

SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska
Box 2037 Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Vol. 12, No 6 June 1969

JUNE MEETING... Ben Crawford Memorial Park, 3rd and Eagle, Monday June 9th, 8 p.m.
Inverse mountaineering: spelunker Chuck Pease will show slides of his 8½ day expedition to a depth of 3100 feet in the Gouffre Berger Cave near Grenoble, France.

CLIMBING AND HIKING SCHEDULE

June 7th, Saturday... GRACE HOEMAN will lead a climb where the weather looks best.
277-7871

LOST LAKE, Kenai Peninsula, June 14-15... "31st Hike"... excellent 6-mile trail, spectacular views of Mount Ascension (5810') and unclimbed Resurrection Peaks. For those wishing to climb, Mt. Ascension rises immediately SW of the lake... LEADER: LOTTE KRAMER, 272-6355.

ANNUAL FLATTOP SLEEP-IN for old timers... June 21... LEADER: GARY HANSEN, 272-1145.

CLIMBING SCHOOL: GENERAL MOUNTAINEERING

1) THEORETICAL SESSION, Wed. evening, June 18, 7:30 p.m. at the AMU Bat-cave (Student Center). Bring a 15-ft length of rope for knot tying.

2) INDEPENDENCE MINE, June 21-22... climbs of The Pinnacle via routes of varying difficulty. Interested members may register at the June meeting. Remember, also to sign waiver sheet. For the weekend you will need summer overnight gear. Climbing equipment needed will include waist "swami" sling of 15-20 ft, rappel sling of 10 ft, and locking carabiner. Bring a hardhat if you own one. Recommended sling material: 1-inch flat nylon. Aluminum carabiners are sufficient.

DIDILKAMA, Saturday June 28... 6100 ft peak, Talkeetna Mtns. From Fern Mine Rd., hike north along Archangel Creek tributary. Continue north over benches and large, grassy plain before climbing into NE cirque. Ascend small glacier to 20-ft diorite summit flake. Peer over east face. Frolic on the glacier. Impressive views in all directions. LEADER: GAYLE NIENHUESER, 277-9330.

RESURRECTION CREEK TRAIL, July 4, 5, and 6... long hike with overnights at Forest Service cabins. LEADER: JOHN WOLFE, 272-8152

BASHFUL PEAK, July 4, 5, and 6... 8050 ft peak, highest in the western Chugach. LEADER: NICK PARKER, 277-2030

SHEEP MOUNTAIN, Kenai Mtns., Sunday July 13... 6250 ft, formerly Wolcot Mtn. Depart from bridge at Snow River inlet to Kenai Lake. Climb initial 4000 ft over grass, heather, and scree to relay station on NW ridge. Continue along ridge to summit. Good views of prominent Seward area peaks. LEADER: to be announced at next meeting.

When the MCA Mt. Sergeant Robinson expedition fizzled for lack of adequate snow to pave Assassination Glacier, we barely withstood a personnel drop-out to launch an alternate excursion to the pocket, Plateau Glacier from which flows Monument Creek. Finally Tom Meacham, Jim Lethcoe, and I set out to tackle this hitherto untouched strip of northwest Chugach.

Saturday: After leaving Tom's car at the Hicks Creek horse ranch, we depart from the Glenn Highway at mile 94 under overcast skies, walk the cat-trail to the Matanuska River with snowshoes and ski poles in hand, cross the ice without incident, and head for the mouth of Monument Creek 2 miles downstream. When river ice gives way to unconsolidated snow, we lose no time donning our webs. Our route follows the west bank of the open creek before it condenses in alder and canyon. No choice but to take to the alder and ascend the west benches to a point beyond the "key-stoning" and the lower valley. Immediately we're thrashing our Keltys in prize Alaskan alder - no clean climb here. Steep alder slopes force us off the snowshoes. Somehow those snow pickets seem out of place. The slope slackens - on go the webs. We repeat this routine countless times in the next 5 hours. Alder gives way to scrub hemlock. Hemlock loses out to alder. Late in the afternoon we scrounge room for our McKinley tent--surrounded by alder. The view takes our breath away: we've gained $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the river and 1000 vertical feet of brush. We dub this alder camp! Even our mung tastes of it.

Sunday: Light snow falling, more alder. The crux of the climb catches us early: unbroken alder gives way to broken alder as we crest the first major bench. We fight to break trail through this crud snow. Each trail-breaking lead is good for about 300 yards. Whiteout and falling snow rankle already frayed spirits. In early afternoon we decide to switch the routine: while Jim pitches a new camp, Tom and I spend the rest of the day sleuthing a moose track through the remaining 2 miles of alder. Finally we contour into upper valley above the now frozen creek bed before returning to camp.

Monday: We set out in high spirits over our newly-paved super-highway. As we contour onto Monument Creek, clouds lift to reveal spectacular avalanchy valley, 5000' relief on either side. Shortly after midday, we draw within $\frac{3}{4}$ miles of snout. Jim has to be out Friday and our nearly 3-day walk-in is just ending. Everyone is too pooped to put camp on glacier--steep 1000' snout seems like a lot of needless calories for Keltys. We rationalize logistics and decide to bag the peak from a valley base. Terrain near snout looks particularly avalanchy so we reconnoiter camp where we are. While Tom pitches the tent, Jim and I punch a trail to the snout.

Tuesday: We set out on snowshoes with our objective almost 4 miles away and 4500' higher: just a long one-day climb if we don't run afoul time-consuming problems. At the bottom of the snout we rope up and choose steep direct route to avoid a stretch of blue ice which will require step-cutting. A big wind is funneling through this Venturi so I confidently predict wind-packed glacier above, and we cache webs. Beautiful climb up on hard wind-packed except uppermost concave section of slab on unconsolidated snow where it catches the afternoon sun. At the top we begin long march up Plateau Glacier. Lethcoe and Meacham soon start punching through to their hips. Man, those guys weigh too much! Jim tries crawling! We rest-step to east the impact. Too time-consuming. When I start going in we realize the futility of it all and hope the weather holds for tomorrow. At the top of the snout we recall avalanchy slab and wait 'till the sun passes behind peak 8645. That night we eat a big mung and say prayers to Skike.

Wednesday: Windy and clear. We're up at 5:15 and race through our breakfast glop. On to the peak: we make good time on webs and reach yesterday's farthest point around 10. We weave through upper glacier--superb--and gradually climb into amphitheater below peak. We eat lunch at 7000 ft. I'm turned on by the north face which offers the most direct route to the summit--a 1000 ft ice climb which must hit 65 degrees--but ice debris at its bottom dictates another choice. We reject the west ridge--too long and gendarmy--in favor of the east ridge which is $\frac{1}{2}$ mile long and less gendarmy. We gain

the ridge via a 300 ft 55 degree clinging snow-on-ice slope. Man, those 20 ft gendarmes now are 100 feet high. The view is superb. The final dog-leg of Assassination Glacier is 5 miles of crushed ice cubes. That route will never go. We spend "hours" surmounting the first gendarme. At 3:15 PM we're at 7500 ft with most of the ridge still to go. We reluctantly turn around. No one is eager for a bivouac. While following Jim and Tom down our access slope, I get some self-arrest practice. We've lost it and lie aloud that the view was worth our efforts anyway. Nevertheless we enjoy our tromp down glacier; solitary clouds drifting in from the southwest catch the sun as prisms and we witness a spectrum of refracted light. Together with a myriad of climbing possibilities-ice slopes, snow, hanging glaciers, and rotten crud rock-and we have a name for the glacier.

Thursday: As Jim has to be out Friday, we start out after caching our wands for a return visit. Our paved highway is still intact if somewhat sun-drenched, and we make fantastic time. A big avalanche has covered part of our route through the alder on the west benches. Nevertheless by early afternoon we have swallowed up camps 1 and 2 and are crossing the Matanuska River by 3:00 PM. We are out by 4:15 PM.

ARKOSE PEAK, 5850'

March and April 1969

Grace Hoeman

This double peak at the head of Arkose Ridge stands out like husky dog ears when one views the ridge coming from Anchorage and driving towards the Matanuska Valley. We obtained a particular good view of it when we did Eska Mt. in March 1968. Vin suspected that Arkose was the peak climbed by Bading, Pillingman and Wilson in July 1961 (Scree: 3:10:4) and was interested in checking this out.

On March 29 of this year Vin and I go up the Little Susitna Valley on our snow-mobile "Bluebird," but the day is too short and the snow unconsolidated. Vin and Bluebird get buried and disgruntled, we let Arkose be.

April 5 sees Lotte Kramer and I ski up the valley after we park our car at the Little Susitna Lodge. We advance to Lone Tree Creek in drab, snowy weather. We lose our enthusiasm under threatening skies and turn back via Lonesome Mine, which we investigate thoroughly, looking for treasures.

April 6, under the same sad weather conditions, we fools try again and persist. We make it up what G. Wilson in her 1961 Scree article on "Two Unnamed Peaks" called the higher North Peak and more massive of the two. We arrive at 14.00 hr and to our ennui the sharper South Peak looks higher. Corniced snowmasses hide signs of previous ascents and I have to give up after a few attempts to uncover a cairn. Time is advancing and nasty clouds billow up the valley. We retreat in haste, skiing in a complete whiteout, falling and getting up again. Just before dark we reach our car.

The riddle of the higher peak needs to be solved. On April 27 I climbed at 6.30 hr, still on skis, but I have to pick my route carefully in the lower valley in order to stay off the frozen mud. By 9.00 hr I am beyond the mine and cache my snowshoes at a site claimed by a rock ptarmigan who protests loudly and is supported by a cony from the distance. I hurry on up Lone Tree Creek and at 11.000hr I reach the bowl. Avalanche tongues reach down the slopes, searching for me, little hobbit on slats. I move on swiftly and as the going gets too steep for skis and skins, I leave them and punch holes up the final stretch to the col. By 11.30 hr I'm on top of the South summit. Today, under fairly clear skies, the South Peak is indeed lower than the North Peak which Lotte and I climbed three weeks ago. A cairn marks the summit here, but I can not find a register. I drop a weighted plastic bag between the cairn rocks. The sun now warms the entire bowl below and I hasten back to my skis. A wonderful run down the bowl follows, I sing and laugh at the licking avalanche tongues. I stop to pick up my snowshoes where I'd left them in the morning and the ptarmigan comes running, renewing his argument. He practically jumps onto my rucksack. Soggy snow slows me down on the final stretch and not until 15.30 hr do I reach the lodge. There's no doubt in my mind that what the 1961 party climbed is indeed Arkose. This trip can be warmly recommended to skiing MCA'ers.

Larry Swanson, David Hawley and I had planned on a climb of Explorer Peak (MCA scheduled trip). An alternate was chosen because of poor weather south of Anchorage. We went to Independence Mine and had a very enjoyable time climbing Needle Peak. Snowshoes were worn to within 200 vertical feet of the summit. One interesting rock pitch completed the ascent. While returning from Independence, a stop was made at the Little Susitna Tooth. We made a rapid ascent of the rock, scraping the snow off the summit in order to find a little room to sit down. There is definitely a crowd. Following an interesting variety of rappels, we headed home. It was a most enjoyable day.

"PALMER'S THUMB" 5500'

April 19-20, 1969

Karen Courtright

Climbers: Bill Babcock (Leader), Fred Katy, Grace Hoeman, Lotte Kramer and Karen Courtright.

Bill Babcock led an overnight club trip on an attempt to climb the "Palmer Thumb" (5500') which is the high point on the cirque formed by the Matanuska Peak. Leaving Palmer after crossing the Matanuska River and 2 to 3 miles beyond the bridge on the left hand side there are two greenhouses (the kind plants grow in). Here a dirt road takes you to the foot of the mountain.

A 3-hour bushwhack of devil's club and alder on steep slopes brings one above the tree line. Three more hours of steep alpine slope brought us to our campsite on the ridge. An early morning start took us to the foot of the steep face leading to the "Thumb". Considerable hazardous conditions and exposure kept us from attaining the summit.

This route is a challenging climb for experienced persons. A considerably easier approach is from the S. E. slope leading to the summit.

STREL'SHLA MOUNTAIN 5400'

April 26, 1969

Karen Courtright

Climbers: Karen Courtright (Leader), Lotte Kramer, Fred Katy, Randy Renner, Bill Babcock, Al Tomich and his friend Wayne.

Weather on O'Malley looked precipitous so we headed north up the Glenn Highway to climb Eska Peak. After meandering through Sutton we drove to the foot of Eska. There after attempting to reach the mountain, we were turned back by a brush fire heading down the valley.

Determined to climb, our party drove north to Strel'shla Peak behind the Victory High School and reached the summit late that afternoon.

BIRDSEYE RIDGE

May 3, 1969

Lotte Kramer

The five people who had planned to hike up this easy ridge were unanimous in deciding to go somewhere else, as it was blowing and snowing. We, Al Tomich, Loes Firalyo, Richard Ellis, Jay Taty and I started from McHugh campground up the trail towards the rocky ridge whose high point is McHugh Peak. The higher we went, the windier it became. Dick Ellis first decided to go back, then Loes, after she successfully climbed an icy gully. She was escorted down safely (?) by two charming men. The rest of us went along the ridge, which at times was swept by winds so strong that we had to sit down in order not to be carried away. We got within a few feet of the top, but everything was covered with ice and snow, and the wind was so strong it was too dangerous to risk the top, especially as one member had neither ice ax nor crampons. Back across slippery, icy snowfields was no pleasure, but uneventful. As Jay stated: it was a good first climb for him in Alaska, an interesting initiation to MCA.

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska regretfully says good-bye to Tom and Jane Meacham who will soon be leaving Alaska, and expresses its thanks to Tom for his service as MCA treasurer. Following Tom's June discharge from the Army, they will make their home in Colorado where Tom will be returning to law school in the fall. We remind them that Alaska needs more good lawyers.

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I R E M E M B E R A M A N

I remember a man with a serious face, boisterous laugh and ragged pants topped off with white K-boots. A terrific struggle thru tag alder on a 45 degree slope in deep soft snow at ten below. The man struggled in that incredible snarlwith snowshoes still on his feet!

A 400-mile drive to find out that no one would fly us in. Fascinating discourse on mountains, birds, etc., quotes from Robert Service, "The Men Who Don't Fit In". Happy we left, happy we returned, we'll get it later.

The sea and land on Homer's Kachemak Bay, stories of birds, a kick by a horse. Laughing at and with each other. Thirty miles, fifty miles, Seward. Sea, mud, rivers, glaciers, storms, 15 miles with heavy packs. A small man shivering on the summit, pants full of holes, parka losing down with each gust of wind. Totally unconcerned, searching the distant summits for as yet unclimbed routes.

A 12-hour day with two or three rest stops. Ultimately only a small dot on the trail ahead. Will that little S.O.B. ever stop! On the following day, looks good, it will goone way or another. Another unclimbed summit climbed, another magnificent experience in nature.

Slow and easy on the descent, that's when people can get hurt. Look at that! A snow bunting living on the summit! Anyone want gorp? Must be some we packed last year! Look at that, a water ouzel!

Shouldn't we camp soon, it's been dark 2 hours and some people are $\frac{1}{2}$ mile behind. Really, you set up camp, I'll go back and show them the way.

You mean you're going up that! I'll wait for you at the Double Muskie. The wind can't be more than 60 mph wind. Think it will go. Sure. Anyone bring any food?

Skis are faster than snowshoes. That is, if you don't ski into an alder thicket. Use the right wax. Bring along skins, don't break a leg.

We have got to get into the area across the Matanuska, by Valdez, Harding Icefield, Brooks Range, St. EliasNepal.

--- Bill Babcock

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RITS AND PIECES

Over April 26 and 27, twenty enthusiastic students at AMU's mountaineering course practiced prusik, pulley, and bilgeri crevasse-rescue techniques in a very appropriate 80-90 ft crevasse on the Matanuska Glacier.

Nick Parker and Bob Spurr finally completed their "winter" ascent of East Twin. The first major effort on Dec. 1 by Dub and Harry Bludworth and Bob commenced by flashlight and snowshoe from Eklutna Lake and ended at East Twin Pass in high winds. Over the weekend of Dec. 28 and 29, Nick and Bob, joined by Dub and Harry, Jim Lethcoe and Gerry Garland, found enjoyable winter climbing above the Pass and almost reached the summit, running out of time on the east ridge "dike" about $\frac{3}{4}$ hr. from the top. Finally on May 10, vanguards of an AMU mountaineering class experience climb, they reached the summit amidst more snow on the ridge and in the air than on previous attempts.

On Sunday, May 18, Nick Parker and Bob Spurr clambered up rotten rock and unstable talus to reach the high point of Sheep Mtn. 6223' (Talkeetna Mtns.). The summit, previously unreported in SCREE, is a register-less, cairn-less point on a scree knife-edge. The views of Sanford, Wrangell, Drum; Marcus Baker, Sergeant Robinson, Wickersham (they waved to Grace, Fred, and Harry) and the remaining northwest Chugach were spectacular.

KANCHEE, El. 4310' Harry Bludworth and Grace Hoeman selected this Anchorage skyline peak for a short "home early" outing on April 13. We started from Stuckagain Heights and this time got stuck with four Irish Setters. We had lunch atop our target, or better the dogs had our lunch. The register and cairn, placed on the summit by the Wilsons were in perfect shape.

FRONTIER PEAK (6205'). First ascent by Bill Babcock and Karen Courtright, May 10-11, 1969. Across from Pioneer Peak is the high point we call "Frontier." The approach was made from the S. E. ridge after camping at 2500' level. Two routes would not go as we had no hardware. Many sour cherries later we reached the top by traversing and attempting a southern route. Visibility was poor, so we descended the easier S. W. ridge. Downwards we hurried fast to spy upon seven magnificent professional climbers -- all of them rams.

SCREE is published monthly by the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, which is affiliated with the Anchorage Department of Parks and Recreation. Editor: Liska Snyder. Staff: Marty Corcoran, Carol DeVoe, Joanne Merrick. Please send material for July SCREE to Liska Snyder, 2806 Alder Drive, Anchorage, Alaska 99504, by June 25.

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