



July 2005

A Publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska  
Box 102037, Anchorage, Alaska 99510

Volume 48 Issue 7

**Monthly Meeting**  
**July 20 @ 7:30 PM**

## **Picnic!**

The July general meeting of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska will be the annual club picnic and will be held at Sunset Park near the southwest corner of Birch Street and Vine Avenue in Government Hill. To get there from downtown Anchorage, take the A Street Bridge across Ship Creek. Bear right toward Elmendorf Air Force Base and onto East Loop Road, take the first right onto Hollywood Drive. Continue southeast for four blocks until Birch Street. Take a right on Birch Street. Vine Avenue and Sunset Park will be on the right

Members are encouraged to bring salads and desserts to supplement the MCA's burgers and hot dogs.

### **Trip reports In This Issue**

**Mt. Fairweather and King Peak**

**Chugach Crusher – Anchorage to Valdez**

**Mount Susitna Paddle Climb II**

**Long Lake Peak Bagger**

### **Hiking and Climbing Schedule**

June 24 - 26 Summer Solstice B

Tom's annual solstice trip this year begins Friday evening, 7pm. Hike from the Summit Creek trailhead to Summit Creek Pass. Three miles to camp, 1500ft elevation gain. Climb peaks 4990 and 4982 on Saturday and Sunday. Flowers too!  
Leader: Tom Choate 333-5309

July 2 Saturday

Cantata peak Class C, 5 miles in and 3,500 feet elevation gain. Moderate climbing, exposure,

route finding. Limit 4 unless a co-leader comes along. Leader Charlie Sink  
[Clarity@gci.net](mailto:Clarity@gci.net) or [Charlie@Chugachmiut.org](mailto:Charlie@Chugachmiut.org)

July 6, Wednesday 6 p.m.

Crow Pass Class B 1,800 feet of elevation gain and 8 miles round trip. Contact leader at least 24 hours in advance of trip. Leader: Steve Gruhn  
[Steven.Gruhn@hartcrowser.com](mailto:Steven.Gruhn@hartcrowser.com) 344-1219 (h)  
868-9118 (w)

July 9 Saturday

Harp mountain to Eagle River overlook and out hanging valley. Class D 10 to 12 miles with 4,000 ft elevation gain. Leader Ray Nabinger  
694-5099

July 10 Sunday

California to Penguin Class D, 11 miles and 9,000 feet total elevation gain. Leader Tom Dolan, call for more information. 223-1308

July 11, 5:30 p.m. Monday

Penguin Peak (4334) Class D 4,100 feet of elevation gain and 4 miles round trip. Contact leader at least 24 hours in advance of trip. Leader: Steve Gruhn  
[Steven.Gruhn@hartcrowser.com](mailto:Steven.Gruhn@hartcrowser.com) 344-1219 (h)  
868-9118 (w)

July 16 – 30

Gates of the Arctic National Park, maybe the most beautiful place in Alaska. Class C. Steep and rocky terrain. \$200 air charter deposit due by June 1st. Party is limited to six. Leader: Don Hansen 243.7184, or donjoehansen@msn.com

July 18 – Monday

Virgin Creek, Class B Contact leader at least 24 hours in advance of trip. Leader: Steve Gruhn [Steven.Gruhn@hartcrowser.com](mailto:Steven.Gruhn@hartcrowser.com) 344-1219 (h) 868-9118 (w)

August 11 – 15

Hut Maintenance trip to Rosie's and Hans' huts Class: D, Glacier Travel Elevation Gain: 6000+ Distance: 30 miles round trip. This trip is geared for those members that have recently completed the MCA glacier travel classes and want more glacier experience. We will be painting the huts. Leader: Greg Bragiel 569-3008

August 19 - 21

First Annual Couples Trip, Climb and Barbecue Class: B (to Upper Snowhawk Hut) D (to Temptation Peak) Elevation Gain: 2100 to Upper Snowhawk, 5000 to Temptation Peak. Distance: 12 miles round trip Upper Snowhawk, 16 miles round trip to Temptation Peak. This trip is for COUPLES ONLY. We will camp near the Upper Snowhawk Hut. For anyone wanting to climb, there is good access to Temptation Peak from the hut. Bring your grille, burgers, hot dogs and ribs to share with participants. Leader: Greg Bragiel 569-3008

## Trip Reports

### **Mt. Fairweather (15,300') and King Peak (16,972')** **By Dave Hart**

It took us four attempts over four years, but my climbing partner Paul Barry, his wife Carolyn, and I climbed the East Ridge of Canada's stunning King Peak (16,972') on May 21, 2004. King is the sixth tallest peak in the combined Canada/Alaska region, behind Denali, Logan, St. Elias, Foraker and Lucania. We had previously attempted the 1967 Japanese Southwest Ridge in both 2001 and 2002 reaching high points of 13,400' and 15,200', respectively, while last year we turned back from the standard East Ridge at 14,100' due to avalanche concerns. Our recent 24-hour summit day was our longest one endured to date among the combined sixty-plus expeditions in which Paul and I

have participated. We also found King to be one of the most challenging peaks of the twenty-one 14,000'+ peaks in Alaska or Canada that we have climbed. Each of the six existing routes presents continuously exposed climbing, as demonstrated by the dozen or so ascents of the peak to date.

Our strategy for King Peak was simple: acclimatize with an ascent of Mt. Fairweather (15,300') then fly 200 miles north, ski to a well-stocked 14,000' high camp and wait for a good weather window. We were tired of going back to the same peak each of the last four years, and were committed to staying as long as needed to give it a fair go.

Mt. Fairweather is the southern-most peak of the twenty-six 14,000'+ peaks in the combined Canada/Alaska region. Some claim it is the closest major peak to the Gulf of Alaska, though Mt. St. Elias (18,008') has also claimed that distinction. In any case, its proximity to the moist Gulf of Alaska has created an element of notoriety for its terrible weather. As such, we left Haines, Alaska on May 10, 2004 in Paul Swanstrom's Cessna 185 ski plane with 4 weeks of supplies for both trips. Our participants were Paul and Carolyn Barry, Wayne Todd, two of our Dutch friends Wytze Rijke and Joris Endel, and I. Wayne and the Dutch pair would return to Anchorage after Fairweather, while our trio would fly 200 miles north to the Alaska/Yukon border and ski into King Peak. Our route up Mt. Fairweather was from the Grand Plateau Glacier to the north of the peak. This route has become the standard walk-up route, though crevasses, slab avalanches, serac exposure and poor weather make this route potentially a much more severe climb than the benign experience we had.

We spent our first day on the glacier ski touring from our 10,000' base camp for an hour up to an 11,000' pass overlooking the Gulf of Alaska. The second day was also spent ski touring for a couple hours up to 11,500'. At this point we felt marginally acclimatized, and decided we'd try for the summit the next good weather day we had. As it turned out, it was the very next morning. We left at 8:30am, unroped with plans to link up in two teams of three once we reached the crevassed area. An hour later, Wytze, Joris and Wayne skied past the ½ mile section of serac exposure, roping up 30 minutes later. Paul, Carolyn and I followed, leaving our skis behind as soon as we roped up at 11,000', preferring the security of crampons on the hard pack steep snow. By 11:30am, we all regrouped just below a 13,000' pass for lunch. It was a relief to be past all of the serac exposure below. Our day was stellar, cloudless with no wind. A rarity for the region, I'm sure. Upon intersecting the west ridge at 13,500' directly below the summit, we figured the last 2,000' would get a bit windier so we put on our Gore-Tex wind suits. Up to this point we had been dressed in fleece only. Occasional crevasses forced us left, off the ridge crest up 30-40 degree slopes. After a snow storm these slopes would certainly pose a deadly avalanche

hazard, but we found mostly styrofoam kick-stepping all the way to the top. We crested the last rise at 2:30pm, six hours after leaving base camp, 5,500' below us. No clouds could be seen. Clearly visible waves were crashing on the Gulf of Alaska coast a scant 10 miles west of us. It was hard to imagine that we had been camping at sea level in Haines only two days prior. After a few photos we headed down, arriving back in camp by 6pm, shocked at having finished our first peak in record time. As it turned out, ours was the third ascent of the season with at least one more occurring after ours out of the eight teams attempting various routes on the mountain this spring. Such traffic is unheard of for the seldom visited Mt. Fairweather. We called our pilot the next morning and by 10am Paul and Carolyn were flying 200 miles north to our 8,000' King Peak landing site on the Alaska/Yukon border. By 2pm, Wayne and I were retracing their path, with a quick stop in Yakutat to fill the plane with gasoline. The flight along the entire southern extent of the coastal St. Elias range was stunning. At 4pm, Paul, Carolyn and I bid Wayne and our pilot Paul farewell as they taxied down glacier and headed back to Haines in time for dinner. We were on our own at our Alaska/Yukon border base camp. The black rocky pyramid of King Peak towered an impressive 9,000' above us, 15 miles to the east.

Friday morning, May 14, 2004 we prepared our last real breakfast for 12 days – coffee, pancakes and fried ham with a striking view of St. Elias to the south and Logan and King Peak to the east. Not a bad place for breakfast. We loaded up our sleds with food for 12 days, fuel for 16 days, and all the requisite cold weather gear and climbing gear for King Peak. Our loads were debilitating, as always. It was 9 miles into Canada and 1,000' elevation gain to the standard Mt. Logan King Trench base camp. American air taxis are not allowed to land in Canada without prohibitively expensive insurance premiums, forcing the additional 9 mile ski from our base camp on the border. We would share the King Trench with several Logan expeditions for 9 more miles up to the 13,500' King Col where we would branch off to a final camp 700' higher. We spent two days skiing through sun and repressive heat up to King Col, cursing our heavy sleds at any steep incline. Our third day was relatively easy, only gaining 700' to our 14,100' high camp, which we placed in our previous year's exact location, pinpointed by remnant snow walls barely visible on the wind scoured saddle. At this point we were second guessing bringing in so many supplies and warm clothes, as the weather was stellar with more sun forecasted. It was easily 20 degrees warmer than our prior several years on King Peak. We went to sleep that night hoping to start our summit bid the next morning at 4am. We were already planning what other peak we might climb in the extra week that we'd now have from finishing early.

It was not to be. We ended up spending the next six days confined to our tent. It was in fact clear as

predicted, though lenticular clouds scoured Logan and King Peak for the entire week, buffetting our tent the entire time. Our snow walls required daily repairs as the intense wind would erode our snow blocks daily. After day 4 or 5, we had mastered construction of triple thick walls, protected by an angled upstream deflection wall to extend the life of the main walls. It is impressive what three bored engineers stuck in a tent for a week can create.

Dave Hart fueling on Fairweather



Finally, at noon May 21 the winds mellowed out and our satellite phone text message forecast was for one day of improving weather before another storm hit. We had to give it a shot. We expected a 12-15 hour day to climb the 3,000' to the summit and back. We took 12 Gu packets and 2 quarts of energy drink each, plus all the requisite hardware and extra clothes. Little did we know how much we had underestimated the route as we left our base camp at noon that day with broken clouds above, occasional snow flurries, but generally improving weather.

The terrain was steeper than expected, with ice and hard snow requiring running belays and careful climbing. This slowed our progress, but we gladly sacrificed speed for protected climbing. The weather was still marginal all afternoon with high winds and lenticulars licking the summit as we climbed higher. Multiple fixed lines littered the route all the way from the base of the ridge to 16,000'. We clipped most of the visible anchors as we passed, supplementing with our own, as required. The

consistent 45 degree snow and ice slopes provided enjoyable climbing, before increasing to 50+ degrees for the last three pitches below the top of the prominent couloir at 16,000'. Some erroneous fixed line led us off route forcing an hour of traversing four 50 degree snow and ice pitches through the rocks only 100' above a bergshrund and the easier snow slopes below. At 10pm, we finally hit the 16,500'summit ridge, a mere 500' from the top and reevaluated our situation. We'd been climbing for 10 hours, the weather was deteriorating, and it looked downright nasty on the summit. Would it get worse, or better? Who knew? Retreat was sure to be slow, especially in poor weather. We had on all our clothes, including down parkas, neoprene full face masks and goggles. We'd never climbed before wearing so much of our clothing, but it was difficult to stay warm even wearing all our clothes. If it got worse, descending would be a real challenge, especially with twilight approaching. But if it got better, we'd regret turning back from our fourth attempt. What should we do? We huddled behind the leeward ridge crest and gathered our senses out of the wind as best we could. Ten minutes later, we decided to give it another hour, as it seemed to be clearing up with the setting sun. Up we went and the higher we got, the more the winds dissipated. We finally reached non-technical terrain, and could enjoy the views down to the Seward Glacier 10,000' below us, as the setting sun cast long pink shadows on all the major peaks in the range – Logan, St. Elias, Vancouver, Augusta, Cook, and beyond. We could even faintly make out Mt. Fairweather 200 miles to the south of us. Finally at 11:15pm, I saw Paul stop climbing a pitch in front of me and start belaying in Carolyn and I as we traversed the exposed final ridge. I hoped they were on the top, but feared Paul was simply regrouping and retrieving pickets from me as we had done for the last 12 hours to continue leading out along some nasty knife edge. But, karma was with us for once, and as I approached them squinting through my goggles into the sun setting over their shoulders, I could see that beyond, the knife edge dropped out of sight below. This was it! After three prior attempts we had finally made it. We each felt a sense of relief and satisfaction, yet also apprehension, knowing that the descent would be just as challenging and hazardous, perhaps even more so due to fatigue and lack of daylight. Before heading down we took a final look around. The summer sun was just setting, casting the long dark pyramid shadow of King Peak across the glaciers two miles below us. All the surrounding St. Elias Range peaks were glowing pink with alpenglow. Perhaps most importantly, the wind had died down to almost nothing.

Down we started about 11:30pm, carefully down-climbing and reverse leading our route. We avoided the five off-route traverse pitches in exchange for an overhanging rappel over the bergshrund into the darkness to the easier traveling below. Fortunately, the old fixed line we had encountered all the way from our camp to about 16,000' aided our descent. We un-roped

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from each other and arm-wrapped our way down the fixed sections. This saved us considerable time on our nocturnal descent. Still, we had to rappel many times where the fixed line was either buried or missing, spending hours in these transitions, again using existing anchors where possible, and supplementing our own pickets, V-threads and pitons where necessary. Our two quarts of fluid each was gone soon after reaching the summit. As dehydration and fatigue set in, we became slower, though I think no less safe, just more careful in our down-climbing and rappels, fully aware of the consequences of a slip. Through the "night" we continued down, still wearing all our gear, but fortunately the wind stayed at bay. There was barely enough light to keep moving and avoid a bivy. At 2am we got out our two miniature LED headlamps for the two end climbers to ensure proper rope work and knots. During these darkest few hours, our two headlamps bobbed along the snow and ice, with the faint shadows of three climbers in tow. At 5am we finally got hit with direct sunlight again, instantly warming us up, yet our lingering chill made us keep on every single bit of clothing for several more hours. We descended until we were able to unrope for the lower section of the ridge, before the final steep pitches above camp. At this time, we saw a group of Logan climbers on King Col wake up, come out of their tents, and watch our final few rappels from their vantage 1 mile away and 1,000' below us. Our last three rappels were finally finished and we pulled our rope through the last anchor, trailing it behind us for the 300 yard walk to our camp. Finally at noon of the second day, Sunday May 23, we arrived in camp totally exhausted and mentally spent. We collapsed on the snow, the first real rest we'd had in 24 hours of non-stop climbing. Paul and I agreed that this had been one of the most physically challenging two or three summits days in our careers. What a relief to be back. We brewed up and went straight to bed, too tired to really sleep, though I'm sure we each dozed off for a couple hours.

By 4pm, the predicted fast approaching storm had set in, with snow and gale winds for the next 36 hours. Our 28 hour weather window had slammed shut; we had fortunately found the only possible summit day in at least a 10 day period, and possibly more. We slept all afternoon and night and awoke the next morning to a howling snowstorm. As much as we were ready to abandon our camp of the last 8 days, we were even more excited to rest for a day after our summit day marathon. The continued sleep and rest was divine. The next day we woke to less stormy conditions with minimal visibility through the thick clouds. It was our ninth day at our high camp; we were rested and ready to leave even if it meant travel by GPS and compass. We packed camp, struggled with our sleds back down a few steeper sections to the now empty 13,500' King Col, and GPS'ed our way back to the Logan base camp in 8 hours. Here we had tea with an Aussie trio who had come close to summiting Logan, but turned back due to the constant lenticulars of the past week. We then finished our 9 mile

ski back to the Alaska border that night, arriving at 11 pm. We had called Paul Claus of Ultima Thule for a pickup while on our descent. At 8am the next morning May 26, his orange Otter swooped in and picked us up. We were home in Anchorage by 6pm that night.

The fact that this was our fourth attempt on King Peak and that it was such a challenge made it that much more special. I returned to work, while Paul and Carolyn rested for a couple days before flying into the Alaska Range where they climbed Denali's West Rib in seven days round trip from Talkeetna, before heading off for a successful seven-week expedition to Mt. Nun (7,100 meter) in the Kashmir region of northern India. They certainly had an envious summer climbing season.

So, King Peak's East Ridge isn't a new route, or anything unique in the mountaineering sense. Our ridge had been climbed a handful of times from the dozen or so ascents of the mountain. In fact, Reudi Homberger soloed it in 8 hours round trip in 1992. Still, we had a very rewarding experience. The only notable aspect about our trip was the fact it took us so long, when I know certainly there are lots of folks out there who could have done it in a fraction of the time. One other item of interest is the Kluane National Park Ranger Rick Staley commented that he was unaware of a woman having summited King Peak before. It's fitting, I suppose, that Carolyn may have been the first woman to climb Canada's 4<sup>th</sup> tallest peak, since she is a Canadian citizen. Even more exciting for her was that it was her first expedition.

Beautiful scenery, great friends and challenging peaks made our 2-1/2 week adventure a success. Good weather helped, too. But, mostly, we're just happy that we won't have to go back to King Peak a fifth time next spring!

## **The Chugach Crusher—Anchorage to Valdez, first ski traverse**

### **By Joe Stock**

In April 2004 Dylan Taylor and I skied up the Valdez Glacier with enough food to get us to the Bear's Tooth in Anchorage—we thought. But double-carrying over Mount Thor pounded our egos enough that we bailed at the Matanuska Glacier to the Glenn Highway. Armed with this Chugach knowledge, and the Canadian powerhouse Andrew Wexler, I left Anchorage on April 10 of this year and showed up in Valdez 18 days later. The Chugach Crusher Traverse was the last section from Vancouver, British Columbia to Anchorage that had not been skied.

The Chugach Crusher is 175 miles long and about 30,000 vertical feet. Andrew and I had three caches

along the way. Before the tour we stashed a bag to the Crow Pass hut, and Mike Meekin and I flew a bag into Grasshopper Valley at the end of the Marcus Baker Glacier. Mike dropped us more groceries at the Scandinavian Peaks hut on the Matanuska Glacier. No one gives a toss if you're self-supported or not, so we saved ourselves the misery.

Eight days of splitter weather got us from Anchorage to the Matanuska Glacier. One hundred mile per hour wind and deep snow pinned us down for five days, and then five more days of sun let us get to Valdez. Without the storm we could have done the tour in 15 days. But how could the weather have been any more perfect?

Wex and Joe at Mat hut



On April 10 Cathy dropped us off at the Glen Alps trailhead in Anchorage and we headed up Powerline with empty packs. After 13 hours we had crossed Ship Lake Pass, Ship Creek, and Paradise Pass to arrive at the Crow Pass hut feeling charged and alive. From Crow Pass we covered part of the popular Eklutna Traverse including the Raven Glacier, Eagle Glacier and Whiteout Glacier where we crammed into Hans Hut with a spirited Mountaineering Club of Alaska group. From Hans Hut it took a few hours to ski down the Whiteout Glacier where we skated for 15 miles through Lake George. Turning the corner from Lake George onto the Knik Glacier was the first place we roped up to avoid hidden slots. Our second cache at Grasshopper Valley still intact and we gorged on doughnuts and Kailua. For two days we slogged up the Marcus Baker Glacier to a 9,000 foot

pass (use the slightly higher northerly pass) and the Matanuska Glacier. Raging winds kept us Bibler-bound for three days until we bailed down glacier to the Scandinavian Hut. More winds forced us to nail the door shut for two days and swap stories with Trond and Geir. From the hut we plowed up the east fork of the Matanuska Glacier to Turtle Flats and the Powell Glaciers. We crossed a series of easy passes between the Powell and Sylvester Glaciers (7,200'), Sylvester and Tarr Glaciers (6,300'), and Tarr and Nelchina Glaciers (6,700'). From the Nelchina we toured through deep wind ruts to the Tazlina Glacier, up Cashman Col, and down the Valdez Glacier to the Pipeline Bar. Absolutely crushed and needing to rehydrate.

While still in the mountains we trained for the fame we'd never get. "Where'd you get that tan?" Wex would say, feigning awe.

"We just got off the Crusher Traverse," I'd say like Stallone.

"Oh. What's the Crusher Traverse?" Wex would say after an awkward silence.

"Anchorage to Valdez. You never heard of it? It's the classic new tour." I'd say. A smooth-faced teenager at H2O heliski in Valdez gave us the opportunity to test our rehearsed lines.

"You been out skiing?" the teenager said. I stuttered for a second, then dodged my mantra, and a giggling fit.

"We skied from Anchorage." I said meekly.

### **Wex skiing to Nelchina**



"Oh," the teenager said, his face devoid of expression. Maybe us skiing 175 miles should have amazed him, but I realized he knew more. That we hadn't helped any

noble cause. We were just two guys out playing in the snow and reciting Napoleon Dynamite.

Big thanks to Mike Meekin, Charlie Sassara, and Richard Baranow for their generous beta. Other local help came from Kaladi Coffee and AMH.

## **Mount Susitna Paddle Climb June 2003, By Stu Grenier**

After the successful August 2000 paddle climb of Mt Susitna (which appeared in the previous Scree), I set my sights on another prominent Cook Inlet Paddle Climb, Mt Redoubt, from Anchorage. As a recon in 2001 I soloed the approach with big crossings between Fire Island and Ladd, Trading Bay in one push, and West Foreland to Kalgin Island. By the time I rolled my kayak up on the beach at Redoubt Creek, just 12 miles from the volcano, I had finally got the hang of paddling in West Cook Inlet. It was not without a cost though. I had capsized at West Foreland and lost a few water bottles that were in my cockpit and gray hairs rapidly appeared in my beard on this trip. I had seen skookumchuck like waves near the Forelands from a distance and they put the fear of God into me. To add to all of this, August nights are dark and brown bears come to the beach to look for dead fish. I have yet to learn how to relax when these animals pass by or loiter near camp. Also from studying photos of seven kayakers in Cook Inlet taken from around 1900 when kayakers were common place in these waters I found that all of them were larger doubles or triples. Using the smaller single kayakers in these waters is pushing the technology to the limit in anything but reasonable weather.

With this experience I was able to get a team together to attempt a paddle climb of Redoubt. There were only two of us for the paddle and we hoped to get a third for glacier travel on the volcano via an airdrop. I initially thought that we would launch at Pt. Worenzof but as I looked out my window and watched the birch trees sway wildly in the wind I decided that the Big Su (Susitna River) would be the better bet. My partner was Sarah Quimby, a kayak guide I worked with in PWS (Prince William Sound). We were in a double. We had not climbed together much and the more I thought about it the better the Big Su looked. Mt. Susitna would be a good prep climb and if a third member could not be found it would allow us to return home with at least one summit. We launched in early June 2003 where the Parks Highway crosses the Big Su. It would not be until July that we found our way back to the road system. At five weeks this became the longest MCA paddle climb ever and one of the longest MCA trips.

Heading down the Big Su it felt good to be heading for Sleeping Lady again and West Cook Inlet to boot. I was surprised to find an unbelievable amount of boat traffic

until we got to the Deshka River because the kings were in. There were more boats on the river than cars on the Parks Highway. After the Deshka there were hardly any.

Because of previous trips I had an idea of what to expect and found more sources for information. In "Shem Pete's Alaska", Shem Pete dropped a big hint on how to climb this mountain. He said the following when referring to Etl'ghilgetnu (Pierce Creek). "The trail from Tuqen Kaq' to Deghelishla went up here." Tuqen Kaq' was the mouth of Alexander Creek. Why would the Dena'ina come all the way from the mouth of Alexander Creek to Pierce Creek to climb Mt. Susitna? I had to answer this question so Etl'ghilgetnu (Rotten Beaver Dam Creek) would be our route. This route also avoided all the dogs and locals that I met on my first ascent and was positioned perfectly for someone approaching the mountain by kayak from the north.

We landed within a hundred yards of my August 2000 base camp in an area clear of alders and sweepers. As we unloaded the double kayak I went up into the forest to scout for a camp spot. To my surprise I found a large pile of dog food and birdseed with boards laying over it and a platform nearby about 8 feet up a tree. It was a bear baiting station. Sarah and I checked it out and decided that we didn't want to camp near it. We moved camp about 100 yards up stream. Sarah paddled the kayak alone against the current without a problem. We soon had our position completely concealed from the river, which is my habit when in a place I plan to cache gear.

The next morning we crossed the forest and muskeg to Alexander Creek. Rather than take a pack raft as I did in 2000 we just stuck our thumbs out and caught a short ride to the other side and down to Pierce Creek on a passing skiff. There we stashed our big water jugs and started up climbers left of the creek. As one would suspect from Shem Pete's hint there was a clear game trail. There was also evidence of bear baiting stations for the first mile but after that the trail continued on the crest of the ridge above the creek. Where Pierce Creek becomes a canyon with a waterfall, a gully entering the creek interrupts the trail and you make your way to a large bench with grass fields and alder thickets. We entered the alders here and found grass fields here and there that led us up towards alder line. I kept telling Sarah how lucky we were to be doing this route compared to the one I did in 2000.

On this first day on the slopes of Mt. Susitna we came across a small Porcupine. Now it is no secret to those who read the Scree, distinguished MCAer and biologist Tom Choate once gave lessons on how to safely, and not so safely, pick up one of these creatures without injury to either party (Scree April 02). Well, I knew that Sarah had yet to perfect this art so I went through the motions, and had this unusually blond porky in the standard "teddy bear" hold where you hold the critter by

one of its front legs. This is usually a safe way to carry one because as Dr. Choate explained porkies are not strong enough to do one arm pull ups. But to my horror I looked down to see a pair of brown vice like teeth about to clamp down on my thumb. Yikes! This is one amazing porky! It could do a one-arm pull up. I dropped the beast to save my hand.

**Sarah Quimby tests the theory that a porcupine can't do a one arm pullup.**



Stu Grenier photo

After recovering from the initial shock I picked the porky up again but this time put a stick in front of its nose which it promptly bit into and would not let go of. At this point I could carry the beast but I never took my eyes off of it in case it spit the stick out and went for my hand again. Sarah seeing me pick the beast up had to do it too and managed to get the beast in the teddy bear hold. Rather than use a stick to nullify its jaws she used my ice ax. The beast promptly bit into my sling and would not let go. After a photo or two she set the beast down and it waddled unharmed into the bushes. So that is how our first meeting with a Mt. Susitna local went. Our next one was even more exciting.

That night we camped climbers left of a small rivulet that ran into Pierce Creek. We kept our food in an air tight

"Kodiak Bag" near the tent. Some sages like Dick Griffith prefer this method because the food becomes less of a target because of the human presence. You also get to be lazy and not have to spend time stringing stuff up between two trees. Before I fell asleep I undid the strap on the shoulder holster.

In the black of night I was awakened by a snap in the alders. It was from my side of the tent which was the down wind side. My ears perked up as I listened for a confirmation. Another snap sat me up and I freed my right arm from the bag and grasped the 44. I said softly to Sarah, "Sarah we have company." She did not move or say anything. I listened. Snap! Even closer this time. Things were starting to become nightmare like. We were being checked out by something very big. Undoubtedly a bear. I said loudly the only thing I could think of, "Sarah we have company!" I drew the pistol out and held it with both hands aiming at the top of the tent. Listening intently for a hint of its direction and distance while reconfirming where Sarah and I were, so as not to accidentally shoot one of us if I did need to shoot. Snap! Way too close. I shouted the only thing I could think of, "Sarah we have company!" I thought to myself if it touches the tent I am going to fire. Everything froze for what seemed to be a very long few seconds. Then snap and pop it began to move but thankfully away from the tent. As I listened the sounds grew fainter as it went back the way it had come. Needless to say I did not sleep much that night.

The next morning I got up first and took a look around. Our tent was positioned between two alder groves in a long section of grass. As soon as I looked down the hill about 40 yards my eyes met a large black face looking right back at me. I'll always wonder if that was the same bear that had visited our tent that night and it just hung around to get a look at us or see if the food would become more accessible. The animal had no fear. We made eye contact and it turned to its side and walked across my field of vision in a very slow deliberate manor with its head down. We packed up and left the area quickly.

This was the first bear of the trip and one of the few blackies. It was also for me the most disturbing encounter. Once we left Mt. Susitna and the Big Su for the inlet the brown bears became more and more common. At one spot we could count 15 brown bears at one time. We often had no choice but to leave our food in air tight bags inside the kayaks because it was mostly grassland. There was no place to place the food. We stopped counting bears at about 75. Some locals had electric fences around their homes and tents. Others had dogs and/or shotguns. Everybody has a bear story. Over there dogs really are mans best friend. I wish I could figure out how to carry one safely in a kayak.

Working our way up and to climber's left we made it to a good-sized creek running out of a deep gully that drains

into Granite Creek. We dumped our packs here and summited after observing a large grizz sow and two cubs at a safe distance. The summit area was mostly covered in snow and when we could not stay on rocks we were post holing. The weather and views were much better than last time. Shem Pete was right. Pierce Creek was the way to go at least compared to my last trip up. As the shadow of Mt. Susitna began to reach for Alexander Creek and then the Big Su, we left a photo can register on the summit and started our decent.

Our next night was spent near the good tasting water that drained into Granite Creek. From there we tried to back track but did a few variations that did not make things easier. On the way down we checked the other side of Pierce Creek out for a trail and found nothing. We did find an awesome loop tree hanging over the middle of Pierce Creek about a mile up from Alexander Creek. Sarah sat in it for about 30 minutes. I wish I knew why the Dena'ina made them.

After filling up our stashed jugs with the less than perfect Pierce Creek water we caught a ride with Rip and some Germans back up to where we hit the Alexander. From there we walked back to base camp with our heavy jugs. As we approached camp I became ill and lost my lunch and quite a bit more. I had been drinking less than perfect water. About 50 yards from base camp I curled up into a little ball and napped. After about 30 minutes I moved into the tent Sarah had set up and crashed until the next morning. By the next afternoon we were eating at a bar and grill in Alexander. The locals listened eagerly to our Mt. Susitna stories.

That was our first summit on the five-week trip.

If you want to see what it is like to ski up Mt. Susitna see Tim Kelley's web site at <http://www.alsap.org/MtSusitna/MtSusitna.htm> Both Tim and I cannot stop going back to this mountain in our season of choice.

## **Long Lake Peak Bagging Trip By Amy Murphy**

Long Lake, nestled at the end of the North Fork Campbell Creek valley, provides an excellent base camp for climbing some of the 5,000+' peaks in the Chugach front range, including Tikishla, East and West Tanainas, Koktoya and Williwaw. The following people decided to backpack with me into this stunning area for three days to bag some peaks: Ron Gehres; Ron Ramsey; Lawrence Armendarez; Martin Ksok; and Tyler Chubb. My son graciously agreed to wake up early on a Saturday morning to drop us off at the trailhead and he chuckled while we took turns lifting each others' backpacks to see who had the heaviest and the lightest



packs. Ron Ramsey is the "backpacking master" as he easily had the lightest pack.

We left from the Stuckagain Heights trailhead on June 4, 2005 and hiked up the game trail that some MCA members performed trail clearing on this past winter, which thankfully this saved us a lot of time and elevation gain. I really appreciate the fact that we won't have to bushwhack through this trail with heavy packs on any more – YEAH! We set up camp at Long Lake in the early afternoon, enjoying mostly warm and sunny weather. Then five of us headed out to climb West Tanaina and East Tanaina peaks, following the standard route up the south-facing gully. Ron Gehres and Martin reached the summit first. When I was about 10 or 15 minutes away from the summit I decided to wait for Tyler and Lawrence again to make sure they were okay as I hadn't seen them for a while. I was a bit concerned as I hadn't climbed with them before and wasn't sure what their abilities were and this hike involves scrambling near the top.

#### **Williwaw Summit shot**



While I was sitting on top of West Tanaina, beautiful, light, fluffy snowflakes started coming down. However, after another 15 or 20 minutes it turned to heavy rain and I could hear the thunder growing closer. Tyler finally showed up and we waited a while longer for Lawrence. Meanwhile, Martin and Ron descended from the summit and met up with us and we became a bit concerned as Ron's hair and a few strands of my long hair were standing straight up, which indicated a high level of electricity in the air. At this point Ron and Martin decided to go ahead and hike over to the summit of East Tanaina, hoping the weather would clear up on the way over.

Tyler was ready to head down to camp as the rocks were becoming really wet and slippery and we weren't sure how bad the weather would get. As I had climbed this peak twice before, I headed down with him.

Lawrence decided to try to forge on to the summit, but never made it. However, Tyler and I had such an enjoyable time glissading (butt sliding) down a steep, fast snowfield, we decided to hike back up so we could slide down again! Luckily the weather cleared up and Ron and Martin reached the summit of East Tanaina and enjoyed an awesome 1,600' glissade down different gullies.

We had hoped to climb Temptation Peak on this trip, so on Sunday morning four of us hiked up to the 4,200' level of the saddle between Knoya and Tikishla Peaks to check things out. It looked like a long, arduous day and there was still quite a bit of snow in the area and on the peak itself, so we decided to wait and climb Temptation another day. Ron Gehres and Lawrence decided to climb Tikishla, but since I have already climbed it, I instead opted to have fun and went sliding down the snowfield we ascended on our way to the saddle.

Meanwhile, Tyler and Martin had to be back at work on Monday so they climbed Koktoya Peak that morning and hiked back out to the trailhead in the afternoon. Ron Gehres and I climbed Koktoya Peak later that afternoon and sat on the summit watching dark clouds with obvious precipitation swirling all around us, but luckily never reaching our secluded valley. We also noticed quite a bit of new snow on some of the peaks in the Eagle River valley area. On our glissade down the steep gully coming off of Koktoya we started a couple of big slides, and it was rather unnerving standing and watching the top layer of snow slide down all around us. We skedaddled over to the side of the snowfield and hiked down until we felt it was safe to continue sliding.

On Monday morning we packed up our gear and headed over to Williwaw Lakes to climb Mt. Williwaw, which is the highest peak in the Chugach front range. There was still quite a bit of snow in the area, so we had a pretty easy time climbing up the snow-covered pass between Long Lake and Williwaw Lakes. Unfortunately Lawrence ended up pushing himself too hard over the weekend and his knee(s) started to hurt really bad and slowed his progress down. He called us on the radio and said he could not climb Williwaw and would hike out by himself. So the two Rons and I headed over to the base of Mt. Williwaw, dropped our heavy backpacks, ate and pondered which route to take. Since there was still a lot of snow in the southwest gully (the standard route), we put our crampons on for the ascent of that steep gully.

After reaching the summit we reveled in the feeling of accomplishment, enjoying the outstanding scenery stretching for endless miles all around us. I have a special attachment to eagles and felt lucky when I noticed a bald eagle gracefully soaring nearby. How can anybody not feel peaceful, happy and extremely blessed when they view the spectacular mountains and backcountry we have so close at hand? We called Lawrence from the summit to see how he was doing,

and he said he had found the trail and was glad to hear we made it to the top.

We eventually and regretfully climbed down Williwaw, picked up our backpacks and headed down the Middle Fork (Williwaw Lakes) trail. We ended our grueling, but fulfilling, trip at the Glen Alps trailhead where a wonderful friend picked us up, despite the fact that we sure didn't smell like roses! Ron Gehres earned the nickname of "Animal" during the trip as he is the only person who climbed all five peaks. Way to go, Capt. Ron!

## **MCA Board Meeting Minutes June 8, 2005 7:00 p.m., Harry's**

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m.

Items discussed included:

- ⚡ We still need a spare light bulb for the projector, Steve will make the purchase and get reimbursed.
- ⚡ Switching of financial institution has been done. We are now using Credit Union One, although we have left some monies in North Rim to cover outstanding checks.
- ⚡ Records keeping: Carlene is to get info from the hiking chair and Randy will contact the climbing chair (qualified leaders, 1<sup>st</sup> aid status, etc.) We also need to get the membership applications/liability waivers from Greg, along with input from those holding records as to the best way to set up a good system. Hopefully everything will be in place at the next board meeting, along with our volunteers, to start moving forward on this project.
- ⚡ Picnic planning. We have our permit for Sunset park and need to buy hot dogs, burgers, buns, condiments, drinks, napkins, paper plates, forks, etc. Charcoal, too. (Desserts and salads are potluck). Annette and Eric will do the shopping. Also, we need to arrange for at least two, maybe even three, full sized BBQ grills to be transported and set up at the park. We will post the info on the website and ask for grills at the membership meeting next week.
- ⚡ Hut site selection: Will be covered by the huts committee chair at the meeting next week. The board also discussed how a clubhouse could serve as a place to store club gear, keep records, having meetings, etc... With our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary coming up, we've proven this is a club with longevity; maybe we should start looking into the future with some long range goals?
- ⚡ Some club members would like to participate in a "rock school", either as students or instructors, to help others with top ropes, anchors, belaying

leaders... We will try to set something up in July, if there is enough interest.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

## **MCA Membership Meeting May 18, 2005**

7:40 –Welcome by president Steve Parry

New folks introductions.

### **Treasurer's report**

\$8,485.51 in North Rim checking, \$6621.51 in savings, and \$1000 CD. We have \$5000 in checking and \$1000 in savings with Credit Union One.

### Committee reports

Hiking and Climbing (sign-up sheets up front; see club web site, details in Scree)

6/18 – Blueberry Hill (D), Steve Gruhn

6/18-6/19 – President's summer solstice sleepover on Flat Top, Steve Parry

6/20 – Rainbow Peak (C), Steve Gruhn.

6/24-6/26 – Annual summer solstice trip with Tom Choate (backpack in for the weekend or hike in for a day. Camping, hiking, peak bagging, first ascents!

6/28 – Snowhawk Valley, 10 miles, Britta Maas.

7/06 – Crow Pass (B), Steve Gruhn.

7/11 – Indian Valley, 12 miles, Britta Maas.

7/11 – Penguin Peak (4334) (D), Steve Gruhn.

7/16-7/30 – Gates of the Arctic Nat'l Park backpack had two spots open up! Contact Don Hansen NOW, and you can get in on this incredible trip!

7/18 – Virgin Creek (B), Steve Gruhn.

8/19-8/21 – 1<sup>st</sup> annual couples trip, upper Snowhawk hut, Greg Braigel. (This is geared to those whose "significant other" doesn't generally do MCA trips but they would like to try one with option to stay in hut and kick back, or get out as participate together.)

### Huts

- Hans reported the top 10 sites for possible new hut. The top five are:
- 1. West fork of Powell glacier (by Mat glacier; tie in with Scandi, Box den).
- 2. Eska Basin, above Eska Falls.
- 2. Golden Crown and Sparrow Peaks (by Rosie's).
- 3. Confluence of Sparrow and Finch glaciers.
- 4. Upper Troublesome glacier (add on to Pichler's, Lake George).
- 5. Upper Chickaloon glacier (this would be a fly-in). (We had a tie for second place.)
- Because of the tours granted to Glacier City Snowmobile Tours over the next year, we want to document use of the Eklutna Traverse. We need log

books from Rosie's (and placement of a new one). Folks doing the ET should call the "hotline" to say when you'll be going in (so Glacier City will know, and avoid you). All ET trips need to be documented, especially summer use. If enough folks are out there in the summer, this current plan will need to be re-addressed.

- Pichler's has extra fuel so please distribute to Hans' hut and Rosie's hut, if you are going in. Also, when at huts, use the fuel there, then replace what you used so fuel gets cycled through and doesn't get too old.

- Also remember to please pack out human waste when traveling the Eklutna traverse. If you cannot pack out, then use the waste bags and put in the blue barrels, do NOT throw off into a crevasse for future pollution!

Parks Advisory – Revised draft of backcountry management plan for Denali is out. Over 8000 form letters in favor of heli-hiking have been submitted. Mt. Baldy access: Landowner has put up barricades. Stay tuned for updates.

Training – It looks like there's enough interest to plan a "rock school" sometime in July. This will most likely take place towards the end of the month, in Hatcher Pass, and will be teaching beginning trad (in addition to some other basics). Date will be announced as plans are made.

Awards –Not present.

Library – The ladder has been purchased so we can access the top shelves..

Calendar – We are being held up because some of the winners have not submitted their photo medium so we can get going to press... Those who do not respond pronto will be bumped by runners-up.

### Old Business

This year's club picnic will be at Sunset Park at Birch Street and Vine Avenue in Anchorage. We will need a few full sized BBQ grills to be brought in for the hot dogs and hamburgers. The club provides dogs, burgers, buns, condiments, etc. Members are asked to bring a salad or dessert for potluck. Directions will be posted in the Scree.

### New Business

Has the club ever considered the idea of getting its own club house? We currently have our library at AMH, the Vin Hoeman collections is at Bill Romberg's, the club equipment is at Steve Parry's, and our membership records and liability releases are at Greg Braigel's. Maybe we can start brainstorming on a central location that could handle all of these needs, and allow for meetings...

### General Announcements

Margie, our refreshments person, has decided its time to "pass the torch". We need someone to volunteer, as Margie has been at it for over a year and a half, and she deserves a break! Please speak with her at the break; it's not that hard to do!

### Slide show presentation

Bjarne Holm will show slides of his trips in the eastern Alaska Range.

Once again, Margie has provided us with some awesome snacks. Thank her for always providing for us. If you want to see snacks continued, offer to take over!

Submitted by: Carlene Van Tol, Club Secretary

## Adze

SATELLITE PHONE FOR RENT Iridium 9505 handheld sat phone \$75 / 10 days or \$100 / 2 weeks Icom VHF Aviation handheld radio and Icom CB handheld radios also available. Dave Hart 868-2673 (h) 223-1113 (c) [hartd@unocal.com](mailto:hartd@unocal.com)

Seeking partner(s) for some type of backcountry trip July 23-31. I'm from Olympia WA, in AK for the summer, and my partner for that week just backed out. Was planning a trip in Lake Clark N.P, still be my preference, but without a partner I can't be too picky. I'm 47, excellent shape, experienced in overland travel & navigation, used to bushwacking & rough terrain. Glacier travel ok, but not technical. Have own transportation. Eric Temple, 360-357-9365

Looking for partners interested in splitting costs to climb Gannett Peak, Wyoming. Also looking for partners interested in splitting costs to visit the highest points of Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. No dates yet scheduled, but the Illinois highpoint is only open the first weekend of June, July, August, and September. [steven.gruhn@hartcrowser.com](mailto:steven.gruhn@hartcrowser.com), 868-9118 (w), 344-1219 (h)

For Sale:  
Mountain Hardwear Trango 3 Tent \$350, Kelty White Cloud Pack \$350  
Wayne 522-6354

For Sale  
Marmot Qualofill bag in excellent condition. Temp rating Zero degree F. Color Purple. Long length. Modified Mummy. Full length zipper with baffle, hood and collar. Used on Mt Vinson in Antarctica at -20 degree F. Weight 4 lbs.  
Dolly Lefever, [dolly@acsalaska.net](mailto:dolly@acsalaska.net) daytime 223-9927

Ex-MCA President Dan O'Hair is going to be in Alaska July 13-23. He was a noted MCA activist, hut builder, trip and expedition leader, and wrote the Roadside Geology of Alaska. He and his family hope to meet old friends and make some new ones. You can reach him at [jupiter8@ix.netcom.com](mailto:jupiter8@ix.netcom.com)

# Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Steve Parry	248-8710	Board member	Eric Teela	240-9693
Vice-President	Steve Gruhn	344-1219	Board member	Annette Iverson	222-0581
Secretary	Carlene Van Tol	748-5270	Board member	Sean Bolender	333-0213
Treasurer	Joe Kluberton	301-4039	Board member	Randy Howell	346-4608
			Board member	Jayne Mack	694-1500

Annual membership dues: Single \$15, Family \$20 (one Scree to a family)

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 treasurer. The Post Office will not forward the newsletter.

The 'Scree' is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles and notes submitted for publication and other communication related to the newsletter should be emailed to [Scree@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Scree@yahoogroups.com) or submitted on the web at [MCAK.org](http://MCAK.org) or mailed to Scree Editor Box 102037 Anchorage Alaska 99510. Articles should be received by July 20 (the club meeting/picnic) to be in the August Issue.

Paid Ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be 'camera ready' and prepaid.

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

Mailing list/database entry: Greg Bragiel  
Hiking Committee: Matt Nedom - 278-3648, Carlene Van Tol– 748-5270  
Climbing Committee: Richard Baranow - 694-1500, Randy Howell – 346-4608  
Huts: Hans Neidig 355-3244  
Calendar: Stuart Grenier 337-5127  
Scree Editor: John Recktenwald 770-1636  
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