

JUNE MEETING
Wednesday
June 18, 7:30 pm
Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets
Downtown Anchorage

Slide Show: Cordilleras Blanca, Peru
by Harry Hunt

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

- Jun 20-22 Mount Ascension (5710)
 Easy Glacier Travel. Kenai Mountains. Start from Primrose Campground in the Chugach National Forest. Trip follows the Primrose Creek Trail to Lost Lake. Camp near Lost Lake. Limited to 9 people.
 Leaders: Tom Choate 333-5309, Matt Nedom 278-3648
- 21 Flattop Mountain (3554)
 Class B. Western Chugach. Annual summer solstice sleepout. Start from Glen Alps in Chugach State Park. No leader.
- 21-25 Hicks Creek to Boulder Creek
 Class C+. 42-mile hike through the Talkeetna Mountains. Limited to ten people. Listed in 55 Ways.
 Leader: Bill Wakeland 563-6246.

- Jun 28 - Jul 6 Aniakchak Crater and Vent Mountain
 Class B - C. Charter from King Salmon at a cost of \$240 - \$475 per person (plus air fare to King Salmon). Base camp will be in the crater. Trip limited to nine people including leader.
 Leader: Don Hansen 248-7184(h) or 271-6656(w).
- Jul 12-19 The Goat Trail (Chitistone Gorge)
 Class C. Fly in from McCarthy for \$200 per person. This trip follows an old miner's trail through the Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park and Preserve. Limited to 8 people.
 Leader: Curvin Metzler 333-8766 (Voice mail)
- 13 Mt. Williwaw (5445)
 Class D. From Williwaw Lakes.
 Leader: Tom Choate 333-5309
- July 19 - Aug 3 Mount Igikpak area of Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve
 Class C. Charter from Bettles at a cost of \$430 - \$450 per person (plus approximately \$248 air fare

from Fairbanks to Bettles). Climb of lesser peaks in the Mount Igikpak area. Trip limited to 8 people including the leader. Note: This trip is NOT a climb of Mount Igikpak
Leader: Don Hansen 248-7184(h) or 271-665(w).

Aug 2 Bold Peak Anniversary Climb

Class D. 50th anniversary of the first ascent of a Western Chugach 7000-footer. We'll follow the mostly non-technical Stiver's Gully route rather than repeat the first ascent route. Need mountain bike for the approach. Bring prussik loop, carabiner, harness (or enough webbing for waist loop). Long day, strenuous, but very rewarding. If weather is bad, may try it the next day. Elev. 7522.
Leader: Willy Hersman 265-6405(w)

Aug 28-Sept 1 Kesugi Ridge

Class C. 25-mile hike through Denali State Park.
Leader: Curvin Metzler 333-8766 (Voice mail)

TRIP REPORTS

Mount Marcus Baker from the North by Cory Hinds



group of six MCA members attempted Mount Marcus Baker via the original Washburn Route (Northeast ridge). The team of Elena Hinds, Cory Hinds, and Jim Francis summited in a narrow weather window on April 4.

Meekin ferried five of us onto the upper Matanuska Glacier at about 7000 feet on 30 March in fine weather. The scenery from this base was tremendous: 3000-foot walls rising to the south with icefalls disintegrating into powder avalanches reaching the lower glacier. Huge glaciers merge into the mighty Matanuska and flow north between spectacular peaks. Our route was a beautiful ridge slowly rising to the southwest from 7000 feet to 10000 feet then arching up steeply south to over 11000 feet to join the massif. As the first passenger dropped, I had the whole amphitheater to myself for about 45 minutes.

Compact snow encountered at base camp made it easy to build sturdy snow block walls which we figured we would need sooner or later. Our plan was to establish a solid base camp and take 5 to 6

days of food up for the climb. A short recon ski was made to the foot of the ridge to look at conditions on the obvious snow ramp left of the ridge. Several crevasses were encountered between base camp and the base of the ridge, but skis probably kept us on top. The next morning, our sixth team member was flown in and the team of Chris Riggio, Michelle Potkin, and Mike Ohms was complete. As we reached the base of the ridge, the winds had picked up from the south and some snow was being blown around. Leaving skis at the base of the ridge, the Hinds, Hinds, Francis team headed up to Camp Spindrifft at about 9000 feet in the lee of a crevasse as winds began to build and visibility decreased. Snow walls were quickly erected but little sleep was had due to the booming winds which came in gusts and from seemingly from all directions. The top row of hefty snow blocks were blown off onto our tent at one point. The other team, an hour or so behind, opted to return to base camp and wait out the storm.

Next day the winds died a bit, but it was still white-out so both teams stayed put. The third day the storm broke and we woke to bright sun; time to move up! We opted to stay on the ridge rather than cross the basin at 9000 feet. Continuing up the ridge, we encountered patches of ankle-deep snow and exposed rock. At 10000 feet, the exposed rock ended and blue ice coated the convex upper part of the ridge which we called "the shield." Simul-climbing, we crossed 500 feet or so of brittle 60-degree ice and reached lower-angle Styrofoam snow over ice to the top of the ridge in about 2 hours. Quickly, we traversed south onto the plateau at 11000 feet encountering hard, wind-blown snow and located a tent site in the lee of a detached "shark's tooth" crevasse at about 11500 feet. The Riggio, Potkin, Ohms team reached Camp Spindrifft at 9000 feet on this day.

The weather held and we were off for the summit at 9:30 A.M. after brewing up. Our light summit packs were a welcome change and we made good time gaining the north summit in good snow conditions. The knife edge over the north summit (12360) had our full attention and we simul-climbed with snow pickets. An unexpected surprise was the absence of blue ice on the southern side of the north summit; only Styrofoam snow. We slogged slowly up to the middle summit (12500) encountering patches of drifted, ankle-deep snow and harder sastrugi. Crossing several obvious crevasses, we traversed left down from the middle summit onto the "football field" between the middle and true summits. Moving steadily, we climbed up the East Ridge of Marcus Baker and summited at about 3:30 PM. We could see large sections of the Sound and the Knik and Marcus Baker Glaciers flowing off to the southwest. The 4000-

foot rock walls to the east were breathtaking. As high clouds had moved in, we hastily got down. As we were traversing back up the middle summit, I attempted to jump across a three-foot crack and managed to fall 25 feet over backwards into the crevasse. Luckily, the walls were vertical and I hit nothing, but had a bunch of snow hit me from the lip above. As soon as I realized I was OK, I was out of there, stemming with crampons and using an ice tool. The rest of the descent was uneventful, and we were back at the sharks tooth high camp at 8:00 P.M. The Riggio, Potkins, Ohms team reached followed our tracks to the base of the shield then returned to Camp Spindrift on this day.

Next morning, lenticulars were flying around and we decided to have a cold breakfast and get down as fast as possible; we were moving by 8:00 A.M. Crossing the basin at 9500 feet, we encountered knee-deep snow; perhaps our decision to go up the shield was a good one. Near white-out conditions were encountered at 9300 were we traversed back to the ridge. An encouraging note at Camp Spindrift told us that the other team had returned to base camp earlier that day, and that they had wanded the route from the base of the ridge to base camp. At about 2:00 P.M., both teams were reunited in base camp and the weather slacked for a few hours and we swapped stories, ate, and dried gear. A few hours later, a blizzard hit that lasted 24 hours.

During one early morning shoveling session, I managed to both break the zipper on our vestibule and rip our tent fly. Although disturbing, the rip in the fly did not grow. However, it did allow lots of snow to get between the tent and fly- and prevented us from cooking. Luckily, the other team had their act together and was able to cook for us. Chris Riggio oversaw the construction of some excellent "wind tubes" around our tent sites that channeled the winds and scoured drifting snow.

The weather broke during the night and we packed up and headed down toward the Scandinavian hut. Looking for a challenge? Check out peak 11345. The west ridge looks like it will go; 5000 feet - but no walk-off! Meekins picked up Jim Francis and Mike Ohms at about 5500 feet on the Matanuska Glacier, and the rest of us headed to the Scandinavian Hut for more climbing in the land of the "blue hole" (see separate trip report for climbs done in this area).

The ski out the Matanuska Glacier was quite an epic. Following the route description, Michelle and Chris ended up taking almost 5 days and ran out of food. Lack of snow coverage and wet, unconsolidated snow contributed to the ordeal. Advice to others

skiing out is to stay in the center of the glacier all the way to the end where the tall fins of blue ice are encountered, then go left or right; this team ended up too far left (south) towards the end of the glacier.

Grand Canyon - Paria Canyon

by Bill Wakeland



Monday April 21, we got off to a late start down the Hermit Trail. Nine hours later Don and I heard the most welcome sound of the whole trip. A frog croaked! From above it had looked like Monument Creek was dry, and we'd have to go on down to the Colorado River for water. But hidden from view was a couple hundred feet of creek (and frogs) that was dry, both above and below. Our good luck held for the rest of both hikes.

This was the second year we had elected to make two shorter hikes instead of one long hike - more variety and lighter packs. It was also trip number 6 in the canyon for MCA groups. Our members, all veterans of prior canyon hikes, were: Don Hansen, Linda White, Fred Kampfer, Stan Aarnson, Ed Mulcahy and me.

That first day was a doozy for us, not being prepared for a hot, steep, rocky trail with full packs. Plus we had to go all the way to the campground listed on our permit - we were still in the "corridor" area. Plus the trail was in the worst shape I'd seen it since my first hike there 21 years ago.

Camping near the frogs, we were so pooped we hit the sack in a matter of minutes, without dinner. It was 7:30, and dark! But from that point on, it was all "downhill" for us, even the climb out to the rim a few days later.

We were at Monument for two nights, then moved a few miles to Hermit Camp for a night. While down in the shade along the river at Monument, tragedy struck! When we returned to camp, Linda let out a yell, "My food's gone!" We rushed over to comfort her, and sure enough, there was quite a hole in her pack and remains of food and plastic bags scattered about. She had been varmintized! No matter, between us there was plenty of extra.

From Hermit we move into a "at large" camping area west on the Tonto Trail to camp along



Boucher Creek. That afternoon we had a short, but violent rain storm - sort of an aftermath of a really scary flash and bang lightning and thunder storm the evening before.

We'd heard some negative comments about the Boucher Trail, the only trail on the South Rim I hadn't been on, so we allowed two whole days to get to Dripping Springs, which is only three hours from our cars. Well, the trail was rough in places, very steep in places, and we carried a lot of water. But we were glad for the extra time - we enjoyed two lovely camps, with fantastic views. And we were out to the rim in plenty of time to get cleaned up, re-supply and meet the Cadieux clan, Mary Jo, Bob and Chris, for dinner on the 27th. They had rented a car in Phoenix, and joined us for the Paria hike.

The only real negative of the Boucher hike was the infernal helicopters. I have never heard them so loud and constant - 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. - sometimes lined up playing follow the leader - obviously on a prescribed route to avoid the areas of lodges where more people and more money talk louder.

Next day we drove nearly 300 miles, crossing Glen Canyon at the dam, and deposited the packs and all but three of us at the Whitehouse trailhead for Paria Canyon. The other three drove to Lee's Ferry to drop off vehicles and meet our driver, Rona Levein, who then ferried us back. On April 29th we nine trooped off down the Paria, a gentle downgrade in a modest little valley. But the walls closed in and reached ever upward. Soon we were forced to cross and re-cross the creek; Bob counted 100 such crossings by about 10:00 A.M. The water felt sort of good; cool. I wore fabric boots. The socks dried out overnight in the cool of morning (36 degrees one morning).

That evening we camped among box-elder trees on some pretty little benches, on a tributary called "Buckskin," after exploring it for a couple of miles. It is a real slot! Deep and narrow. In places you can barely squeeze through, and it gets so dark you need a flash for a photo at noon. But the water is ok to drink, after treating, unlike the Paria, which has agriculture chemicals from far upstream, and we had to search for springs.

Back at camp, we waited in vain for the frogs to start - they put on quite a show last time I was there. But they were still around - Linda requested we remove one from her tent! However, the quiet was most rewarding, in contrast to the chopper noise. Nothing but birds and bats!

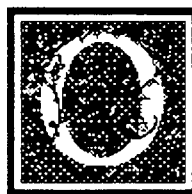
The rest of the 38 miles downstream varied

from deep, narrow canyons with great, vertical, multi-colored "desert-varnished" walls, to more open spaces with high grasses and cottonwood trees as we approached Lee's Ferry. Among the attractions was a side trip to Wrather Arch, one of the biggest in the Colorado Plateau, and petroglyphs. The last camp was in the cottonwoods at the old Wilson ranch remains where cattle were still being run in the lower canyon until a few years ago.

After crossing the Paria 300 or 400 times, we reached the cars and headed to Flagstaff for showers and a final pig-out at Granny's Closet. Next day, May 4, we went our separate ways, most driving to Phoenix for the flight home. Two great hikes, no casualties except sunburn and some meals sacrificed to varmints, and in the very best of company!

Spring Break in the Wrangells

by Charlie Sassara



Our program for Wrangell 1997 started with a relaxing family trip to a side glacier to the Hawkins Glacier, one valley south of Mt. Bear. Shawn and Michele O'Fallon, Carlos Buhler and Siri Moss and I spent a week ski touring and exploring side valleys

near the North Face of Mt. Donna. We broke our self imposed rules of no movement before 1:00 P.M. on April 23rd when Shawn, Carlos and I left camp at 11:30 A.M. and set out to make the first ascent of an 11300-foot peak just to the north of camp. Climbing without a rope and a single ice tool per person for 5000 feet, we stood atop the peak at 7:00 P.M. We named the peak Mt. Benkin after Carlos' lost K2 summit partner from last summer.

After returning to the lodge we helped Paul entertain a North Face marketing team, which was sampling Ultima Thule's Super Cub skiing by leading the pack up a splendid 450-foot Grade III waterfall on the south side of the Chitina River. Highlights included Siri leading a rope team that included Paul's eight year old son, Jay, who kept giving ice beta to the North Face crew.

With decompression from work complete, Siri left with North Face for Anchorage and Carlos and I turned our attention to this year's project, the East Face of University Peak. Depending on which map is used for reference, the summit of University Peak is either 14470 or 15030. Aircraft and personal altim-

eters put the elevation around 14800. At 8500 the East Face was the tallest unexplored and unclimbed face in the range. The climb involved sustained snow, ice and rock climbing along a rib of ice and rock that defined the route.

Our four bivouacs on the ascent took two to three hours of chopping to secure a platform for our Bibler. The technical cruxes included delicate mixed climbing along the broken rock rib at 11500 and near vertical boilerplate ice through a 400-foot serac barrier at 13500. We took four days of food and fuel, but required seven days (including one storm day) to climb the route and descend the North Ridge. Paul Claus supported our efforts with daily overflights and a pin-point food drop on the summit by ace bombardier Reudi Homberger.

Our summit on May 4th was the third ascent of the mountain. The second ascent occurred on April 8th of this year when Paul Claus, Ruedi Homberger, Dave Staeheli, and Danny Kost made a rapid 14.5-hour round trip ascent of the 4000-foot North Ridge from the basin at 10500, just south of Mt. Bona. The first ascent was in 1955 and followed the Hawkins Glacier along the western flank of University to the 10500 basin, then up the North Ridge.

Alaskan Grade VI-

Two Weeks and Two Days in the Wrangell Mountains

by David Hart



On April 3, 1997 Paul Claus of Ultima Thule Outfitters flew Anchorage climbers Paul Barry, Kirk Towner and me from Chitina to "Bona Basin" at 10500 feet on the upper Klutlan Glacier in the heart of the Wrangell Mountains. Directly above Bona Basin rise

Mounts Bona (16550) and Churchill (15783) two of the highest mountains in the area.

During the next two weeks we would summit four peaks. From Bona Basin we made the third ascent of Mt. Tressider (13315) up its northern slopes (Alaska Grade I). We also completed the first ascent

of Peak 12610 (Mt. Pandora) approaching its west ridge from the north (Alaska Grade II). On our last day in the Basin we made a one day ski ascent of Mt. Churchill, up its southeastern slopes (Alaska Grade I). Our final objective, Mt. Riggs (11738), is located 25 miles down glacier and one mile west of the Alaska-Yukon border. Before our ascent, Riggs was likely the highest unclimbed named summit in Alaska. Our chosen route was the striking south-southeast ridge (Alaska Grade IV-).

Due to the 10000-foot gain in altitude from Anchorage, our first day in Bona Basin was spent acclimatizing in the tent. That evening we did manage an evening ski along the lower slopes of nearby Mt. Tressider (13315), our first objective.

Tressider was first climbed in August 1969 via two different routes on the same day: the narrow west ridge and the gentle north face. From base camp, our north face route (Alaska Grade I) appears heavily crevassed and prone to serac avalanches. However, careful route finding allowed us to safely ski to about 12500 feet where we exchanged our skis for crampons. Long transverse crevasses made for tricky route finding, but our luck held out and we reached the summit four hours after leaving base camp. Ours was the third ascent and occurred twenty-eight years after the first two ascents.

Possibly the most spectacular vista from the summit was the massive 8000-foot east face of nearby University Peak (14470), one of the most challenging high peaks in Alaska. Less than one month later, Charlie Sassara and Carlos Buhler would make a six-day alpine style ascent of this extremely technical face, which they tentatively rated Alaska Grade VI-. Approaching clouds cut short our visit on Tressider's summit; we were back at base camp two hours later.

Our second objective was Pk 12610 located five miles down the Klutlan Glacier on its south side. Before our ascent it was one of the highest, if not the highest, unclimbed summit in Alaska and as such it piqued our attention. The next morning we started skiing down the Klutlan in marginal weather. A thirty mile per hour tail wind and a gentle down hill slope speeded our descent down the glacier. An hour later we had dropped 1200 feet and began skiing up the northern flanks of Pk 12610. Unfortunately, the weather had a different plan in store for us. As we reached 10500 feet the winds increased and the ceiling



ALASKA ROCK GYM

\$99.00

Summer Climbing Pass

- Unlimited use of the Best climbing gym in Alaska.
- New routes go up twice per week.
- Full access to weight room.
- Excellent cross training exercise.
- Builds lean muscle mass and speeds weight loss.
- Quickest way to improve climbing performance.
- Meet cool people!
- Good from now till August 31.



Alaska Rock Gym

4840 Fairbanks Street, 562-7265

began to drop. Although we had wanded the entire five miles back to base camp, we were not keen to continue our climb in deteriorating weather only to struggle back up the Klutlan in an increasingly persistent ground blizzard. After all, this was only the third day of our two week trip. We needed to pace ourselves! We finally cried "uncle" and headed back to the barn. Our forced march through maelstrom back to base camp was unpleasant, to say the least. Within thirty minutes of our arrival, the visibility turned to nil; we had made a good call.

What had appeared to be the start of a multi-day storm managed to blow itself out that night. By the next morning the sun was out and the clouds had vanished. Once again we roped up and headed down the glacier to re-try our luck on Pk 12610. Within three hours we had skied to an 11300-foot col at the base of the west ridge. To our dismay, the weather began to change again and snow flurries appeared. We didn't want to repeat this approach a third time so we quickly cached our skis, replacing them with crampons and ice axes. The crux was a sixty-foot, sixty-degree ice pitch directly above the col. Above that, moderate snow climbing continued up the ridge. Here we experienced our only crevasse fall of the entire two weeks when Kirk stepped into a hidden narrow slot, and ended up at eye level with the ground. After crossing over an 11800 foot hump, easy snow slopes led to the final summit block which consisted of a small maze of crevasses and cornices. The high point was a slightly overhanging cornice block, so we chose to touch the true summit with our outstretched arms from a safe distance.

Interestingly, the summit contours of Pk 12610 as shown on the U.S.G.S. topographic map are mislabeled. We confirmed with our altimeters that its true elevation agrees with the contours as depicted on the map, but this is 500 feet lower than its name indicates. We unofficially named it Mount Pandora, in tribute to the people and history associated with an abandoned mining claim in the nearby upper Kotsina River valley.

Once on top, the clouds dissipated, allowing us to spend over thirty minutes reveling in the views of the entire Wrangell and Saint Elias Mountains. One hundred miles to the south, Mounts Logan (19950) and Saint Elias (18008) towered above a sea of smaller peaks. Ten miles to our northwest, Mounts Bona and Churchill rose above all the nearby surrounding peaks. In preparation for our 25 mile ski down the Klutlan Glacier towards Mt. Riggs, we were able to scope out a safe route through the slightly crevassed upper Klutlan as it snaked its way toward the Yukon. This forethought would prove to be helpful during

our descent three days later. Seven hours after leaving base camp, we returned fortunate to have made the first ascent of Mount Pandora (12100) via its west ridge (Alaska Grade II).

It was only four days into our trip and we had already climbed two peaks from our base camp. We were getting spoiled by our day trips with light packs, so we opted to attempt Mt. Churchill in the same manner. Unfortunately, Paul woke up violently ill later that night. He was suffering from food poisoning that kept him running outside all night long. Being explosively sick is hard enough in the comforts of home, but doing one's business in the middle of the night with a ground blizzard plastering your britches with snow is a truly unforgettable experience. Poor Paul.

By morning, Paul was recovering and able to drink water again. Our Churchill plans would only be delayed by this one day. To our surprise, it was Kirk's birthday, and he prepared a special desert for us that evening.

We woke on our sixth morning to intermittent clouds yet again. Still, we loaded our day packs and skied from camp about 9:00 AM toward Mt. Churchill whose summit was 5300 feet higher and six miles away. Four hours later our trail of wands extended 4000 feet above our camp. The clouds which had until now hidden our objective instantly parted, revealing both Mounts Bona and Churchill rising from the 14500 foot plateau. The snow was rock hard so we ditched our skis and continued the last mile across the plateau on foot. At -50 F, we were finally experiencing temperatures closer to our expectations. During the last week our night time lows had been above zero each night - a pleasant surprise.

Churchill's summit ridge is an enjoyable narrow whale back ridge rising 1000 feet from the high plateau. Interestingly, the Volcano Division of the U.S.G.S. recently discovered that the source of the famous White River Ash eruption was from a caldera on the plateau immediately east of Churchill's summit. The summit ridge actually defines the western crater rim of this caldera. At 2:30 PM, we crested a final headwall and stood on top where we were greeted by a steady forty mile per hour wind that plummeted the wind chill to a frigid -70 F. A few pictures later, we were rushing back to the relative comfort of the lower ridge. Due to carelessness I received a bit of frost nip on my cheek. During the following week, this waxy gray patch of skin would peel; a lesson well learned.

With boiler plate sastrugi snow covering the



mountain, we agreed it would be easier to carry our skis and descend on foot. Two and a half hours later, we were back at base camp. We were amazed to have climbed Churchill in just over eight hours round trip, compared to three years ago when Paul and I spent eight days climbing the adjacent Mt. Bona. There's a lot to be said for day trips.

We were scheduled to meet another friend of ours, Harry Hunt, 25 miles down the Klutlan in two days for the second week of our trip. The next morning, April 9, we loaded up our sleds and spent two days skiing towards our final objective, the unclimbed Mt. Riggs (11738). As we neared our rendezvous site on the afternoon of the second day, Paul Claus flew over head with Harry on board. After landing Harry at our new base camp, Paul flew back to us and offered to shuttle our gear the final two miles. Who were we to turn down an offer like that? Paul set down his cub next to us on the glacier and we loaded half our gear into the back. Our remaining gear would make it on a second flight. During these last two miles, the Klutlan transforms itself from a flat and snowy surface ideal for skiing to a crevassed, icy maze which would have been hell with packs and sleds. Unencumbered, it was an joy to ski through this otherworldly landscape. We reached our new base camp just off the Klutlan Glacier at 6700 feet on the southern slopes of Mt. Natashat, a peak which Harry, Paul, Dave Lucey and I had climbed from its opposite side the previous April.

A pleasant surprise greeted us as we arrived at base camp. Harry had delivered a care package to us courtesy of my girlfriend, Dawn. Inside were fresh oranges, home made brownies, a Taco King burrito and the current issue of a popular girlie magazine. It's hard to say which treat we enjoyed best!

On April 11 Harry, Paul and I set out towards Mt. Riggs with four days of food and fuel, while Kirk remained in camp due to a foot infection. Fortunately for Kirk, Harry brought in a course of Penicillin that would aide Kirk's recovery. Our intended route up Mt. Riggs was the south-southeast ridge, still five miles down the heavily crevassed Klutlan Glacier. As such, we were forced to parallel the glacier along the hilly lateral moraine and valley wall. Less than a mile from camp we cached our skis and continued on foot, occasionally post-holing through the quickly melting snow. That evening we placed our camp at 7200 feet in a beautiful valley due west of the south ridge. Riggs' impressive south face loomed over head.

The following morning at 9:00 AM, we packed up camp intending to move up to 9500 feet where we would place our high camp. Once we gained the

south ridge proper at 9000 feet two hours later, we could see the encroaching low pressure front we had measured on our altimeters the previous night. This convinced us to dig a cache for all of our camping gear and try for the summit then and there. After all, it was less than 3000 feet and two miles away, and the weather might prevent another chance the next day. By noon, we had reached 9500 feet and could finally view the 2300 foot crux leading to the summit. Up to this point we had no idea what the upper mountain would look like. To our dismay, it appeared a bit more challenging than we had hoped for. Narrow knife-edged ridges, small cornices, three short ice cliffs, a rock band and tremendous exposure brought serious doubts to my mind. Secretly, I gave us less than a fifty percent chance of succeeding.

We roped up at 10000 feet and began climbing the narrow and slightly corniced ridge using pickets and ice screws as running belays. Paul led out with me in the middle and Harry on the other end in case Paul wanted a breather from leading. The exposure was impressive with three-thousand foot drops looming on each side of the ridge. Two short ice bands at 10500 feet and 11000 feet defined the technical crux of the route. We would later rappel each of these 70 degree barriers on our descent. Fortunately, we were able to skirt around the rock band at mid-height. A final 300-foot 50 degree snow face prolonged the uncertainty of our success until the very last minute. Finally, at 5:00 PM on April 12 we could go no higher. We had succeeded in making the first ascent of Mt. Riggs via the striking south-southeast ridge (Alaska Grade IV-). As quickly as we could, we returned to our cache and then to our valley camp by 9:30 PM in light flurries, just after darkness fell.

The next morning we enjoyed a leisurely morning in the sun; the impending storm never materialized. That evening Kirk greeted us back to base camp two and a half days before our expected pick up date. His foot was improving but still infected; it would be weeks before the swelling and pain subsided enough for him to resume normal activities.

I knew my phenomenal luck with weather had to end some day. After six years and ten consecutive Alaskan expeditions without a delayed pick-up, my pay back had finally arrived. Eight hours before Paul was due to come get us, a massive low pressure system settled over the Wrangell Mountains. Fortunately the storm was short lived and Paul was only two days late in picking us up.



Our two weeks and two days of adventuring in the Wrangells did not quench our thirst to explore these mountains. Rather, it opened our eyes to many other great climbs and ski tours yet to be done in this wonderfully remote part of Alaska.



Candyland Ice Climbing Access

The Alaska Railroad is going to institute a free climber registration program for the Candyland ice climbing area during the next ('97-'98) climbing season.

They are doing this in hopes of preventing any climber-train incidents like the one which occurred last year - necessitating an emergency stop by the train when some climbers left their gear on the tracks.

This program will require a one-time registration at the Alaska Railroad office by each climber, allowing the railroad to familiarize climbers with necessary safety precautions and right-of-way requirements.

Although the railroad has right-of-way for 100 feet on either side of the tracks, they are only requesting that climbers keep at least 20 feet clear, leaving sufficient room for climbing.

This is not an attempt to restrict access to the Candyland area, simply an effort to prevent conflict between climbers and the railroad.

If anyone has any questions, comments, or other input that I can pass on to the railroad, please call me at 338-0705 or fax 564-1019.

Mark Miraglia
President



ADZE

Host Needed

A host couple or family is needed to invite Petr, an eighteen-year old exchange student from the Czech Republic, to live with them during the coming academic year. Petr, who will arrive in late August, has a special interest in rock climbing, downhill skiing, and paragliding. His favorite subjects are physics, history, languages and P.E. His home is a small village of 1000 inhabitants called Stredokluky.

Petr is one of seven students who wish to come to Alaska this fall as part of the PAX Program of Academic Exchange. They are few of the hundreds of teens arriving this August sponsored by PAX, a non-profit foundation which provides a U.S. high school and home stay program for students from over 20 countries. PAX students have been carefully screened, speak English, have full insurance coverage, and come with their own spending money.

Petr looks forward to living like American teens for one school year, joining sports teams, studying for exams, and participating fully in family life. PAX families provide students with meals, a place to sleep, study, and a warm supportive environment. Private rooms are not required and single parents, young couples and retirees are welcome. We would especially like to match Petr with hosts who have an avid interest in rock climbing, paragliding or skiing.

Ray Clements 346-2064, 346-4602
fax, or e-mail ray@aonline.com

