

the **SCREE**

**Mountaineering Club
of Alaska**

June 2014

Volume 57 Number 6



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Peak of the Month: Mount Kutkakoh

Monthly meeting: 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, June 17

Program: To be announced.

After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb.

-Nelson Mandela

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."

Join us for our club meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 17, at the BP Energy Center, 1014 Energy Court, Anchorage, Alaska.

<http://www.alaskageology.org/graphics/meetingmap.gif>

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Cover Photo

Dano Michaud descending the Magic Couloir on Lark Mountain.
Photo by Harold Faust.

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for the *Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 24th of each month to appear in the next issue of the *Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. Do not submit photos embedded in the text file. Send the photo files separately. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. If you have a blog, website, video, or photo links, send us the link. Cover photo selections are based on portraits of human endeavor in the outdoors. Please submit at least one vertically oriented photo for consideration for the cover. Please submit captions with photos.

Monthly Meeting: Tuesday, June 17, at 6:30 p.m.

Program: To be announced.

Hut Closures

- ⇒ The Mint Hut will be closed for maintenance from July 5 through July 7.
 - ⇒ The Bomber Hut will be closed for maintenance from July 7 through 10.
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Geographic Names

At its April 30 meeting, the U.S. Board on Geographic Names voted to approve the name Globemaster Peak for a 9150-foot peak in the Colony Glacier drainage 2 miles south of Mount Gannett in the Chugach Mountains. The name commemorates the servicemen who died in the November 22, 1952, crash of a C-124 Globemaster aircraft en route from Washington to Elmendorf Air Force Base.

At the same April 30 meeting, the U.S. BGN also voted to change the name of the Black River to the Draanjik River. This 160-mile-long river flows north-northwest and west to the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge and enters the Black River Slough 16 miles northeast of Fort Yukon, thus draining the majority of the Porcupine Plateau. The town of Chalkyitsik is on the left (south) bank of the river. The revised name is of Gwich'in origin and translates to "caches along the river."

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

- ⇒ **July 5-13 Summer Mountaineering Instructional Trip.** Glacier Travel, Technical. Lots of elevation gain and loss. About 31 miles distance. Trip leaders: Greg Bragiel and Tom Choate. Learn the basics of mountaineering, including: food preparation, navigation, route finding, snow travel, knots, ice climbing, glacier travel, crevasse rescue, bouldering, rock climbing, leadership, and much more. Participants will share expenses. \$50 deposit required to sign up. Trip is currently full. Contact either Greg or Tom for additional details.

Online? Click me!



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

Wendell W. Oderkirk (March 17, 1944 – May 2, 2014)

By Shonda Oderkirk

Wendell W. Oderkirk was born in California, where he married Shirley and welcomed their first daughter, Shimane. California living, with its traffic and air pollution, grew old fast. Both remembered their Dads talking about Alaska – “if I were younger and had no attachments, I’d move there.” Why wait? They packed up and with kid and cat moved to Alaska in May 1967. They drove the then-unpaved Alaska Highway in a Chevelle, pulling a trailer. It wasn’t easy, but there were no regrets.

Wendell dove into Alaska life and loved it. He hunted and fished and moved on to cross-country skiing and mountain climbing. He became active in the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, learning new skills, making new friends, training as a mountain rescue team member, and, for a time, serving as the MCA’s President. He and his team of friends attempted several winter ascents, only to be foiled by weather: 1) In 1969 on Mount Marcus Baker; and 2) In 1972 on Mount Foraker. More efforts resulted in a 1971 attempt at The Tusk, a then-unclimbed peak in the Hidden Mountains. His 1972 attempt of Mount McKinley was thwarted just short of the summit by every climber’s trial – weather! They never returned from these attempts empty-handed – there were the great stories and pictures.

In July 1970, he and his team of John Bridge, Patrick Freeny, Charles Hildebolt, Bob Smith, and Art Ward, and succeeded in making the first ascent of Mount Dall. After that ascent, the team made the first ascents of Peak 7102 and Peak 5920, both in the Dall Glacier drainage. While delayed by a snowstorm on

this expedition, he nearly missed the birth of his second daughter, Shonda, who decided to arrive three weeks early. He and Shirley met on her way to the hospital!

In 1971, for a change of pace, he and his buddies built the Mint Hut from the helicoptered-in supplies. In addition to these climbing credits, there were other stories about being buried in an avalanche, snow caves, and endless debates about the best tents and gear.



Wendell Oderkirk in July 1970 on Mount Dall.

In 1973, an Outside family tragedy sent Wendell in a different direction. He and his family left Alaska, hearts heavy, looking back at the land they loved. They packed up two kids and cat and headed down the Alcan in an old Volvo. He pursued a nursing career, ending up with a Bachelor’s, Master’s, and Ph.D. in the field of nursing. A passion that rivaled his love for Alaska was that of teaching nursing at the college level.

He never lost his love for Alaska. His stories and memories and passion for the Great Land led to Shonda’s packing up from Outside and moving to Fairbanks to finish her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees at UAF. She is still there after 24 years.

Wendell’s teaching pursuits led him to New Mexico where he met his second wife and had a son. This all-too-brief time of happiness slowly wound down after his Alzheimer’s disease diagnosis and the disease gradually took him away. After the diagnosis, he did get in two more happy visits to Alaska. He died of Alzheimer’s disease at the age of 70. At the end, when he was no longer there, talking about Alaska always brought that particular glow back to his eyes – and for a moment he was animated and connected and vital.

MCA Huts Notes – April 2014

By Greg Bragiel and Bradley Nelson

We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them. – Albert Einstein

No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it. – Albert Einstein

We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them. – Albert Einstein

You can never solve a problem on the level on which it was created. – Albert Einstein

New problems must be solved with new thinking. – Greg Bragiel, MCA Huts Committee Chairman

The MCA was established in 1958. We have had a rich history of members/mentors with vast outdoor experience, excellent training events, seven fantastic huts, an annual calendar, MANY club-sanctioned trips, an annual ice-fest, a history of promoting climbing and exploration, first ascents, excellent meeting presenters AND you!! It has been WOW for most of its 56-year history. I write this today with the perspective as a member since 2003 and Huts Committee Chairman for nearly 10 years.

I suggest to you that the days of members-only use of the MCA huts are fading. Two generations have grown up using them after our predecessors built them. Many use them without being members or even considering paying the meager annual fee. They consider membership unnecessary.

The Mint Hut was built in 1971, 43 years ago. The Mint Hut has changed from a climbers' refuge to a weekend hangout for Team Kicker/More Liquor. The hut is typically filthy and the interior has the appearance of a bomb explosion site: clutter, socks, discarded items, dirt, dog hair, food, overflowing toilet barrels. Snowmachiners boldly travel the Gold Mint Valley onto the Mint Glacier, over Grizzly Pass and beyond. MANY signs placed by Vicky Lytle appear to be ignored; urine occupies a significant portion of filled barrels. I have questioned the membership status of anyone that shows up at the Mint Hut while I was there. Most are not members. All promise to join when they return home. Do they? Have they?



Mint Hut

Rosie's Roost was built in 1968. Rosie's has also changed from a refuge for climbers and travelers of the Eklutna Traverse to a kite-skier hangout. They now hire Era Aviation or Alpine Air to drop them at the toe of the Eagle Glacier and kite ski the area. Human-waste barrels fill quickly and are occasionally left open for bear incursions and dispersion.

The Scandinavian Peaks Hut was built in 1990. It was built as a peakbagging refuge for members. The Scandi is regularly advertised and used by Outside climbing groups and guides.

Rules concerning use of the toilet are ignored. Caring members show up and find feces in the luggable loo.

The Bomber Hut was built in 1990 and has changed from an infrequently visited valley refuge to a hangout for the Nasty Boys.

Numerous snowmachiners track out the Bomber and Penny Royal Glaciers. Weed and cigarette smoke fills the hut. A recent log entry from Todd Quimby described his disgust with six snowmachiners tracking out the Bomber Glacier while his party skied it.



Scandinavian Peaks Hut

He lamented, ". . . sadly this will be my last Bomber Traverse ..." This hut had been a semi-permanent home for a non-member snowmachiner motoring deep into the Talkeetna Mountains. This was a 2006 incident wherein when I telephone him I was informed, "... I will join the MCA and help you with supplies ..."

Do you think he joined?
New problems must be solved with new thinking. – Albert Einstein

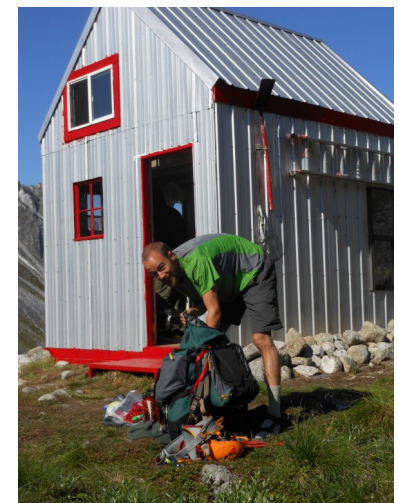
With seven huts to attend to, I CANNOT visit all the huts frequently, do all the work, have discussions with hut users as to their membership status, and deal with all the care and maintenance issues. I suggest to you that this is the responsibility of ALL hut users, whether they are members or not. Supplies need to get to the huts on a regular basis. Regular evaluations of structural integrity and needed repairs must take place.

What can be done? New problems must be solved with new thinking.

The MCA appears, from my perspective, to be undergoing a slow change. Member participation is dropping; official club trips are almost non-existent. The original club guidelines, member type, and participation are changing. I suspect that the MCA is dying a slow death. The Meetup Group has taken



Rosie's Roost



Bomber Hut



Hans' Hut

over trips and appears to flourish. OK. What is different here? New problems must be solved with new thinking. I know that I am not the only member that cares deeply for our huts! You would not have read this unless that were so. I know that all of

you care about the future of the MCA, huts, ice-fest, calendar, etc. How can we make a difference? How can we steer the future of the MCA to help it flourish again? What can be done? New problems must be solved with new thinking. Here to begin introducing some new ideas is Bradley Nelson.

MCA Hut Ideas:

Spreading the vision.

1. Create signage to share the vision. As an example:

Welcome to the Mint Hut. The MCA huts are built, maintained, and kept running by its members. The huts were created by the donations of labor and supplies by MCA members. The huts were built to create a safe, comfortable place to stay for those that love the mountains and to allow those mountain lovers safer access to the places where they want to be.



Dnigi Hut

What is the MCA? The MCA is a group of regular people who have regular jobs and love the outdoors. No one is paid to maintain huts, to track first ascents of mountains, to teach mountaineering classes, or to do any of the many events and programs the people of the MCA do to make mountaineering in Alaska better. We have no government funding or rich benefactor. We are able to stay alive and do what we do through our small member dues and donations of time and money.

Please enjoy your time at the Hut. Put a note in the visitors' log to thank the people that built it. And look to see if there is anything you can do to improve your stay and the experience of the next person. There are tools in every hut for general maintenance of loose hinges or whatever else the hut might need. They stay stocked with tools by people like you. So that people like you can help keep them in excellent condition. Thanks for your help. Below is a list of things that need regular attention in this particular hut.

Remember it takes all of us to keep these running.

So the MCA is you and me, helping others have a great mountain experience.

(Here would be a list of things that the hut often needs to give them a list of Ideas to get them thinking. Things like sweeping, cleaning dirty pots left by the last group, cleaning the outhouse, fixing loose screws, etc.)

Scree – June 2014

2. Improve the website.

Group huts based off of routes and have a way for people to leave comments on current trail conditions and encourage people to leave current hut conditions. This has worked very well for Cross Country Alaska. Here is a link to their web page for Arctic to Indian: http://www.crosscountryalaska.org/trails/version1.php?trail_id=41

Sometimes people leave updates on trail conditions several times a day on this site. I think if we had the website with the best, most up-to-date information, then we could control the information people know about the huts when they go to look them up. We could have a link to join the MCA to make that very easy to access. We can try to steer people toward buying into the vision of the MCA and huts rather than just finding a place to stay on a cool traverse. And encourage people to look for things on the site that other people have listed that are needed at the huts.

Hopefully by improving the website and signage we can:

- Increase awareness of our need for everyone to help keep huts running and spread the workload;
- Decrease the amount of non-members staying in the huts;
- Improve our experience in the huts by having cleaner, better-maintained huts; and
- Raise awareness of the MCA, the MCA's vision, and the hut vision.

We need supplies carried to the Mint, Bomber, Dnigi, and Scandinavian Peaks Huts. Please help.

The Mint Hut will be closed for maintenance, painting, and repairs from July 5 through 7. The Bomber Hut will be closed for repairs, painting, and maintenance from July 7 through 10. Please tell your friends.

You have answered the call in the past. Tom Choate has spent countless hours hammering, fixing, and repairing huts with me. Thank you, Tom!! I occasionally get calls to see if anything needs to go to the huts. Members have volunteered to help with various projects including big ones. Witness the Mint Hut re-roofing project in 2008. Witness the Hans' Hut renovation in 2013. It is my hope that we can work together to promote a bright future for us and for future generations of climbers.



Pichler's Perch

First Ascent of Mount Muir from Harriman Fiord

Text by Ryan Fisher

After a busy winter working with a movie project in Seward and before an even busier guiding season coming up, Nathan Lane and I decided to try to get a little lost in Prince William Sound and enjoy the calm eye of the storm. We launched my 16-foot inflatable Achilles boat (the *HMS Marmot*) in Whittier on April 28th while the last rain clouds were working their way west out of the sound, leaving five bluebird days and ridiculously calm seas.

I had been looking at topographic maps and Google Earth of Mount Muir for a year and daydreaming what Harriman Fiord looked like. We tried to get back into the fiord during our end-of-the-season guide trip for Exit Glacier Guides, but stormy weather pushed us into Blackstone Bay instead. Now with a great weather window and our time freed up, Nate and I left Seward at 5:30 in the evening and were dried up in the Pigot Bay cabin that night poring over the topo of Muir once again.

The next day we motored into Harriman and were not disappointed with the translation of

what proved promising on maps and what unfolded before our eyes. As soon as we got our first look at Muir in person we both immediately felt it was possible. However, there were some definite obstacles that would need to be figured out before we got to the summit ridge. The most obvious problem was that the route we were considering lay up the Colony Glacier and behind a massive icefall that we enjoyed watching ice puke down its face regularly that week.

We made camp on the southwest shore of Surprise Inlet and commenced our staring and discussing of the route in question. We thought it best to take a quick hike up the Serpentine Glacier to see if we could unlock a way to access a relatively glacier-free hillside separating the icefall just to the north of Penniman Glaciers and the icefall sweeping down from the most northern

tongue of the Serpentine. This 2,500-foot snowfield looked possible to access by boot-pack up a small avalanche chute at first, and then skinning the rest of the way up to what we hoped would be easier travel on the Colony Glacier.

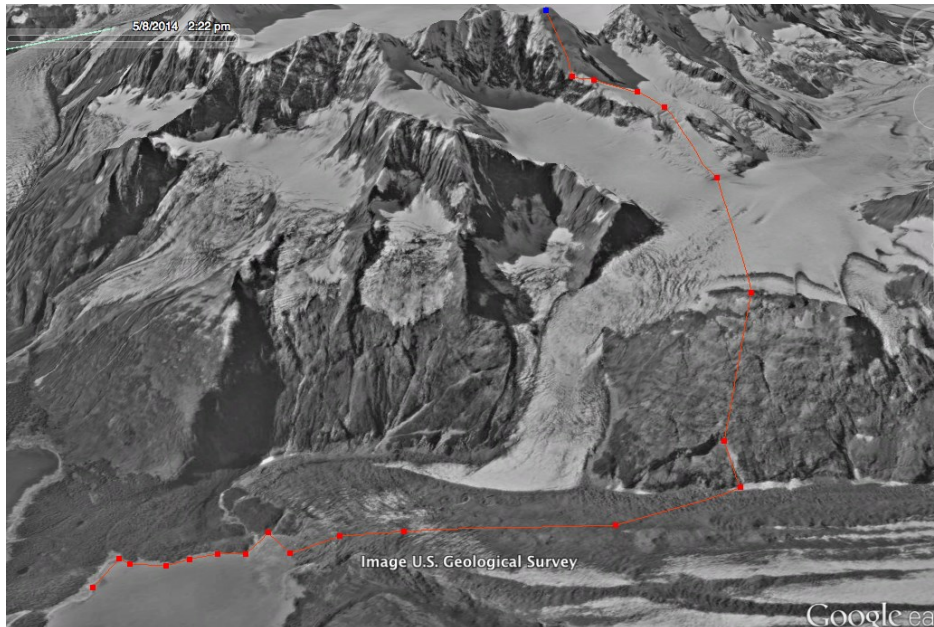
Once we spotted the avy chute after an hour hike up the maze of rocky morainal debris, we headed back to the boat to return to camp. Unfortunately, the tide had gone out and where I had thought there was deep enough water to anchor the boat was now a muddy bottom. With the *Marmot* propped up on a rock we had no choice but to hike, or shoreline boulder, a half mile to our camp and wait for high tide to retrieve the boat. After packing for the climb and eating steaks, I donned my dry suit and

made a midnight dash back down the boulder course by headlamp and was able to motor the *Marmot* back to camp.

The next morning we loaded our packs, donned Xtratufs, and started the half-mile boulder traverse back to the Serpentine. This time we felt the *Marmot* was better left in camp and we took on the extra half mile trudge, but

with much heavier packs. At the glacier's edge we swapped Xtratufs for climbing boots and dropped a bit more weight, like extra ice screws, and thinned down the medical kit. The going was slower with our added weight, but the slog up the Serpentine was fairly straightforward. We angled toward the thin avy chute and were at its base in about an hour and a half. To get to skinnable terrain, we boot-packed up the first 600 feet of snow that was already starting to soften under the early afternoon sun. Once the angle lessened our skis thankfully came off our backs and we slogged the last 2,000-ish feet, zigzagging up a snow slope and eyeing the massive seracs of the icefall to our left.

We hit the Colony Glacier and were relieved to see a fairly easy and flat ski across it toward the little glacier that flowed from



The route.



Ryan Fisher starting the beach trek to the Serpentine Glacier the first day of the climb. Photo by Nathan Lane.

the northeast bowl of the Muir massif. We also got a chance to see the mountain fairly close for the first time and were a little put off by the incredibly huge serac blocks dangling from its north face, where we had hoped to find a route. As we skied closer, I noticed two possible routes up the face. The first would zigzag around, underneath, and on top of the seracs and crevasses littering the face, kind of making an “S” move up the mountain to the summit ridge. The second was a steep, tight couloir that shot up the southern side of the face and made a direct line to the summit. This was obviously the fastest route, but would take us under some fairly imposing hanging seracs and ice formations.

We skied up the final ridge to a good camp spot safely below the face, but away from falling debris. Wind gusts had been steadily building to a point where putting up the Megamid was a four-handed affair. We felt we had put ourselves in a good position; now all we needed to do was see what the couloir would give us and make a run for it. With the alarm set for 4 a.m., I fell asleep with wind gusts shaking icy condensation down on my head.

Not hearing the alarm, we managed to get up by 5 a.m. and start gearing up. We left camp just after 6 and found our first crevasse about 100 yards out when Nate punched his leg into a hole. Farther up the climbing steepened, and we encountered really firm alpine ice, making front-pointing and two-tooling necessary. The ice felt solid in the morning light and we made good progress as we neared the opening of the couloir.

At first the couloir was nowhere in sight, but then we noticed the rock ridge ran right up next to the first insanely huge serac

block of the face, with just a slight opening in between them marking the entrance. The ice in the couloir was even firmer and as the angle steepened we slowed some to make good placements of our tools. The angle stayed pretty consistent at 60 degrees until the last 60 feet, when it steepened quite a bit more. All told, the couloir was about 800 feet long and we were able to simul-climb the first 500 feet or so before setting up a belay.

At the top of the couloir, I couldn't have been more stoked to see the last 500 feet to the summit was basically a walk-up. We headed up with the sun already starting to warm the air to a jacketless temperature. Coming over a little cornice and seeing the last 100 yards to the summit, I switched my ice axes in my hands and took two steps. I plunged up to my chest in a crevasse that angled back away from me, forcing me to strain on my tools I had driven into the thankfully hard, windblown snow in front of me. As my legs dangled in space, I tried yelling for Nate, but he was too far back and out of sight below the cornice to hear me. Figuring he was below me anyway, I made a swinging leg kick to porpoise my hips up onto the edge and thankfully was able to squirm my body out of the hole onto solid snow. I marched up a few feet until Nate came up over the ridge and I was able to point out the crevasse and safely belay him around it.

Within minutes we were standing on the summit of Mount Muir, staring at the entire Prince William Sound spread out in front of us. It was 10:30, very light wind and not too cold, probably around high 30s. To the north we could just make out Mount Marcus Baker, but the haze kept it somewhat obscured.



Ryan Fisher climbing the last 50 feet of the couloir with the view to the north in the background. Photo by Nathan Lane.

Looking west we could see the Colony Glacier terminate into Inner Lake George. And looking south and east the sound presented all its islands and bays, making it look both very explorable and highly complicated.

We didn't stay on the summit longer than about 20 minutes as we were worried about the sun warming our overhanging serac friends too much to give us safe passage down the couloir. Careful cramponing down the summit slope we got to the couloir and decided to do a running belay of sorts to get down the steepest sections. Basically, I drove a picket and axe into the alpine rime and lowered Nate who would set an anchor and take up rope as I down-climbed as quickly and carefully as possible. This worked well and gave us a much needed measure of safety, except we were carrying only a 30-meter rope, which made the process somewhat repetitive. You could see water dripping off the ice formations hanging over our heads, and hear chunks of ice falling off to our right.

Finally out of the couloir, we angled to our right and farther away from the largest ice boulders and continued our simul-down-climb. Nate was farthest below and fell up to his waist in a crevasse. I plunged my tools and dug my front points into the slope when an ice chunk broke loose above us and caused a

slough slide that hit Nate waist level just as he was crawling out of the hole. This was more of a "Really? Are-you-kidding-me?" moment than a huge danger, so we laughed as he pulled himself free and we continued downward. By 1:30 we were back at the tent and gave ourselves our first true congratulatory hug now that the more obvious dangers had been surpassed.

The slog downslope was fairly uneventful, just brutal sun baking us to an uncomfortable level. The snow slope was a heavy concrete ski down and the avy chute now had open water running where just a day earlier had been covered snow. We trudged down the Serpentine Glacier, trying to work our leg muscles into not rolling over the wrong precarious rock. Finally, we hit the shoreline right about high tide, which made our bouldering shoreline traverse that much more interesting with our packs.

Back at camp we couldn't believe the diversity we had just climbed through over the past two days. The beauty of a sea-to-summit climb is being able to say you completely earned every foot of that mountain. Muir had given us an opportunity to go into an area we had never been, scout a route, and start hiking up from the mud of the intertidal zone to the glaciated summit 7,605 feet higher, and then back to zero.

Zimmerman-Helander Revelations 2014

Text and photo by Graham Zimmerman

Clint Helander and I have just returned from the Revelation Mountains where we made the first ascent of the west face of Mount Titanic (M6, 5.8, 50 degrees, 4,000 feet) in a 22.5-hour push from base camp. It was a very enjoyable climb in a rarely visited corner of the Revelations. Unfortunately the trip was cut short by an incident that necessitated an early departure.

The Revelations are a sub-range of the greater Alaska Range, approximately 130 miles southwest of Denali. It has been receiving much attention over the past seasons and a number of impressive ascents have been made in the area. This was Clint's seventh trip

into the Revelations. He is considered the "godfather" of the range, having written a profile of the range in the 2013 *American Alpine Journal* as well as having made many of the aforementioned significant ascents. This trip was a chance for him to mop up some more projects

in the area. It was my second trip into the range, having visited the Revelation Glacier last summer with Scott Bennett.

We flew in on April 17th and were dropped off on a small valley glacier above and east of the South Fork of the Big River. Base camp was set up in a protected location directly beneath the West Face of Jezebel Peak (9,650 feet).

On April 21st at 4.30 a.m., we set off from base camp under a gorgeous showing from the Aurora Borealis and made the 4-kilometer walk to the base of the route. The route started with 1,700 feet of steep snow climbing that led us to a contact between the lower-quality rock of the lower buttress and the gorgeous white granite of the upper. From there the climbing turned to high-quality mixed climbing with beautiful chimney

and corner cruxes. As the sun came up, the route became drier and we rock climbed for 1,000 feet of granite that was at times impeccable and others total choss.

Reaching the summit snowfield, we brewed up and hydrated before running to the summit. This was the second ascent of Titanic (9,300 feet), behind the 1981 ascent of the East Face by Fred Beckey, Dan Hogan, Doug McCarty, and Craig Tillery. It was a gorgeous sunny afternoon.

From the summit we descended the North Ridge to the north margin of the East Face, rappelling and down-climbing to the

glacier below. From there we walked 8 kilometers over a pass and down another glacier back to basecamp, arriving at 2:00 a.m. on the 22nd.

After a few days of rest under variable skies, we headed off to try another objective.

After deciding the weather

was too poor, we began the 3-kilometer ski back to camp. While on this ski descent, which we had made a number of times, I took a fall into a hidden crevasse and twisted my right knee quite badly. After Clint extracted me we made our way back to basecamp and were able to fly out that afternoon so that I could get back to Seattle for an MRI.

This trip was supported by the American Alpine Club's Copp-Dash Inspire Award, the New Zealand Alpine Club's Expedition Fund, and the Mount Everest Foundation. Huge thanks to all these organizations for the support they provide us and the rest of the climbing community.

Huge thanks also go to Outdoor Research, Exped, Petzl, Boreal Julbo, and Second Ascent Seattle.



Mount Titanic from base camp with the west face route shown.

Taking Another Aim at Gunsight Mountain

Text by Frank E. Baker

Following snowmachine tracks up a mountain seems like cheating, but it's probably one of the more efficient ways to get up 6,441-foot Gunsight Mountain during winter, whether you prefer skis or snowshoes.

So there I was again, this time in mid-April of this year, slogging up the gradual slope behind a considerably younger climbing buddy named Radu Girbacea, a native Romanian who, com-

We started about 10:30 a.m. from the pull out at Mile 118 on the Glenn Highway, which is at about 2,800 feet. A week later this place would be invaded by bird watchers during their annual pilgrimage to observe hawks, eagles, and other birds that migrate through the area.

I've climbed Gunsight Mountain (in the Talkeetna Mountains) in summer and fall from every direction except the north side,



Radu Girbacea on the descent, looking east. Photo by Frank Baker.

pared to me, is a cheetah. I spent most of the day looking upslope toward Radu, some 300 yards above me.

I'm beginning to think there are only two kinds of hikers and climbers -- the "dashers," who are under 50 years old, who are basically in a race; and the "plodders," who like me, are over 65, and view each trip as more of a "campaign." Most of the "dashers" have full-time jobs and are reluctant to go out much longer than six hours. As a semi-retiree, I don't mind stretching such a trip to 9 or 10 hours, or even longer.

from Squaw Creek. In winter, however, I prefer the more gradual east side. Snow in this area does not settle and consolidate very well like it does in Turnagain Pass, to the southeast of Anchorage. I think it's because of colder temperatures. This contributes to a very unpredictable surface that makes skiing difficult. You might get a nice glide going and then at an unforeseen moment, you break through. Thus, my choice for winter is snowshoes with cleats; and crampons at the ready if needed.



Frank Baker on Gunsight Mountain's summit with the East Fork of the Matanuska River in the background. Photo by Radu Girbacea

The temperature was in the low 40s, but it felt warmer. Radu and I kept shedding clothing as we hiked upward. The last time I sweated so much was bicycling in Houston, Texas, during the summer! When we started out, it was cloudy and the light was flat, offering no horizon in the snowy whiteness. But the weather improved as we ascended, and soon there were patches of blue sky.

It was that time of the year when even the snowmachine trails were beginning to soften, so it was good we had the snowshoes. The trails petered out at about 5,500 feet. It took about five hours for Radu to reach the summit, with me about 20 minutes behind. By that time the skies had brightened dramatically, and there was very little wind.

We enjoyed a brief lunch on top, relishing the 360-degree views. To the southwest, we took in the Matanuska Glacier and its long, winding river of ice that flows from deep in the Chugach Mountains. But some clouds were obscuring the Chugach granddaddy, Mount Marcus Baker, at 13,176 feet. Directly to the south we could clearly see the East Fork of the Matanuska River, and to the north, Squaw Creek as it bent around toward Caribou Creek. Far to the east, the giant mountains (Mount Blackburn, Mount Sanford, and Mount Drum) were all obscured by clouds.

The Gunsight Mountain register that I installed a few years ago was buried beneath the snow. Perhaps the next time I (or someone else with MCA) am there in summer it can be repositioned in the rocks so that hopefully, it can remain accessible in winter.

While we were on top, a couple of snowmachiners tracked their way to within about 800 feet of the top. They were far enough away, Radu observed, so that we weren't forced to smell their machines' exhaust. They paused for a few moments and were gone and off the mountain before we began our descent. It only took about 2 ½ hours to shuffle back to the car, interrupting a few ptarmigan along the way.

It was my 14th summit of Gunsight Mountain. Friends have asked me why I keep going back. I guess my best answer is that it is something I can do. I have never seen an avalanche in winter and I don't need ropes and other protection in summer. And mostly, I like the view.

Per usual, I was stiff and sore the next day while Radu was out bicycling 30 miles or more. But then, he's 45 years old. I've gone many miles in my time, but the distance from age 45 to 69 is by far the greatest. With every year that passes, it just doesn't seem to get any easier. I will pay good money if Tom Choate will lead me to his Fountain of Youth.

What a Lark

By Dano Michaud with Harold Faust

Plans to get up Lark Mountain, east of Moose Pass, developed over several years. Harold Faust and I would drive past it on the way home from some outdoor escapade and acknowledge that its high ground remained unknown to us. No real excitement was generated; the southwest-ridge route seemed to lead nicely up to a continuous high rim. I felt this mountain might easily give



Harold Faust and Gina on the goat trail. Photo by Dano Michaud.

itself up to an old geezer like me; once again, I was proved wrong or at least mistaken.

At one time Lark Mountain was considered for renaming for a member of the MCA after his life of alpine accomplishments was cut short while on a Himalayan climb of Dhaulagiri in 1969. Vin Hoeman climbed many mountains in the Chugach and Kenai Mountains. His multitude of first ascents allowed him the opportunity to name a very large number of peaks in this area where most of us live and play. His widow Grace, honoring Vin's opinion that "a man should be named after a mountain and not the other way around" would have no part of the plan to change the name of Lark, and I respect that.

The summer of 2013 was one of the warmest ever and our climb day of September 1 would prove no exception. I picked up Harold and his mountain pup Gina and we drove out to Moose Pass, parking near the trestle where the Alaska Railroad crosses the narrows of Upper Trail Lake. We headed across the trestle walkway at about 9:00 a.m., hoping and believing that the thick fog that filled the valley would eventually part to reveal the sunshine above. The old mining road to Grant Lake began right on the far side of the water and headed south along the lakeshore for about a half mile before it turned steeply uphill and wound

its way over the ridge toward Grant Lake. Although I was not the biggest fan of mining, one would have been foolish not to admit that the hikers and climbers in this state owe a lot of thanks to our forefathers of yesterday who plowed through this wilderness and built the foundations to many of our trails we enjoy today.

Harold had previously snowshoed partway up the southwest ridge on

an overnight trip with his son Matt, so he knew the spot where we should cut off from the Grant Lake Trail and begin our brush-busting. It was about a mile up the trail at the approximate crest of the ridge, just before the old road drops into a cut and follows a creek bed. The elevation of the trail and the 30-some miles from the coast seemed to moderate the extreme and intense devil's club/alder off-trail combination we Sewardites enjoy a bit farther south, but nevertheless, the struggle began. We had known what we were in for, so there was nothing to do but suck it up, make jokes when we could, wind over and through the seemingly endless windfall obstructions, and grab a few sweet blueberries on the way. Stands of hemlock provided clearer travel and we headed for them when possible.

The clouds remained hanging at this upper timberline elevation, providing an eerie feel and look. We had no real visual of our surroundings as we proceeded upward into the foggy abyss. Every so often the fog would part just enough to reveal the most spectacular views of the many unnamed peaks to the east and south of our route. The ridge at this point was round and fairly basic hiking, as was expected from our view below. As we cleared the confusion of the brush, the fog also lifted and a beautiful high-alpine grass slope was revealed. Presented with a

nice sunny resting spot, we peeled off our packs and busted out our favorite treats while taking in the many spectacular sights this wide open land has to offer. A few feet from our sitting spot, the land dropped off to the north a thousand feet into an incredible mountain cirque below. A receding hanging glacier clung to the northeast side and drained down into the Trail Lakes below. A small group of sheep were visible as they frolicked in the sun on this blue-sky and sunny day.

We discovered a benchmark from 1942 labeled “Lark,” which on the maps is stated at elevation 4405 feet. Likely this is the source of the mountain’s name. The terrain changed as our elevation increased and grass slopes turned rocky and the typical “crud” rock appeared without invitation. The peak looked a good distance away and it was obvious that some route-finding and Class 4 scrambling was in store and welcomed. It was the “scramble shuffle” with some height gained and then a descent back down to get around a difficult piece. We carried no rope or protection with us, so this was all about our ability, agility, and the level of risk we were willing to put out there. Not to say there was any crazy exposure, but as with all climbing, it took some consideration. We worked our way up and around a series of rock cathedrals, clinging to rocky cliff routes that are normally left to the four-legged mountain beasts. This type of

mountain travel is always fun to negotiate and we continued our way up the slope.

From the time we could see the upper mountain, we had focused on a very prominent high point. This point towering the skyline seemed to obviously be the summit, and as is usually the case, it wasn’t. Not until we were at 5500 feet did the true summit present itself to us. The summit at 5750 feet was to the north, and so we proceeded on and with a few more scramble dance moves we were on top. Breaking out the snacks, water, and camera we proceeded with the familiar summit ritual. Finding the summit log, we were surprised that there was only one entry; it was from 1998 when Wayne Todd and Ben Still visited. This peak gets very little climbing, or folks are missing the summit log; I believe it to be the lack of climbs. I must admit I, too, had no real desire to put this peak at the forefront of my climbing list; typically I find that I cut myself short when I have an opinion; never judge a book by its cover, I told myself once more.

We took in the fabulous view that stretched as far as one could see, at least as far as Mount Marcus Baker 82 miles to the northeast and Mount Spurr 114 miles to the west-northwest. But the real treat was what was in our proximity; the mountains, passes, hanging glaciers, streams, and lakes just below our perch – a

world that seemed, at that very moment, untouched by man. We signed the log, snacked, drank down the last of our water, and took the mandatory summit photos. As always, this time on top of the world seemed too short, but my bones and joints seemed to be seizing up and movement was needed. We agreed it was time to move on and we knew the desired route down.

Rather than retrace our struggle through the beetle-killed windfall and brambles on the ridge, we decided to descend the real-sweet-looking couloir that began right at 5700 feet and flowed straight to the shores of Grant Lake below. One could not



Harold Faust (left) and Dano Michaud on the summit. Photo by Harold Faust.



Melted-out snow cavern. Photo by Dano Michaud.

It was the peak of the day, the sun hung high and the scree dust was kicking up with every step. Working our way down, we kept close together to avoid getting hit by the loose rock that we were kicking loose. The hot summer weather had melted most of the snow that usually lasts through the season in this groove; we descended 2,000 feet of rocks and gravel before we encountered snow. We donned crampons to help with control in the inconsistent conditions of soft snow, ice, gravel, etc. A few short glissades were a welcome relief. Below a section where we had to exit the slot for a way to get around some slick waterfalls, we found a huge melted-out cavern in the snow. Exciting as it might have been to crawl along the stream through the tunnel, we deemed it a death trap, took a few photos, and worked our way around it. We finally left the couloir at about 1200 feet and headed through the grass and brush, looking for the old mining trail above the lake. Once on that track we were soon down on the shore of Grant Lake. Harold had talked about a great old cabin on the shore, so we had to check it out. It is indeed an old classic that could provide shelter, if perhaps not comfort. We poked around satisfying our curiosity and then got back on the old road that led back to Moose Pass.

A mile past the cabin the trail crossed over a nice open meadow; halfway across we turned and looked back at the route we had descended. I thought, indeed, "What a Lark!"

wish for a better way down than that straight shot. At the top of this chute, was what remained of a cornice and part of the snow that made this descent go.

We stopped for a minute to water up from a dripping snow faucet that filled the Nalgene at a nice steady pace. One last look down and a deep breath to take in this spectacular view (see the June photo in the 2014 MCA Calendar) and it was time to perform another scree dance. The route down had a small rock challenge at the top, but after a little fancy footwork from Harold, I was soon following him off the summit bench and into the magic couloir.



Mount Marcus Baker as viewed from Lark Mountain. Photo by Dano Michaud.

The Gorgemeister: Out of Season April 19-20, 2014

Text and photos by Wayne L. Todd with Ross Noffsinger and Carrie Wang



Ross Noffsinger and Carrie Wang on the summit ridge with a view of the Knik Glacier.

As we are unsure of conditions for our ingress and climb we take: three sets of Wiggy's Waders, two packrafts, two personal flotation devices (PFDs), two paddles, three helmets, one 100-foot rope, five miscellaneous tools, four self-arrest poles, two standard poles, two pickets, five screws, harnesses, miscellaneous small climbing accessories, and, of course, the standard sundry of gear for a comfortable overnighter.

An 8 a.m. meet (and divvy up gear) time seems quite reasonable, as we simply need to travel seven miles on the flats and gain 3,000 feet over one and a half miles. By 10 a.m., we're hiking east down Hunter Creek (why it flows "backward" is a mystery). Despite recent very warm temperatures we're able to cross on ice a couple times. Gaining the all-terrain vehicle (ATV) trail, we also gain muck. At a discontinuous ice spot, I manage to leap across with the shelf collapsing behind. A futile effort, though, as the next nearby water crossing is ice free. We bust out the Wiggy's, Ross' first time. Soft ice, muck and solidity pass underfoot, culminating in tussocks before a beaver dam crossing. After that it's level, fairly smooth, and firm, suitable for cruising.

Approaching one of the major riverbeds, we "see" a lake to the right and no water to the left (no logic). "Sweet, we won't even need to use the Wiggy's." Oddly, salty ocean scent is pervasive. As we draw nearer reality emerges, and we see significant water in the Knik River exiting out of the lake. At this wide spot, we try Wiggy's again and manage a knee-deep crossing (though disappointingly all waders have leaks). A mile later we again hit the river, which no longer looks Wiggy-able.

The boats are deployed and Carrie and I ferry across with packs. Carrie re-crosses with a boat in tow and Ross experiences a packraft firsthand (this goes infinitely more smoothly than a Sevlor boat crossing 15 years previous).

A duffle of all water paraphernalia is left hoisted up a tree. Dry beaver dams, exposed granitic rocks, inverted trees, mosquitoes (is it that season already?), and white ice-covered beaver ponds with corresponding chewed stumps quickly pass by on the way

to our anticipated creek ingress. Sun-reflected water pools, surrounded by ice, are soothing, but we realize it's too late to ingress via the creek bottom.

"To the forest" leads to very minor brush, and downed trees with moose sign all about. Soon we find flagging and an old, cut trail, but also isothermic snow. Initially it's patches, then consistent inches, then consistent knee-deep plus. Hmmm, we have thousands of feet to gain and miles to cross. Alternating leads, we trudge on with occasional areas of breakable crust, even more frustrating. We slowly gain ground and talk of setting an earlier camp. Carrie and I think this will become a recon trip. Ross "encourages" occasionally from behind with, "I think the snow's getting better." I see differently through my glasses. The isothermic snow transitions to crust over sugar snow, even more work. Despised snowshoes would make this tolerable and more attainable. We see only one moose despite the tracks and scat of dozens.

By 7 p.m., we're all fatiguing and find a rare level-ish spot, still not even in the valley. As Carrie digs a tent platform with a shorty shovel, Ross and I continue sans packs to see if continuing tomorrow has any merit. After a few hundred yards the snow improves a little, then a little more (except areas around shrubbery). We make it around the corner to see into our ingress valley.

We return by 8 p.m. with encouraging news and one quarter mile of set track. Carrie has improvised a missing tent pole with a branch. Questions of fuel quantity (4-ounce can) lead to conservation measures, so Carrie and I continuously hand warm the can. Physically beat, but with hope, we bed down around 10:30 p.m. Our summer-rated down bags surprisingly keep us warm for the night.

Very early, goose honks emanate from above. Awake anyway, we begin rousing after 4 a.m. The fuel can coddling continues and we mostly have enough water before the Jetboil flame sputters out. The formerly insulated, wet, leather boots, now frozen, are problematic to get a foot in, especially the left, which

also has a frozen sock. After 6 a.m., we're off, with camp already broken down.

We progress much faster than yesterday, though still with doubts. Beyond our track the snow varies from non-breakable to breakable, but remains firm underneath. The frozen wet-avalanche-debris crossings are a reminder of why we're getting an early start. Firm snow continues in the valley bottom. Airborne white above a pocket glacier at the valley head is noted; cloud or spindrift? With a route-photo check (thanks, Paul Andrews and Richard Baranow), we're confident of this gully route extending to the skyline.

All are tired from yesterday, but Carrie rallies upward. I eventually lead and all are relieved by the near-ideal crampon conditions. The ridge crest s-l-o-w-l-y comes into view, the distance shortens, tops of tall Chugach peaks exhibit, then all the east peaks, then the expansive Knik Glacier, stretching from north to south to east.

I'm elated to be on the ridge with phenomenal views. One section of the eastern Chugach looks to be stormed up, but otherwise we have unhindered views of Chugach peaks from 4,000 to 13,000 feet. Impressive from on high, the Knik Glacier of infinite crevasses dares a fool to attempt a crossing, or even a jigsaw puzzle.

Bundling up in the wind, we walk the short distance north to the summit, stopping for numerous pictures and momentous views. Taking pictures for a panorama from the summit block in gusts is unnerving. A flock of cranes flies nearby to the west. We'd like to stay for hours, but know we need to be down and out of our gully before the sun bakes it, and know this is to be a long day. Digging in the frozen summit cairn we find a frozen plastic bottle, surprisingly intact, with just a 1994 Tim Kelley/Bill Spencer entry and a 2007 Richard Baranow/Wendy Sanem/Natalia Aulenbacher entry.

The hard snow conditions and gully angle are too steep for walking, but awkwardly under-angled for down-climbing. Proficient at simultaneous extremity down-climbing, I still face out a few times to get re-juiced, as the descent requires a lot of steps and plants (2,500 feet worth). Occasional spindrift snow rains down.

In the valley and back in the sun, we are chilled by a steady wind. This rugged valley of snow-sprayed, steep, rocky peaks and pocket glaciers could easily be mistaken for elsewhere of much greater elevation. Ravens circle overhead.

Our early-morning, shaded, and windy-condition clothing is soon smothering as we exit the valley,

leaving the wind behind. A flock of small dark birds flitters by a few times. At cache camp as we de-clothe, I reminisce we can't stay another night (and am not excited about the descent). Just an hour and half later, though, we are to the flats, mostly undisturbed by the wet-snow trail descent (boots are heavier now).

More water, more mosquitoes, to the boats. Dang, the east wind is chilly. Carrie and I cross and I return for Ross as Carrie walks to the next crossing. Ross, now an "experienced" packrafter, and I float to the far side of the next Knik River crossing. The hazards of the ice slush lake, outflow current, and now headwind make for intense paddling to ferry the extra boat over to Carrie. And I still manage a not-so-smooth return.

Packed up, chilled, and now on a familiar ATV trail, we motor from there, making it back to the car in one and a half hours (before 10 p.m.) even with muck, Wiggy's crossing, and floating ice sheets that break apart behind the person in front, punctuated by owl hoots.



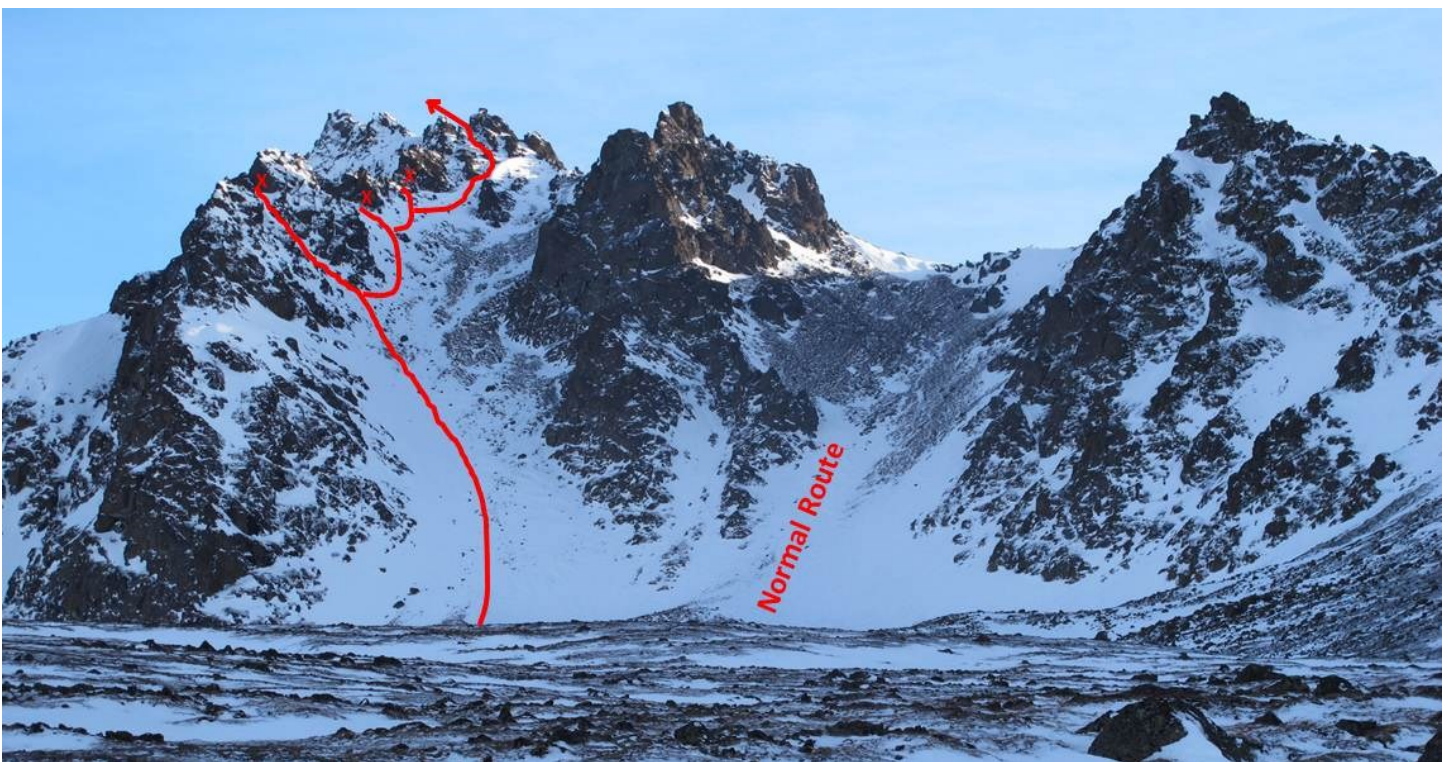
Ross Noffsinger (left) and Carrie Wang with heads down for relentless post-holing.

No Shortcuts on O'Malley Peak

By Joe Chmielowski

"This is definitely a no-fall situation," I thought as I sunk the pick of my ice axe into the hard snow. I paused briefly to kick better footholds with my crampons and ascertained my situation. I looked up and saw only 20 more vertical feet and a slight bulge before I would top out on the ridge. "No worries, I'll be out of this couloir in five minutes and on the summit soon." Although the first part of my mental prediction proved true, the second part did not. Sure enough, I was soon out of the couloir, but when I gained the ridge I was looking down the long drop of the northwest face of O'Malley Peak. Further upward progress to my right was blocked by a 30-foot slab of smooth rock.

physical-fitness test that includes push-ups, sit-ups, and a 2-mile run. I guess I do this to prove to myself that I am not getting old, even though the candles on my birthday cake are starting to set off my kitchen smoke detector. This year was particularly important to me, because I was turning the big 40. I was really inspired to do well on my test and I mentally committed to setting a personal record for my 2-mile run. I am not competitive with other people, but I do like to compete against myself. And the thought of 40-year-old Joe going back in time to beat 18-year-old Joe's record was just the inspiration I needed to continue a demanding physical routine.



Undeterred, I hugged the rock face and moved right to discover a 1-foot-wide crack leading up another 10 feet that just might let me gain the ridge after all. Finding decent hand- and footholds (front two teeth of the crampons), I made my way up this feature only to meet a similar view and a definite dead end. "Dang, I really don't want to down-climb all of this," I lamented to myself. But there was no other choice; this challenging route to the top just wasn't going to pan out. Thus, I began the slow and laborious process of down-climbing back to the main couloir. So, how did I get into this situation? Let me explain by rewinding six months to August 2013.

Every year before my birthday in September, I spend a few months getting into the best shape of my life. I self-administer a

So while out on my lunchtime run on the Chester Creek Trail in midtown, I decided to do a series of aggressive hill sprints on Juneau Street. It seemed like a good idea at the time, and each sprint was faster than the previous one. However, on my way home I felt a twinge in my left hamstring. The next morning I could hardly walk down my stairs and I diagnosed my injury as a pulled hamstring.

I had never pulled a hamstring in my life and I thought this injury would fade quickly. I slowed my running down, but did not stop. I hiked Syncline Ridge near Eureka and a couple weeks later Matanuska Peak near Palmer. But the pain persisted into September and I did not beat 18-year-old Joe (I could just see him laughing). Actually, for the first time in about 20 years, I

missed my personal physical fitness test. I guess 40 really is the turning point in life.

I was pretty depressed and checked myself into physical therapy. I was told no more running or hiking in the short term and was relegated to some modest gym exercises and light spinning on the bicycle. But soon October became November and then December and my hamstring was getting better when my therapist Sandra asked me, "How will you know you are strong again and through with therapy?" I thought about her question for a minute and then responded, "When I can climb O'Malley with a 25-pound pack and not have any pain during the climb or the day after."

"OK," she said. "That's what we will work towards." We had this conversation the week before Christmas and a month later, on January 31st, I was leaving work on a sunny Friday afternoon to accomplish my mission. As I left my fifth-floor office, I pointed to O'Malley out the window and told my co-workers, "See you later suckers! I'm off to go play in the mountains. I will call you from up top." About a half hour later I was at the Glen Alps parking lot with my micro-spikes on treading across the icy Powerline Trail to O'Malley Gully.

At the top of the gully, I sat on the snow-encrusted saddle and ate half of a peanut-butter sandwich before continuing across the Ball Field. This flat section of the hike alternated between brown dry rock, glare ice, and patches of hardened snow like concrete. There was a persistent 10-miles-per-hour wind right in my face and drying out my eyeballs. I stopped and put on my snowboarding goggles, which tinted my view a rose color and kept me from squinting into the wind.

At Deep Lake, I paused to put on my full crampons before committing to my route. I usually take the right couloir, which is not too steep and is considered the "normal" route. But my friend Todd Kelsey told me he thought the left couloir was the "normal" route and that it was longer, more direct, and a bit more fun. After observing both routes and noting that the consistency of the snow was like styrofoam and concrete, I deemed the avalanche danger to be minimal and moved left to investigate this new route.

About half way up, I looked left again (to the north) and saw a narrower, steeper even more interesting couloir that might connect directly to the summit. Todd didn't mention anything about this one, but it looked challenging and the snow conditions were great. The day was sunny, 20 degrees Fahrenheit, and I had plenty of time to work through this route, so I traversed across and then up and into the narrow gully.

The angle became significantly steeper, but the climbing was good, so I pressed on. Eventually I topped out on a side ridge that did not connect to either the main ridge or the summit. As mentioned, I attempted the large crack, but met with a similar fate. After down-climbing, I got back to Todd's main couloir, but did not give up. Surely there must be a shortcut to the top. I attempted two additional short, narrow gullies, but each one dead-ended into smooth rock. After losing about an hour route-finding and sweating profusely, I reluctantly returned to the main couloir and thereafter successfully intersected the ridge. Ed Viesturs' famous quote, "There are no shortcuts to the top," popped into my brain as I hiked the last 15 minutes to the summit. I was rewarded with a spectacular view of the Chugach Mountains and the city of Anchorage.

I could just make out the tiny building where I work in the city below and decided to give the folks back in the office a call. "Hey, Todd, I made it!" "What took you so long?" "Well, I had some route-finding issues. But enough of that, I'm going to wave my arms – see if you guys can see me." I said this as a joke, but I actually did stand tall in the wind and waved my arms as high as I could. There was a pause and then, "Nope. You are too far away. Let me put you on speaker phone." Then I knew several folks were listening so I said again, "Ha! I hope you suckers are having fun at the office." There were some incoherent grumbles and a couple even called me names that are not appropriate to either repeat or print.

After summiting and mocking my friends, I pulled out a small blue piece of foam and sat on the snow to finish the other half of my peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwich. I reflected on my injury back in August, the months of physical therapy, and the fact that I had just accomplished my goal. What a perfect day. Fifteen minutes later I was carefully navigating the back side of O'Malley down steep snow and ice. There were no free rides glissading and no plunge-stepping to relieve my knees. It was slow going until I reached Hidden Lake, at which point I replaced my crampons with micro-spikes and donned my Black Diamond headlamp. The trail from The Wedge to the Powerline Trail and back to the trailhead was shear ice (the lingering effects of our two-week-long chinook in mid-January). The stars were out and I could clearly see Orion, the Big Dipper, the Little Dipper, the North Star, and that constellation that is shaped like a house. What a great way to accomplish my goal – and all the sweeter because I had the mountains to myself while everyone was busy working in Anchorage.

Peak of the Month: Mount Kutkakoh

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Saint Elias Mountains; Chilkat Range

Borough: Haines Borough

Drainage: Garrison Glacier

Latitude/Longitude: 59° 8' 35" North, 135° 42' 0" West

Elevation: 6369 feet

Prominence: 1319 feet from Mount Clarence Mattson (6550)

Adjacent Peak: Mount Clarence Mattson

Distinctness: 1319 feet from Mount Clarence Mattson

USGS Map: Skagway (A-2)

First Recorded Ascent: The summit might be untouched.

Access Point: Garrison Glacier

From June 5 to 25, 1966, Dr. Lawrence E. Nielsen led a team of glaciological researchers on an exploration and mountaineering trip in the Takhinsha Mountains southwest of Mount Kutkakoh. This was the first recorded mountaineering trip into the area and Nielsen and trip participant David C. Chappellear subsequently named several geographic features using words from the local Tlingit language, including Mount Kutkakoh, which reportedly means wilderness or lonely place.

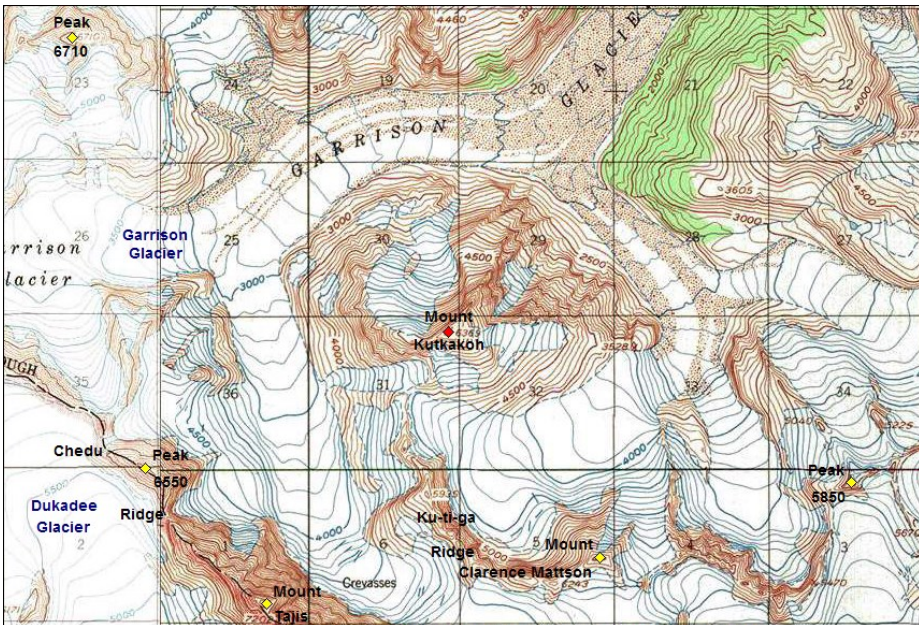
Some 30 years after Nielsen's expedition, SouthEast Alaska Backcountry Adventures (SEABA) began taking clients on some of the ski runs on the northern aspect of Mount Kutkakoh.

Not knowing of Nielsen's and Chappellear's name for the peak, the SEABA guides began to call it Editors. With its lengthy runs, Mount Kutkakoh soon became one of the classic ski peaks in the Chilkat Range.

In 2006 Will Wacker climbed the northeastern aspect of the peak to within 20 feet of the summit after being dropped off on a tributary of the Garrison Glacier by a ski plane.

I don't know of any complete ascents of Mount Kutkakoh; yours could be the first.

The information in this article came from Nielsen's and Chappellear's article titled "First Party in the Takhinsha Mountains, Alaska," which was published on pages 273 to 287 of the December 1966 *Appalachia*; and from my correspondence with Ben Still and Will Wacker.



Ben Still and the north face of Mount Kutkakoh (center, below the skyline) as viewed from the summit of Mount Emmerich. Photo by Ben Still.

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Annual membership dues: Single \$15, Family \$20

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. Articles should be submitted by the 24th 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.

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