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Peak of the Month: Kangianisua

"Many peaks and routes await discovery and exploration."
– J. Vincent Hoeman

JUNE MEETING: Saturday, June 22
The "Flattop Summer Solstice Campout" will be on Saturday, June 22, and take the place of the regular monthly meeting. Just the MCA getting together up on a mountain. This isn't a guided trip, nor is there a specific time to start or finish. Maybe get a huge group photo at 8 p.m. Individuals attending should bring everything they need for camping, hiking, hydrating, etc.

"To maintain, promote, and perpetuate the association of persons who are interested in promoting, sponsoring, improving, stimulating, and contributing to the exercise of skill and safety in the Art and Science of Mountaineering."

This issue brought to you by: Editor—Steve Gruhn assisted by Dawn Munroe

Cover Photo

Cory Hinds leading on "Royal Ribbons" in Valdez.

Photo by Wayne Todd

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Hiking and Climbing Schedule

June 22: Flattop Summer Solstice Campout. No leader.

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

Fun (Pun) Quiz

by Tom Choate

The rock climber got to the top of the pitch, took off his pack, got out a big Sharpie and proceeded to put polka dots all along a crack. Why?

Answer on page 23.

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 11th of each month to appear in the next issue of *the Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. Do not submit photos embedded in the text file. Send the photo files separately. Send high-resolution file photos separately, including captions for each photo. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. If you have a blog, website, video, or photo links, send us the link. Cover photo selections are based on portraits of human endeavor in the outdoors. Please submit at least one vertically-oriented photo for consideration for the cover. Please don't forget to submit photo captions.

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Online? Click me!



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

Total Crud (6140 feet) and Purple Nurple (6682 feet), Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Mat Brunton



Looking down from the summit at the exposed fourth-class section of Total Crud toward the Richardson Highway.

The old Tsaina Lodge. I never went there, but it seems to hold a cherished spot in the history of big-mountain skiing. It was featured prominently in Teton Gravity Research's *The Dream Factory*, a ski porno that I attribute to having a significant impact on the backcountry ski scene in Southcentral Alaska. The increase in both yuppie and dirtbag skier migration to Southcentral Alaska seemed unprecedented following the release of that film. Combined with the release of Alaska's first substantial skiing guidebook and Alaska's all-time 2011-'12 snow season, there was a trifecta of motivation for that youthful migration. The following year I saw for the first time random people at venues that for years prior only saw skiers that I'd known personally from the local community, as the guidebook gave away "secrets" and eliminated the "initiation process" gaining access to many previously lesser-known areas had once required. The traffic at trailheads exploded, and was almost unbelievable.

But, back to the old Tsaina Lodge. Again, I'd never been there – but it seemed like a more low-key and truly Alaskan establishment. I can't say the same thing about the new Tsaina Lodge. I have a friend that refers to it as the "billionaire's paradise." The new business model, with more integration between Valdez Heli-Ski Guides (VHSG) and the Tsaina Lodge, has seen the outfit transition to an exclusive club that (in their own words) provides a "Super Private experience."

They are a heli-ski operation, but they regularly harvest all the best "road runs" – the equivalent of the roadside classics at Turnagain Pass such as Sunburst Mountain, Tincan Common,

and Magnum; or Marmot and Microdot at Hatcher Pass. It think it's absurd that this conflict even exists. After all, they have helicopters! Why are they even skiing roadside runs that can be accessed in one to two hours by a fit party with alpine touring gear alone and no motors whatsoever? I've been a victim more than once. More than once have I been buzzed, and "heli-harassed," by VHSG birds. Fortunately, they did not drop in above me. More often, I've gone back to ski runs EASILY accessible from the road via human power in about an hour to find the stacked ridges of Thompson Pass valleys tracked wall to wall – the equivalent of Turnagain Pass' Taylor Creek valley (between Sunburst and Magnum) being tracked wall to wall.



The northwest face of Total Crud (Point 6140).

Heli tracks were definitely prevalent on the day of this trip report, when I went back to summit and ski Total Crud (Point 6140) and Purple Nurple (Peak 6682). Being near the beginning of a cycle of good stability, the valley between Crudbusters and Igua-nabacks had not yet been totally annihilated by VHSG's neoliberal pow-farming practices. While a helicopter could land on the summit of Purple Nurple, a peak with over 1,000 feet of prominence, they had not yet skied the peak, likely due to the hundreds of feet of 50-degree-plus terrain. Thus, I got it fresh. Total Crud was not a worry as a heli can't land on the small saddle below the summit, and I definitely didn't have to worry about the summit itself being tagged as it required fourth-class climbing with axe and crampons. That said, smaller and lower-angle terrain surrounding both of the big lines I climbed and descended was tracked up.

I share all of this with you because someday I want to see the Thompson Pass area central Chugach Mountains get the respect they deserve. That respect entails a land-use management plan that respects the experience of all visitors, and prioritizes lower impact and smaller-carbon-footprint, human-powered use that is relatively sustainable and better for the health and wellbeing of individuals and the environment. A second priority would be responsible, non-commercial motorized use. The lowest priority should be high-impact, carbon-gluttonous, and profiteering ventures like Tsaina Lodge/VHSG.

There's absolutely no justification for a heli-ski business operating in the road corridor, or in terrain reasonably accessible via human-powered daytrips. I'd even go further as to say, since they have the power of a helicopter and charge so much money, that they shouldn't operate anywhere commonly used by non-commercial motorized (i.e., snowmachine) users.

It's truly sad that the Alaska Department of Natural Resources is so regressive in terms of the business practices it allows on public land under its management. We, the people of the great state of Alaska, need to stand up and demand change. Change that would provide a better experience for everyone (heli-ski clients included, as they wouldn't get ripped off and served road runs, but would actually get in some flight-seeing for the thousands of dollars they paid to the likes of VHSG).

Terrain along this route is loaded with amazing northwest-facing lines, with the summit shots off Total Crud and Purple Nurple being the prizes. Both feature several hundred feet of 50-degree-plus, and many turns around 55 degrees. The terrain along the route is VERY easily accessible from the road and is loaded with northwest faces, chutes, and spines of smaller and lower-angle stature of varying degrees. The very broad, lower northerly slopes of Crudbusters between 4500 to 2000 feet is itself an amazing run of a much more relaxed nature.



Looking south from the summit of Total Crud to Purple Nurple.



Looking back at Total Crud, en route to Purple Nurple.



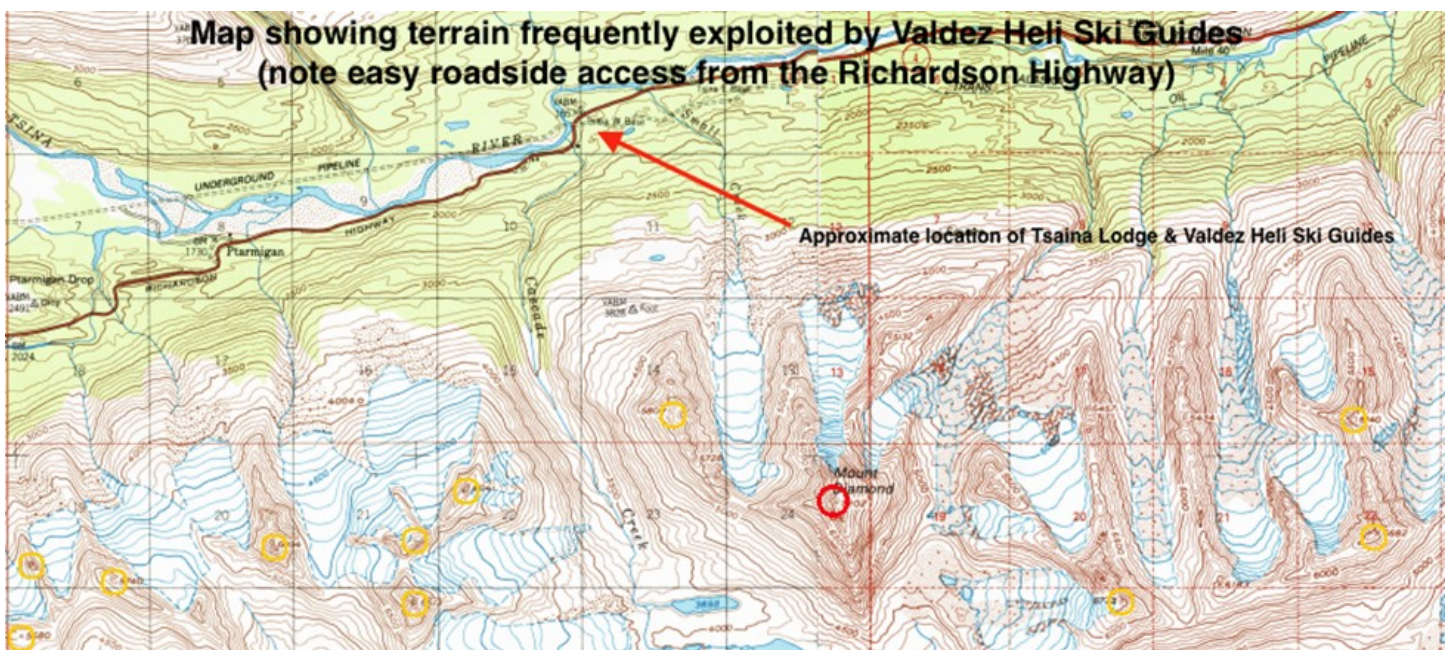
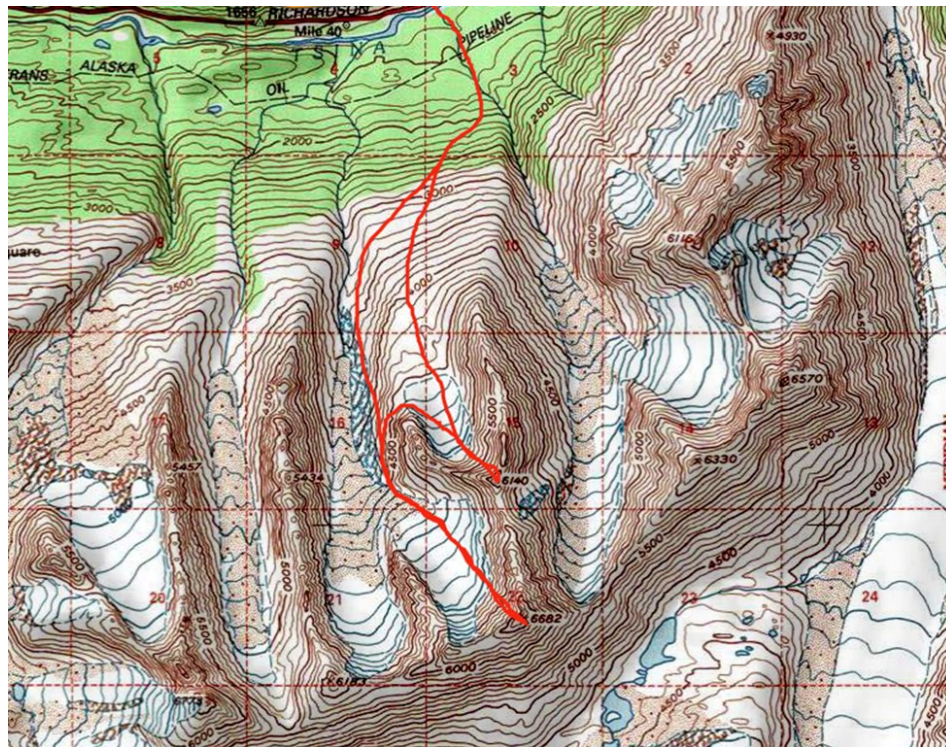
Looking down from the top-out and ski drop-in on the north ridge of Total Crud to the north-northwest.



Looking down to the north-northwest from the north ridge top-out and ski drop-in on Total Crud.



Looking west at the Iguanabacks from the summit of Total Crud.



Randoist Mountain (5128 feet), Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Mat Brunton



View to the east from the summit of Randoist Mountain.

Over the four days of March 27-30, 2019, I went on a ski-peakbagging bender in the Valdez to Thompson Pass corridor of the central Chugach Mountains. I summited six peaks (five with significant prominence), with each route including descents to 55 degrees. It is possible that a couple of those summits might have never experienced a human's touch before. In doing so, I experienced some of the greatest ecstasy of my life. Ecstasy beyond the most intense orgasm. Ecstasy beyond the loving comfort of a mother-child embrace. Ecstasy with the characteristic oneness that only Mother Nature induced satori can provide.

It's the kind of ecstasy that instills the deepest love, and righteous indignation when confronted with crimes against our collective Mother (crimes that hurt all of us), like that of the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill. The week of my ski-peakbagging bender was the week of the 30th anniversary of the that oil spill. Writing this, I'm pissed off and seething. Fight the power. Hopefully my pen (or keyboard), can be mightier than a sword (or whatever else one might use to slaughter Mammon and monkey wrench the machine for its crimes against life, which so often go unpunished).

I wish the sort of Earth-ecstasy-inducing benders I regularly go on were the sort of benders to which more members of our society were hopelessly addicted, rather than the alcoholic and narcotic binges in which so many indulge – like oil worker Joseph Hazelwood. Captain Joseph Hazelwood was intoxicated and not at the helm on March 24, 1989, when he crashed the *Exxon Valdez* oil tanker into a reef in Prince William Sound just
Scree—June 2019

outside the Port of Valdez. The crash released 11 million gallons of oil, toxified over 1,000 miles of majestic Prince William Sound coastline, killed hundreds of thousands of animals, and generally wrought ecological catastrophe in what was once one of the most beautiful and pristine ecosystems on the planet.

Much of the area remains polluted and toxic to this day, despite visible evidence of the oil spill at the surface being mostly gone. Only an estimated 14% of the oil was actually cleaned up, and Mother Nature was left to deal with at least 86% of it on her own.

I hope that I've fed you some wholesome food for thought! On with the trip report ...

I've climbed and skied several prominent coastal Alaskan peaks around Seward, Portage, Whittier, and Valdez over the years. No other peak has provided as much awe as Peak 5128 (a.k.a. 1563 [meters] and 5110). Being the highest and most prominent peak on the south side of the Port of Valdez range formed by Solomon Gulch and Jack Bay, the ocean and mountain views are the sweetest eye candy (and it's absolutely engaging to imagine that beauty tainted by an oil spill). Big Chugach peaks, spackled in snow from sea level, rise out of the ocean with extreme relief. The sea of mountains seems as endless as the sea itself (with northern Prince William Sound in clear view).

Peakbagger turned me on to this one, as I was inputting other Valdez/Thompson Pass-area peaks into its database. Peak 5128 had already been submitted, likely due to its more-than-2000-

foot prominence. Having been in the Allison Lake zone in January of 2019 to climb and ski Snow Dome, I realized that it would be a realistically attainable daytrip summit, given the right conditions.

Late March of 2019 provided ideal conditions, at least from a ski-peakbagger's perspective. Rain to about 4000 feet had refrozen and stabilized the snowpack into what seemed to be about 30 feet of concrete. Travel was fast and efficient; avalanche danger was low (especially given that several days of intense sunshine and melt-freeze prior had the snow in a highly processed state). The rockfall and wet avalanche cycle had already gone through several iterations and, with slightly cooler weather on the day I went for 5128, wasn't an issue. I didn't notice any wet avalanches (even wet loose) the day I was out, and only a couple minor chunks of rock that fell (and this over a journey that stretched several miles, one way).

This very prominent peak does not yet have a name. I propose "Randoist Mountain," in honor of the Gospel of Randoism being proclaimed here. One love.

To view a video of the trip, visit <https://anchorageavalanchecenter.org/trip-reports/central-chugach/randoist-mountain/>.



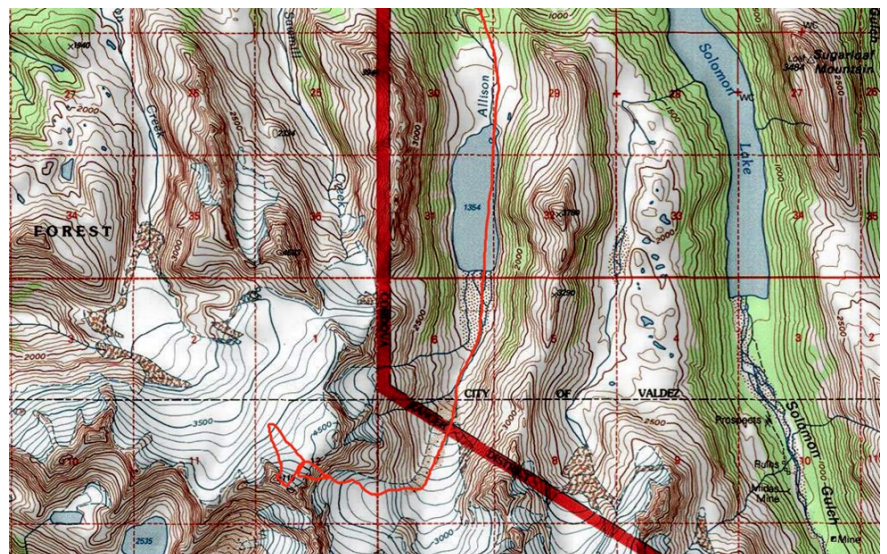
View east from the big funnel top of the descent couloir.



The southeast-facing couloir northeast of Randoist Mountain that Mat Brunton used to access the glacier below it that drained to Jack Bay. Brunton descended the steeper, skinnier more easterly couloir climber's left for his exit.



Looking back up at the crux of the descent couloir (while the top was nice and soft this section was boilerplate, steep-skinny-exposed, slide-for-life that mandated drawing the ice axe for side-slipping)



Bird Ridge Overlook (4625 feet), North Face, Bird Ridge

Text and photos by Mat Brunton



View south to Bird Ridge Point and Turnagain Arm.



Northwest aspect of the summit of Bird Ridge Overlook.

Dr. FRangeLove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Exposure

The Bird Ridge Overlook (BRO) north face is a ski descent I contemplated for years, after first noticing it on a summer backpacking-peakbagging trip into “Bird Country:” one of the most spectacular zones in the vast Chugach State Park (CSP). Being in the Turnagain Arm area of CSP, it has a relatively deep snowpack for the park (at least in the upper elevations), and the north face usually holds snow well into summer.

It took a couple snow seasons, after first noticing it on that summer trip, before I was able to figure out the line’s approach. Initially, I was fixated on a long and daunting approach from Glen Alps through Ship Lake Pass (between The Ramp and The Wedge) and up the valley with the south Fork of Ship Creek’s eastern headwaters. That proved a challenging option in regarding to timing – in terms of being able to hit it when there’s enough daylight for the long mission, but enough darkness and cool enough temperatures to prevent a long slog through rotten snow on the exit.

After a couple seasons with the line on my mind, Southcentral Alaska was in the midst of a spring that provided snow to sea level (something we had lacked for at least two seasons prior) and reports were flooding in about good conditions on the classic back-

country Nordic ski traverse: Arctic to Indian. That prompted me to re-assess the map: maybe there was a better way to access the BRO. Surely enough, with enough snow to ski the trail from Turnagain Arm to Indian Creek Pass, the Indian Valley Trail provided very reasonable access.

On March 4, 2017, with splitter bluebird skies, but wickedly wind-blasted snow, I convinced Brian “Randoman” Harder and a visiting Randoist brethren from the Wasatch Mountains (the Salt Lake City Viking, Lars K.) to explore the area. Adventure in an obscure zone, epic views, and character- building snow were guaranteed. On that attempt, we were able to ski the entire route (to and from the car near sea level). As I’d done the Arctic-to-Indian traverse multiple times, and Randoman had completed it once, we definitely noted how much better the descent from Indian Creek Pass was with alpine touring gear (rather than with yard-sale inducing Nordic skis matched with soft boots and NNN bindings).

Despite the early-spring conditions providing great trail conditions in the Indian Valley, the mountain slopes were wind-blasted and punchy or slide-for-life. Combined with some old (but still spooky) pockets of hollow wind slab, a cornice fall crater just below the crux of the BRO, and route-finding issues on a complex and steep face that’s a big step up (in terms of alpine climbing) from Ptarmigan Peak’s north face classic (the S Couloir); we only climbed and

skied about 75% of the BRO on that attempt.

A month and a half later (April 19), I was back for a second attempt. While much of the snowpack on the Indian Valley Trail had burnt off, and required hiking in trail runners for a bit, upper-elevation snow conditions were much more appealing than on the previous visit and snow stability was more confidence inspiring.



Brian Harder and Lars K. heading up Bird Ridge Overlook.

As mentioned, there's some route-finding on the big north face to piece together a continuous line of snow. Having chosen the wrong fork on the prior attempt with the boys, I went directly up the other fork this time and was handsomely rewarded (after passing through an un-skiable choke) with a big, exposed, and STEEP upper face leading directly to the eastern summit ridge just a short distance from

the summit itself. A raven auspiciously greeted my arrival.

As I stared down the line, after booting up to the summit and back to the ski drop-in, I realized I had "learned to stop worrying and love the exposure." Dr. FRangeLove was born. Not that it still wasn't an intense vision quest experience ...

In the spring of 2017, the narrow choke and crux of the line was un-skiable: too narrow for even my 171-centimeter skinny spring skis and only filled in with rotten snow over steep rock. A short down-climb with the ice tool and crampons was in order. Then, the final STEEP couloir section of the descent. The ambiance of that line was absolutely world-class, and the entire route was a testament to the wonders of ski alpinism hidden in the Western Chugach.



Line of ascent and descent on the north face of Bird Ridge Overlook.

After bagging the BRO with sublime snow conditions, and plenty of

time remaining before the exit would be rotten, more exploration was in order. I headed back up a nook in the north face to check out another potential line I noticed with the boys on the last trip. It looked like it might just be a big apron with a short chute above, but it turned out to be a wide chute into a narrow, twisting couloir that snaked up the north face to the western summit ridge far higher than I could have imagined. Quite the surprise! The zone is stacked with "extreme" ski descents.

As far as I can tell, my route on the north face of BRO to the summit was both a first ascent and descent.

To view a compilation video from both 2017 trips, visit <https://anchorageavalanchecenter.org/trip-reports/western-chugach/bro-north-face/>.



View northwest from the top of the descent couloir.



Shot Tower (6096 feet) West Ridge Free Variation (1,500 feet 5.11a R), The Parabola Northeast Ridge to East Summit (5750 feet), Ariel Peak (6685 feet), Elephant's Tooth (4805 feet) South Face, and Other Rambles; Arrigetch Peaks

Text by Steph Williams



Left to right: Forest McBrian, Steph Williams, and Drew Lovell approaching Shot Tower.

Photo by David Moskowitz

Brooks Range Aviation delivered Drew Lovell, David Moskowitz, Forest McBrian, and me to Circle Lake on a warm and sunny afternoon on July 22 2018. Over the course of two days we walked to Aiyagomahala Creek, the valley of the gentle giant, where arctic sunshine allowed us to climb Shot Tower's stunning west ridge on our third day in the range. The "night" before – perhaps better described as a dimmed version of day in the land of the midnight sun – we entertained the possibility of freeing the route. It was a farfetched dream based on nothing more than naïve whimsy, having no clue what the aid portion would consist of, beyond what was described as a 60-foot crack with tied-off pins. Climbing beta in the Arrigetch Peaks remains vague at best, even on the most-popular routes, a phenomenon that is, arguably, one to cherish in this day and age. Bearing this in mind, I sincerely hope that the value of sharing the following observations outweighs any negative tradeoffs from information saturation. At the very least, may it spare interested climbers the burden of carrying an aid rack up a 1,500-foot route.

On first sight, the aid pitch looked like it would go free, albeit at a difficulty above our team's apish prowess. Fortunately, a more moderate option opened up just to the left, along the far edge of the slightly overhanging golden face. We climbed 5.11a cracks before turning left of the arête to a run-out 5.9 slab that hung above a wide roof, where the northwest face dropped precipitously be-

low, making for an airy and memorable pitch. One more short pitch of 5.8 in a corner merged with the original line about a pitch below the summit. It was very possible that others had done this detour, but there were no signs of passage, and we left none ourselves. Finding and free-climbing a variation of this fantastic arctic route in the wild Arrigetch was a personal benchmark, a success due in no small measure to the unfailing encouragement from the finest partners one could have, and a dose of good luck with warm, stable weather.

Over the following weeks of our 22-day trip, we camped and rambled in the Aquarius Creek and upper Arrigetch Creek valleys. We climbed the northeast ridge of The Parabola, bailing off the summit of its east peak in a rainstorm back down the ridge in seven 60-meter, double-rope rappels. We also climbed Ariel Peak via the north side, a scramble that, when snow and ice covered, was downright thrilling, given its nontechnical status. David and Forest attempted The Albatross via the southwest ridge, but retreated after contemplating several more frictionless rain-soaked pitches. Meanwhile, Drew and I found a remarkable 150-meter 5.10 dihedral on the lower flanks of the eastern buttress of Xanadu Peak, which could be a sweet half-day outing, though it took us two attempts, in the intermittent cold rains of early August. We referred to the right-facing corner as the "Virga Dihedral," as we were frequently wondering whether leaden clouds building over

the crest would produce precipitation heavy enough to touch the ground. Typically I forecasted rain while Drew argued it was only virga. We were each right at least once.

On August 11th, the final clear day of our trip, we all enjoyed the south face of the Elephant's Tooth, one of the few remaining peaks below snowline. Drew and I climbed three pitches (5.7 to 5.9) up the path of least resistance while Forest and David veered toward the steeper headwall to find bouldery and exciting 5.10c moves. Sitting on the summit surrounded by sweeping granite walls and elegant spires – the mythological fingers of the giant's hand outstretched, a tale of origin from the people who came before us – left an indelible impression in our hearts and minds. Within our viewshed, we knew there were unseen grizzlies and black bears, wolves and foxes, lynx, caribou, moose, Dall sheep, and wolverines, roaming the tundra expanses and spruce forests. It was all worth it: the relentless tussocks, mosquito harassment, mega-carnivore avoidance, cold rain, slippery talus, heavy loads, and tent-bound restlessness. For those hardships we were gifted a handful of exceptional climbing days, weeks in the northern wildlands, and the company of kindred spirits, each of us moved by an evocative beauty radiating from the Arrigetch Peaks at the heart of the immense and incomparable Brooks Range.



Steph Williams about a pitch above the "Mushroom" on the West Ridge of Shot Tower.

Photo by David Moskowitz



Left to right: Forest McBrian, David Moskowitz, and Drew Lovell on the upper West Ridge of Shot Tower with the original aid line shown in green on the right and the free variation in red on the left.

Photo by Steph Williams



Steph Williams jamming up the start of the free variation on Shot Tower.

Photo by David Moskowitz



A very happy team on Shot Tower's summit. From left: Forest McBrian, Steph Williams, Drew Lovell, and David Moskowitz.

Photo by David Moskowitz

International Climbing Camaraderie and Returning to Denali (20310 feet), Churchill Peaks

Text by Dan Koepke



Midnight sun alpenglow on Mount Foraker and Mount Hunter panorama just above Windy Corner on Denali.

Photo by Dan Koepke

Returning to Denali 2017 and 2018 expeditions introduced in April's issue of *the Scree*, I extol a profound, pure camaraderie of the cord shared in the mountains for some of the greatest experiences and lessons in my entire life that continue to thrill me looking ahead to the future.

Climbing Denali repeatedly returns to my mind almost daily ever since Denali National Park expedition Ruth Glacier Expedition Funhogs Anonymous in June 2013 (*Scree* November 2014). I still feel connected with Alex Honnold, Freddie Wilkinson, Renan Ozturk, Alex Blümel, and Gerry Fiegl remembering sharing classic whiteout-downtime camaraderie with our team of amateurs. Of course we were not aiming for Denali's summit that expedition on the Ruth, yet I literally fell asleep with my eye on Denali and while there definitely began dreaming of returning to climb Denali.

Later Freddie encouraged me about my writing projects exalting quality relationships, and he always reminds me that if it's important, your story might live on because bold, yet modest, inspiration lives on. Dynamic everyday heroes *live on* in our international community of alpinists that makes the hills and high mountains feel like home for those *Born to be Wild* – the name of the Steppenwolf song played via my request the last time I saw Alex Blümel and Gerry at the Fairview Inn when we returned to Talkeetna in June 2013.

In October 2015 Gerry Fiegl (27) passed away after falling while descending with Alex Blümel and Hansjörg Auer after their first ascent of the south face of Nilgiri South (22438 feet) – only the second ascent of the peak – in the Annapurna massif. Gerry Fiegl

lives on. RIP, Gerry. Live on.

*Wild men & women still run free
chasing & racing under the sun
living young once only
shining
like snowy mountains far away.*

Returning to Denali: Expedition Alaskan International Ohana, May – June 2017



Team Alaskan International Ohana on the Kahiltna Glacier.

Photo by Van Loral

Compassion and a camaraderie of the cord weave fascinating stories in the mountains, like sacrificing my best chance at summiting during our Denali 2017 Expedition Alaskan International

Ohana due to managing a friend's frostbite. Frostbite below Camp 4 (14000 feet) is relatively uncommon on Denali, but Ed Shred and a buddy, Gaber, were bitten a bit after a sunny day turned into a frigid subzero night that froze their sweaty feet en route to Camp 4. That lesson remained with me on Cerro Aconcagua (22841 feet) and other mountains when sunny, clear days quickly transitioned to cold evenings at high-altitude that impaired circulation.

Gaber displayed a sort of psychological denial about the severity of his toes' frostbite. In his defense, frostbite manifests somewhat slowly and subtly before returning to lower altitudes and warmer conditions. A Salt Lake City climber / emergency-room nurse / frostbite specialist administered a neurological exam showing there was deep nerve damage in the foot and not just the toes. Medically-licensed climbers, rangers, and frostbitten gnardogs alike coached Gaber to descend, but he tenaciously held onto a fantasy for the summit and even suggested he could summit solo when I explained his responsibilities to himself and the team to turn around. Especially as team leader, ethically I could not ascend any higher with him and I encouraged him to retreat mostly for his own sake since exposing his frostbitten toes to step-kicking trauma on the fixed lines, frigid temperatures above 14000 feet, and de-creased circulation at altitude would all jeopardize chances for keeping his toes and being able to climb and hike with his son.

Shred's toes were more frost-nipped than -bitten, so we decided to ascend the headwall's fixed lines while Gaber rested his toes' growing blebs. Reaching the ridge after ascending the fixed lines for our first time and passing Kiwis Matty Knar and Van Loral descending from their first summit push after turning around near Camp 5 (17100 feet), a rock immediately broke my crampon's center bar. For fun Ed climbed to Washburn's Thumb (16500 feet) – his highest ever – before we descended the fixed lines, me with only one crampon. Then we retrieved our skis just beneath the bergschrund and enjoyed skiing the headwall back home to camp.

While I devoted hours and days and nights to imploring and pleading that later proved effective enough when Gaber finally descended, the Kiwis wisely left for another shot at the summit. I was fully aware how much time and effort we expended convincing him to descend, especially when the Kiwis returned to Camp 4 after their long marathoners' push to the summit with two nights at Camp 5. I particularly respect the Kiwis' aggressive approach and their willingness to suffer when necessary, and I was so elated for them! I truly shared a little of their joy, and Ed Shred and I hooked up tea and snacks to celebrate. This also encouraged us immensely finally seeing our chance right around the corner after almost three

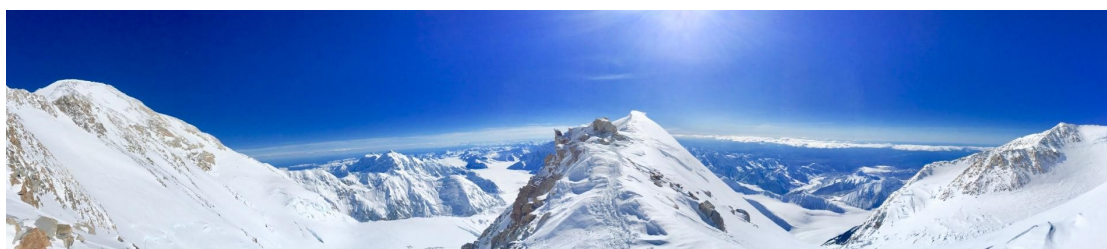
weeks on the mountain. Gaber's frostbite hampered me in certain ways, but also enabled me to swap crampons without needing to fix, replace, or even sweat my broken center bar.

Ed Shred and I soon ascended to Camp 5 where winds hammered camp. Over and over a brief window opened, everyone prepared to go, started up, and were turned around by the intensifying wind and lack of visibility. Guides described their groups getting spanked. That happened for two days until all at once the storm sent an exodus of every ranger and climber back down to Camp 4 on our Day 23.

Keeping Ed Shred's injured toes safe and warm was certainly a priority and he was ready to descend, especially in order to share his upcoming birthday with his wife at home rather than holed up with me for another week at Camp 4 still taxing his toes. Even without frostbite I was on the same page; there were many things I would rather do than invest another week or more of stormy tent-time just hoping for a chance at the summit. I knew I would be back.

Denali 2017 Expedition Alaskan International Ohana taught humbling lessons about frostbite, team leadership, and how uncooperative weather conditions could be. Another big takeaway lesson was learning that regulations prohibit solo-ascents using a group permit if all other teammates descend. Thus a solo permit would allow climbing both with others and also independently. Soloing Mount Rainier (14411 feet), Pico de Orizaba (18490 feet), and Aconcagua already made the idea realistic. Our first week during the Denali 2017 expedition at 9600 feet, Ed Shred saved the life of a very novice permitted soloist by digging him out of his tent buried in snow: I knew a permit would be the easy part and I began considering my own solo adventure.

Bozeman bros who had recently arrived to Camp 4 and whose trip was partially funded by working odd jobs for an old Bozeman climbing buddy, Adam Fruh, shared hot drinks and hearty hospitality as Ed Shred and I retrieved our cache from Camp 4 before we descended in gorgeous golden midnight sun to Camp 3, where we crashed. The next day while waiting until night for temperatures to fall so we could travel more safely, we handed out extra food and chocolate to happy helpful people like Ranger Mel Coady. After walking our sleds down to Camp 1 (7800 feet), the adventure and camaraderie of two best friends roped-up and gliding over the



Above Denali's fixed lines at 16,000 feet. Photo by Dan Koepke

Kahiltna's yawny June crevasses through the dusky night back to base camp (7200 feet) after 24 days on Denali still stands out as much as any solo-summit or any other memory in my entire life.

These precious people, connections, and memories make the mountains alive for me and make it easy to focus on the *people* of the stories, rather than my own achievements and adventures which are rather mellow even when successful. That's what Freddie was getting at regarding relationships. Returning to Denali, for me, is all about boldly yet modestly facing personal failure and accepting a conservative level of risk while chasing dreams and growing in my backyard to become the best human and mountaineer possible. What does it take to be the best mountaineer?

Classic Montana in the age of Hollywood, Alex Lowe modestly reminded us: *The best climber in the world is the one having the most fun.*

Returning to Denali Solo in June 2018 and Exploring Peru's Cordillera Blanca in July 2018



Above: Camp 4 on Denali.

Below: Suspended Snow Angel.

Photos by Dan Koepke



Picking up the story from April's issue of *the Scree*, I arrived to Camp 4 (14000 feet) on June 6, 2018, as mountaineers were skiing from Denali's summit literally thrilled about the best day in their entire life. That's a real feeling for some fortunate people: one told me personally and everyone was talking all about it around Camp 4. When's the last time you felt even nearly that good?!

Mount Shasta's lesson about failure resounded: *Do not let fear of failure limit opportunities to grow and succeed.* I was growing, suc-

ceeding, and psyched doing exactly what I loved, enjoying the time of my life. There was no place I'd rather be. I felt grateful and ecstatic.

Perfect conditions vanished and yet the stoke around Camp 4 lived on. Rest during bad weather then spring outside when it cleared and grab the skis to go play and acclimate with international mountaineers all there for the love of the game and sharing the stoke like it's the last day on Earth or first day in heaven. Basking in the active joy of being alive in paradise and doing what I loved most, I will always remember afternoons blissfully skiing fresh powder above 15000 feet on Denali's headwall and West Rib Cutoff beneath the Orient Express and evenings sharing classic alpine camaraderie with mountaineers from around Alaska, around the country, and around the world.

Denali earns a reputation for fickle weather. Suddenly facing another week or more on Denali in a tent above 14000 feet with no chance for even an attempt at the summit while also feeling super strong, it seemed like a luxurious no-brainer to sneak out and finally fly to Peru like I initially planned in May. A complementary aspect of any fearlessness about failure also implies failure may always be imminent: *maybe you're not pushing yourself hard enough if you're not failing sometimes – accept failure and move on.*

I appreciated confidently giving myself a realistic chance to summit Denali via the solo permit, but also didn't feel like I had to stay indefinitely until summiting. The stage was already set for a very social and successful attempt at Denali's summit in 2019 teaming up with the Fantastic Four from Aconcagua and Ed Shred. Was I wimping out or just living the good life with sweet options?

A two-day weather window suddenly opened. Of course everyone at Camp 4 was talking about it, even though not everyone cared to push toward the summit. I made the rounds and discussed plans with teams I knew. I felt pretty strong and there were also some descending teams' abandoned caches up there they begged me to grab so they would not be fined. For me this meant the bonus of not carrying as much food up there while also helping them out.

Ascending the fixed lines, feeling fantastic physiologically, everything seemed to be coming together for a legit chance at the summit. With the brief relief of reaching the ridge soon came the disappointment that there was a monster lenticular cloud atop the summit with legit flagging all around the ridges. The storm predicted to arrive in roughly 36 hours was obviously coming early and there was no time for a summit attempt before it would roll in big. I heard there were still maybe a couple teams at Camp 5 (17100 feet). It seemed downright irresponsible to try withstanding the storm with hurricane-force (more than 70 mile-per-hour) winds as a soloist when the rangers were discouraging everyone from going and all staying at Camp 4.

On the way down the fixed lines I ran into Norwegian Thomas Lone who was going for it – and who recently summited Mount Everest on May 16, 2019. Congratulations, Tom! I had recently explained the significance of lenticular clouds and knew he might actually head to Camp 5 anyway even after reaching the ridge, and he did. To their credit Tom and his partner Didrik eventually earned Denali's summit with their respectable turn-it-on approach – but only when the storm was gone about 10 days later after both 8 days at high camp and a return to 14000 feet. Call it sour grapes, but not my idea of a great decision or good time especially for me so close to home in Anchorage. I was thrilled about my decision communicating with them via the satellite phone while they were still hunkered down at Camp 5 and I was in Huaraz (10000 feet) after rock climbing around town, eating two-dollar three-course lunches in restaurants, and summiting Urus Este (17782 feet) in the Cordillera Blanca.

Everything worked well and according to my plan for descending Denali solo: I enjoyed skiing sledless down from Camp 4 over crevasses and crashing at 11000 feet where I could almost taste all the thick oxygen in the air. After skiing down to Camp 1 with my sled, I retrieved my cache there, and luckily met Paul Strickland and his partner Alexander who both agreed to rope up together back to base camp. Paul and Alexander were scooped up from base camp right away by Talkeetna Air Taxi, and I waited just long enough to fully appreciate the pretty purr of a K2 Super Cub coming to pick me up just before the storm. That evening climbers were everywhere in Talkeetna and soon I ran into Carlos Petersen, Max Alvarez, and Daniel Araiza at the brewpub. Many summitless mountaineers ate, sharing solid feel-good camaraderie due to relief about being off the mountain just in time. Storms prevented flights in or out for seven to nine days straight *twice* in 2018.

First thing in the morning the next day, I stopped by the Talkeetna Ranger Station to check in and shake hands with Ranger Tucker Chenoweth before driving Alexander, Paul, and a Romanian solo mountaineer from Talkeetna to Anchorage in the rain of the encroaching storm. We immediately stopped at the Ding How all-you-can-eat Mongolian grill and buffet for a team feast; then I dropped Alexander and Paul off at the airport. I flew to Los Angeles for Lima the next day.

Aiming for Denali solo was spontaneous, if not even somewhat whimsical, and my businesses needed attention, too: it turned out a very important shipment of packrafts did not arrive when they should have, and I was barely able to resolve the company's error to get them to Alaska by late July, just in the nick of time. I was acclimated with three weeks before needing to explore the Aleutian Range's potential for skiing remote volcanoes and coordinating eco-expeditions, and then packrafting in the Brooks Range's Arctic Circle in early August. Like realizing I had three weeks to ex-

plore the Himalaya while traveling around the world in 2017, the opportunity was not ideal, but certainly sufficient for a scouting trip. *If you always wait for something perfect, you may wait your entire life.*

I hoped the Cordillera Blanca would challenge me and develop my social and solo mountaineering skills among singular mountains like Alpamayo (19511 feet) and Artesonraju (19682 feet) in order to help transition to technical high-altitude Himalayan mountaineering. Rock climbing around Huaraz with temperatures in the 60s appealed to me, too. The proximity of the Cordillera Blanca's 16 20000-foot and 33 18000-foot peaks to nice high-altitude towns like Huaraz makes for easy approaches to base camps above 14000 feet a matter of a few dollars' bus ride – after only \$1,000-plus in airfare and 30-plus hours to Lima, a \$25 overnight bus ride to Huaraz, and a few hours in a packed *colectivo* bus on one of the bounciest, wildest rides of your life.

I immediately headed for the Ishinca Valley to test how well I kept my acclimatization. Urus Este's steep exposed snow on a small glacier afforded a wonderful view from the peak and I felt excellent. Call me a snob, but I got bored fast with brutal down-hiking and slipping in dirt descending. I'm a skier! Wanting more technical climbs rather than continuing with moderates, I focused on finding teammates and expanding my climbing network.



*Peru's Ishinca Valley
Photo by Dan Koepke*

Checking and posting messages for partners at gear shops and the Huaraz Casa de las Guías, I met a young local guide, David, and for fun we walked together outside of town to Los Olivos to boulder a long traverse route by a babbling brook while another climber played a didgeridoo. Then another day David and I bussed to the Monterrey rock-climbing area where a big climbing event, part of their alpinism festival, was taking place the next couple days. David and I climbed briefly and then began working to clean up the area of trash and also the rock around new routes that the local guides were setting for the event. I seized that small opportunity to contribute as a climbing ambassador for my country and state. One of the older guys ran off and brought back drinks and snacks for everyone. I never, ever drink soda as a matter of nutrition and principle, but I politely accepted their generous gesture with a "Salud! Cheers!" and a swig.

I homed in more and more on the gem of Alpmayo, which seemed almost as dangerous and logistically intense as it was technical to climb. It's a short ice-climbing route of moderate technical difficulty, but I needed a partner, lots of gear, mules, and some good fortune regarding timing because the route was so crowded. I met some potential partners, some bad and some good, like stud Josh Worley during his Vertical Year, and also ran into my *tocayo*, or twin, Daniel Araiza.

I first met Daniel Araiza in January 2018 at 18370 feet on Aconcagua a few days before I summited just ahead of his Mexican team of eight. We shared a congratulatory hug on Aconcagua's summit, and serendipitously I ran into him next in June 2018 outside Denali's Camp 3 (11000 feet). We shared quality laughs and good times around Denali's Camp 4, especially since he stopped by every day for medicine to sooth his respiratory crud. Carlos and I stayed in touch after Denali and he mentioned Daniel would be around Huaraz.

I immediately recognized Daniel in the Andean Kingdom shop and he invited me to join his team of 8 to 10 climbers and guides for dinner next door when I was done. Daniel briefly introduced me to them and he addressed their expeditions' objectives and logistics in Spanish while I dug into my meal and listened. It was an ambitious plan that seemed almost like another day at the office for Daniel, although he recognized it was ambitious, too, and I particularly respected his expertise when he told me this was his eighth expedition in the Cordillera Blanca after I asked – I later learned his first was at 18. We were both planning to be busy, but we hugged and agreed to meet up again soon for a beer or a climb nearby and we stayed in touch, chatting about it.

Literally the very evening I met up with a newly-formed group of four to finalize logistics and start for Alpmayo the next day, we learned the tragic news of three climbers dead on Alpmayo after a large serac fell on the route. Some of the local guides from the day at Monterrey jumped in a van outside Casa de la Guías to investigate and retrieve the buried bodies, including a guide and a client from the company of a renowned mountaineer who was staying at the same hotel. Earlier in the morning, we were cheerfully watching the World Cup and that evening he was hurting badly when I passed him on the street. *Let it be a lesson to myself, I thought: I don't ever want to make that type of call to victims'*

families as a friend or on behalf of my company. Of course nobody does.

An Alpmayo expedition was now out of the question for my timeframe and most everyone around that little town in big mountains was shaken up – especially locals and climbers. I began feeling much more conservative about the abundant objective risk in the Cordillera Blanca after the big snow year. Running out of time, I aimed for a solo attempt of Nevado Pisco (18871 feet) and enjoyed an amazing experience aside from a gastrointestinal explosion that sent me down humbly from advanced camp the day I was finally ready to make my summit push. I rested back in Huaraz and on July 11th began preparing for my long return to Lima and Alaska for upcoming adventures in the Aleutian and Brooks Rang-

es. It became obvious that I need to return with a strong team for more technical climbs around Huaraz. *Who's coming with me?* I was so happy to return to Alaska on July 12 after finally exploring Peru, learning so much, staying healthy (aside from my gut), and living to climb another day.

Back in Anchorage between Aleutian and Brooks Range expeditions in late July, I learned about the death of Daniel Araiza (29) and Enrique Gonzalez (24) on Artesonraju while rappelling after summiting on July 18. Anyone who knows Daniel's spirit knows that Daniel Araiza *lives on*. Daniel Araiza lives on through Max and Carlos and Uncle Charlie's next generation of young Mexican climbers with whom I ice-climbed around Ouray at "Dexter's Lab" and in the Ice Park in December 2018; Carlos and Daniel teach so much about passionate alpinism and chasing dreams. Of course it still hurts. I

had shared time in the mountains with Daniel more casually and more frequently than family that first half of 2018. We shared a high-quality, quick camaraderie of the cord and sometimes that's all you get with the most charismatic, dynamic people in the world who live at home in the mountains until their dying day. RIP, Danny. *Live on.*



Carlos Petersen and Julio Rebora leading "Dexter's Lab" (WI3-4).
Photo by Dan Koepke

*Wild men & women still run free
chasing & racing under the sun
living young once only
shining
like snowy mountains far away.*

Epilogue: Returning to Denali 2019 and Looking Beyond

Returning to climb Denali in May 2019 on a solo permit, I'm still not willing to take any extraordinary risks, especially with a heavy heart thinking about Gerry and Daniel, as well as Auer, David Lama, and Jess Roskelley who were recently killed by an avalanche after climbing "M16" on the Canadian Rockies' Howse Peak.

Mountaineers better fully understand the risks taken in this game that proves to be a matter of life and death – especially when we make it one. In his *Alpinist* article, Auer dramatically said they had "no choice" but to push up Nilgiri South's South Face before Gerry died, like they were in war or something – similar to all-or-nothing Maurice Herzog climbing Annapurna and barely making it out alive and losing fingers, toes, and more on the retreat because he was so possessed by summit fever. These days I'll take humbly skiing out with my best friend for modest, summitless memories anytime, compared to an evacuation – and you should, too! Talk about this with your climbing partners and make sure everyone agrees! Perhaps the mountaineering community needs more role models who are willing to walk on the living side of the sharp line between risk and reward, yet perhaps these mountaineers lived and died exactly how they would have wished, too.

Respecting risk, I have also recognized that – far from simply endangering my well-being – mountaineering has enriched and saved my life, and I plan to keep it that way. I would rather live and die in the mountains more than anywhere else, but I have much more climbing and living to do. We all die eventually, but we do not all live on. *Live on.*

*Wild men & women still run free
chasing & racing under the sun
living young once only
shining
like snowy mountains far away.*



*Camp 4 from the West Rib Cutoff on Denali.
Photo by Dan Koepke*



*Mountaineers on Denali at Windy Corner, 13,000 feet.
Photo by Dan Koepke*



*Denali's Windy Corner at 13,000 feet.
Photo by Dan Koepke*

"Royal Ribbons:" Now and Then

Text and photos by Wayne Todd



Cory Hinds leading "Royal Ribbons."

The predicted heavy snowfall is upon us, but there is no deterring the Valdez ice climbing.

After a short bit of back-and-forth driving, Cory Hinds and I are fairly sure we're at the creek to access "Royal Ribbons." The mileage from the airstrip that Andy Embick's book utilizes closely matches the mileposts.

Today we "wisely" use snowshoes, as the previous day's decision to not bother with them for such a short approach to the Mile 19 climbs really taught us how long $\frac{1}{4}$ mile can be when post-holing in knee- to thigh-deep snow.

After some slight shrubbery to avoid a domicile, we soon utilize the technical features of the snowshoes as the creek bed narrows. The terrain varies from snow-covered rocks and downed logs to ice-covered rocks to wet steps. This section is scenic when not "immersed" in careful shoe placement. I now understand why the guidebook estimated 45 minutes for such a short approach. A winter whimbrel darts about the creek.

A snow-covered ice alluvial really tests the snowshoes' gripping power below the climb. The ice climb looks stout, even from a second's perspective; free-hanging lower right and incomplete

up top. Cory notes the uppermost section is not in, so we'll likely be stopping after the rock traverse.

The standard climbing for this trip is for Cory to lead on a phat rope and trail a skinny rope for use on rappels. He's up left and away on the mini vertical steps. Soon I'm following, quite content to be belayed. At the nook belay station, after a fairly efficient transfer of gear, Cory is up and right, destined for the rock.

As he leads out of sight, the progress slows briefly, so something on the route is tricky, then there's ice fall, then snowfall. The understood three tugs and I'm on belay.

At the rock section, even noting the clipped old piton, I shake my head that leading this is fun for some. My older mono-points are reasonable for hooking rock shelves. The next pro is a Cory-placed mini hex, then two old pitons equalized with ancient webbing, moss colored. Or is that moss in the shape of webbing? Then back on ice with alder protrusions (the alders do not help). And there's Cory with an alder anchor. Ice is nice; rock not-so-much. An alder-studded body-width ramp angles up and left, but we don't see the point.

Today we decide to pull the skinny rope, so as to have the

phatty run through the anchor material. Cory raps first with rope placement away from sharp rock. I also note the jerking alder anchor from the phat rope barely feeding through the belay device.

Now on rappel, I repeat the rope placement. A glance down from the second rock ledge reveals "Whoa, that's a very long free-hanging rappel" (150 feet?). Dropping over and appreciating the significant overhang, I feed the phat rope through the belay device as fast as possible, so as to lessen the bouncing.

On terra firma again. Challenging, but glad the climb is complete.

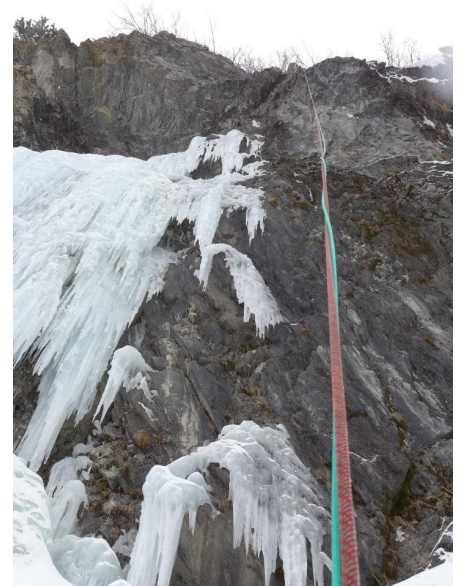
NOT. Neither of us, nor together can budge the skinny. Cory is already thinking "prusiking" and I'm thinking return tomorrow with friends and ropes to climb the ice again. Cory zigs and zags on the slope, going short and long with serious pull on the skinny while I whip the phatty upward. Wait, what are we talking about? Oh right, stuck ropes. I'm surprised how well the whip continues upward to at least beyond the first rock overhang. The skinny budes, moves a little more. "YES! Don't stop," and Cory runs downhill with the skinny in tow.

Our conclusion is to always pull the phatty, so as to have less initial rope stretch.

Crampons remain on for the initial technical walk out, but snowshoes eventually prevail with the accumulating snow.

Tomorrow's agenda: "Hung Jury."

Meanwhile, 12 years previous, Mike M. and Dave L. ...



Looking up at the free-hanging stuck rappel ropes.



Cory Hinds at a belay spot on "Royal Ribbons."



Wayne Todd and the rappel route off "Royal Ribbons."



Cory Hinds approaching "Royal Ribbons."

MCA Winter Mountaineering Instructional Trip, Kenai Mountains

Text by Mary A. Vavrik

February 22 – March 2, 2019

10 Students, 4 instructors, nine days



*The team at Devils Pass Cabin
Photo by Greg Bragiel*



*Winter mountaineering instructional crew gearing up for a lesson on roped glacier travel in the sunshine near Devils Pass.
Photo by Bill Posanka*

After four enthusiastic students hauled in camp-stove fuel and some climbing equipment on a training excursion near the Mint Hut in the Talkeetna Mountains, the trip got diverted to the Resurrection Trail in the Kenai Mountains due to an untimely winter storm in the Hatcher Pass area. It was nothing short of amazing that Greg Bragiel, our trip leader, was able to secure cabins along the Resurrection Trail at the 11th hour!

The trip was announced in the fall of 2018 and quickly filled up. We had several planning meetings at Greg's house, followed by some training trips among the participants.

About a week before the trip, everyone met for a gear check and to go over the dinner menu, for which the students were responsible.

The morning of the start date, we all gathered to divide fuel and group gear. The car shuttle was accomplished with a rendezvous with Kenai Peninsula folks at the Bean Creek Trailhead. Meanwhile, the group that got dropped off at the Hope Trailhead began their journey.

Day one was a seven-mile ski on good trail to the Caribou Creek Cabin. Car shuttle people arrived fairly shortly behind the first group. After warming up the cabin, setting up tents, and eating a hearty dinner, there was some instruction on navigation, leave-no-trace ethics, and trip planning.

Day two was a more challenging slog through deeper snow, negotiating gullies with heavy packs and sleds. The group was split up according to speed of travel. After a nine-hour day of travel, we arrived at our next camp.

We spent the next day learning how to travel with and use an ice axe for self-arrest, how to rope up and travel as a rope team, and how to set anchors. After dinner we practiced tying knots and had a discussion on staying warm and nutrition/hydration.

Day four we traveled to the Devils Pass Cabin, practicing crevasse rescue en route. The following day we were instructed on, and practiced, crevasse rescue, digging snow pits to evaluate the snowpack, and avalanche rescue-beacon practice. After dinner, we enjoyed problem-solving scenarios through story telling.



*Left to right: Shaun Sexton, Mary Vavrik, and Nick Owens practicing snow anchors at the Devils Pass Cabin.
Photo by Greg Bragiel*

While traveling to our next destination, we participated in an avalanche probe search line for victim rescue/recovery and learned more navigation skills with map and compass.

Upon our arrival at the Juneau Lake Cabin, we met our fourth instructor, Jake, who, thankfully, had gathered firewood for the cabin before we got there! We were instructed on wilderness first aid, how to make various rescue litters for evacuation of an injured person, and emergency signaling.

Due to a hard-packed trail, travel was swift and easy for the rest of the trip. Upon arrival at the Trout Lake Cabin, we began the process of building a quinzee. We all enjoyed shoveling snow onto cabin benches and tarped-over backpacks. After it solidified for several hours, we watched Greg transform the huge lump of snow into a cozy igloo for sleeping. We squeezed 12 of us in for the christening!

While the quinzee was hardening, we practiced more simulated glacier travel and learned how to insulate a winter bed with spruce boughs.

The last day on the trail, it only took a few hours to ski/snowshoe/walk out to the Bean Creek Trailhead. We stopped for a little civilization rest stop in Cooper Landing before continuing on to the Hope Trailhead on the north end of the Resurrection Trail where we set up a tent camp. We practiced fire building and learned stream-crossing techniques.

Awakening to a chilly morning, we packed up camp and headed to our final destination for some ice-climbing instruction. We were taught ice climbing, belaying, and rappelling skills.

That was a fantastic trip with great people! There was so much useful information to learn, taught by highly skilled and qualified instructors at an incredibly low price! Many thanks and respect to the instructors for donating their time, patience, and expertise, and to all the students for their participation and willingness to share and learn together.

Participants - Greg Bragiel (instructor), Tom Smayda (instructor), Jacob Thompson (instructor), Richard Rasch (instructor), Nick Owens (team leader), Mary Vavrik, Shaun Sexton, Chris Hellmann, Gloria Rasch, Hans Schlegel, Edmund Eilbacher, Renae Sattler, Liz Parsons, and Bill Posanka.



*Mary Vavrik at the ice-climbing venue on the last day of the instructional trip.
Photo by Greg Bragiel*



*Instructor Richard Rasch demonstrating snow-pit testing.
Photo by Greg Bragiel*



*Winter mountaineering instructional volunteer Tom Smayda teaching student Renae Sattler how to create a Z-drag system during a crevasse-rescue lesson at the Devils Pass Cabin.
Photo by Bill Posanka*



*Practicing fire building.
Photo by Greg Bragiel*

Peak of the Month: Kangianisua, Romanzof Mountains

Text by Steve Gruhn



Mountain Range: Brooks Range; Romanzof Mountains

Borough: North Slope Borough

Drainages: Aichilik River and Jago River

Latitude/Longitude: 69° 4' 41" North, 143° 29' 52" West

Elevation: 8540 feet

Adjacent Peak: Peak 7540 in the West Fork of the Sheenjek River and Jago River drainages, Peak 7810 in the Jago River drainage, and Peak 7390 in the Jago River drainage

Distinctness: 1,600 feet from Peak 7540

Prominence: 1,600 feet from Gothic Mountain (8620)

USGS Map: 1:63,360: Demarcation Point (A-5) and 1:25,000: Demarcation Point A-5 SE

First Recorded Ascent: 1991 by Dennis Schmitt and two Swiss climbers

Route of First Recorded Ascent: South slopes

Access Point: Okpilak Lake

In 1991 Dennis Schmitt and three Swiss climbers were flown in a Cessna 185 to a landing strip at Okpilak Lake. From there they set out to explore the region to the south and east. The team first climbed Mount Michelson and then headed up the Arey Creek drainage. They then climbed Peak 8405, which Schmitt subsequently called Mount Colgan in honor of Patrick Brendon Colgan, a fellow active member of the Sierra Club. The party then climbed 8715-foot Mount Arey. After descending to and crossing the Jago River, the team climbed 8620-foot Gothic Mountain.

The team headed farther up a southeastern tributary of the Jago River to an icefield south of the easternmost peak with an elevation over 8000 feet in the Alaskan arctic. Schmitt and two of the Swiss climbers ascended the southern slopes to the summit. Schmitt later dubbed that peak Kangianisua, which in Inupiaq means "most easterly."

The next day the four headed west to a pass south of 8350-foot

Obolisk, which Schmitt and one of the Swiss climbers ascended. The party descended to a northern tributary of the West Fork of the Sheenjek River and Schmitt made a solo climb to the twin North Point Towers east of the northernmost point on the Continental Divide and then descended to the west along the divide, thereby ensuring that he had visited the northernmost point on the Continental Divide. Later the group departed from a landing strip on the West Fork of the Sheenjek River in a Cessna 185.

I don't know of a second ascent of Kangianisua.

The information in this column came from Schmitt's report titled "Northernmost Peaks on the Continental Divide, Romanzof Mountains," which appeared on pages 125 and 126 of the 1992 *American Alpine Journal*; from Schmitt's report titled "Romanzof Mountains, 1992," which appeared on pages 128 and 129 of the 1994 *AAJ*; and from my correspondence with Schmitt.

6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Michael Meyers (President) - Present
 Charlie Sink (Past President) - Absent
 Gerrit Verbeek (Vice-President) - Present
 Jen Aschoff (Secretary) - Absent
 Katherine Delia Cooper (Treasurer) - Absent
 Max Neale (Director) - Absent
 Tom Meacham (Director) - Present
 Lila Hobbs (Director) - Present
 Jonathan Rupp Strong (Director) - Present
 Visitors: Hazel Strong, 0 years old (Congrats, Jonathan!)

Scribe: Michael Meyers**Committee Reports**President (Mike Meyers)

- Snowcat/helicopter operations in Hatcher Pass feedback has been given.
- Trips should be a key focus.

Vice-President (Gerrit Verbeek)

- Summer MCA campout/party will be on the Saturday, June 22nd on Flattop Mountain.

Secretary (Jen Aschoff)

- Nothing to report.

Treasurer (Katherine D. Cooper)

- Nothing to report.

Training (Gerrit Verbeek)

- Training committee needs volunteers. Nathan Pooler interested later this year.
- Motion to spend \$800 to train 10 people in first aid/CPR so that they can lead or co-lead trips was passed, but we only have four volunteers for the class.
- Only one person (Gerrit) attended P-Tex ski repair training.
- May 8th at 7 p.m. – Photography Class with Andrew Holman (BP Energy Center – Cottonwood Room).

Director (Max Neale)

- Nothing to report.

Liability Committee (Tom Meacham)

- 14- and 15-year-olds can attend MCA trips with parents on for low-risk trips.
- Rewrite two-year terms for board members within the by-laws.
- Drafting letter to the state about hut liability – pending board approval.
- The liability waiver will be sent to the State Park tomorrow.

Trips (Gerrit Verbeek)

- All MCA trip participants do not need to become trip leaders. Not all are meant to lead; we ask that they just volunteer for the club in some way.

Scree (Steve Gruhn, Dawn Munroe)

- 11th of the month to get stuff into *the Scree*.

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

- Draft Ten-Year Master Plan made it into the May Scree.
- Board approved \$300 limit for design and fabrication of signage for Mint Hut toilet system usage – this is in work.
- Rosie's Roost to get a re-skin – aiming for summer 2020.
- Kurt Hensel (Chugach State Park Superintendent) requested a meeting with Greg Bragiel to hear about the MCA. Jonathan Rupp Strong will attend. Possible questions include discussing which areas could eventually get new cabins permitted, and a volunteer trail maintenance program (also involves Dave Hart on the Citizen Advisory Board).

Awards Committee (Tom Meacham, Charlie Sink, Steve Gruhn)

- A meeting will be held next week.

Communications Committee (Lila Hobbs)

- Website update coming soon, thanks to Billy Finley.

Calendar Committee (Mike Meyers, Lila Hobbs, Vicky Ho, Andrew Holman)

- Calendar work in the process of upgrades and looking for online voting system that will work for us.

Mentorship

- Lila Hobbs to take over mentorship program.

Library (Charlotte Foley)

- Nothing to report.

Unfinished Business

- Matanuska Glacier deal for MCA members.

Time and Location of Next Meeting

- May 29, 2019, at 6 p.m. on the UAA Campus, ConocoPhillips Integrated Sciences Building, Room 105A (main floor by the coffee stand).

Fun (Pun) Quiz**by Tom Choate**

Answer: The guidebook said the protection crack would be hard to spot.

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Mike Meyers	mcmeyers24@msn.com	Director 1 (term expires in 2019)	Tom Meacham	346-1077
Vice-President	Gerrit Verbeek	903-512-4286	Director 2 (term expires in 2019)	Max Neale	207-712-1355
Secretary	Jen Aschoff	jlaschoff@gmail.com	Director 3 (term expires in 2020)	Jonathan Rupp Strong	202-6484
Treasurer	Katherine Cooper	209-253-8489	Director 4 (term expires in 2020)	Lila Hobbs	229-3754
			Past President	Charlie Sink	529-7910

Annual membership dues: Single \$20, Family \$30

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address below. If you want a membership card, please fill out a club waiver and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter or have questions about your membership, contact the Club Membership Committee at membership@mtnclubak.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 11th of the month to appear in the next month's *Scree*.

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be in electronic format and pre-paid. Ads can be emailed to vicepresident@mtnclubak.org.

Missing your MCA membership card? Stop by the monthly meeting to pick one up or send a self-addressed, stamped envelope and we'll mail it to you.

Mailing list/database entry: Katherine Cooper—209-253-8489 or membership@mtnclubak.org

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Gerrit Verbeek—903-512-4286 or hcc@mtnclubak.org

Huts: Greg Bragiel—569-3008 or huts@mtnclubak.org

Calendar: Stuart Grenier—337-5127 or stugrenier@gmail.com

Librarian: Charlotte Foley—603-493-7146 or library@mtnclubak.org

Scree Editor: MCAScree@gmail.com Steve Gruhn assisted by Dawn Munroe (350-5121) dawn.talbott@yahoo.com

Web: www.mtnclubak.org

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

Cory Hinds exiting from "Royal Ribbons."

Photo by Wayne Todd

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