



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 2037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

JULY 1977

VOLUME XX, No. 7

JULY MEETING

NOTE CHANGE IN MEETING PLACE!!

Wednesday, July 20, 8 PM, Central Junior High School, 1405 "E" Street, Anchorage. HEILGA BADING BYHRE will receive an honorary membership at the meeting. She was a charter member of the MCA and was its first secretary. Currently residing in Edmonds, Washington, HEILGA has been active in climbing in Alaska for many years. The program will be announced at the meeting--come and be surprised!

HIKING SCHEDULE

- July 15-29 Fifteen MCAers will leave for a trip to the ARCTIC WILDLIFE RANGE.
- July 16-17
SATURDAY-
SUNDAY REED LAKES, Talkeetna Mountains. Great family trip. This is a great place for kids who like to climb boulders and explore. The lake is nestled in a mountain glen. Long day or overnight. Meet 6:30 AM, Fred Meyer. Leader, PAT KLOUDA, 243-3216.
- July 23-24
SATURDAY-
SUNDAY COOPER LAKE TO RUSSIAN RIVER CAMPGROUND via Upper Russian Cabin. Altitude gain is by car to Cooper Lake trailhead. One car will have to be left at Russian River campground. Good trail from Cooper Lake to cabin at Upper Russian, distance of about 8 miles. Trail down is about 12 miles. Meet 6 AM, Fred Meyer. LEADER NEEDED"
- August 6-7
SAT-SUN PETERS HILLS. Hike number 47 in "55 Ways." LEADER NEEDED!
- August 7
SUNDAY MT. VIGOR. Leader, BILL STIVERS, 277-2869.
- August 13-14 LOST LAKE, near Seward. Hike 11 in "55 Ways." LEADER NEEDED!
- August 20-21 SHIP CREEK TO INDIAN. Leader, BILL STIVERS, 277-2869.

LEADERS ARE STILL NEEDED ON THREE OF THE ABOVE HIKES. LET'S GET MORE OF YOU MCAers TO PARTICIPATE. CALL DONA, 279-2901, AND OFFER YOUR ASSISTANCE!

*****TRIP REPORTS*****

PINOCHLE CREEK--HICKS CREEK HIKE

May 29-31, 1977

by DONA AGOSTI

Twenty-six MCAers plus two mystery couples showed up for the Memorial Day opener. We made quite a splash. JOHN NEVIN had arranged with his homesteading friend at Mile 99 Glenn Highway to allow us parking privileges. We hadn't expected nine cars, but the FARRARS, DUNNS, and HAMMONDS were most hospitable.

As expected at this time of year, the three mile climb to the pass required some fancy footwork around mudholes, but the sun was shining and the view of the Matanuska River Valley was superb. The light weights could tiptoe over the snowfields beyond the pass, but at least one hiker sunk to her hips and at one point could be said to have mired. BILL STIVERS called a halt at six miles on the Hicks Creek flats. Tents popped, a fire was soon blazing and the wet sock roast began. About 10PM a moose appeared, silhouetted on the high ridge above camp. He appeared to be shaking his head in amazement. The Dall sheep to the west gave only bored glances and went on munching.

Good weather left us shortly thereafter. Rain fell the entire night, punctuated at 6AM with one hour of snow. Those without rain flies and others whose brush with the realities of Alaska outdoor life had dampened, returned home at intervals throughout the day. The return trip was another exercise in guessing which snowbank or puddle was deeper. In addition to clouds, sun, and rain, we also had a few minutes of hail. The trail had further deteriorated and it took six hours--as long as the incoming trip. (This excludes the flyers--several men and one gal hiked the six miles in three hours.)

Six men--BILL STIVERS, JOHN NEVIN, DAVE EVANS, GENE KLYMKO, CHARLES KIBLER, and MARTY BASSETT--climbed the ridges south of camp. Hicks Lake was still frozen, but DAVID and BILL said the view from 5000 feet was spectacular. They also spotted a wolverine and moose with new twin calves from this vantage point.

Those taking part in this swimming weekend were DONA and TIM AGOSTI, CASS ARIEY, BIL BARNES, JR., MARTY BASSETT, SHARON CRAWFORD, DAVE EVANS, VALERIE JENNINGS, GENE KLYMKO, BILL and ROSEMARY KOBUS with CHRIS, JUDY, MAT, and MIKE, PIERCE and EMILE McINTOSH with KATY and MIKE, BILL STIVERS, and RON WEST with BREN, JOE, and MATT.

We haven't identified the two couples who missed the boat by minutes at Fred Meyers, hiked to the pass and promptly returned to their cars. They were probably the dryer MCAers around.

BYRON PEAK (N. Summit)

June 3, 1977

by LARRY SWANSON

"Hey, let's go climb Byron Peak," Scott MUELLER was saying. "We can bring our downhill skis and boots and ski back down the glacier, too." It sounded like fun, so I found myself along with STEVE STORTZ and SCOTT starting out from the parking lot at 10 AM under sunny skies. We proceeded up the glacier and gained the N.W. ridge without difficulty, our pace having improved considerably after cacheing our skis about three-quarters of the way up. Once on the ridge we went a little out of our way to pose on a picturesque snow bridge and then roped up before proceeding through a crevassed area. The snow along the summit ridge was much deeper and somewhat wet so we took turns breaking trail. Our 5 PM summit time will affirm its depth, or maybe just attest to our physical condition. At any rate we made up for it with
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BYRON PEAK continued.

quick glissades back to our skis, then a nice ski run the rest of the way down, and managed to get back to the truck by 8 PM.

CASTLE PEAK, 10,190'
FIRST ASCENT AND PREVIOUS ATTEMPT
June 15-17, 1977
by LARRY SWANSON

When ART WARD and I first looked at this giant monolith rising up from the Chitina Valley, we knew we had to climb it. For ART that time was eight years ago and for myself, five. Castle Peak is very deserving of its name for its rock walls rise almost straight up 3500' from the glacier below on its southern and eastern exposures and a good 2000' on its western exposure. Its summit is glacier-capped, and a full three-quarters of a mile long. Almost perfectly level, it has one small point which rises a few hundred feet higher. Its northern side is guarded by a glacier clear to the summit, which looks like a feasible route on the map.

But as JOHN PINAMONT, SCOTT MUELLER, JEFF BENNET, PAUL CARNICELLI, ART WARD, and myself found out in August of 1973 that it is a series of ice blocks and seracs, which look almost impossible to ascend. After a two day walk in along the Kuskulana River and another day walking up and down 200 foothills of glacier moraine on the Kuskulan Glacier, we found ourselves looking up at this mass of ice and quickly decided to attempt something else. Nearby peaks, P9,847, P10,092, and P10,354, also all unclimbed didn't look any easier. So we settled on P9,820 which actually only rises 900 feet from the pass which is between it and Mount Blackburn. We all got within 100 feet of the summit, but only JOHN PINAMONT and I had time to do the final pitch of blue ice before bad weather forced us back to camp. Several crevasse falls, snow, and rain made the rest of the trip less than enjoyable.

In contrast to this earlier attempt, ART's and my recent ascent was less trying. With the aid of ART's supercub we were able to scope out a good route and land at 2350' on a gravel bar. This saved us two days of brushwhacking, not to mention a lot of mosquito bites. To make things even better, we landed next to a guide's old cabin and discovered his fairly nice trail up Mill Creek, which became our route.

Mill Creek flows into the Lakakina River about a mile up river from our landing spot. After wading and jumping across several channels of the Lakakina River we found the beginning of the Mill Creek Trail. It stays close to the creek for about three miles, then peters out where the brush ends and the creek forks. We took the west fork and in another two miles we took another fork, this time to the east. This fork took us to what should probably be Mill Glacier, since it is the largest of three glaciers draining into Mill Creek.

From our camp on the Glacier that night we had an excellent view of the steep ice gully we planned to ascend the next day. It rose 1200' from the glacier floor to the top of the ridge connecting P9,847 with Castle Peak.

The morning of the 16th was overcast at about 15,000 feet. This was fine with us since we could still see our peak, and we hoped the snow wouldn't get too soft. We started up the gully about 5:30 AM so as to catch it when it was still frozen well. The front points on our crampons had a good workout before we reached the top. A few falling rocks made it even more interesting. The rest of the distance to the summit ridge consisted of a series of snowbridges and ice blocks. We somehow manage to maneuver over and around them without too much difficulty. Right before the summit ridge we had to go up a very steep slope through deep snow. But once on the ridge
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CASTLE PEAK continued.

it was just a long slog over to the high point, which was one last spectacular bit of climbing up a knife-edged and corniced ridge.

Our stay on the summit was brief and our descent was swift, especially when we returned to the ice gully. It was now almost a waterfall with ice and slush on both sides. And to make matters worse, rocks from a gully on P9,847 kept rolling down and funneling into it.

We sat and watched for a while and then figured we had no alternative but to make a run for it. As soon as I started down, a chest-sized boulder shot by me and I was so scared I almost went back up. The rest of the way down we would run down a few steps backwards, front pointing, and then take a quick glance up before proceeding. I'm usually cautious on ice, but I literally ran across one ice cliff to avoid a boulder roaring down the gully at us. Once out of the gully and into camp we were very relieved and elated to be still in one piece.

The next morning it was snowing when we started down the glacier, but shortly it cleared up. We made good time getting out and were soon in ART's plane taking one last look at our mountain. Somehow it didn't look quite as forbidding now, but neither of us ever wanted to climb it again!

MONTANA PEAK, 6900'
June 17-19, 1977
 by GARNET ROEHM

Friday afternoon, June 17, we locked up the truck at the Little Sue Roadhouse and set out for Point 5,715, an unclimbed peak (we think) halfway up the east side of the valley. The approach up the old road was accentuated by our mingling with 100 head of cattle. Time came for us to exit right up a high side valley, but the River wouldn't let us. The Little Sue was the DuhKosi without footbridges. We scouted out the river for another three miles, and there was nowhere to cross it without a high risk of getting a free ride downstream. At this point Montana Peak was looking feasible, well, closer anyway. DICK THALER, LUNDA HESTING and I sacked out that night on a grassy knoll 1000 feet below the MCA cabin. Saturday morning it was rainy but we managed to find the cabin and reconiter a route up over the Mint Glacier until we couldn't see anymore due to the low cloud ceiling. We could see the base of the SE gully which the cabin notes recorded as a route on a couple of attempts. 5 AM Sunday there was not a cloud in the sky. We headed for that snow gully and ascended it to the crest of the south ridge by 8:30. From there the route seemed dubious, so we hemmed and hawed and took in the view. Denali, Hunter, Foraker Spurr, Redoubt, Marcus Baker, and Mount Sargent Robinson were a few of the peaks we could pick out. Not a bad view we thought. To continue on the south ridge was out since it ends in a rather vertical nature. So we jumped off the west side of the ridge, traversed the rather unstable snow beneath it to the SW face. Three mixed snow and rock pitches put us atop the west ridge just 50 feet from the summit. This was the fourth recorded ascent and took us six and one-half hours from the cabin. VIN HOEMAN, CLIFF ELLS, and JOHN SAMUELSON were up there first in 1963. They did a similar route except they approached the mountain from Reed Creek. We didn't linger long on the summit as it was a long walk out.

LOWER TOWER, 6135'

June 26, 1977

by S. L. CRAWFORD

With good weather forecast for the weekend, DON ANDERSON and I decided we would try a climb on Lower Tower, north of Snowbird Mine in the Talkeetna Mountains. The heavy rain we drove into in crossing the Matanuska Valley late Saturday afternoon was not encouraging, but it had tapered off and all but ceased by the time we arrived at the cabins below Snowbird Mine where we stayed the night.

The next morning we were awakened by early sunlight, soon obscured by low mists, however, which continued to envelope the peaks most of the morning. We set out at 8:30 AM on the trail up the verdant slope leading to Snowbird Mine. On the first plateau above the old towers before the mine we began to encounter patches of snow, and much snow in the entire upper Glacier Creek Valley behind the mine, all the way to the notch leading onto the glacier behind Lower Tower and Higher Spire. Here we turned right to ascend the west ridge, staying at first just off of it on the glacier side. We quickly gained elevation, punching steps in the soft snow up the steeper initial slope until it tapered off and ended beneath the rocks of the ridge a ways up.

The rock was good granite, and quite easy at first, although covered with disconcerting clumps of moss which lay on the rock but were not at all attached to it, and would slip off into space with a mere nudge of the foot. Soon exposure increased, and when we came to some rock slabs laterally sloping and dotted with the treacherous moss, with an additional steep patch of snow beyond, we stopped to rope up.

The snow lead a rope length to the foot of a vertical section, but with a bit of maneuvering we were able to top it, and there came upon an old white rope rappel sling to encourage us that we were on the right track. After a few more rope lengths of careful climbing, we came at last upon the pseudo-summit that we had been warned about, with the true summit in sight a scant stone's throw away, but rising and leveling off from a nasty little drop of some 12 or 15 feet directly beneath where we stood. It was too far to jump down easily or lower oneself down to, so we resorted to rigging up a short rappel, leaving the sling with a few feet of cord tied to it and dangling down to where we could reach it from below for use in our return escape.

The summit itself was a big flat slab of rock somewhat askew. We lay on the slab and peered over the upper edge at the glacier far below, to see if there might be any feasible alternate routes up or down. The valley we had come up, and the Reed Creek valley to the east were not at all visible in the mists which had remained all day in those directions, although we had been in intermittent sunshine most of the afternoon. Further along the edge of the glacier was Higher Spire, marked on the map as a mere 6 feet higher than our summit. It would be an easy march across the glacier from the notch to reach its base, with several routes from there looking possible from our distance.

Beginning the descent, to regain the pseudo-summit we jury-rigged a foot loop about shoulder high in the cord attached to the rappel sling, and with one convenient foothold in the rock below the overhang of the 15 foot wall, the cord loop, and a further foot loop in a second sling then attached to the first, we were able to reach the top of the rock and pull ourselves over.

A long rappel down the vertical section further on, and we were soon back on the upper glacier snow in late afternoon sunshine for some fun "sitz-glassading." Exiting through the notch, we had to leave the sun behind for the deep shadows cast from the western ridges. But our descent back to the Snowbird Mine ruins was quick, half glissading, half bounding across the snow, with pauses to look back at our peak, now free of mist and bathed high up in the late warm sun.

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LOWER TOWER continued.

We stopped for a drink at the creek where it emerged from under the snow near the ruins, where the water ran through old wooden conduits still intact. Finally, across the last flat section of snow patches, over the edge at the towers, and down the final steep slope of turf, in contrasting lush green, to lower Reed Creek valley and the cabins below. The round trip had taken just under twelve hours.

BUFFALO MINE
 June 26, 1977
 by EMILE McINTOSH

On a beautiful Sunday ten of us started a pleasant amble northeast up Moose Creek from Buffalo Mine. Just past the new Black Diamond Mine we started northwest uphill through brush and open areas of wildflowers. Those well-known pesky flying critters kept us on the move to the first high and slightly breezy spot where five of the group ate lunch with a nice view of the Matanuska Valley. The others, led by COL. DAVE KLINGER, ascended to higher ridges for a better view and encountered an even greater variety of wildflowers.

This is a nice hike with easy access from Buffalo Mine Road about five miles past Palmer on the Glenn Highway. The area abounds with old mining equipment, buildings and leaf fossils. Those participating were LIZ CUADRA, MARGAN DEBENELETTI, BERNIE RAJMIERGA, SCOTT KEY, COL. DAVE KLINGER, MARTY MARGESON, EMILE and KATHY McINTOSH, SHELLY MIKSELSON, and BRIGITTE RESSEL.

GOLD CREEK--DEVILS CANYON HIKE
 July 2-4, 1977
 by DONA AGOSTI

This trip almost ended before it began. I telephoned HAROLD LARSON, Alaska Railroad Section Foreman at Gold Creek the night before. He said he'd tried to cross Gold Creek in his ATV three days before, but backed up fast when he started floating downstream. He promised to check out the stream a mile from the action house and call me back. He later reported that the creek was down a few inches and was probably crossable with a rope. I thanked him and went back to bed (11 PM). At midnight, the phone rang and it was HAROLD McWILLIAMS, a miner in the John River area who had just returned to town and heard from his wife that I was looking for information on the road to the canyon. He had taken heavy equipment over the road last year and identified a few landmarks. Unbelievably, this road, built by the Bureau of Reclamation in 1957, does not appear on any map or record at BLM.

It was a somewhat apprehensive leader who met 12 other hikers at the railroad depot the next morning. We used the five hour train ride to practice the bowline knot, discuss stream crossing techniques, and visit the refreshment cars. HAROLD and NANCY LARSON were waiting in the bright sunshine at Gold Creek station. My first thought when I saw HAROLD was that DENNIS WEAVER had migrated to Gold Creek. We piled 13 packs into his trailer, loaded a few assorted MCAers as well, and McCloud pointed his steel-lug tractor in the direction of Gold Creek. He eyeballed the stream all of one minute, then took off through the white water with our backpacks. Almost to the opposite bank the trailer hung up on a rock and water started to dampen the packs. Within minutes three or four of us had formed a passing line in waist high water, and the packs were on dry ground. The crowd then crossed, using the trailer and tractor as a bridge. Our 4th of July hike was off to a hangup, I mean bangup, start. Thirteen backpacks lighter, McCloud got his trailer off the rocks and back across the stream to the cheers of an enthusiastic audience.

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GOLD CREEK--DEVIILS CANYON HIKE continued.

Six miles, six streams, and 1500 feet higher, we found our new friend, JIM, waiting at a campfire near his cabin with the coffee pot hot. He had just inspected his caved in roof, another casualty of the unusually high winter's snowfall. Even though it was then 6 PM, 12 of the 13 voted to go three more miles. We lost one couple to fatigue enroute, then set up camp at Mile 10 on a cleared turnoff overlooking the Susitna Valley. There were a few mumbles about condominiums and urban renewal from grumblers in the rear tents, but one hour later (10 PM) there wasn't a sound in camp. Except two blasted birds who knew only one note.

Nine of our thirteen left camp with day packs at 7:15 the next morning, certain that the only possible traffic would be four-logged. We had seen grizzly and black bear prints the previous day. One high stream necessitated boot removal or log slithering but it was comparatively easy going on the improved road. We reached Mile 16 where the mining road switched back up and over the mountain. We hiked left on the old Corps of Engineers road and entered a jungle of alder, devils club, and willow. Ever with the growth, the road was still discernible. The trail meandered around a lake, between two high ridges, then up, over and down towards the Sensational Su. We could hear the river long before we saw it and the pace quickened. At about 1200 feet we turned a corner and there she was, snaking and seething through the canyon seven million gallons per minute (I looked that up). We lunched and napped at this scenic view point but Ole JOHN and MARTY couldn't stand not to know what was around the next corner. They came roaring back and we all followed. About a thousand feet above the canyon on a small lake the Corps had built a barracks type building. We couldn't believe that porcupines had chewed almost the entire floor until JOHN found a rusted gallon can of floor wax and we speculated Porkie liked peanut butter on his toast. A yukon stove, a table, and boxes of core samples were all that remained of the interior. The weather station near the cabin was very intact and obviously still in use. Peering over the canyon wall, we saw far below the suspension bridge which we speculated the Corps had erected in order to do coring in the vertical rock across the gorge. The bend in the river provided a gravel bar landing site which we hear is still used by water and weather measuring people. This is also the site of DON SHEL-DON's famous rescue of the seven army scouts. He landed his Aeronca float plane upstream among house-size boulders and six foot waves, swept downstream, somehow managing to steer the plane, snatched the shivering survivors off a rock (on four separate trips), maneuvered his plane backwards another mile and a half downstream, turned around and took off downstream. This location is also the scene you may have seen on ABC-TV when BARNEY GRIFFITH, DR. BLACKADAR, and others kayaked the Canyon last summer. MCAers were also treated to a special half hour of BARNEY's private film footage last fall. And last but not least, this is where the BIG DAM will be built.

Back in camp four hours later we toasted our 20-mile day and died. The trip out next morning was sunny and uneventful. Til Noon and Gold Creek. We stragglers arrived to find JOHN NEVIN already belaying stream crossers. We believe MARILYN FREITAG will never forget Independence Day, 1977. Just as she reached the center of that me river, the skies opened up, lightning cracked, thunder boomed, and hail came down in buckets. The rest of us scrambled for raingear, but it was hopeless. The amount of rain that fell in ten minutes was unbelievable, and the ground was white with ice. Back at the section house, the LARSONS set up a receiving room for drowned rats and cranked up the coffee pot. Within an hour human beings emerged and the stories began. Train several hours later, and back in Anchorage at 8:30. What a Fourth!

Those who hiked were: MARTY BASSETT, LIZ CUADRA, MARILYN and LAURA FREITAG, ANN HONHART, EMILY and PIERCE McINTOSH, DREW MORRIS, JOHN NEVIN, JANE PEARIA, LIZ and AL ROBINSON.

*****LETTERS TO THE PRESIDENT*****

MCAers wishing to respond to the following letter, or to write on other topics, are invited to send their letters to MCA President TOM MEACHAM, 1410 H Street, Anchorage, Alaska 99501. Selected letters will be published in future SCREES.

Dear Tom,

As an MCA member, I would like to respond to our name the peak contest. Alaska contains a vast amount of wilderness, including hundreds of unnamed and unclimbed peaks. This being the case, the wilderness can probably survive a few more names without disappearing, but I would like to voice a note of caution here.

To many people, including myself, unmapped, unnamed, and unaltered places are infinitely appealing and are the real essence of the term wilderness. If I were inclined to climb in areas where most of the peaks were named and guides published on how to get up them, I would visit the Rockies or Sierras. Here in Alaska, we have the exciting opportunity to visit wild places, to climb mountains which few have climbed, and, if we are lucky, to venture where no man has been before us.

Let me give you an example of the type of thing I hope the MCA will avoid. A friend of mine, RAY BANES of Bettles, and I were discussing the Arrigetch Peaks one evening. RAY has lived in Wainwright, Hughes, and Bettles for at least the past dozen years, and has done considerable work for the National Park Service on the proposed Gates of the Arctic National Park. RAY was relating his recent discovery of a climber's map of the Arrigetch (possibly from the AAJ), which displayed names for every major spire there. To him, this represented a serious blow to the wilderness values of the area. Dismayed, he related what to him was the ultimate desecration of those very beautiful and unique mountains, the designation of one of them as "Disneyland." Now I have been both to Disneyland and to the Arrigetch, and I was inclined to agree. Think about that Tom, you've been to the Arrigetch.

The great Alaskan wilderness can certainly stand the naming of a few more peaks, and some should be given appropriate names, but let's adopt a conservative view. Many of us would like the opportunity to climb mountains unaltered and unnamed, to at least think that we were the first to share with nature the view from the top. Names can dissect the integrity of these wild places.

Sincerely,

KEVIN AFGAR



AUCTION!

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND A PUBLIC AUCTION
TO BE HELD FRIDAY, JULY 29th, AT 7-30 p.m. IN THE LUCY CUDDY CENTER,
UNIVERSITY OF ALASKA, ANCHORAGE.

THE PURPOSE OF THE AUCTION IS TO RAISE FUNDS FOR THE
ALASKA CENTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT, WHICH IS CRITICALLY LOW ON
MONEY. ALL ITEMS TO BE AUCTIONED HAVE BEEN DONATED, AND ALL
PROCEEDS WILL GO TOWARDS KEEPING THE "CENTER" IN OPERATION.

JUST A FEW OF THE UNIQUE ITEMS AVAILABLE INCLUDE: A FLY-IN
FISHING TRIP WITH RED'S FLYING SERVICE, SAILING IN PRINCE WILLIAM
SOUND, CAMPING GEAR, SKIIS, LESSONS IN MASSAGE, GUITAR AND TENNIS,
AND MUCH, MUCH MORE. CONTACT THE CENTER AT 274-3621 FOR A COMPLETE
LIST. BEER WILL BE SERVED AT A MODEST PRICE.

* * * COME AND HAVE A GOOD TIME! * * *