

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

July 2014

Volume 57 Number 7



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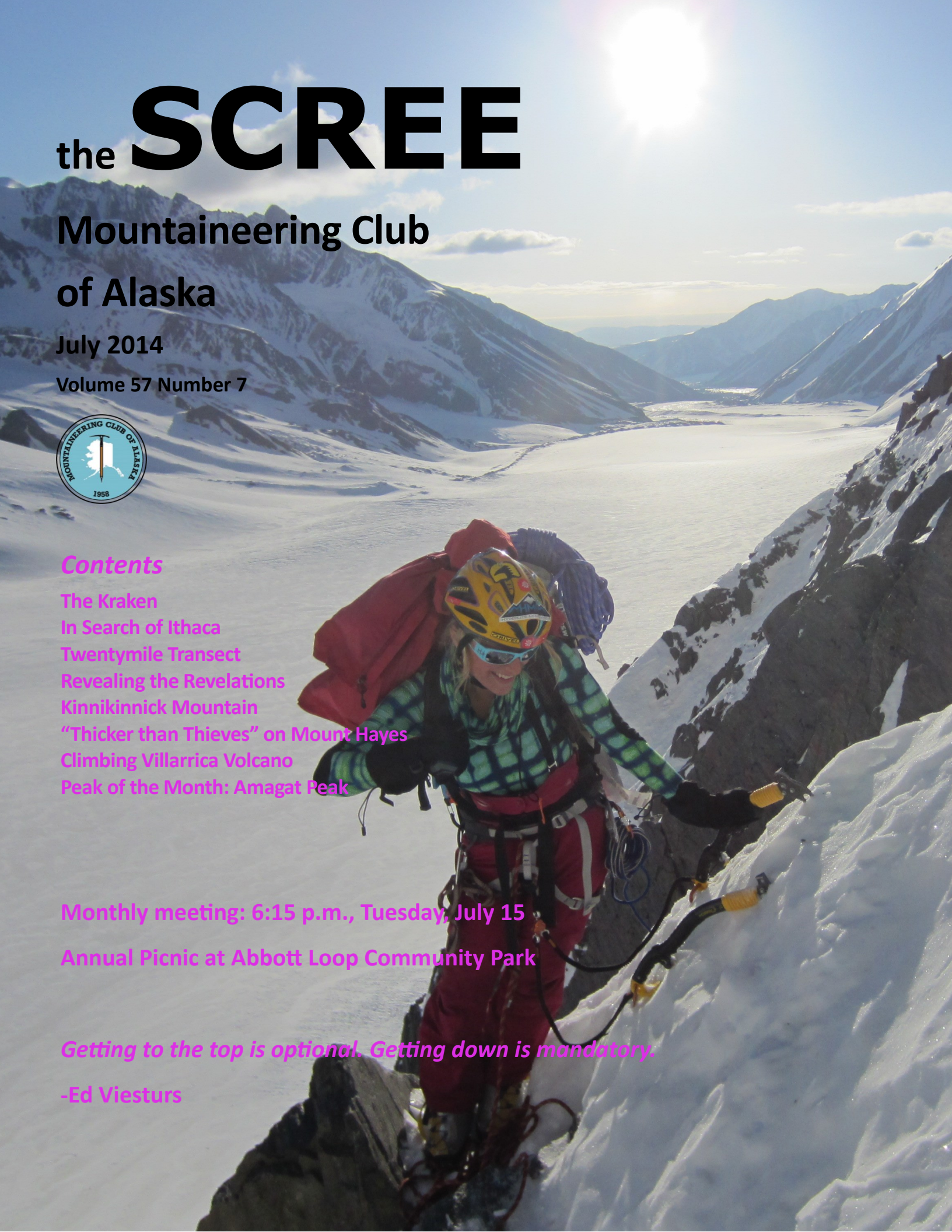
Peak of the Month: Amagat Peak

Monthly meeting: 6:15 p.m., Tuesday, July 15

Annual Picnic at Abbott Loop Community Park

Getting to the top is optional. Getting down is mandatory.

-Ed Viesturs



The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

www.mtnclubak.org

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

Join us for our club meeting at 6:15 p.m. on Tuesday, July 15, at Abbott Loop Community Park, 8101 Elmore Road, Anchorage, Alaska.

<http://anchorageparkfoundation.org/directory/abbott/>

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Cover Photo

Angela VanWiemeersch at the start of "Thicker than Thieves" on the South Summit of Mount Hayes, getting excited before the 2,000 feet of snice.

Photo by Jason Stuckey.

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

Monthly Meeting: Tuesday, July 15, at 6:15 p.m.

The July monthly meeting will not be at the BP Energy Center. The annual MCA summer potluck picnic will be Tuesday, July 15, from 6:15 to 8:00 p.m. at Abbott Loop Community Park at 8101 Elmore Road. The park is on the east side of Elmore Road between Lore Road and 84th Avenue. Here is a link to the park page: <http://anchorageparkfoundation.org/directory/abbott/>.

It's a potluck! Bring something to share based on the first letter of your last name:

A - H: dessert

I - R: side dish

S - Z: salad

Hot dogs, hamburgers, veggie burgers, fixings, and drinks will be provided by the MCA. We reserved the picnic shelter in case of bad weather. No alcohol is allowed at the MCA picnic. Be green and bring your own utensils, cup, and plate. We have to pack out what we bring in.

Hut Closure

⇒ The Bomber Hut will be closed for maintenance from July 7 through 10.

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

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

Online? Click me!



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

Climbing Notes

Paul May reported that he climbed Peak 1614 east of Louis Bay on Knight Island on April 2, 2013. He also mentioned that he climbed an 1870-foot peak southeast of Port Chalmers on Montague Island on April 20, 2013, as well as Peak 1640 south of Masked Bay on Chenega Island on May 24, 2013, Peak 2150 northwest of Picturesque Cove in the Kenai Mountains on June 10, 2013, and Peak 2031 northeast of Granite Cove in the Chugach Mountains on August 12. Peak 2031 was originally called Peak 10 by U.S. Coast and Geodetic Surveyors in 1947.

Sam Zmolek reported that he climbed Peak 2531 southeast of Port Levashef and northeast of Uniktali Bay on Unalaska Island on November 15 and dubbed it Gyrfalcon Peak. He also mentioned that he climbed several other peaks on Unalaska Island: Peak 2353 northwest of Small Bay and west of Ugadaga Bay on August 22, dubbing it Storm Queen Mountain; Peak 2039 southeast of Humpy Cove and northwest of Beaver Inlet on August 20, calling it Mount Marianne; Peak 2007 west of English Bay and south of Kalekta Bay on June 30, 2013, naming it Pegleg Peak; Peak 1453 southwest of Kalekta Bay and west-northwest of Morris Cove also on June 30 last year, naming it Lazy Mountain; Split Top Mountain (1850) on April 29, 2013; Peak 1398 east of Constantine Bay and west of Kalekta Bay on September 22, dubbing it Melodia Mountain; Peak 1729 west of Kalekta Bay and east of Unalaska Bay on September 15, calling it Priestess Peak; Peak 1918 northwest of English Bay and southeast of Kalekta Bay on August 11, naming it The Lion's Mane; Mount Newhall (1916) on March 18; and Peak 1599 west of Kalekta Bay and east of Unalaska Bay on June 21, calling it Outen Mountain.

Ben Still reported that his wife, Jill Still, and he climbed The Fortress (5540) and Peak 5250 southeast of Hicks Creek in the Talkeetna Mountains on May 17. He called Peak 5250 Hicks Peak.

Carl Battreal reported that in mid-May Sy Cloud and he climbed Peak 8514 southwest of Baultoff Creek and northeast of Klein Creek in the Nutzotin Mountains. They named it Hidden Peak.

Trevor Kreznar reported that Andrew Farrell, Henry Gates, Josh Solomon, and he climbed Mount Eva (1522 meters; 4993 feet) west of the Bear Lake Glacier in the Kenai Mountains during the first week of June.

Steve Gruhn and Ben Still climbed Crabtree Mountain (3295) and Peak 4373 northwest of Trout Lake in the Kenai Mountains on June 14.

We look forward to reading full reports on each of these climbs in future issues of the *Scree*.

Geographic Names

The Alaska Historical Commission has requested comments from the MCA regarding two competing proposals to name a 3610-foot point on Heintzleman Ridge in Juneau either Scribner Peak or Tlaxstanjin. From 1983 to 1997 Jon Scribner was the regional director of the Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities' Southeast Regional Office 3.8 miles west-southwest of the point in question. Tlaxstanjin is reportedly a Tlingit word that means "idle hands" or "hands at rest." Provide comments to Steve Gruhn at geographicnames@mtnclubak.org by August 14.

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names released its quarterly review list on June 23. Included were five proposals to change names of geographic features in Alaska. Proposals include changing the name of the Middle Fork of the Chandalar River in the Brooks Range to the Ch'idriinjik River (ch'idriinjik reportedly means "heart river" in the Gwich'in language), changing the name of Birch Creek in the Tanana Hills to the K'iidootinjik River (k'iidootinjik reportedly means "birch that is cached up high river" or "birch cache river" in the Gwich'in language), changing the name of the Chandalar River in the Brooks Range to the Teedriinjik River (Teedriinjik reportedly means "luminous river," "shimmering river," or "light amid the waters river" in the Gwich'in language), and changing the name of Beaver Creek in the White Mountains to the Tseenjik River (tseenjik reportedly means "beaver creek" or "beaver river" in the Gwich'in language). Additional details are available at http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/quarterly_list.htm (click on Review List 417). Comments on the name proposals may be sent to Lou Yost at BGNEXEC@usgs.gov.

At its June 12 meeting, the Domestic Names Committee of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names voted to approve the name Weisser Creek for a stream on Kodiak Island that flows into Chiniak Bay southwest of Chiniak Point and southeast of Pony Point. Erhardt Richard Weisser (1914-2001) was a supervisor of the Public Works Department at the U.S. Coast Guard Station on Kodiak and was instrumental in opening the area to homesteading in the 1960s. More details are available at http://geonames.usgs.gov/domestic/quarterly_list.htm (click on Review List 416).

The Kraken

By Sam Zmolek



View to the south from the summit of The Kraken. Photo by Sam Zmolek.

The Kraken looms as a broad outcrop between Beaver Inlet and Captains Bay on Unalaska Island, conveniently within a few short miles of the road system, but nestled far enough back on the island's rocky spine to deter casual exploration by the average hiker. This 2,417-foot edifice stands is one of the largest peaks directly adjacent to the town of Unalaska, and like the vast majority of summits in the vast wild that is Unalaska, it does not have an official moniker. The Kraken's unofficial name was given because of the way several rough and twisting ridgelines meet at the apex of the mountain, though it doesn't look near as interesting when viewed from the town.

I got the chance to climb this peak for the first time early in the summer of 2013, on a clear, calm, and warm day, the kind that are few and far between in the Aleutian Islands. I had the whole day, and was even lucky enough to have a good partner – Cathy Reis – free for the hike. We drove out of town up to the end of the road in Pyramid Valley and jumped out excitedly, not even sure yet of what we were going to climb, but being prepared for a long day and hoping to make the most of it.

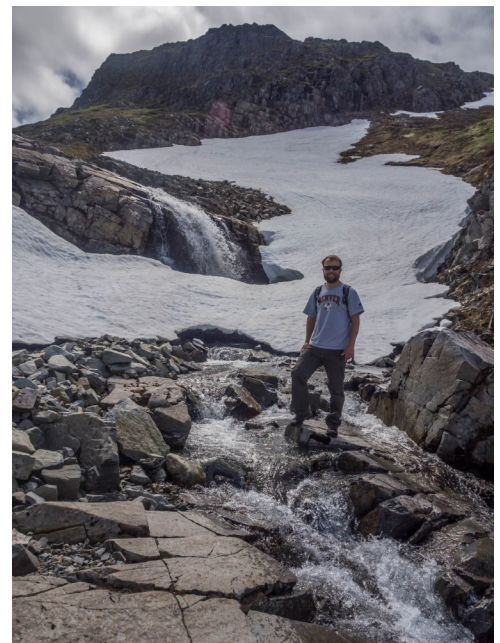
The first mile or so followed an old jeep trail that dates back to World War II that used to go around the back side of Pyramid Peak, and is still the most used approach route for that peak. Once we reached the top of the pass just southeast of Pyramid, we veered to the right off the road and began venturing into the unknown for both of us. As we walked a gently sloping ridge heading southeast, we lost all sign of roads, trails, or other signs of civilization, and were only keyed into the shapes of the treeless, rugged landscape as we searched for the most efficient route up the drainage.

options, but we decided to take a fairly straight line to the southwest until we reached a saddle near 1,800 feet, ascending next to some strikingly flat slabs of volcanic rock.

When we reached the first saddle, we turned back to the southeast and worked our way up to the summit ridge. The whole way up, we were staring at a very prominent horn that juts out like a shark tooth on the west end of the summit ridge. In fact, this feature was so striking that we were shooting for that above all else and only ended up climbing the true Kraken summit as an afterthought.

The summit ridge sits at an elevation just above 2,000 feet, and this ridgeline is just plain magical. The ridge drops almost 1,000 feet straight down into a perfectly sculpted cirque, which is huge for the small scale of Unalaska peaks. Compared to all the other landscapes within a reasonable

A large stream was cascading through a deep gully on our right until we came to a series of large, lovely waterfalls. We stayed to the left of the falls and picked our way up some talus slopes until we ascended to around 1,000 feet above sea level and discovered a high, rocky meadow. From that point there seemed to be a few



Sam Zmolek below the waterfall en route to The Kraken. Photo by Cathy Reis.

distance from the town of Unalaska, this area stands alone. After reaching the ridge and admiring the impressive drop, we headed west along an intoxicatingly perfect knife edge that just got better the more it progressed. There is one big step in the ridge before it ends abruptly in an imposing horn that reaches 2,300 feet elevation, and we weren't sure it would be passable as a scramble despite scouting this one crucial feature from other distant peaks in previous months.

When we got to the step, we quickly realized there was nothing technical about it, and crossed it without fanfare. From that point, ascending the horn was easy and very enjoyable. At the top it became clear that we weren't the only adventurers to be sucked in by this beautiful feature, as it had one of the bigger rock piles on top that I have ever seen out here. The top of this horn was just big enough for two or three people to sprawl out and enjoy, and we definitely stopped to take in the incredible views of Pyramid Valley, the cirque, and even views out toward Mount Ballyhoo and Unalaska Bay.

After savoring every moment we could, we looked at The Kraken looming back up at the ridge, and decided we had enough time and energy to work our way up the ridge around a mile with 400 vertical feet of additional elevation. It was go time!

The final climb to the top was almost boring, until we reached a rocky false summit protruding 30 feet out of the broad flank of the mountain. After scrambling up this small protrusion, the real summit popped into view 50 feet or so away and only a few feet above the outcrop we were on. But there was a serious catch, in the form of a narrow ledge that dropped off precipitously for hundreds of feet on both sides. Not helping the problem was the fact that there was a steep drop with exposure just to get onto this narrow ledge between the false and true summits. It took some planning, and mental



Sam Zmolek and the view to the southwest from the west ridge of The Kraken. Photo by Cathy Reis.

preparation to get out there, but we ventured out and made our way out to the summit pinnacle.

Once we made it out to the true summit of The Kraken, the full nature of what we had accomplished came into view as we could see the main ridge that spun off to the south before splitting into several subsidiary ridges. These ridges were more rugged and scary than anything we had climbed to get to the top, and there was so much more topographic complexity and rugged beauty that weren't fully apparent from the north side of the mountain. Surprisingly, I couldn't find any signs of previous ascents up this peak. This isn't to say it had not been previously climbed, but considering how obvious it was that the horn down the ridge has been climbed before, it's safe to say The Kraken doesn't get as much traffic.

The nice thing about our July 7 ascent was that with lots of corn snow on the gentle north-facing slopes, we had no problem getting around half of our descent done by glissading. So after an eventful afternoon and evening, we had a rather uneventful hike back to the car and a well-earned meal at the bar.

Overall, climbing The Kraken was one of the more memorable day-hike adventures I've had in the two years I've been lucky enough to live in Unalaska. Between the rugged features, the incredible views, the isolation, solitude, and unique perspectives of the area, it's a classic that I would recommend to any adventurer who is looking for something beyond the more commonly climbed peaks in the area. And it's a peak that you'll be glad you climbed, whether you live here and plan to come back, or you're visiting for a few days and will never be returning. Either way, if you like a good scramble with enough exposure to make you feel alive, you'll love The Kraken.



Sam Zmolek starting the knife-edge ridge walk. Photo by Cathy Reis.

In Search of Ithaca

Text by Jérôme Sullivan; photos by Lise Billon



Our arrival on the Revelation Glacier. Our first trip with so much food!

The roar of the plane's engine slowly faded away in the distance, leaving Lise Billon, Pedro Angel Galan Diaz, Jeremy "Djamel" Stagnetto, and me alone in a deafening silence. The rays of the sun slowly dipped behind the mountains, leaving us in the cold shadow of towering peaks. Moments passed by before anyone spoke, and then, it was barely a whisper.

"Putain..." ("Wow" in French.)

Names of places are often associated with fantastic visions. For me Alaska rimed with Jack London, the gold rush, bearded guys with toothless smiles and grimy fingers plucking banjo strings. I also thought of Eskimos running behind their sleds and building igloos before darkness swallowed up the landscape.

Obviously times have changed. Clint Helander, our local friend, welcomed us with a big smile displaying a keyboard of teeth with no black notes. The disappointment did not last as he showed us pictures of the gold nugget we had crossed the ocean for: the northwest face of Pyramid Peak.

We had been warned; the weather in the Revelation Mountains can be cold and miserable. This year, though, the southern parts of the range were very dry. So dry our pilot, Paul Roderick

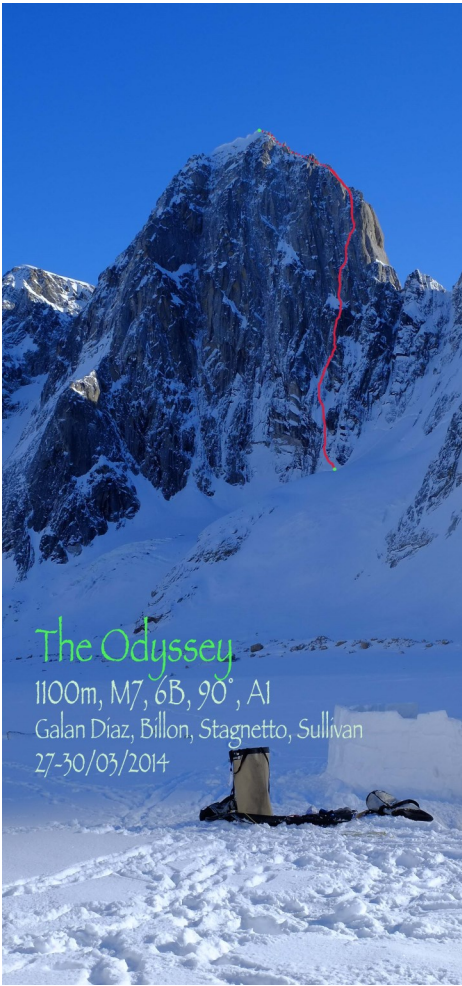
of Talkeetna Air Taxi, was not sure we could land the Beaver on the glacier. We had to wait out the storms in Talkeetna, all the while not knowing if we would be able to get dropped off into the Revs.

During this lapse of time, Talkeetna revealed itself as a place not so far from how I had imagined it. Dirt roads and bars filled with dead animal skins, bearded men playing bluegrass and drinking moonshine. The Fairview Inn would definitely be one of the highlights of our trip.

Finally the high-pressure system came in and we were catapulted, with a serious hangover, onto the Revelation Glacier.

"Putain," whispers Djamel in awe, as we looked at the surroundings.

Pyramid Peak loomed over us, tall and proud. Veins of white streaked through dihedrals, slabs, and roofs, creating illusions of climbable lines. Our eyes instantly traced at least 10 possible lines on the west face. And suddenly, we are all speaking together, comparing what we see and feel. But before the night engulfed the range we needed to build our base camp.



The Odyssey
 1100m, M7, 6B, 90°, AI
 Galan Diaz, Billon, Stagnetto, Sullivan
 27-30/03/2014

Route of "The Odyssey" on Pyramid Peak. The "West Face Gash" attempted by Irwin, Vonk, and Welsted is on the left. See page 10.

The next days were spent trying to fix the first 300 meters of the direct line we had envisioned on Pyramid Peak. Things didn't go exactly as planned. The rock was very compact, leaving almost no possibility for protection and the white smears were often more snow than ice. The blades of the tools often left two deep, vertical gashes revealing the rock beneath. In two days we climbed 150 meters only to dead end in a blank slab. Our dreams of a direct line pummeled away as we rappelled down.

In order to boost our spirits after this deception we climbed a beautiful ice smear on an unclimbed shoulder of Mount Patmos. We call this summit Mount Boucansaud in remembrance of a friend who passed away. We climbed the line in 20 hours, camp to camp. The climbing was pretty straightforward. A streak of bright blue ice, sometimes quite thin, but always consistent, was pasted on slabs and ran through dihedrals. It led us to a snow corridor and to the summit. We would call the line "The Iliad" (900 meters, WI5) as a prelude to "The Odyssey."

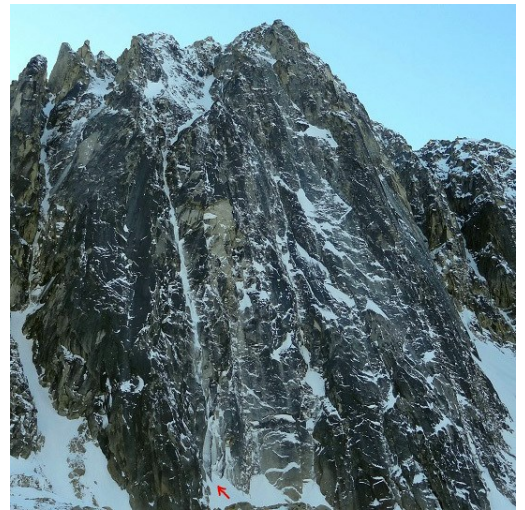
And there we were, back at base camp again. Beautiful summits surrounded us and yet we stayed focused on our Pyramid. Like a call of sirens, we were magnetically attracted to the wall again. Our previous failure seemed to have boosted our motivation but we couldn't seem to find a logical line. We headed out anyway, as the weather forecast seemed to be good for the next week.

The approach was short and, at the foot of the wall, we decided to try a line more to the right. A few easy pitches led to vertical snow. These unprotectable pitches were quite scary. After

some classic mixed terrain we found a good bivy site. The next day was the key to the summit. A steep and compact section seemed to give way to a series of chimneys and dihedrals. I took the sharp end of the rope and found an improbable smear of ice glued precariously onto a slab. As I shuffled my feet across, it crumbled away, destroying the key to the route, but I'd gained access to the steep dihedral that we'd seen from below. After a fall that left my jacket gutted like a fish, I reached the snowfield above. The summit seemed more real than ever! An overhanging chimney plugged up with snow, some more technical pitches, and we reached our second bivy.

The next day started out with a steep rock pitch. The temperatures were cold and made the climbing difficult. After a rightward traverse we gained a long and steep gully system that eventually gave way to the summit ridge. The air was saturated with big frost crystals rising with the air currents, making our arrival on the arête kind of eerie. The mountains behind sparkled and shone as the sun hit the floating particles. One hundred meters of "kitty-litter rock" separated us from an easy ridgeline and the summit. We all agreed that this was the worst rock quality we had ever seen. Barely brushing the rock literally made it crumble apart! We bivied again just beneath the summit, the night was cold, but we were right below the summit and nothing could go wrong then.

"Walk a week or fly an hour." As I sat in a comfortable chair, sipping a local ale, my eyes fell upon the flight service company's slogan. It all felt so unreal, like a dream you forget in an hour – the time of a plane ride. The need to climb, the cold, the struggles, the fear are all gone, a vague memory, quickly evaporating like the beer bubble rising to the surface of my glass. Looking down at my used shoe soles, I thought of the famous saying: nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed. So where did all that sticky rubber go, what did the metal of my crampons turn into? Was the path that led us to the Revelations so long?



The amazing ice smears of "The Iliad." Arrow shows start of route.

Twentymile Transect: Peak 4360 and ?

Text and photos by Wayne L. Todd



Carrie Wang viewing the Knik Glacier and the route of the March 2012 Knik-River-to-Twentymile-River Traverse.

The Questionable Beginning:

Camp setup halts abruptly when Carrie Wang realizes she left the stove fuel in the car. Fifteen wilderness miles and 2,500 feet separate us from the nearest road. Adrenaline logic produces: one large black sack that can potentially melt snow during warm sunny hours, a half dozen alder stalks protruding through the snow might produce an hour “twiggy” fire, or we may have to drop immediately into the headwaters of the West Fork of the Twentymile River for serious fire building (which would end our trip and start a hasty, nasty, brushy exodus).

Having already forgotten a second ski pole (though quickly remedied by a call to Andy D in Girdwood – thanks), we’re sensing “perhaps this trip isn’t meant to be.”

She quickly tries an email text message to Alpine Air with our Delorme InReach and we then bide our time. Within an hour they respond with options (of varying cost). (And luckily we’d left car keys with Alpine Air at their suggestion).

We’re semi-relieved, though I still feel the need to stomp out a large “THANK YOU” on the snow-covered lake we’re camped on in Bagg Pass. While we wait for our afternoon fuel drop, we skin up nearby Peak 4360 in the blazing sun for mountain views of the deep Chugach and of Whitecrown, our next objective. We

see some of our Knik-to-Twentymile route of a few years back. The mixed-snow-condition ski back to camp is still fun, especially sans skin directly to tent. With every helicopter that flies over, I leap out of the tent. The airspace is quite busy with helicopters today.

Late afternoon two red “birds” pass low to the west, one circles down, lands in the “O” and plops a familiar looking sack to the snow. Immediately confirmed, two red fuel bottles with pumps, we’re totally relieved. Our trip is back on track! (But have we forgotten anything else?).

Direct sun is blocked by 7 p.m., even from our light maximized mid-lake site, though we’re rather exposed to wind (we didn’t have any). A late-night tent exodus reveals an intense star-filled sky.



Carrie Wang and the view from the summit of Peak 4360.

Revealing the Revelations

By Darren Vonk



John Lauchlan Memorial Route—The Angel (9265). Photo by Darren Vonk.

Ian Welsted, Kris Irwin, and I received the John Lauchlan Memorial Award this year to go climbing in the Revelation Mountains of the southwestern Alaska Range.

Flying into Anchorage for the first time as an alpine climber is intense. Anchorage itself is a typical city, but the mountains that surround it are virtually screaming to be explored. Just a few minutes on a highway and a person is literally on his way to utopia...

We landed at 1 a.m. on April 2, 2014, and booked into the hotel for a restless night of sleep. Before leaving Anchorage for Talkeetna in the morning, we stopped for a few items at AMH, REI, and breakfast at Middle Way Cafe on West Northern Lights Boulevard for a rather tasty breakfast burrito. Upon finishing our errands we met the Go Purple Shuttle to Talkeetna; our driver, Gary, a charismatic individual, picked us up on time. We crammed our duffels and skis into the van and were off. The shuttle took us north to Wasilla and we made a quick stop at Carrs to purchase groceries for the ensuing three-week stay in the range.

We arrived in the small town of Talkeetna and ripped into the Talkeetna Air Taxi parking lot at 5 p.m., hopeful to catch a flight that same night to the Revelation Glacier. Luck was on our side, as we weighed and signed in and retrieved some more fuel for

the stoves. An hour after arriving in Talkeetna, Paul Roderick flew us onto the glacier in one smooth swoop. At that point, I had spent 19 hours in Alaska and was then in terrain in which few had ventured.

Landing on the glacier, we encountered the French team that just spent a solid two weeks in the range and was surprised to see us a day early. They had great success on some routes and enjoyed a fair amount of excellent weather. The Frenchmen packed up quickly, jumped into the plane, and flew out with Paul.

At 9 p.m., it was dusk, and we were alone with blue skies and big granite peaks surrounding us with multiple routes primed for the picking. Kris Irwin, active guide and owner of "Rockies Ice Specialists," spotted the line for the next day. We set up tents, packed our bags, melted some snow for water, and had a bite to eat. By 11 p.m. our alarms were set and we were ready for a 5 a.m. start.

Beep...beep...beep, the alarm sounded and we woke up rather fast; stoke was high and the white gas was roaring to life. Six liters of snowmelt and quick oats had us literally running out of camp and up a snowfield for our first taste of Revelation granite.

Irwin racked up and was gone before we knew it. The next few

hours were four pitches worth of fun, moderate ice and névé climbing. Irwin finished his block and was done for a while, meaning it was all mine. I tied in, grabbed the rack, and continued upward, climbing and laughing at how good life was at that very moment.

As the day continued, I pulled some great pure rock moves and established a belay at the base of an ice pillar. Spectacular. Off I went, the terrain was aerated and steep, but had good ice where needed and rock to smear against. I tapped my way up and onto the upper névé climbing. After climbing four pitches, Ian Welsted, a tree planter and well known alpinist, took the ropes and gear and pulled us through the upper headwall in a fast, single, 200-meter pitch all in simul-climbing mode; we were on a ridge and crested the skyline.... that was simply the top of the buttress, the summit loomed well in the distance and a formidable ridge separated us from the true summit.

We brewed up and talked strategy. Irwin was determined in his decision and Welsted and I concurred. Off we went; Irwin took the lead, weaving and bobbing to the summit of The Angel via a new route. We rappelled the southeast face of The Angel and ended our first day.

The Angel, "John Lauchlan Memorial Award Route" WI4 M5, 1,200 meters.

Gear: Standard mixed rack up to 3". Six screws, assorted pins.

A few days of stable calm weather had Dike Peak looking in perfect condition. We ascended. The route climbed with moderate difficulty coupled with blue sky and pitch after pitch of ice that in the Canadian Rockies would never be climbable. We discovered a big snow gully and a dike pitch, which climbed surprisingly well and protected even better. A chock stone and varying snowfields brought us to the top of the unclimbed Dike Peak. Although we were ecstatic at our progress, there was a storm brewing, so we left as quickly as we arrived. Three long



Route of "Powered by Beans" on 7800-foot Dike Peak. Photo by Ian Welsted.

rap into a gully had us running down in pure pleasure. Easiest descent I'd had in a long time.

Dike Peak, "Powered by Beans" WI5 M5+, 1,000 meters.

Gear: Standard mixed rack up to 3". Double up on C3s, 0.75", and 1". 10 ice screws, assorted pins.

We woke to sunny skies and calm conditions, a perfect day for a casual outing up Hydra Peak, located at the southwest corner of the Revelation Glacier. We left camp at 10 a.m., skied up a valley for an hour, and climbed a big snow couloir. Six



"The Casual Route" on 7800-foot Hydra Peak. Photo by Kris Irwin.

interesting pitches later had us meeting the ridge at early evening and standing atop just an hour later. Another casual walk down big snow slopes and we were back at our skis, racing back to camp with a tailwind.

Hydra Peak, "The Casual Route" AI4 M6, 600 meters.

Gear: Standard mixed rack up to 3". Small selection of screws and pins.

Days later after watching the west face of Pyramid Peak, we decided to once again attempt a new line up it via the big gash. This route was one of the main reasons we flew into the Revelation Mountains. We had been up this route once before, about 10 days earlier. It had started to snow very lightly, turning this gash into a funnel for spindrift, so we bailed.

Then, at our second attempt, the weather was cooperating and Pyramid Peak looked to be in perfect shape. We retraced our steps from the earlier attempt and moved quickly up the first 700 meters. Reaching our high point, I continued up for a few more pitches, fixing the ropes and rappelling back down to where Welsted and Irwin were starting to dig a ledge for our tent. After a night's sleep I ascended the ropes and brought up the guys. The next pitch offered unconsolidated snow and no ice or cracks to climb, with large overhanging snow mushrooms.

We bailed, spending the better part of the morning and early afternoon rappelling. After returning to the skis in the valley bottom, the cornice that was hanging on from the summit ridge released and swept the face through which the line ascended....

After 23 days in the Revelations we climbed three new routes, one of which was an unclimbed peak... a total of 65 technical pitches. A day later, after a short flight and a long shuttle ride, we arrived back in Anchorage satiated and planning our next Alaskan adventure.

Pyramid Peak, "West Face Gash." Unclimbed... 1,500 meters.

Kinnikinnick: Perseverance vs. the Flow

Text and photos by Wayne L. Todd with Carrie Wang

August 23-25, 2013



Twentymile Lake (left) and Carmen Lake from the summit.

The new, partly-completed Historic Iditarod Trail that travels east from Berry Pass is phenomenal. The major bridge over Rosehip Creek is amazing, despite being “blocked” by a large log. After the bridge, a short, orange-flagged section through first-phase trail construction leads 1/8 mile down to the creek. Older blue flagging follows a game trail east under large trees (elevation 300 feet).

Under pristine blue skies (after weeks of rain), we stop where the north ridge of Kinnikinnick Mountain intersects the game trail (1/5 mile). The “fun” stops here. We’re not psyched about this climb; we have a guaranteed steep upslope bushwhack of 2,000 feet (1,500 feet, actually) and strong doubts if this route would actually go (despite a fly-by [other side of the mountain] and numerous pictures from other peaks).

After a procrastinatory snack we plunge in, and down, as decades of decaying trees created moss covered holes. Devil’s club also lurks about. The first of numerous cliffs forces us to scout for a climbable spot. The brush is still saturated, and despite rain pants, we’re soon soaked. The worst part of the wet brush is the slick footing: the moss is slick, the usually beautiful false hellebore is now an OSHA hazard, and even roots are slick (salmonberry and the unpleasant foot-snaring huckleberry).

Whoever is not leading thwacks the devil’s club leaves, and other plants, so as to make a visible descent route (a good idea). Occasional salmonberries and serviceberries only tease the caloric and psychological output. Numerous cliff scrambles of grabbing brush and roots, along with planting the whippet head bring comments of, “I sure hope we find a better way down.” The packed ice axes snagging shrubbery adds to the experience. We are perplexed by the steepness of this jungle as map contours indicate a lesser angle. I take GPS waypoints. Eventually, a field of thick, wet fern (and false hellebore and salmonberries) slightly increases our tedious upward pace, but physically feels like hiking upstream in a bad dream, and still causes many falls (due to not seeing our feet and foot entrapment). I am very glad to have two poles some of the time (partly due to a recovering ankle); sometimes they’re just plant anchors.

At 1,700 feet we take a break, reminiscing about previous bushwhacks, how difficult it would be to descend this, how long it’s been already, the likelihood of having to abort up higher, etc. We almost turn around. I scout left and right without a pack and propose reevaluating after another half hour, as the next 50 yards looks OK. We transition out of brush into alpine and sun and can finally see the north ridge up close (at least the

next 1,500 feet). At 1 p.m., we break again, still not feeling “in the zone” and set another time check.

Though a shadowed section on the ridge looks too steep, a traverse into a scree gully that bypasses right looks feasible. We make good progress up the alpine rock slope and begin to enjoy limited mid-mountain views. At 2 p.m., traversing right (west) onto the scree/sand/talus/rock slope works, but varies from hard (difficult to edge) to very soft (downhill slide). We get peppered by rockfall; “Yeah” for helmets. In the gully we try for the firmest route, but it’s mostly slidable rock. Back on the ridge, the east view opens up to Carmen and Twentymile Lakes but our focus is on the nearby ridge that looks scrambly. At 2:50 p.m., we tackle it, skirting around really crappy rock sections (after testing). Making progress, I hope this may be the worst part (though I know from pictures there are probably two bad

sections up ahead). We acknowledge the exit will take as long as the climb and we’re already seven hours from our tent at Berry Pass, and descending in the dark would be foolhardy.

The ridge tapers; a bump can be seen in the distance, could that be the summit? We’re running low on water, but don’t take the time to get drips from a remnant cornice. Accessing the bump looks difficult with ridge gendarmes, high exposure, and crap rock. I desperately scan for routes, but am thinking we’re about done.

After a brief discussion, we opt to give it a try along the ridge. We scramble and climb to the right (west), focusing on our next moves, rather than the thought of reversing this (though lurking). A few bad sections, a reprieve, then more exposed sections. The ridge tapers again, I’m actually thinking we’re almost there (and thinking I just want us to be done, and going back, and being down before dark (uninjured), and being safe). The ridge tapers even more and, #%+@, there’s yet another, obviously higher, bump. As I approach it, the ridgeline looks even worse and impassable without rope work; steep gendarmes with high exposure on both sides (we have 100 feet of rope and minimal gear). At 4 p.m., my heart sinks, “I’ve never been so close to a summit and skunked so cruelly.” Carrie is more than ready to turn around, as darkness is already in our exodus.

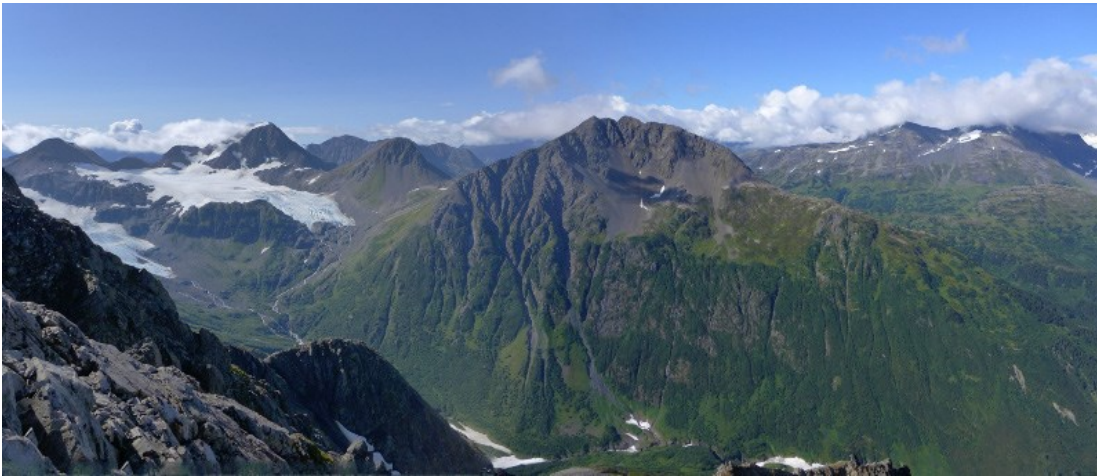
Widening my focus, I see a gully that drops a couple hundred feet down on the left (east) and a possible connecting gully that leads back to the ridge below the summit block, beyond the gendarmes. With logic such as, “we sure as crap don’t want to come back and do this again,” and baby steps of approval, I descend. It goes! I’m clambering up the other gully as Carrie descends as I know this will be a limited-time summit stay. I top out and, what, yet another bump, but this one is close and an easy walk. Finally, the definitive summit at 4:30 p.m.!

The views are grand of the open Twentymile River Valley, iceberg in Twentymile Lake, color-contrasted Carmen Lake, snow- and ice-covered Chugach peaks behind, the rather broken glacier below us to the west, the dogsleds on the Punchbowl Glacier with surrounding peaks ... but we want off of here. We fantasize about one of the red helicopters that have been flying around all day suddenly visiting our location. We leave a register in the cairn, gently worded, in my opinion, about our route; take some pictures; have a quick snack, and are off 15 minutes later with a cold wind at our backs.

Though the reverse route is known, it’s more difficult as we now must down traverse and down-climb. I’m reasonably nervous as a fall could be fatal. “Could I signal the camp on the Punchbowl Glacier with my compass if needed?” We focus on the exodus in



Carrie Wang ascending the gully to bypass a steep section on the ridge.



Left to right: Lowbush Peak, Highbush Peak, Lingon Mountain, and Nagoon Mountain (center) from the north ridge of Kinnikinnick Mountain.

sections; halfway across I see fresh blood on a rock. “Are you bleeding?” “A little bit.” True, but adds to the angst. Though the descent has mostly just one route, our placed cairns add confidence. Then the next bad section, four extremities on different features; only move one at a time, repeat. I see the top of the “scree” gully. “Yes, we’re getting there and only one bad section remaining.” I lightly weight one rock and it, along with many others, careens and bounces down-slope on steepening terrain.

I’m quite ready with two poles at the gully top. The scree-ish gully broadens to a fan and is a quick descent for the first 1,000 feet, but then becomes roll-able rocks. As we so disliked our up-route bushwhack, we convince ourselves that this slope connects well to the snow-covered stream below (though there would still be a horizontal bushwhack back to the trail, AND despite ruling this out earlier from cliffs seen from below). But this slope is dry (though I slide twice on the beautiful slick heather). Before the point of no return (cliff mayhem), we regain our vision and senses and traverse around to our ascent route.

The descent ensues, along with bugs (red flies) bad enough to dope up, but surprisingly the foliage is now mostly dry. Good thing, as its still slick, and slips are part of the routine. We find our ascent route and follow it only where convenient. After a couple cliff sections where we have to crawl back up and play poke your head through the brush above yet another impassable precipice, we find our route again and diligently stay on it. This is the first time I use waypoints in brush to help retrace our route. We slowly lose elevation until one last cliff, then the holey section and then back to the comforting tall spruce trees. We wait to break until the “bridge to nowhere” (another one). Hopefully this trail gets completed. At 9:45 p.m.: dusk, and all this “fun” in just two miles.

On trail, we notice odd small wave print boot tracks heading up and guess as to wearer (female camped at Berry Pass?). In the dozen-downed-trees section, we gulp our treated water. Though near dark, it’s easy to stay on this wide, generally low-angle trail without a headlamp. I startle at two dark trailside objects in a tree grove. Only stumps, but Carrie insists on headlamps after this. The

waning moon rises behind us around 11 p.m. as we continue many “heyooos” and “heybears.” Walking on pressure-treated lumber with brush encroaching from the sides seems odd. The minor stream crossing, numerous nearby stream sounds, and we’re approaching Berry Pass. “Sweeeeet,” our reflectorized, undisturbed tent (midnight, 16 hours later). For efficiency, we eat snack food and save the dinner until morning.

With the sun caressing the tent, we enter a bug-free, blue sky day. A smooth, slowly descending trail with two poles in hand – “NICE!” We’re shaded for the first third of the exit and ironically get more soaked now from bordering dew-soaked brush, as we refuse to don rain pants. And more of those funny boot tracks, with another boot track. We guess whether the wearers left last night or this morning. By the high stream crossing, we meet two packrafters who camped out last night en route to Berry Pass. They met two other male packrafters hiking out last night in drysuits and water shoes who had lost their boats and all gear shortly after putting in for the Twentymile float. Mystery solved.

We meet only a few more people before the “T,” but encounter a steady stream as Alyeska nears and the helicopters fly frequently overhead. We contact a Girdwood friend for lunch and meet other friends just exiting a Glacier Creek float. A great ending to a very mixed weekend.

Oddly, we saw no wild animals the entire trip, though we heard howling the first night.

Was it really that bad? Fall is a great time for mountaineering and ...

Post Script: Route information, GPS points, and recommendations (don’t climb this route or this time of year) are available upon request. As we were probably the first hikers to the pass after weeks of rain, the salmonberry bushes along the way were loaded; not so much after we went by.

“Thicker than Thieves” on Mount Hayes

Text by Angela VanWiemeersch; photos by Jason Stuckey, unless otherwise noted.



The eastern aspect of Mount Hayes showing the route of “Thicker than Thieves.” It starts up the previously unclimbed northeast face and continues to the South Summit and then to the true summit. After reaching the summit John Giraldo, Jason Stuckey, and Angela VanWiemeersch descended the east ridge of Mount Hayes. Photo by Angela VanWiemeersch.

One, two, three in a row, Jason Stuckey, John Giraldo, and I stood at the base of Mount Hayes with our chins high in the air, staring at the northeast face. We passed the binoculars back and forth, discussing how to approach the beast, in which style, and by which aspect. I remember feeling like we were the three musketeers, getting ready to embark on an epic battle. However, I later realized that we were more like the three Ninja Turtles avoiding a run-in with their archenemy Shredder.

The northeast face of Mount Hayes is an object of intimidation as well as inspiration. Its face of poor-quality rock has many runnels, prows, and snow slopes; a marvelous face of features to climb. The only catch was that nearly every line was threatened by seracs, including our originally planned line. So face-down the cards went; we decided to fold. It wasn't worth it. We decided to try to climb the line on the far left with the least amount of overhead hazards. Moms and Dads would be psyched all over, from Alaska to Michigan.

Night went, morning came, and soon thereafter we ditched our skis and headed up and over the bergschrund. John blasted up the first block of steep “snice,” placing gear in small rock outcrops when he could. The gear was always in stupid places

that were sketchier to get to than the actual climbing. So on cruiser-terrain we didn't worry that much about the gear and kept pushing upward. We swapped leads in blocks while simul-climbing just about everything until the top 1,200 feet of the face.



Brewing up at the second bivy in a rad cave below the South Summit of Mount Hayes.

At that point, we started pitching things out here and there when the climbing got trickier. We experienced icy snowfields, super-fun rock moves, and calf-burning pitches of glacial ice. From there, we thought it was a straight shot until I led a mixed pitch to the edge of a cliff. I traversed out left and set up a belay

smelly alpine climbers playing Tetris with body limbs and sleeping mats. We made it work and we were stoked.

In the a.m. we savored the radical exposure of our bivy and gazed onward toward the sexy face below the main summit. Soon thereafter, Jason led out of the bivy and headed



Angela VanWiemeersch following Jason Stuckey's lead on the knife-edge ridge the morning of the second day.

in hopes that the terrain above didn't cliff out as well. As I handed the rack to John, I suddenly realized which Ninja Turtle John was. As he flew out of the belay and styled the exposed crux I had no doubt in my mind he was Raphael. No, he did not talk with a Brooklyn accent, but he had that fiery, strong-willed, go-for-it attitude. Not to mention a witty comment here and there to keep me giggling all the way up the route.

Jason led us up some steeper ice pitches to a knife ridge as the sun went down. We were psyched to have finished the face. The cold temperatures settled in and we were getting sleepy. Our current location didn't provide for a good bivy. John cruised up high on the ridge looking for a place to dig, but it was too steep and all ice. He eventually struck gold and found us the most amazing snowy cornice to sleep beneath. It was such a lucky find, really the only thing around. We dug out a trench as much as we could, but it was still only wide enough for one grown man to sleep comfortably in. So there we were, three

up and over to the other side of the ridge. This would be the start of what seemed to be the never-ending knife-ridge traverse. During this traverse the sky filled with low clouds, the wind kicked up, and visibility got bad. The terrain ahead of us was a maze of ice and snow. It was going to be a gamble with or without good weather. We regrouped to discuss our plans. We didn't even know if there was going to be a plausible route through the craziness. Our options were to either go for it or turn around; because once we ventured onward there would be no easy way to go back. Luckily we were all on the same page and opted to continue. That was one of the coolest moments of the climb for me. Three different people with three different perspectives, but we were all on the exact same wavelength.

We consulted a zoomed-in photo of the glaciated maze of the south buttress. Jason stepped forward to point out a path where he thought the route would go. I considered Jason's Ninja Turtle identity to be Leonardo. He was the wise big

brother. Jason had spent almost the last decade of his life in the mountains of Alaska, exploring the beautiful giants. He is an endless encyclopedia, well researched and experienced to say the least. I love his dedication.

As we stood before the icy mess, he knew exactly what we were looking at and how to best approach it. So on we climbed, through the crazy maze for hours and hours, over mushrooms and snow bridges, crevasses, and seracs. It was all so wild up there, so surreal and unlike any other place on earth. The moon seemed like the best comparison, so far away from other life forms with no color in sight.

After a long day of cold and super-windy route-finding craziness, we found a rad ice cave to bivy in. It was amazing. As we dug a pit and melted water, the light-pink alpenglow laid softly upon the beastly mountains around us. We were higher than each and every one of them. It was easily the most inspiring moment of all my climbing experiences. I took in each and every moment with disbelief and awe, realizing how completely satisfied I was in this cave high above the horizontal world. I felt so lucky to have made it there safely and with the company of such amazing people. We crawled into our sleeping bags, pretty tired and loopy from a long day and the previous bivy. But this bivy was quality. I slept like a rock. We all did.

In the morning the business began. I led us out first thing in the morning toward the South Summit, one snow bridge at a time. We were happy to have made it so far, but a sense of urgency ran through our veins. At this point, we had climbed 5,400 feet of elevation over 1.5 miles. We still had another 4 miles with 1,300 feet of elevation gain, and 7,400 feet to descend with



John Giraldo (right) and Angela VanWiemeersch enjoying the views of the Hayes Range.

very little food and fuel left. Jason took over leading and soon we were standing upon the South Summit.

We dropped off the South Summit and quickly crossed the summit plateau. As I led us over the bergschrund, I found my own Ninja Turtle identity. I was Michelangelo, the baby of the turtles that was overly psyched to be on such a grand adventure. As I climbed up the summit slopes, I passed fluted snow mushrooms and other Dr. Seuss-ical formations. The summit ridge went by in a blur and the next thing I knew I was standing at 13,832 feet, the highest I had ever been, atop the summit of Mount Hayes.

We took some photos, had a snack, and quickly began our descent. Clouds had rolled in, and it had started to lightly snow. Visibility was low and descending was sketchier than I had expected. Jason led us into the abyss. Those next few hours were spent down-climbing thousands of feet of steep snow and ice faces, rappelling over giant crevasses, and weaving our way in and out of crazy glacial obstacles. Another handful of rappels and some down-climbing brought us down to the glacier and back to our skis, 72 hours after we had begun.

As we skied back to base camp, a strong wind began to blow out of the west, with gusts strong enough to make one stumble. I felt like we escaped the oncoming weather just in the nick of time, avoiding any run-in with our archenemies. We sat safely in base camp, drinking scotch and playing Yahtzee while the wind howled for hours. What a trip. We named our new route “Thicker than Thieves” (VI 5.8 AI4 M5R, 7,300 feet).



Left to right: Jason Stuckey, Angela VanWiemeersch, and John Giraldo loving life at the point of full commitment at the second bivy.

Climbing Villarrica Volcano in Northern Patagonia, Chile

Text and photos by Barry Weiss



Villarrica is visible from everywhere in Pucón.

Last December, my wife Joyce and I had the opportunity to spend some time in Chile, and one of our destinations was Pucón in northern Patagonia. The Lonely Planet guidebook lists a visit to Pucón with a climb of the Villarrica Volcano as one of the three top things to do in Chile. So, we had to check it out.

Pucón is an interesting and charming town. It is geared totally to outdoor adventures, with outfitters for climbing and rafting along with outlet stores of Patagonia, The North Face, and similar companies. It was a bit of surprise to encounter this in a small town in northern Patagonia, but there it was.

Villarrica is a 9,383-foot snow-capped volcano. It dominates the town, visible from almost everywhere in Pucón and also from the far distant countryside. Villarrica is one of the most active volcanoes in the Andes; it last erupted in 2008. The town is full of evacuation routes in case it erupts again, just like Alaska has tsunami evacuation routes posted throughout coastal towns. And the volcano is indeed active. People who live in the area say that on many dark nights in the winter, you can see a glow coming from the summit of the volcano. But we were there in December, at the time of the summer solstice in the southern hemisphere, so there was not much darkness in Pucón.

We planned our trip so that we would have a two-day window for climbing Villarrica, just in case the first day had bad weather. But lucky for us, the first day was bright and sunny so we climbed that on that first day. This left the second day free for other adventures.

Local regulations require that those wishing to climb Villarrica use a licensed government guide unless they can provide evidence that they either are a certified mountaineering guide or have extensive mountaineering experience. We're not certified guides, and our mountaineering experience is not



Evacuation route in case of volcanic eruption.



Many groups climb Villarrica every day in the summertime.



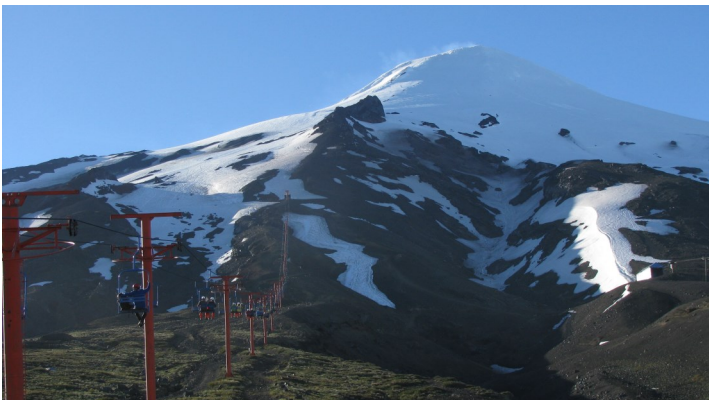
The crater of Villarrica

extensive, so we had to sign up with an outfitter company to climb the volcano.

There were seven of us in our group, plus two guides. There were lots of groups of that size, and some larger, also climbing Villarrica that day and apparently every day. The outfitter can provide all the gear – ice axes, helmets, and even jackets and hiking boots if you didn't bring your own. But you need to bring your own sunscreen because sunburn is a real risk at elevation in the ozone hole of the southern hemisphere.

moving to avoid standing where the wind blew the fumes. We couldn't see down into the bottom of the crater, however. It's too dangerous to stand right at the edge and look down, so we didn't get to see the molten lava deep in the crater. But the huge size of the crater with fumes coming out was impressive all by itself.

The climb ended, of course, with a descent, and the descent included the other highlight of the climb – a mile-long glissade down the side of the volcano. So many people climb and



The climb of Villarrica begins with a ride to the snow line on a ski lift.



View of distant volcanoes from the summit of Villarrica.

The trip starts with a bus ride from Pucón to the base of the mountain, and then a ride up a ski lift. There is downhill skiing on the slopes of Villarrica in the winter, but the lift is used by climbers in the summer. The lift takes you to about 6,000 feet in elevation, which is just at the snow line in summer, so once you get off the lift, you are in the snow.

Then the climb – up, up, up. Not technically difficult, but spectacular on the beautiful sunny day when we were there. It took several hours to ascend the 3,300 feet to the top.

The highlight upon reaching the top, beside the view of other volcanoes hundreds of miles away, was that we were standing on the edge of a volcanic crater that constantly emitted sulfurous fumes. They were so smelly that we had to keep

descend Villarrica each day that there are roller coaster-like glissade chutes in the snow, providing a pre-made track for the rapid descent. Then back to Pucón where there are restaurants, breweries, and everything else one needs to end a perfect day. All in all, it's an interesting and fun trip. We'll talk more about it, along with our multi-day adventure in Chile's Torres del Paine National Park, in a presentation at the August MCA meeting.

Peak of the Month: Amagat Peak

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Amagat Island

Borough: Aleutians East Borough

Drainage: Morzhovoi Bay

Latitude/Longitude: 54° 53' 49" North, 162° 52' 53" West

Elevation: 1065 feet

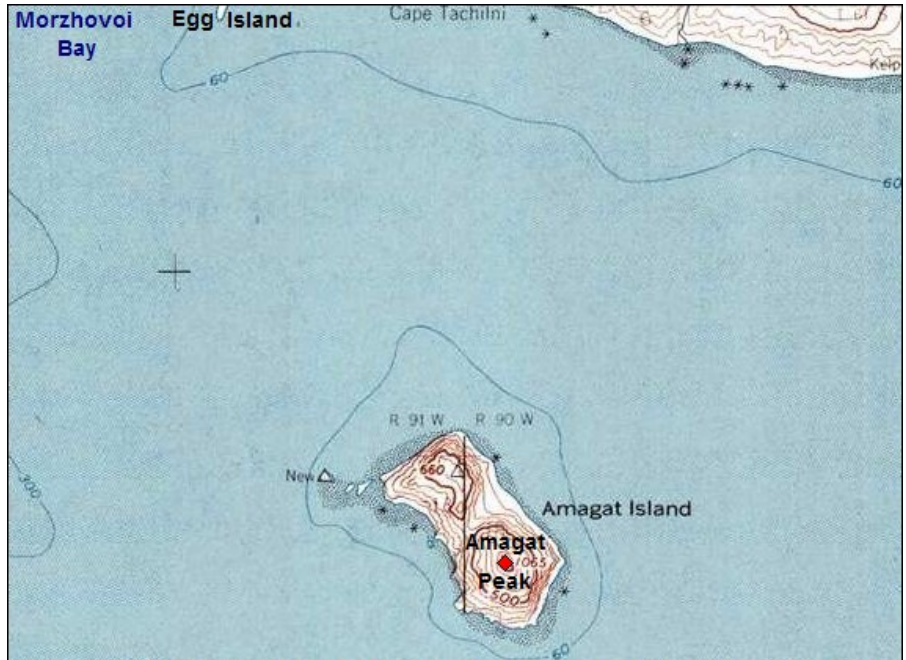
Prominence: 1065 feet

Adjacent Peak: None; Amagat Peak is the sole peak on Amagat Island.

USGS Map: False Pass (D-3)

First Recorded Ascent: July 29, 2008, by Robert Edward Webster

Route of First Recorded Ascent: Northwest ridge



Map created with TOPO!® ©2003 National Geographic (www.nationalgeographic.com/topo)

Access Point: South of the west tip of Amagat Island

Amagat Peak is the highest point of Amagat Island, an approximately-200-acre treeless island off the southern tip of the Alaska Peninsula.

While sailing a catamaran, *The Minnow*, from Honolulu to Valdez, Bob Webster arrived in False Pass on July 27, 2008. The following evening he anchored *The Minnow* south of the small islets off the northwestern tip of Amagat Island. On the morning

of July 29, Webster kayaked from *The Minnow* to a rocky beach south of the northwestern tip of Amagat Island while his daughter Melinda Webster, Mike Fullerton, and Josh Newman took an inflatable dinghy from *The Minnow* to the same point. Fullerton and Newman spent most of their time ashore beachcombing and videoing horned puffins. Together Bob and Melinda Webster climbed up the grassy west ridge of the 660-foot point northwest of Amagat Peak. Melinda opted to turn around at this point, but Bob continued south to the 450-foot saddle and

up the slippery grass of the northwest ridge of Amagat Peak to the summit, where he encountered glaucous-winged gull chicks in their nests and excited gull parents that defecated on his head. He retraced his route on the return. The party then sailed to King Cove for the evening.

Webster rated the trek to the summit of Amagat Peak as Class 2.

The information for this article came from my correspondence with Bob Webster and from the following links, some of which contain additional photos:

<http://hmsminnow.blogspot.com/2008/07/amagat-king-cove-72908-by-bob.html>; <http://www.summitpost.org/amagat-peak/737706>; and <http://xpda.com/alaska08/amagat/>.



Amagat Island and Amagat Peak, as viewed from the northwest. Photo by Bob Webster.

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The *Scree* is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes, and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be emailed to MCAScree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 24th of the month to appear in the next month's *Scree*.

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

Scree Editor: MCAScree@gmail.com Steve Gruhn (344-1219) assisted by Elizabeth Ellis (elizabeth.anne.russo@gmail.com)

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