



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 102037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

JUNE 1989

Volume 32, Issue 6

JUNE MEETING

The next monthly meeting of the MCA will be held Wednesday, June 21st, 7:30 pm, on the summit of Flattop, weather permitting, otherwise it will be held at the usual place, the Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd and Eagle Sts., downtown Anchorage. Entertainment will be provided by you, in the form of kite-flying, etc. after the business meeting. (Neil O'Donnell will show slides, if it's raining.)

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

- June 2-4 LOWER RUSSIAN LAKE to RESURRECTION CR.
Leave Friday night. 31 miles one way. Class C. 55 Ways #8.
Leader: Alan Shayer 277-9085
- 17-18 FLATTOP
Overnight on the summit. Traditional. Class B. No leader.
- 22-23 ROCK CLIMBING CLASS
Teaches the basics of rope handling, anchors, belaying, how to be a human fly on rock and what sewing-machine legs are. Class will be after work, along the Seward Hwy. The club has helmets and ropes, so all you'll need is a couple of inexpensive items. If the weather is poor the class will be held the following Monday and Tuesday nights.
Leader: Pete Sennhauser 345-5577
- 24-25 MYSTERY MOUNTAIN
Class C-D. Ask Tom for details.
Leader: Tom Choate 333-5309
- 30- AMPHITHEATRE MOUNTAINS
July 4 Tangle Lakes - Paxson area, class C-D.
Leader: Don Hansen 279-0829h 261-4565w
- 30- McCARTHY BIKE TRIP
Mountain bike trip and possible raft trip or Root Glacier trip.
July 4 Leader: John Baker 274-0105
- July 8 HOMICIDE PEAK
Mountain bike through Powerline Pass and scramble up this Chugach climb. Class C.
Leader: Neil O'Donnell 274-5069

16 HIDDEN PEAK
Round trip 6 miles. Elevation gain 3000'. Class C.
Leader: Don Hansen 279-0829

22- KATMAI TRAVERSE
Aug 5 Cross the Alaska Peninsula from Katmai Bay, on the Shelikof Straits, to Brooks Camp via the Valley of 10,000 Smokes. A two-week trip, with time to explore the mountains and photograph bears and go fishing. Class C-D.
Leader: Don Hansen 279-0829

Aug 21-28 SIXTH ANNUAL HARDING ICEFIELD TRAVERSE
Leader: Dan O'Haire 561-1141

The Hiking and Climbing Committee is always looking for leaders. If you have an idea for a trip, whether for an afternoon or several weeks, give Don Hansen a call at 279-0829. H and C Committee: Don Hansen, Chairman, B. Wakeland, A. Shayer, J. Baker, N. O'Donnell, W. Hersman.

TRIP REPORTS

Isthmus Icefield Traverse

Willy Hersman

It goes by many names. Some call it the Spencer Icefield or the Blackstone Icefield, or the Portage Icefield; the visitor's center at Portage Lake calls it the Whittier Icefield. Tom Choate says it should be called the Poet's Icefield, since many features nearby are named after poets. I guess that's okay, although I prefer Isthmus Icefield since it lies between Prince William Sound and Turnagain Arm. On May 11, Tom and I, along with Rick Maron set out to traverse this area, from Crown Point, on the Seward Hwy. near Kenai Lake, to Whittier. A trip which can be done mostly on easy glaciers, and since it was still early we were able to use skis for all but 2 or 3 of the 45 miles.

We followed the Falls Creek Trail to the snow slopes at the head of the creek's valley and dropped into an unnamed valley beyond the 4150-foot pass about 8 miles from the start. After sitting to watch goats, sheep and a lone wolf, we ascended to the 3950-foot pass which gives access to the upper Paradise Valley. A short bushwack going northeast was not too much trouble and we were able to make a nice camp below the ice. This is a particularly nice spot, where the Snow River begins. Several small islands of spruce and tundra are between the many channels of the river, with recently exposed, glacially-grooved bedrock faces alongside small inviting pools which reflect unclimbed peaks above.

We had hoped for an ascent of Trident Peak, but the weather did not cooperate. Getting onto the Inlet Glacier (local name for the glacier feeding the Snow River) we easily skied up past passes which lead to Grant Lake and Moose Creek, although we were in a fog much of the time. At the head of the Trail Glacier we spent two nights in poor weather in a short glacial trough, finally crossing the Trail Glacier to our high-point of 5150', on the SE ridge of Isthmus Peak. Hopes of climbing Isthmus gave way to the poor weather we were having, and it was not until we were past it a ways that we could see the summit for the first time. When the clouds lifted we found ourselves in the midst of the main icefield, whatever name you give it, with the Spencer at our feet.

Finally the weather broke and we saw a chance to redeem ourselves for all the

lost chances to make a worthwhile ascent and our eyes poured across the giant wings of Carpathian before us. The left wing was out of the question, too many dips, cornices and French policemen, so we decided on the other easier-looking one, but the wind was too much so we hid behind this wing for the night. In the morning the weather looked fine.

On the 17th we three headed for the summit, and just like the three Brits on Denali that day we suspected not the weather to change so fast. By 11 am we were without visibility and I was having a hard time seeing cornices on the knife-edged east ridge we were on. At some point below the summit we crossed the north face and reached a bergschrund below the summit block. Gingerly we stepped across a snow bridge and onto the north ridge, each of us only vaguely aware of the drop down to the Skookum on our right. Psychological pickets were set occasionally and when there was no more upward progress to do I realized we had made it and sat on top as the wind began to make itself known.

The storm intensified on the descent, and Rick carefully led us down, impressing us with his ability to see anything at all. Tom and I could scarcely see our own feet. After the storm lessened the next day we left the Blackstone Glacier for the Burns via an interesting and scenic pass and skied towards Bard Peak. It was an easy descent into Whittier where we waited for the train, and met several MCAers with paddles in their hands instead of ice axes!

Knoya and Tikishla

Mindy Baum

May 13-14

Alan Shayer, Mindy Baum, Nat Goodhue, and Pamela Seiser began their trip up Knoya and Tikishla by stopping off at the Alaska Breakfast Club. While contemplating the downpour, they considered other alternatives, such as the South Fork of Eagle River, Indian and Hawaii.

At the trailhead they were greeted by an unexpected participant of last year's expedition to these peaks. This elderly and short-legged individual, who had successfully summited both peaks, has the advantage of having a low center of gravity. This made up for his inability to use an ice axe. Despite Mindy's protestations, Alan adhered to club rules and would not allow the party to accompany them because he was unable to sign a release form. Alan then chased away the basset hound.

Leaving from Stuckagain Heights, they followed the trail to timberline above the north bank of North Fork Campbell Creek. They traversed the ridge up to Knoya and as they summited the sun broke out. Nat celebrated by baring his chest to the four sacred directions. With darkening clouds they headed for camp on the high bowl between Knoya and Tikishla. The route was windblown of snow, except for a few patches. They made camp amidst sunshine and wind. Only Nat's tent blew down and while Allan ran to his assistance, Alan's pad blew away. If found, please return to owner.

They woke up to fresh snow, three inches. Once again they contemplated alternatives in Pam and Mindy's breakfast club. It was recollected that last year the basset hound had spent the night on the summit of Tikishla and had to be rescued the following day. Due to whiteout conditions this year's expedition members elected to spend the day hiking through two lower valleys. They passed over the saddle between Knoya and Tikish into Ship Cr. A few miles downstream they climbed over to a Chester Cr. tributary and eventually returned to Stuckagain

Hts.

As they drove back home they passed the basset hound sitting on his porch. His eyes seemed to say that they couldn't make Tikishla without his assistance.

Nagishlamina Peak
First Ascent

Tom Meacham

The last unclimbed Anchorage skyline peak exceeding 10,000 feet was finally ascended on April 5, 1989 by a party of four in a seven-day expedition under perfect early-spring weather. "Nagishlamina" (11068) is one of the five prominent summits of the Tordrillo Mountains, visible due west of Anchorage across Cook Inlet; the others are Mt. Spurr (11070), Chickantna Peak (10893), Mt. Torbert (11413), and Mt. Gerdine (11258). According to Dr. Rod Wilson, a long-time student of the Tordrillos, Nagishlamina was also believed to be the highest unclimbed peak in the United States.

Our party was a "mature" group (average age 45 years), and consisted of Dr. Jim Sprott, Daniel Blake, and Tom Meacham of Anchorage and Dave Johnston of Trapper Cr. On April 2, Lowell Thomas ferried us by bush plane into the north side of the Tordrillos, landing at 2300' on the Nagishlamina River, below the Pothole Glacier. The lake which Lowell, Jim and I had recalled at this spot from two previous approaches up the Pothole had mysteriously disappeared, leaving a rough landing zone of ice ridges and wind hummocks. A relatively easy march with skis and sleds led us to Camp I that night, at 3300' on the main Pothole Glacier.

The next day we turned up the northeast-trending branch of the Pothole, which provided our main access to Mt. Spurr by at least two earlier expeditions, we think ours was the first to use the northeast branch of the glacier to gain access to the Spurr plateau. This tributary is relatively crevasse-free and straightforward up to about 6500'. Our camp II was at 6200', below a prominent icefall, with steep walls capped by hanging glaciers rising before us, an inspiring sight.

The weather, which was fine to begin with, inexplicably improved with each passing day. Were we really climbing in a coastal range in Alaska? On day three a route was placed off the glacier on its northerly margin, at a fairly steep angle in firm snow. We reached a prominent rock ridge at 7850', where we placed our high camp. It was a spectacular location, with the terrain falling away on all sides, Mt. Spurr and Nagishlamina in the near distance above us, and the ice plateau of the Chigmits to the southwest, bounded at its far edge by the abrupt, unclimbed pickets of the Revelation Mountains. Hundreds of peaks and ridges lay in our view, virtually all of them unclimbed and unexplored.

Our summit day, April 5, dawned nearly cloudless, with no wind and temperatures slightly above zero. The ridge above camp required mixed rock and snow scrambling, up to a subsidiary peak at 10175, overlooking Harpoon Glacier. From that point, we dropped to the saddle leading to the rounded summit of Nagishlamina, which we reached at 2:30 pm under cloudless skies and -5 deg. F.

The descent on April 6 took us from the high camp all the way to the landing zone. On the 7th, Dave was unable to putter around camp like the rest of us, and instead soloed Peak 6740 on the southwest ridge above the river. The following morning Lowell slipped in ahead of the foul weather advancing through the passes from the southwest, and returned us to the comforts and cares of civilization.

MINUTES OF THE MAY MEETING

The May meeting was held at the Pioneer Schoolhouse on May 17, Pete Sennhauser presiding. Reading of the April minutes was waived.

New members and guests were welcomed and then there were no committee reports or announcements to speak of and no new or old business. Bill Wakeland showed some excellent slides of the Brooks Range. Shortest meeting in recent memory.

Respectfully Submitted,
Pete Sennhauser

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING May 9

The board learned of three important items:

The MCA has been accepted by Sanctuary Travel to be on a list of organizations which is eligible to receive funds whenever one of our members uses their travel service and mentions that the MCA is his/her choice for such a donation. This was possible through the efforts of Tom Choate who worked with Sanctuary on it.

The MCA was accepted by the IRS as a tax-exempt organization.....finally!
John Baker worked on this a lot.

The Poles we invited are coming to Alaska June 21st for a try at Denali. Hopefully they will take time after their climb to visit us at the July meeting.

The board also discussed getting a rock-climbing class for June (See the Schedule).

Respectfully Submitted,
Pete Sennhauser

ADZE

Looking for backpackers to take part in a photography/natural history study of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, July 1-9. Call John Wenger at Alaska Wilderness Studies, 337-0608.

Climbing Notes

The MCA trip to Mt. Soggy was a success. Randy Howell, Neil O'Donnell and Willy Hersman put in many hours on May 7th to climb the 6200 feet to the top and then hike out 9 miles to Ice 9 (the car). The summit register was found with only two previous entries, although the peak has been summited at least 5 times.

Jim Sayler reports that he, Phil Menke and Karen Cafmeyer made an ascent of Peak 6410 above Eklutna Lake on May 7th. Their route was via the north ridge. No evidence of a previous ascent was found on top.