secretary@mtclubak.org	Director 3 (term expires in 2021)	Tom Meacham	tmeacham@gci.net
Treasurer	Katherine Cooper	treasurer@mtclubak.org	Director 4 (term expires in 2022)	Luke Konarzewski	lukekonarzewski96@gmail.com
			Director 5 (term expires in 2022)	Brendan Lee	brendanlee718@yahoo.com
			Director 6 (term expires in 2022)	Josh Pickle	joshuampickle@gmail.com

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@mtclubak.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. Material 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@mtclubak.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 — membership@mtclubak.org

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vacant — training@mtclubak.org

Mentorship: Katherine Cooper and Lila Hobbs — mentorship@mtclubak.org

Huts: Greg Bragiel — 350-5146 or huts@mtclubak.org

Calendar: Vicky Ho — 512-470-8640 or hovcky@gmail.com

Librarian: Gwen Higgins — library@mtclubak.org

Scree Editor: Gerrit Verbeek — MCAScree@gmail.com assisted by Dawn Munroe (350-5121 or dawn.talbott@yahoo.com)

Web: www.mtclubak.org

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

*Rachel Johnston coming up an unnamed ridge along the Traverse of the Talkeetna Mountains.
Photo by Colleen Metzger*

Mountaineering Club of Alaska
Box 243561
Anchorage, AK 99524-3561