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# the **SCREE**

## **Mountaineering Club of Alaska**

**July 2017**

**Volume 60 Number 7**



**“There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,  
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,  
There is society where none intrudes,  
By the deep Sea, and music in its roar:  
I love not Man the less, but Nature more.”  
– George Gordon Byron**

**Monthly meeting: **Wednesday,**  
**July 19, at 6:30 p.m.****

***Change of Venue.* The July  
barbecue picnic will be at the  
Bayshore Clubhouse at 3131  
Amber Bay Loop.**



# The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

[www.mtnclubak.org](http://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 outing at 6:30 p.m. on **Wednesday, July 19, at the Bayshore Clubhouse at 3131 Amber Bay Loop.**

<https://www.google.com/maps/place/Bayshore+Clubhouse/@61.126201,-149.9530618,15z/data=!4m5!3m4!1s0x56c899b000000001:0x3e842dff7e1cf0ca!8m2!3d61.124058!4d-149.943285?hl=en>

For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit

<http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=members.form>.

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## Cover Photo

Wayne Todd (left) and Steve Gruhn at about 2500 feet on the northeast ridge of Foundary Peak.

Photo by Harold Faust

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**Article Submission:** Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to [mcascree@gmail.com](mailto: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.

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**Monthly Meeting: Wednesday, July 19, at 6:30 p.m. Change of Venue.** The July barbecue picnic will be at the Bayshore Clubhouse at 3131 Amber Bay Loop. There will be burgers, veggie burgers, and hot dogs. Bring a side dish to share and your plates, cup, and cutlery (paper plates and utensils will be provided for people who forget)!

## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

**Late July or August:** Symphony Lakes Backpacking and Mountaineering Trip. Matt Nedom will be leading a backpacking trip above Symphony Lake with goals of climbing Cantata Peak, Triangle Peak, and possibly Calliope Mountain. He plans to stay two nights, Friday and Saturday, possibly three, sometime near the end of July or in August, depending upon his work schedule and schedules of those wanting to join. Contact Matt at [mattnedom@gmail.com](mailto:mattnedom@gmail.com) or leave a message on his home phone at 278-3648 with your name, telephone number, and days that you cannot participate. Group Size Limit: five people, including the leader.

## Climbing Note

On June 16 Joe Stock wrote to say that James Kesterson, Paul Muscat, Glenn Wilson, and he climbed Peak 6402 in the Double Glacier and North Fork of the Big River drainages in the Chigmit Mountains of the Aleutian Range. Theirs appears to have been the first recorded ascent of the peak. We look forward to reading a detailed trip report in a future issue of *the Scree*.

**Scree Editor:** At its June 12 meeting the Board of Directors appointed Dave Hart as the new *Scree* Editor. Dave replaces Steve Gruhn, who resigned effective with the July *Scree*. Please support Dave by submitting your trip reports and other items to [mcascree@gmail.com](mailto:mcascree@gmail.com) before the submission deadline.

## Choate's Chuckle

- Tom Choate

In what way are safe car driving and safe belaying almost the same?

Answer: foot braking vs. hand braking

Online? Click me!



**Check the Meetup site and Facebook for last minute trips and activities. Or,**

## The Discovery of the Serendipity Spires

Text by Zach Clanton



*The Salmon Shark, showing the route of "Predatory Waters" (5.8 1,200 feet).*

*Photo by Zach Clanton*

*"Glaciers, mountains, rivers, forests, tundra; a landscape rich with places that have never felt the tread of human feet. It thrills me not because I can break first ground, but because first ground remains unbroken." - Kim Heacox*

From June 22 to July 16, 2016, James Gustafson, Reese Doyle, and I spent 25 days exploring the entirely new alpine climbing arena we call the Serendipity Spires in southwest Alaska. This once-in-a-lifetime discovery trip of the "Bugaboos of Alaska" was made entirely possible by the American Alpine Club's Copp-Dash Inspire Award and the Mazamas' Monty Smith Memorial Grant. But our relationship with these mountains is greater than any one trip. The history and meaning of this adventure runs much deeper than simply seeing a mountain on a map and going for it.

As rock climbers who reside in Alaska, we have made it our goal to utilize the thriving bush plane culture and continually search for quality stone on unnamed, unclimbed peaks, separate from areas with previous climbing history. Because of the sheer vastness of the Great Land, the potential for classic new routes not only exists in established areas, but also within groups of peaks that still remain off the climbing world's radar. This simple prospect excites us to no end.

Although our trip was the result of four years of searching, logistical nightmares, and chossy misadventures, my first glimpse of The Salmon Shark was actually incidental. I snapped my first photo purely by instinct, like a moth to a flame, and from a great distance while flying to an entirely different destination. It

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wasn't until months later that I took a closer look at my aerial photos and started the investigation. I had inadvertently taken pictures of these striking rock formations with my long lens, but locating them was not as easy. I had to cross-reference the photograph time stamps and approximate headings on the aviator's compass with Google Earth images and inaccurate topographic maps. After the coordinates were certain, I still had no idea what the rock would be like, how to walk in, or where the nearest landing zone was. I would have to wait another year for the snow to melt and that perfect day to get in the plane once more. As a result, the greatest endeavor was simply figuring out how to approach and arrive at our base camp to begin mapping out the potential of these beautiful spires (not to mention the endless weather, flying, and food/gear packing logistics).

When the day of departure finally came and our bags were packed, a floatplane took us 100 miles from the nearest road into the Hidden Mountains of the Alaska Range and settled into the choppy waters of blue-green Two Lakes. Our feet then took us five days through 16 brutal miles of thick forests, rushing waters, and sprawling tundra to a base camp beneath the collection of granite peaks. Flying, hiking, and climbing in a world of eagles, bears and Dall sheep. Gold panning, camping, and foraging in a place riddled with minerals, blueberries and mushrooms. Through tremendous effort, we discovered our own version of paradise where peaks remain nameless and even the USGS maps don't speak the truth.

Much of the reason I go to the effort to do these exploratory

trips is not just because I believe the best and most classic rock climbs in Alaska are yet to be found. It seems that most guidebook “classics” are either unattainable by mere mortals or dangerous choss piles. We do this in an effort to search the enormous wilderness so that we can contribute to the climbing community as a whole and open up quality areas that generations of climbers will continue to expand upon safely, free of objective hazard. And I can safely say that my mission has been accomplished. We hit the jackpot last year with the initial discovery of the three cirques and the summiting of one (out of four) of the Serendipity Spires, but we have major unfinished business before we unleash this newfound alpine arena to the world.

Read on for more of the story ...

As luck would have it, Reese and I lost the rock-paper-scissors battle to James for the first beautiful pitch of the climb. But when it came time for the final summit pitch that would place the first person on top of The Salmon Shark, it was Reese’s turn and he took the rack with a big ol’ smile.

“Predatory Waters” (pictured above) was our first bit of climbing on Day Eight of the trip and it started out harmless enough. The weather looked threatening, so our plan to walk up and find the start turned into roping up when the clouds began to lift. Then the sun came out and pitch by quality pitch, this ultra-classic route revealed itself to be one of the most wild and exposed adventures I had ever known, topping out on the unclimbed coffee-table summit of The Salmon Shark. The fine red line has been used to represent many classic climbs, but what you don’t ever see is the real context of humans on rock, the hand jams and the high-step mantels. The deep breath and look around the corner to see if that crack system goes is something that is tough to convey through images.

*“Maybe there’s just no truthful ‘big picture’ to be had when you’re still buzzing with the intensity of the details. Maybe the idea of looking at things from a bird’s-eye view and seeing it all isn’t the right way to think about this strange activity of ours. Perhaps it’s more about immersion, about losing oneself willful-*

*ly in the surroundings and the act.” – Christoph Willumeit*

We attempted another objective, but the weather, our schedule, and our dwindling supplies prevented us from completing our intended line. Our first attempt was delayed until Day 19 of the trip because seven days of consecutive rain followed our ascent of The Salmon Shark. Fog and wet conditions then continued to linger. Laden with bivy gear and multiple days’ worth of food and water, our first try didn’t get but four pitches off the ground due to the technical difficulties we encountered early on. And on Day 22, with supplies dwindling and a four-day walk-out still ahead of us, we made our final attempt as light as possible. It was a dream come true and a legendary climb in the



*James Gustafson climbing “Predatory Waters” on The Salmon Shark.*

*Photo by Reese Doyle*

making, but unfortunately cut short by time and supplies. As good as the climbing was, we had to think about our survival in this wild country. And as it turned out, we made it back to the lake for pickup with almost no food and definitely no fishing poles. To this day, the second half of the climb along with its descent is still shrouded in mystery. All we can do is stare at the photographs and imagine what it will be like to be up there again.

*“This is country that you might confuse for a Romantic fantasy: a rendering of the sublime.” – Maya Prabhu*

The lesson was simple. This was far more than just a climbing trip. This was a relationship with our environment. From the moody weather that alternately encouraged and confined our movement to the

herds of Dall sheep that used our favorite bad weather hang-out spot as a back-scratching rock, this wild place dictated our every activity.

Our trusty Black Diamond Mega Light (a.k.a. Mega Dude Sandwich) served as base camp. This was our home and singular shelter for every night of the 25-day trip. During the five-day approach, we were usually posted up on a sandy beach by the river, but most of the time, we were on the only soft patch of tundra around. A “dry” camp was most enjoyable to all of us after a long winter spent camping on glaciers, walking around barefoot amongst the wildflowers and mushrooms. This is not

to say that the camp was not a “wet” one. We definitely had whiskey and it definitely came in handy during the week-long downpour. At over 5000 feet, when storms move in, it can seem like one is living in the cotton-ball version of Groundhog Day. Short breaks in the clouds were often the highlights of our day and a great excuse to get out of the tent and drink more whiskey.

*“A vision of such beauty was worth a world of striving.” – Eric Shipton*

With tools like Google Earth and guidebooks for every climbing destination on the planet, it’s easy for the modern climber to think that pioneering in the old ways no longer exists. Maybe it’s because of our community’s obsession with numbers and statistics. Maybe it’s because of climbing’s recent surge in popularity or that everyone thinks all the cherries must have already been picked by Fred Beckey. There’s no real way to put your finger on it.

Although most of today’s ascents seem to be about repeating someone else’s line in a faster time, different style, or putting up a new line on a known mountain that is so hard and/or dangerous that it’ll never be repeated, the idea of climbing as a means of discovery is alive and well in Alaska. What we seek is genuine adventure in a landscape free of human history, where the actual climbing is a product of exploration, not an Internet search. The Serendipity Spires is a place and state of mind



*Zach Clanton climbing “Predatory Waters” on The Salmon Shark.  
Photo by Reese Doyle*

where the freedom to trace the original line up an untouched peak is still done with one’s own creativity. And this is just the beginning!

As a product and source of media, I feel like the greatest gift we can give to the community that has given us everything is to show people an untamed world that they never knew existed. Images have the power to spark the imagination. And the alpinist’s imagination is the most fundamental tool we possess.

Stay tuned for the full film with more pictures and more information on the rest of the unclimbed Serendipity Spires.



*Reese Doyle (top) and James Gustafson on the first ascent of The Salmon Shark.  
Photo by Zach Clanton*

# Infinite Alaskan Adventures

Text by Will Harris



*Climbing into the night on the second day on the "Infinite Spur" on Mount Foraker.*

*Photo by Ben Silvestre*

Those Rucksackers who regularly read the *Rucksack Club Journal* might have noticed a pattern emerging from the stories that I'd submitted to the last few editions. Each year another article had detailed another expedition culminating in yet another failure to reach the summit of some far-flung mountain. Happily, in 2016 I'd managed to buck the trend, and despite failing to climb the new route we had in mind, my partners and I reached a summit, and via a route that provided plenty of interest. And for once, that year the pence-per-foot-climbed equation came out in my favor, as despite the considerable cost of getting to the Alaskan mountains our time on Denali along with our ascent of the 2700-meter-high "Infinite Spur" on Mount Foraker combined to give a favorable ratio.

Alaska attracts hundreds of climbers each year, all with dreams of summiting its stunning ice-encrusted mountains. Of the 1,500 or so who arrive each season in Talkeetna, the starting point for most Alaskan adventures, around 1,100 attempt to climb Denali, the highest mountain in North America. For the remainder a blend of steep rock, reliable ice, cold temperatures and 24-hours-a-day sunlight provide a perfect playground, providing steep technical challenges on the region's lower peaks.

It was with these steep, technical challenges in mind that Ben

Silvestre, Pete Graham, and I booked our tickets to Alaska for May 2016. Ben and Pete were returning after their successful first ascent of the East Summit of Jezebel Peak, a challenging mountain in Alaska's Revelation Mountains, in 2015 [*Ed. note: see the September 2015 Scree*]. For me, this was to be a return match after my trip in 2013 when a 50-hour sleepless mission on Mount Hunter saw my partner and me reach the top of "Deprivation" on the north buttress, but not the summit of the mountain. This was to be my first expedition with Ben and Pete, two climbers with a reputation for revelling in the harshness that alpine climbing offers, having earned the nickname of "the bivy brothers" due to the numerous nights that they have spent huddled together without sleeping bags on ledges on some of the world's steepest mountains. With six weeks at our disposal, we were confident that we would have time to ride out the inevitable storms and, with luck, get a chance to climb something worthwhile.

The Alaskan mountains provide some of the most easily accessible "expedition" climbing in the world. In place of porters, yaks, and weeklong walk-ins are a fleet of small planes stationed in Talkeetna waiting to whisk climbers off to the glaciers of the nearby mountain ranges. The convenience of being flown from

Talkeetna to the base of your chosen mountain means that a trip to climb Denali can comfortably fit into a three-week holiday, with attempts on other mountains squeezable into two weeks or even less. This is undoubtedly attractive to those with conventional jobs with limited holiday allowances. After a flurry of last-minute shopping in Anchorage, we drove up to Talkeetna. After our obligatory National Park ranger briefing and a final burger and beer, we flew onto the glacier, three days after leaving home.

Our team's first objective was to explore the little-visited Thunder Glacier, a 10-mile ski south of Denali base camp. We had seen photographs suggesting that this cirque of steep faces might hold potential for unclimbed technical alpine routes and, with this in mind, headed in with three weeks of food and supplies to see what we could find. After establishing camp we set off to explore, seeking suitable lines for our first attempts.

In alpine climbing we often talk of "objective" danger, meaning the types of risk that cannot be counteracted by good skill or judgment, such as falling rock and ice. One of the dangers often faced is that of serac fall, seracs being ice cliffs formed where hanging glaciers fall over the edges of cliffs. Sadly, we found the Thunder Glacier to be awash with both serac fall and loose-snow avalanches, greatly limiting the lines that we judged to be justifiable to attempt. The one safe possibility looked to be a steep line of snowed-up rock and ice on the unclimbed north face of Point 9070.

Alarms rang at 3 a.m. and we were soon out into the freezing air, post-holing the few hundred meters from our camp to the base of our intended route. After 200 meters of progressively steepening snow slopes, we reached the first steep section of snowy rock climbing. Using ice axes torqued into cracks and hooking small nicks in the rock, we got up that short section, but what we found above was less than promising, deep unconsolidated snow on 80-degree granite slabs. We persevered for another six rope lengths, before it became obvious that the foot of unconsolidated, powdery snow was presenting both overly time consuming, and at times

dangerous, climbing conditions. We began to abseil, reaching our tents 15 hours after we set off.

Failing to reach the top of an intended route is an experience with which all climbers will be familiar, and as one moves toward exploratory alpine climbing on big mountains in faraway places, the success rate begins to fall further. Pete, Ben, and I had all experienced expeditions where we had failed to climb our intended objectives, and sometimes had come home empty handed altogether. I know of people who have been away on expeditions and failed to reach the bottom of their mountain, or indeed any mountain. The expedition process in itself is hugely rewarding, and that is what keeps people coming back, year after year, regardless of "success." With that in mind, we called for a plane to give us a lift across to Denali base camp, from where we would start the second stage of our expedition.



*Pete Graham (left) and Will Harris at the first bivvy on the "Infinite Spur" on Mount Foraker.*

*Photo by Ben Silvestre*

Like most climbers hoping to ascend technical routes on Denali or Foraker, we chose to acclimatize on Denali's West Buttress. The relatively low height of most of Alaska's mountains, alongside the convenient fly in, is a factor that makes a short trip to the range possible; however, if one hopes to climb on the higher mountains of Foraker (17400 feet) or Denali (20310 feet), then a

sensible approach to acclimatization must be taken to avoid potentially life-threatening altitude-related illnesses. The process of acclimatizing our bodies to deal with higher altitudes involved a process of gradual ascent, with days spent resting at new elevations and return trips to higher altitudes to safely shock our systems into adapting to the lower oxygen levels in our blood caused by lower atmospheric pressure.

Whilst every climber setting foot on Denali or Foraker is well briefed by the National Park Service about the well-documented need for physical acclimatization, the need to acclimatize psychologically is often overlooked. Climbing alpine style on big mountains, just the climber and his partners cast adrift in a vertical world of rock and ice, can be an intimidating experience. By gradually immersing oneself into the mountains, the mind becomes ready to accept the challenge ahead. Our trip up the West Buttress eased us gradually into the Alaskan

experience, preparing us psychologically to try hard on Foraker.

The vast majority of climbers who come to Alaska do so to ascend Denali by its West Buttress, and we were unsure as to whether we would enjoy joining the hordes, worrying that the crowds would detract from the mountain experience. Instead of being overwhelmed by the number of other people around, we enjoyed the social scene, a welcome contrast to the solitary nature of the Thunder Glacier and the intensity that we would later find on the “Infinite Spur.”

Ascending the West Buttress had been described as a high altitude camping trip, and indeed it did involve a lot of carrying heavy loads uphill and time spent cold camping. To disparage an ascent of the route as “only” winter walking and camping, though, would be to miss the point. Hauling sleds and carrying heavy loads at altitude is hard work, and I had a huge amount of respect for the people toiling away, often through the harshest of conditions, to attempt to reach the highest summit in North America.

For our purposes we needed to be acclimatized up to the height of Denali’s 17200-foot camp, and to do this we established a camp at 14200 feet and then made several progressively higher trips up the mountain. We had hoped to have a chance to sneak in a trip up to the summit, but sadly the weather didn’t play ball, and we decided to head back to base camp after our second trip to 17000 feet in order to give ourselves as much time as possible to wait for a weather window in which to attempt Foraker.

The “Infinite Spur” is one of Alaska’s biggest routes, taking a direct line up the chaotic south face of Mount Foraker, soaring 2700 meters from the Lacuna Glacier to the mountain’s south summit. First climbed by Michael Kennedy and George Lowe over 11 days in June 1977 [*Ed. note: see pages 344 through 358 of the 1978 American Alpine Journal*], the route had since gained test-piece status. The difficulty of the route lay not only in the technical challenges that it presented but in its committing nature; it would be extremely difficult to retreat from high on the route in case of injury or bad weather, and the descent from the summit would be long and complicated. After a flurry of repeat ascents at the turn of the century, it had lain untouched, with the exceptions of the tragically ill-fated attempt to climb the route made by Sue Nott and Karen McNeill in 2006 and an ascent by a Swiss team in 2009. There were suggestions that melting ice might have made the start of the route unclimbable, so it was with some trepidation that we made the 10-hour ski around to its base.

Crossing the bergschrund on an outing like the “Infinite Spur” can be the hardest move of the route, psychologically if not

physically. As will be familiar to many club members, in the weeks leading up to a hard, committing and potentially dangerous ascent a lot of time is spent considering motivations and envisioning possible outcomes, along with a small amount of soul searching. Curiously, once a climb is underway I rarely feel the “hunted” sensation that some climbers describe feeling on big routes. Rather, a total engagement in the process of forcing upward progress strips away the self-doubt, with total focus replacing pre-route nerves. This process was magnified for me on the “Infinite Spur;” the biggest climb of my life so far loomed large in my thoughts in the weeks and months leading up to our trip, during the endless training sessions and sleep-disturbed base-camp nights. It was a great relief to start climbing.

By the end of the first day on the spur, we had reached a lower-angled section of snow where we hoped to dig a small ledge on which to camp. Up to that point, we had ascended around 700 meters of steep snow and rock, by then fully immersed in the climbing. After constructing our reasonable ledge, we put up our two-person tent and piled inside. After a much-needed rehydrated meal we lay down to sleep at around 8:30 p.m., only to feel the ledge slowly collapse and the ropes tying us to the slope become tighter. After a change of tactics and a few hours sitting in the tent on what was left of our ledge we opted to give up the false pretense of sleep. We were back outside with bags packed and tent away by 2 a.m.

The next day turned into a gruelling example of when alpine climbing feels like hard work, 24 hours of steep snow, rock, and ice. From freezing-cold, steep rock pitches to sun-baked snow slopes we headed up the 1000 meters that we knew we would need to ascend before finding the next possible place to pitch a tent. At 1 a.m. the following morning, we arrived at a steep ridge and began digging, excavating a platform big enough for our tent, giving one of the most thrilling campsites around.

There is always a balance to be struck on big alpine routes, carrying enough food and equipment to give a margin of safety, but not so much to make sacks too heavy to climb with. To save weight we had brought the smallest single-skin tent available, along with two sleeping bags between the three of us, zipping these together to make a blanket under which we huddled. We equally cut down on the amount of food that we would carry, taking five days worth, which we could stretch to seven if we were forced to sit out bad weather.

Halfway through the second day on the route, we were overtaken by two friends of ours, Colin Haley and Rob Smith, on their way to making a blisteringly-fast single-push ascent of the route. They chose to carry no bivy gear and very little food,



staking everything on their ability to keep moving fast with tiny rucksacks. That was pretty awe-inspiring stuff, showing how far the light-and-fast ethos could be pushed. Even more mind-blowing was that Colin went back to solo the route a few days later, once again cementing his reputation as one of my generation's best alpinists. Carrying no ropes, climbing protection, bivy gear, and almost no food, it's hard to emphasize just how committing an ascent that was, particularly as the tricky Scottish Grade VI crux pitches would be very difficult to down-climb. On his second ascent the weather didn't play ball, leading to an epic stormbound descent with little food or water, from which I gather Colin felt lucky to survive.

By Day Three on the route, we could smell the distinctive odor of our bodies beginning to eat themselves, energy created by breaking down muscle and fat used to supplement the 2,000 calories a day that we were carrying. Another 1000 meters of ascent on gradually shallowing snow and ice fields led upward, and by that evening we were high on the summit ridge, staring into the distance at the endless mountains to the south and the vast tundra to the west. A realization of the raw beauty of our surroundings brought tears to our eyes. After 2800 meters of climbing, we were feeling battered, but knew that we still had a long way to go. We savored the briefest of stops on the summit, then began our descent of the "Sultana Ridge," setting up what we hoped would be our final camp a few hours later.

The descent from Foraker was in itself an alpine climb, involving a traverse of several sub-summits forming the "Sultana Ridge," with over 600 meters of ascent. The good weather that had accompanied us on the spur continued as we traversed these sub-peaks, but as we summited Mount Crosson, the final point from which we would descend back to camp, conditions became distinctly "Scottish." We were by then blindly following our compass down 50-degree snow-and-ice slopes in near whiteout conditions, a nerve-fraying experience at the best of times. Pete plunged through a snow bridge, ending up dangling from the rope inside a crevasse, luckily extracting himself uninjured. We were relieved to drop out of the snow clouds and onto the mountain's lower

face, only to encounter waist-deep wallowing in snow that had yet to refreeze. We pitched our tent for one last time and climbed in at 2 a.m., setting our alarms for three hours later.

Up and away by 5:30, the snow had frozen a little, although we were still sinking up to our knees. A final 400 meters of descent put us down on the Kahiltna Glacier, a mere three miles from our tents. As the last of the snow began to clear, we were treated to a sunny wade across the glacier, threading in and out of crevasses. By this point we were spent, digging deep to get back to camp safely. We shared our last scraps of food, Pete giving me his final energy gel, an act of kindness made all the more significant by the worn out state of our bodies after uncountable hours of hard work. Four hours later we collapsed into our tents.

Back in base camp, we were happy to begin to compensate for the days of calorie deficit inflicted on our bodies, gorging on the tastiest of our treats and gleefully attacking the last of our whisky supplies. Having left skis near the base of the spur, however, meant that the sentiment that it's not over 'til it's over proved true once again. My feet were very sore from the descent, so Pete and Ben very kindly offered to collect my skis with their own. An abortive attempt to collect skis on a sunny afternoon was quickly abandoned after Pete endured a second crevasse fall, with a nighttime collection booked for round two. That was more successful,

but with unfrozen snow, and later whiteout conditions, it descended into a full-on sufferfest. After a two-day wait for clear skies, we were flown back to Talkeetna, to burgers and beers and all of the comforts of civilization, feeling fully sated by our alpine experience.

Ben, Pete, and I would like to thank the British Mountaineering Council, Mount Everest Foundation, Alpine Club, American Alpine Club, Rab, DMM, Mountain House, and Chia Charge for their support. Versions of this article were previously published in *Trek & Mountain* magazine and the 2016 *Rucksack Club Journal*.



*Ben Silvestre (left) and Pete Graham at the second bivy on the "Infinite Spur" on Mount Foraker.*

*Photo by Will Harris*

## Ruth Gorge – May 2017

Text and photo by Sumit Bhardwaj

In May 2016 I was in the Ruth Gorge with Buster Jesik on my maiden alpine – and Alaska – trip. From our base camp, I took a picture of an enticing line on Peak 7400. [Ed. Note: According to the May-June 1981 Climbing (Issue No. 66), Roger Maier, Bob Kandiko, and Paul Kauf named this peak Mount Hemo after their late May 1980 ascent.] The views from the Ruth Glacier were not very clear, but the line did look climbable. Back in the Lower 48, Daniel Tomko and I decided that this was a worthwhile objective and Buster was willing to guide us. With that, we had the group for a climb in the gorge.



On April 29 we landed in Anchorage and drove to Talkeetna and the weather was cooperative enough for Paul Roderick to drop us on the Ruth Glacier in Yankee Victor the next day. After setting the camp we rested, ready to move if the weather cooperated.

The next morning (April 30), we set out for the route on the right narrow gully on the right (southwest) side of Cavity Gap, leaving base camp at around 10 a.m. We skinned up the Ruth Glacier, crossed the lateral moraine, and then up the side glacier to the base of the climb. We started climbing the route at around noon. Because the route was on the north side, the snow was mostly unconsolidated and steep, making the going slow. After a few steep snow pitches, we got to steep snow/rock steps. The snow/rock steps took mixed moves – first on the left, then straight up, over the second step. This would have been fairly straightforward if there were ice or neve.

As we climbed above, the snow got steeper and the gully narrowed at the top divided by a fin. The right side climbed a chimney with thin snow and bare rock patches – always fun to climb a chimney in crampons and ice tools. Loose rock over the last 60 feet was the crux of the route – sketchy mixed climbing (M5) with very careful foot placement. We reached the col as it was getting dark, but there was nothing to anchor off. We went to the other side (left) of the col to set the first rappel anchor 30 feet down.

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*Route of "Raven Bait" on the north face of Mount Hemo's northeast ridge.*

*Photo by Sumit Bhardwaj*

The descent down involved rappelling through the dark. After the first rappel where the rope got stuck and Buster had to climb up and free the rope, it was an uneventful descent to the base of the climb. We got back around 2 a.m. and promptly dug a snow pit for the bivy. After three cold, shivering hours in the snow pit under a tarp, the first light of dawn was very welcome. We started moving down the glacier and were back at the base camp around 7 a.m. the next day.

A few days later, ravens raided our camp and took some of the food, thereby giving the route the name "Raven Bait."

After taking a rest day, we ended up skiing the next few days – to 747 Pass and back, and then to the Sheldon Mountain House. On Friday (May 6), we went for a climb up the classic "Japanese Couloir" on Mount Barrille. The only bad weather on the trip was the two-hour delay on Saturday (May 7) waiting for Yankee Victor to come and pick us up to fly back to Talkeetna.

Can't wait to be back in Alaska next year!

"Raven Bait" – M5, 60° snow, 1,300 feet

Date of Ascent: May 1, 2017 (21-hour push)

Party: Buster Jesik, Sumit Bhardwaj, Daniel Tomko

## Mount Elliott

Text and photos by Marcin Ksok



*Cory Hinds on the summit of Mount Elliott.*

So you might be skiing up the Middle Fork of Campbell Creek and feel the urge to climb something or you might be heading for Mount Williwaw and change your mind for one reason or another. Don't despair, because there is a nice peak in the area for you to summit. At the end of the ridgeline extending eastward from Wolverine Peak sits Mount Elliott. Overshadowed by the mighty Williwaw, it gets less attention, but makes for a shorter, but still enjoyable, day. My mates Greg Encelewski, Cory Hinds, and Elena Hinds also seemed to think so as we skied up the valley in perfect conditions. It was springtime, some slopes already bare of snow, yet the bottom of the valley held good and firm, perfect for cross-country skiing. The way was straightforward; we started from Glen Alps, heading for the Williwaw Lakes. Greg and I dropped our skinny skis at the base of a slope a quarter of a mile short of a large snow gully leading to the summit ridge from the valley floor, just opposite Williwaw Lake. The Hindses brought beefier gear and were hoping for some turns; therefore they continued up the snow-filled gully. We hikers started up the rocky slope and gained the ridgeline, said, "Hi" to Cory, who was just approaching from below, and kept kicking steps in firm snow. The ridge was pleasant, but way too short, and the summit

greeted us too suddenly. On the way down, we ran into Cory and observed Elena as she kick-turned her way up the snow slope. Not being ones to hang around, we descended and got back on our skis as the Hindses were by then making their way up the ridge and getting to the summit. The way back started out great, gliding down the valley, but as we ran into more snowshoers and walkers, the trail that we had put in that morning became progressively less ski friendly and more frustrating. Such is life, I guess. Make a trail and they will follow.



*Cory Hinds on the summit ridge of Mount Elliott.*

♪ I'll Get by (up Point 4050 and Learnard Peak)  
with a Little Help from my Friends, Gonna Try ... ♪

March 25, 2017

Text and photos by Wayne Todd

With Cory and Elena Hinds, Marcin Ksok, and Carrie Wang



*Southeast aspects of Begich Peak (left) and Boggs Peak (right of center) as viewed from Point 4050.*

Desiring new peaks to climb leads me to mappage by Whittier. I climbed Lowell Peak years ago in summer, but the glacier at the time not only had myriad crevasses, which were tolerable, but also an unusual amount of moulins, which was frightening.

The weather has been great for a while, but it's supposed to be rather windy that way. If it were just Carrie and me, we probably would go elsewhere, but we have Cory Hinds, Elena Hinds, and Marcin Ksok on board. Exiting the Whittier tunnel confirms the wind forecast, which heightens our avalanche concerns. It's wintery prepping skis at the cars. The snow is firm on the flats, but as we ascend the Learnard Ridge, a solid whoomph is noted. (I did not want to go up the gut of the gully.) We trade out leads, but soon Cory dons ski crampons and is lead dog for quite a while (others alternate skis on and off). No more avy signs are noted. The ridge snow varies from wind-blown crust to mild powder to elaborate two-foot-high sastrugi. The wind abates.

Another party of five is spotted ascending the ridge. Very odd; is this our alternate universe (AU) selves in an hour-behind time- warp continuum?

Snow-covered peaks are accented by the glistening ocean. At about 2700 feet, we cut left to access the now mostly smooth glacier (gaining another 300 feet before cutting would be preferable to lessen avy and fall hazards). The glacier has drastically receded and no

longer visibly sports moulin fields, though who knows what lies beneath the snow. Carrie, then Marcin, gives Cory a break from leading. The AU team is gradually gaining on us and we make comments about them (us?) not breaking any trail. Perhaps they heard, or minds melded, and deviate north for the pass between Lowell Peak and Learnard Peak. On the upper bowl we skin for Point 4050 first.

Able to skin to the top, we have views of Lowell Peak, Prince William Sound, Carpathian Peak, Byron Peak, Begich Peak,



*Ascending Lowell Peak's south ridge, backdropped by Passage Canal and Whittier.*



*Marcin Ksok skinning up Lowell Peak's south ridge.*



*Carrie Wang (left) boot hikes while Elena Hinds skins up. Bard Peak (center left) and Carpathian Peak (center right) form the backdrop.*

Boggs Peak ... I sense a mutiny as a couple folks are thinking of calling it a day. When I emphasize the proximity of Learnard Peak, a couple males are on board to continue, so not surprisingly we have a fun ski back to the pass and all head for Learnard Peak. And dang, there's that group following us again.

As I lead up Learnard Peak, the powder thins as the slope angle increases. Frequent slips, above a crevasse, lead to everyone planting skis where they are (didn't think of carrying them, but AU does). Knee-deep post-holing soon leads to the top (and snow-filled boots) with peak views to the north. We spread out on the small ridge, mindful of the precipitous drop on the north side. After brief snacks, photo ops and ganders, we turn about and are soon met by the AU team, which is comprised of Joe Stock, Cathy Flanagan (J&C), and party. We have a brief chat and get a "nice booter" commendation. So much for the AU theory.

The ski back to the pass is short on the good snow. We watch two of J&C's party ski the face of Learnard Peak.

Of the three descent options (ascent route, middle glacier, or [skier's] right-hand side), Cory leads the right side. It is efficient, albeit rough and noisy over frozen avy debris and snice. Steep terrain below the pass between Maynard Mountain and Point 4050 convinces us to down-climb one section (easier for those with an axe and a Whippet [good!]). Back on skis, we note the J&C team is descending the middle-glacier route. Soon we're swishing down the gully and out to the flats.

No iceworms were harmed in this endeavor (as far as we know).

Chair 5 offers good post-trip grub, but Cory and Elena semi-fast as Peter Hinds awaits with his first home-cooked meal.

We were 9.5 hours for 9.5 miles, which is a very skewed 1-mile-per-hour average.

I've looked at climbing Learnard Peak from Bear Valley for years, which would entail a good bushwhack and alpine climbing. This was a very pleasant alternative.



*From left to right: Wayne Todd, Cory Hinds, Marcin Ksok, Carrie Wang, and Elena Hinds pose on the summit of Learnard Peak.*



*Cory Hinds poses gloves-free on the summit of Learnard Peak.*

## Foundary Peak, Kenai Mountains

Text by Steve Gruhn

I first became interested in Foundary Peak while researching the Peak of the Month for the October 2013 *Scree*. In the 1960s Vin Hoeman had identified and named Foundary Peak (albeit with a misspelling) to commemorate Alaska's first foundry, which was established nearby in 1793 to support the construction of the *Phoenix (Feniks)*, the first ship built in Alaska. In the April 2012 *Scree*, Dano Michaud reported that Harold Faust, George Peck, Tom Swann, and he had climbed Foundary Peak in mid-August 2011.

On June 15, after Wayne Todd and I met Harold in Seward, Wayne drove us south to Lowell Point. About a quarter mile south of the Spruce Creek bridge, Wayne pulled into the driveway of Harold's friend and parked the truck. We began hiking to the southwest, up the long northeast ridge of Foundary Peak. The brush under the hemlock wasn't too bad and we made quick work to reach a mountain goat trail, complete with the carcass of one of the former trail users.

In about two and a half hours, we were above timberline and hiking up the snow-dappled tundra of the alpine country, enjoying a near-cloudless day. Our route followed the cusp of the ridge above Spruce Creek. At one point we heard a cornice break off and crash down the cliffs toward Spruce Creek well below. Harold kept his dog, Gina, close to prevent her from wandering onto other cornices. Eagles played overhead. Boats cruised along Resurrection Bay. It was a great day to be outside.

As we continued along the northeast ridge, we came to a 902-meter (2959-foot) point, beyond which gendarmes threatened to prevent forward progress. Wayne went ahead to scout out a route and returned with a recommendation that we look elsewhere. Following goat tracks, Harold and Wayne scouted out a route that descended steeply to the southwest. It's amazing to see the terrain that goats routinely travel. Actually, it was amazing to see the terrain that Wayne and Harold traveled quickly while I inched my way downward. They graciously waited for me at the bottom, one of several times they showed their graciousness in that manner.

After descending to the basin southeast of the 930-meter (3051-foot) summit, we hiked up the steep snow, scree, and tundra to attain the south ridge of Foundary Peak. Once on the south



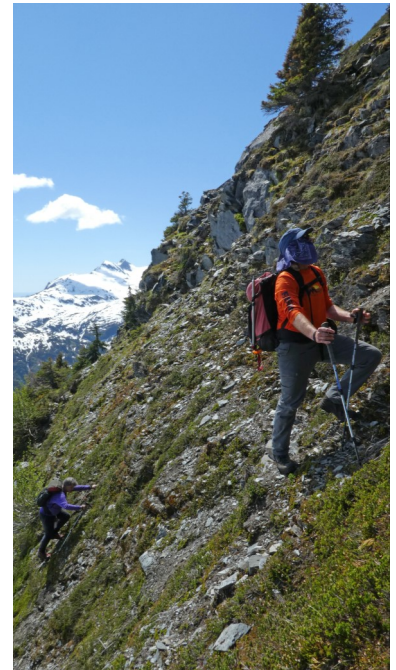
*The northeast ridge of Foundary Peak.*

*Photo by Harold Faust*

ridge, the views of the country to the west opened up. The upper reaches of the Bear Glacier were visible as we strolled to the summit.

We lounged on top for about an hour and then began our descent. We hiked down the south ridge and into the basin southeast of the summit. Once in the basin, we opted to not retrace our steps, but instead chose to continue eastward until we ascended a large snow patch and spur to again attain the northeast ridge below 2500 feet. I recommend our descent route, which avoided Point 2959 (902 meters) and the entire upper northeast ridge above 2500 feet, as a faster route to the summit.

We descended along the ridge, admiring the views above tim-



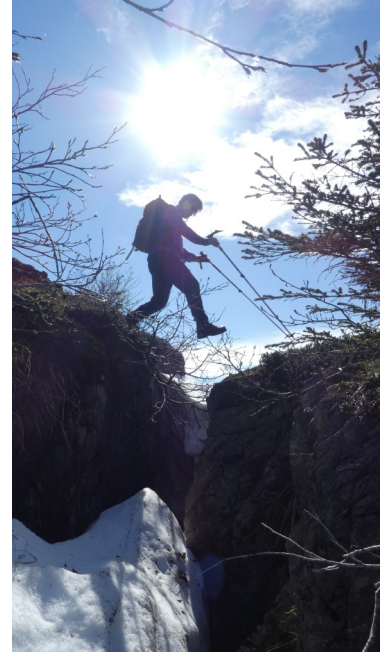
*Steve Gruhn (left) and Harold Faust work up the steep slopes of the lower northeast ridge of Foundary Peak.*

*Photo by Wayne Todd*



Steve Gruhn (left), Gina, and Harold Faust on the northeast ridge of Foundary Peak. The summit as at top right.  
Photo by Wayne Todd

berline. We tried to follow our ascent route, but the brush and downed timber pushed us off route. I became separated from Harold and Wayne (who were north of me and probably a lot closer to our ascent route). Through some bushwhacking and crawling around downed timber, I became further amazed at the ability of mountain goats to find the path of least resistance. Eventually, I came out onto the goat trail and waited for all of two minutes – probably because they had already waited for me much longer while wondering where I was – for Wayne and Harold to join me. Together again, we hiked back to the truck, enjoying another beautiful day in the Kenai Mountains.



Steve Gruhn leaps across a mini-chasm near timberline while descending the northeast ridge of Foundary Peak.  
Photo by Wayne Todd



From left to right: Wayne Todd, Steve Gruhn, and Harold Faust on the summit of Foundary Peak with Callisto Peak (left) and Dos Peaks (center) in the background.  
Photo by Wayne Todd.



Steve Gruhn pauses on the upper northeast ridge of Foundary Peak. The peaks on the background skyline are, from left, Paradise Peak, Tiehacker Mountain, Hearth Mountain, Mount Eva, Mount Alice (rising directly over Steve's head), Mount Godwin, Kindling Mountain, Mount Mary, and Santa Ana Peak.  
Photo by Wayne Todd.



From left to right: Steve Gruhn, Wayne Todd, and Harold Faust on the summit of Foundary Peak with Resurrection Bay and the northeast ridge in the background. Steve's missing out on this year's bandanna fad.  
Photo by Wayne Todd



View down the northeast ridge of Foundary Peak from the summit.  
Photo by Harold Faust

## Mount Rainier (“Ingraham Direct”), May 18–20, 2017

Text and photo by Gerrit Verbeek



"Ingraham Direct" and Kautz Glacier routes. Google Earth imagery with Earth Point overlay of USGS topographic maps.  
Kautz Glacier route data provided by Nick Baker.

The Chugach Mountains have choss; the Pacific Northwest has weather. I arrived at SeaTac in the rain after sunset on the night before we planned to start climbing Mount Rainier, a timetable familiar to anyone with more dreams than vacation days, and the car-rental center warned that it had been snowing in the Cascades. The forecast was more hopeful, though, and in the next few days my friends and I would hit the first stretch of good weather Washington had seen in the past six months and get up and down the tallest mountain in Washington (14411 feet) in 56 hours. Kilian Jornet would laugh or maybe yawn, but we had fun!

I'm sure enough has been written on Rainier, but nothing in *the Scree* for a while (last account by David Lynch, in October 2011. Thanks to Willy Hersman for his peak index!). The first goal of this article is to pass on beta because we prepared for the Kautz Glacier and wound up summiting via the “Ingraham Direct,” two relatively rare routes. The second goal is to give a tiny bit back to *the Scree* for all the entertainment and information nearly 60 years of issues have provided. The third goal is to commemorate a personally significant trip for me. My first big mountain with the name recognition, the altitude, and which actually required

mountaineering skills instead of just hiking uphill until you run out of uphill!

Our climbing group converged on Whittaker's Bunkhouse, outside the National Park road to the Paradise Trailhead. Nick Baker was the ringleader, meticulous for things that can be planned (routes and gear) and lucky for things that can't (weather windows, quality of grandparents). Igor Kwiatkowski joined, too, stepping further outside his comfort zone than the rest of us, but handling it all perfectly, and still smart enough to glissade while I wear the skin off my feet snowshoeing down a ski hill. Seth Oliver was a last-minute fourth member, coming off of Denali after getting up to 17000 feet in two weeks and choosing Rainier as his cooldown ... then instigating a trad climbing session the day after that.

The initial plan was the Kautz, which covers 6.2 miles and 9750 feet of elevation gain from Paradise to the summit. The route crosses the Nisqually Glacier at around 6100 feet, then tracks up the Wilson and Kautz Glaciers and over Point Success to the summit. The “crux” is two low-angle W12 pitches, which reportedly go with crampons and one tool. Nick and Igor had met



while attempting, but not summiting, via the Kautz in a guided group the year before. Past entries on the Rainier Rangers' blog showed the first ascents of the Kautz were typically late May or early June, and the guiding company Rainier Mountaineering, Inc. (RMI), does not recommend the Kautz until the middle of June. The entire route is in the avalanche danger zone; it's comparatively isolated and may not have ranger or guide services nearby. Early this May Mount Rainier had three feet more snow than expected on the mountain and spring storms, which would cover the ice climb and increase avalanche risk. RMI considered the conditions no-go. Despite being prepared to tackle the route, by the week of the trip we were in agreement that the "Ingraham Direct" would be more sensible, with the Disappointment Cleaver as a backup.

The "Ingraham Direct" route covers 8.5 miles and the same 9750 feet of elevation gain from Paradise to the summit. The route was open for the first time in several seasons due to good snow levels, and it was recommended as a fun route that sees fewer ascents than the classic Disappointment Cleaver and "Emmons-Winthrop" routes. So with the decision made, we started Wednesday morning huddled around smartphones at Whittaker's, waiting for news that the road into the park was plowed and open. Good news came through at 9 a.m., so we drove up to Paradise, got a permit at the ranger station, collected blue bags for human waste, and hit the trail. There was deep snow right out of the parking lot, so the snowshoes were quickly in use. Those of us with MSR-style snowshoes really enjoyed the heel elevators and the grip of crampon-edged frames compared to tubular frames. It's also worth mentioning that Rainier gets coastal snowpack similar to, but slightly heavier than, Chugach snow, and most guiding services recommend 24-inch pickets for snow protection. The lower mountain was covered in mist with about 100 yards of visibility, but route-finding was straightforward, thanks to snowshoe and ski tracks that all followed the same route past Panorama Point to Camp Muir. We heard several avalanches or rock slides ripping off the Nisqually Glacier to the west and were happy with the decision to not attempt the Kautz. We popped out of the clouds around 9000 feet

and came into Camp Muir (10080 feet, 46° 50.135' North / 121° 43.920' West) right at sunset. The shelter had plenty of room in it and we enjoyed some dinner and views of Mount Adams and Mount Saint Helens while chatting with a guided group. They hadn't summited and their scheduled trip was ending, so despite the excellent weather window opening up, they would have to walk off the mountain the next day. Tough break!

On Thursday we slept in while the guided group packed up and left, and around 10 a.m. we cached our snowshoes and some extra gear in the shelter cubbies, roped up for the first time and cramponed up the 1.6 miles to the Ingraham Flats (11030 feet, 46° 50.705' North / 121° 44.039' West). We were the second group on the scene, after a group of about half a dozen clients guided by International Mountain Guides (IMG). They generously offered us some of their cooked dinner and we set to work probing and digging out a level camp spot with a windwall. I learned that, when looking for safe spots with no crevasses on snow-covered



*Left to right: Nick Baker, Seth Oliver, and Igor Kwiatkowski crossing the caldera to the summit of Mount Rainier.*

glaciers, convexities (hills) are generally good and concavities (slumps) are suspect. In any case, we found a full 280-centimeter-probe-length of good snow underneath us. The snowpack was two to three feet of heavy snow over a harder layer, which had to be sawed out in blocks. A lightweight aluminum snow shovel sheared while prying blocks out, but a burlier aluminum avalanche rescue shovel worked well.

After setting up camp, we ate some dinner, melted water, and went to sleep around 9 p.m. For a while we convinced ourselves that we were low on fuel, but that turned out to be a needless scare because the fuel was spread between a handful of partially-filled bottles. IMG had said they planned to start their summit push around 2 a.m., so we strategically set our alarms to leave a half hour later and benefit from their bootpack! The plan worked brilliantly, and we fell in behind them and an even larger RMI guided group of about 20 climbers who had come up directly from Camp Muir. Watching the procession of headlamps inching toward the summit in the dark was iconic. As the sun rose we caught up to the group in front of us, but stayed behind them for safety and out of courtesy. We can pat ourselves on the back for going unguided, but their wandering

and bootpack saved us a lot of energy. They had even placed pickets with quickdraws on the dicier slopes and fixed a short ladder across a 600-foot crevasse. Those few steps might have been the coolest part of the climb for me!

After those few steps plus a few thousand more, we reached the caldera at around 9 a.m. under endless clear skies and a driving wind. The last steps to the summit went at a slow, high-altitude, five-hours-of-sleep shuffle: a “2 a.m. Carrs-on-Gambell walk” as Seth called it. But the attitudes were higher than the oxygen levels, and the standard congratulations, fist-bumps, and photoshoots commenced. Nick, Seth, and Igor found the summit register and graciously signed for all of us as I headed off around a portion of the rim. After admiring the scenery for a bit, we roped back up and headed down, getting nuked by the sun all the way back to the Ingraham Flats. Once there we took a rest and started melting water because we were all a bit dehydrated. With our fuel scare still on my mind, I tried some stove-less ways to melt water. From now on, I'll be carrying black garbage bags on any glacier trips, because a black bag full of snow slung under a tripod of hiking poles in the blazing sun is an excellent snow-melting device. I'll also remember some sunblock ChapStick, because for a week after the summit I had a lot to smile about, but kept cracking my lips.

The plan had been to hang around for another day to practice snow anchors, prussik, and just hang out on the mountain, but things were fast-forwarded a bit when Nick began developing a wet cough, mild shortness of breath, and some significant acute -mountain-sickness-related nausea. As a physician's assistant and a mountaineer, he knew exactly what was up. He was developing high-altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE), which is the most commonly fatal manifestation of altitude sickness. He had come prepared with dexamethasone, but didn't have nifedipine on hand (the best medication for HAPE, besides rapid descent) due to some issues with the pharmacy. The dexamethasone helped dampen some of the symptoms, but the definitive treatment is to descend rapidly so we packed up in a hurry, pounded most of our liquid water, and pointed our feet downhill. New groups were arriving at the Ingraham Flats and I'm sure our Gucci campsite was quickly reoccupied! We stopped at Camp Muir, consulted with the ranger and traded some whisky and powdered lemonade to a group of skiers for 1.5 liters of delicious hot water to rehydrate a bit more. The snowshoe trek down from Camp Muir was long, but beautiful, despite the urgency to descend. Nick was feeling better as we dropped elevation and we all smiled and cursed at the alpine touring skiers zipping past us on the way down. Goal for this winter: learn to ski with a pack on! We dropped back into the clouds at around 8000 feet and finished the last few miles in a

ping-pong-ball whiteout with less than 20 yards of visibility. Seventeen hours after waking up for our summit day, we were back at the parking lot, loading up gear, filing our permit at the Ranger Station to formally check out (\$250 fine if you don't!), and heading for beer and burgers. The HAPE cleared up once off the mountain and the quick descent meant we had enough time left before our flights for trad climbing at Little Si, good food, hanging out with Nick's relatives in Washington, and exploring Seattle, but this story has to end somewhere! All in all, an absolutely fantastic time!

Thanks to Nick Baker for corrections and clarifications.

### **Beta and Red Tape**

#### Current Route Conditions

The Mount Rainier Rangers' Climbing Blog

<http://mountrainierconditions.blogspot.com>

Area avalanche forecast (sub-alpine elevations)

<https://www.nwac.us/avalanche-forecast/current/cascade-west-south/>

Mount Rainier weather report

[http://www.atmos.washington.edu/data/rainier\\_report.html](http://www.atmos.washington.edu/data/rainier_report.html)

#### General Route Descriptions

Mount Rainier: A Climbing Guide, by Mike Gauthier

“Danger Zones: Mt Rainier,” by Michiko Arai, 2014  
*Accidents in North American Mountaineering*

Free 1:24,000 Washington topographic map files for  
Garmin GPS units

<https://www.gpsfiledepot.com/maps/view/95/>

#### Required Permits

[www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/climbing.htm](http://www.nps.gov/mora/planyourvisit/climbing.htm)

Climbing Cost Recovery Fee (1 per person, currently \$47  
per adult)

Climbing Permit (1 per group, free but remember to  
properly check out before leaving or face a \$250 fine)

Optional reservation request for Camp Muir

## Peak of the Month: Easy Peak

Text by Steve Gruhn; photos by Danny Kost

**Mountain Range:** Eastern Chugach Mountains

**Borough:** Unorganized Borough

**Drainages:** Amy Creek and Klu River

**Latitude/Longitude:** 61° 4' 24" North, 143° 36' 57" West

**Elevation:** 7263 feet

**Prominence:** 2713 feet from Peak 8050 in the Blackrock Creek, Lost Creek, and Klu River drainages

**Adjacent Peaks:** Broome Peak (7730) and Peak 7150 in the Amy Creek, Blackrock Creek, and Klu River drainages

**Distinctness:** 713 feet from Peak 7150

**USGS Map:** McCarthy (A-7)

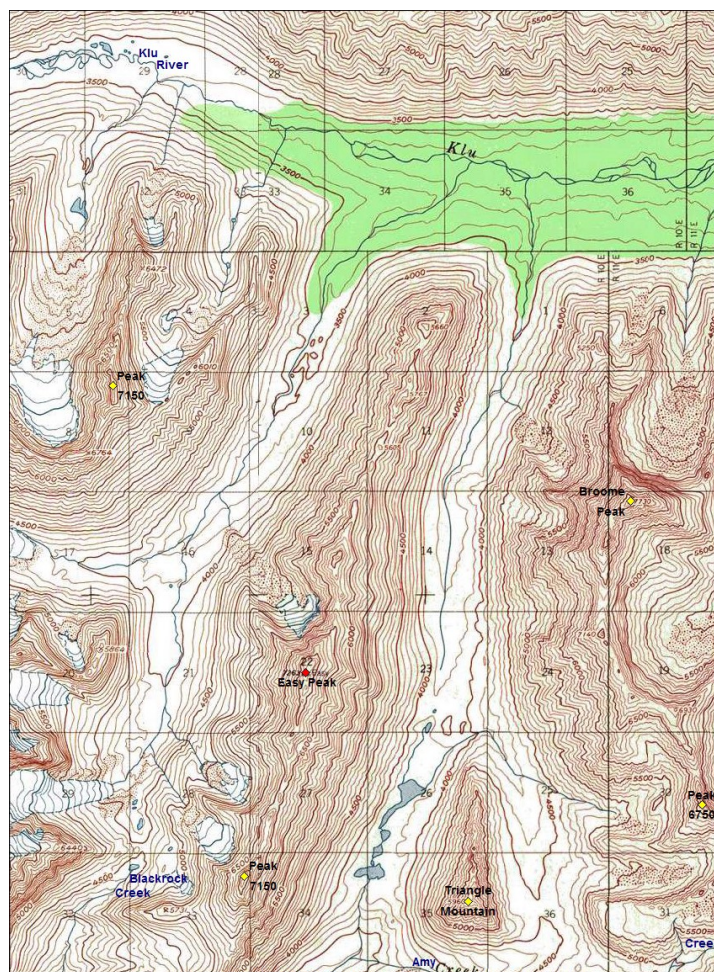
**First Recorded Ascent:** 1951 by a USGS party

**Route of First Recorded Ascent:** Northwest ridge

**Access Point:** Base of the northwest ridge



*Southwestern aspect of Easy Peak (the highest peak in the center of the photo).*



In 1951 a U.S. Geological Survey party flew by helicopter from Chitina to the base of Easy Peak's northwest ridge. The party made a three-and-a-half-hour pack up the northwest ridge to the summit. At the summit they installed a standard brass survey disk, stamped "Easy 1951," and set it in an iron pipe at ground level.

Bivouac.com unofficially calls the peak Easy Peak. The name was undoubtedly derived from the stamp on the bench mark installed by the 1951 USGS party.

I don't know of any other ascents of Easy Peak.

The information for this column came from USGS field notes available at <https://www.geocaching.com/mark/details.aspx?PID=UV3836>, from bivouac.com (<https://bivouac.com//MtnPg.asp?MtnId=22971>), and from my correspondence with Danny Kost.



*The view from the summit of Hanagita Peak with Easy Peak in the right foreground and Broome Peak behind it in the center.*

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Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address below. If you want a membership card, please fill out a club waiver and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter or have questions about your membership, contact the Club Membership Committee at [membership@mtclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtclubak.org).

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

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be in electronic format and pre-paid. Ads can be emailed to [vicepresident@mtclubak.org](mailto:vicepresident@mtclubak.org).

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

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