

the **SCREE**

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

July 2020

Volume 63, Number 7



JULY MEETING: Canceled

**“Accept no one’s definition of
your life; define yourself.”
– Harvey Fierstein**

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McCarty Peak

Crazy Notch Ridge

Moonlight Mountain and Sunlight Mountain

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Peak of the Month: Thorne Mountain

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

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

Cover Photo

*Meg Inokuma leads Carrie Wang up the lower snow slope of
McCarty Peak.
Photo by Wayne Todd*

JULY MEETING The July 1 meeting has been canceled due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

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

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Hut Needs and Notes

If you are headed to one of the MCA huts, please consult the Hut Inventory and Needs on the website (<http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm/Huts/Hut-Inventory-and-Needs>) or Greg Bragiel, MCA Huts Committee Chairman, at either huts@mtclubak.org or (907) 350-5146 to see what needs to be taken to the huts or repaired. All huts have tools and materials so that anyone can make basic repairs. Hut-meisters are needed for each hut: If you have a favorite hut and would like to take the lead on checking on the hut and organizing maintenance, the MCA would greatly appreciate your help!

HIKERS....

The Mint Hut will be closed for maintenance:
July 17 - 19.

The Bomber Hut will be closed for maintenance:
July 20 - 22.

If you are hiking in these areas, bring a tent and plan to camp outside.

— Greg Bragiel, MCA Huts Committee Chairman

All EKLUTNA TRAVERSE HUTS – Eklutna Traverse travelers should take trash-compactor bags along for depositing human waste onsite. Use 5-gallon bucket lined with trash-compactor bag; place tied bag into onsite human-waste barrel. Human-waste system WAG bags have been used inappropriately. WAG bags are for packing out, NOT placing into onsite human-waste barrels. If you want WAG bags, contact MCA Huts Committee Chairman Greg Bragiel at 350-5146.

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

Online? Click me!



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

Announcements

COVID-19 Announcement

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all MCA-sponsored trips, training or other activities will require a COVID-19 waiver to be signed by each participant at the beginning of the trip, until further notice. MCA trip leaders and event organizers will have hard copies of the waiver signed by all participants, including the leaders, before the sponsored activity starts. See page 22.

Eklutna Traverse Hut-Maintenance Trip

Alpha Aviation generously donated helicopter time to execute a hut-maintenance trip. On May 17th, Brad Nelson flew to Hans' Hut and Pichler's Perch. Vent modifications were installed, Hans' Hut's window shutter was replaced, and waste barrels were delivered. A trip report and videos are viewable at this link:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uF5LpNhny8O4VIR1obsW4iw5OyXCCqg1/view?usp=sharing>.

Alpha Aviation owner Chad Emswiler is offering a 20% discount for MCA members for the rest of 2020. Alpha Aviation has a helibase at the Knik River Lodge at the end of the Knik River Road, with direct access to many climbing areas. See www.flyalphaair.com and www.alaskahelicoptertours.com for more details.

Jonathan Rupp Strong

Mentorship Program

We're back! The MCA Mentorship Program is relaunching. We encourage mentors and mentees to continue to minimize the spread of COVID-19 by acting responsibly and following local, state, and national guidelines. To learn more about the program or to sign up to become a mentor or mentee, please email mentorship@mtclubak.org.

Calendar Photo Contest

The MCA is launching its annual photo contest for its 2021 calendar! Information about when, where, and how to submit your photos will be announced on the MCA's website and Facebook page in mid-to-late July. We'll also send a brief e-newsletter to current members. Remember, the 2021 calendar will be vertical photos only! We can't wait to see your awesome adventures.

Trips

June 19: MCA Annual Summer Solstice Campout on Flattop Mountain. No leader.

July 10: Rabbit Lake (currently on hold)

August 7: Williwaw Lakes trips (currently on hold)



The Mitre on October 25, 2019, from Mile 2-1/2 on the Eklutna Lakeside Trail.

Photo by Frank E. Baker

McCarty Peak (6450 feet): Harding Icefield Traverse, Kenai Mountains

Text by Wayne L. Todd

With Meg Inokuma and Carrie Wang

May 12-15, about 45 miles

This touch-and-go is slightly less bumpy, so Joey, our pilot, makes another loop and lands us six miles north of McCarty Peak. Stepping onto the snow, I'm surprised how firm it is, at least at 11 a.m. This bodes well for our objectives. Joey takes off, in his wheel-skied Cessna 185, and heads northeast for Seward. I've never flown around or been on the Harding Icefield previously and am impressed by the rugged steepness of the peaks, especially now plastered with rime.

Carrie Wang, Meg Inokuma, and I gear up for ski glacier travel with me in front, Carrie in the middle with the sled, and Meg third, which is the order for most of the trip. The geographic scale is larger than expected, especially once traveling by foot, but three hours later we are making camp at 5000 feet just east of McCarty. From our earlier flight above the south bowl, we already have a probable climbing route planned.

Though it's after 5 p.m., we skin below the southeast ridge for a closer look of the route, but fully equipped if we decide to climb this evening. I have doubts, as the southwest face is baking in the sun. The initial snow slope looks fine; though the upper section will be the crux, which I'm guessing that alone will be a couple hours. Skis off, crampons on (after a crampon exchange), and the kick steps go in, with Meg and me switching leads partway up. As we level out near the steep rimed rock, I lead again, which is my preference. So far, so good. Through a cleft, down slightly left into a snow gully, and up again, placing occasional pickets. Glancing at Gaia, it looks like the top is just above. "How easy was that?"

After everyone is belayed I clamber up the "last" section to "Oh, crap," despite the summit only 40 yards distant, the first glance of the narrow ridgeline between is disheartening. Vertical to the left (south) with cornices and very steep rime on the right. The others aren't enthused about this route, but it's worth a try and we're so close. I traverse horizontally, kick, plant, move the axe, kick, plant, move the whippet, shove the small cornices off the south side, repeat, placing a picket every 20 to 30 feet. The very steep sections are actually separated by short, wider sections. This is quite doable! The exposed rock does not offer much for slinging, but I find



*Towers of Decision at sunset from the team's second camp on the Harding Icefield.
Photo by Wayne Todd*

two suitable placements, one quite secure, for a fall or descent off the south side.

Meanwhile, though quite focused on the climbing and other members, the views are getting more and more stunning. The icefield dramatically drops off

to multiple fjords; many rimed, jagged peaks jut up through the ice, the low angle light caresses the snow ... I also notice smooth snow slopes on the southwest side that run almost to the ridge. The second slope also happens to be below the good rock anchor. One last easy bit around a rock and up more rime with a pronounced side hole, not quite large enough to crawl through, and "hell, yeah", on top, with 360-degree, gob-smack views, it's 8:30 p.m.

We all find a spot on the mini-ridge and Meg and I shoot many pictures. This is one of my best summit views. The north ridge is more dramatically corniced, great for pictures, but glad that wasn't our route. Alas, we

know darkness is not far off, so after half an hour we backtrack to the slung rock. (A continuous snow slope also dropped south from the summit, but there were two horizontal depressions I didn't want to test.) Carrie belays Meg, I belay Carrie, and then we're all three simul-down-climbing. This is



*Carrie Wang (left) and Meg Inokuma at a gateway to the summit ridge of McCarty Peak.
Photo by Wayne Todd*

going quickly and "Crack!", a fridge-sized rime chunk breaks off the rock to my right, "ICE! ICE! ICE!" and I watch as the rime splits up, but hurtles directly toward Carrie and Meg. Carrie self arrest tucks in the snow; two larger pieces are nearly at Meg when she horizontally spins. The larger pieces miss, but smaller ones make contact with both of them. Carrie responds she's fine; Meg is a little slower with a thumb's up. After confirming she's mostly OK and just needs a minute, we take a quick breather, but need off this slope now!



*Carrie Wang (left) and Meg Inokuma below Peak 6316, one of the many rugged, steep nunataks on the Harding Icefield.
Photo by Wayne Todd*

We continue our traversing down-climb a little faster with only smaller rime shedding. From a mini-ridge we see our skis and more hang-fire above. After making sure everyone is intact, albeit cut lip, impacted arms and legs, but functional, we quickly descend to the skis. The light is waning, but after a short, slow, controlled, roped ski, we're back to the tent before dark. After midnight and tasty freeze-dried dinners, we nestle into our two-person Nallo.

The snow is still quite firm from the night's freeze despite our late-morning start. So firm, that as we're traversing our approach ski tracks, the skis repeatedly slip downslope, scales or skins, annoying and energy sapping. The skis go on the back. Ah, much better, the boot hiking is more secure and less effort. Within an hour we're hiking on softening sun-baked snow, so the skis go on again.

After a bit the full Harding Icefield is in view. The scale is definitely bigger than the Western Chugach Mountains. We take careful sightings, as we don't want to head the wrong direction and end up many miles off route. With the great visibility the path is fairly obvious. I angle slowly down onto the main icefield and sight on Node Nunatak, over 15 miles away. The elevation gains and losses out here are very gentle, a hundred feet over a mile, or less. The scaled skis just skim along, the skinned skis ... not so much. I now see why kite-skiers play up here, and maybe crust skate-skiers.

The peaks bordering the icefield pass by perseveringly slowly, which gives me the sensation I'm not actually moving, but on an earth treadmill that doesn't really move forward. We cross wol-

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verine tracks. I can't imagine how many miles they cruise in a day, and without skis! Meg's feet are getting hammered from the many extra strides from skinned skis.

Node Nunatak goes out of sight for a while, but I'm still quite sure that's the straightest track I've ever done. Carrie occasionally comments about the pace and doesn't like one response so I find myself "volunteering" to pull the sled at the back of the rope. We've become accustomed to the almost eerie quiet now for two days: no animals, no wind, no motors, no

commercial aircraft, not even any fixed-wing planes.

Six p.m.-ish is camp time, so we soon have another nice spot, no crowds, with pleasing distant, circular peak views. We're up even before sunrise, so have majestic lighting on the peaks with long morning shadows across the mild bumpy glacier and even a moon punctuating one set of peaks. The snow is firm again, which is even easier traveling than the afternoon one inch of creamy snow.

Before 10 a.m., we're at the base of Node Nunatak, but I don't have any partner volunteers, and voluntolding's not suitable, so we ski north around the corner, Exit Glacier bound. Here it's less obvious where to go and the tendency is to angle right too soon, which would be down the Bear Glacier. Bird songs are heard, and



*Base camp on the Harding Icefield, viewing west.
Photo by Wayne Todd*

later we see a snow bunting. A few miles later, old ski tracks and then fresher tracks, our first human sign. We follow them briefly. Now on the Exit Glacier and approaching the upper trail route, we group up for some mini-decisions. A plane flies over, our pilot with a client. We ski too low below the hut/trail mound and as we're now off glacier and it's my turn, I get to pull the sled up the hill, the first time I've needed skins the entire trip.

The weather is looking fantastic again and the views still luscious, but we decide to keep moving down at the mountain hut anyway. The snow is friendly soft, now in late afternoon. Carrie route-finds with the help of a Gaia'ed trail, though many feet below the snow. My ski "style" is rather different, wide arcing turns in an attempt to keep the sled under constant tension (i.e., avoid getting rammed by it). We pass under avalanche debris, the snow segues

to near isothermic. Ascending any terrain now would really bite. Brush and steeper sections become part of the ski terrain and as the sled towing really starts to get unpleasant, the snow mostly runs out and we're right on the trail. All sled and gear now goes on the backs, coupled with ski-boot hiking, and initial post-hole sections, it's less than ideal down-hiking. It is great to be on a trail, though, and poles really help.

On the greening flats a moose chomps away on spring foliage, our first animal sighting of the trip. The pavilion looks like a great covered area, so by using all my glacier cord, the non-free standing tent is soon fully up. It's great to get out of the ski boots and walking on concrete with light booties is a new sensation. The bird songs are prolific, which is wonderful until trying to sleep.

The mile-and-a-half road walk is an easy morning stretch to catch our truck ride with Joey after a message via InReach, as there is no cell service up that valley. Then back to the airport to complete our loop.

P.S. I've had numerous people respond they want to get on the Harding for various reasons. There is no reason not to. Fly with Joey at AA Seward Air Tours for an easy start and possible easy finish.

I'm curious if any groups exit off the Harding down the Bear Glacier to Lowell Canyon, possibly between Bear Mountain and Phoenix Peak.

A strong team with ideal equipment and firm snow conditions could traverse this in a day.

This is an ideal ski set-up for touring and mountaineering. A wide-scaled, single-camber, early-rise ski with very light Tech binding and, of course, comfortable and light alpine touring boot (Voile Vector backcountry ski, ATK RT binding [Black Diamond Helio another good option], Dynafit TLT 5 shown below).



Ideal ski set-up for touring and mountaineering.

Photo by Wayne Todd



Meg Inokuma (left) and Carrie Wang back on skis with beautiful late-evening lighting and mostly intact after a successful ascent of McCarty Peak.

Photo by Wayne Todd



The Hilleberg tent quite secure at Kenai Fjords National Park.

Photo by Wayne Todd



Meg Inokuma in front of the shelter near the top of the Exit Glacier.

Photo by Carrie Wang

Crazy Notch Ridge (4233 feet), Clearwater Mountains

Text and photos by Slow-Plodding Human Porter (SPHP)



*The intriguing ridge from a lake along the Denali Highway.
Photo looks northeast.*



Among the tussocks. Photo looks north.

Day 22 of Lupe's 2019 dingo vacation to the Yukon Territory and Alaska!

That one's not in the clouds, SPHP!

A gray, low ceiling morning was about over. Light rain had quit some time ago. Well beyond the lake, a long ridge rose ever so slowly toward a big hilltop at the north end. Still time enough for the Carolina dog to do something today, if a suitable opportunity presented itself, but so far the drive east on the Denali Highway had merely been a pleasant sight-seeing trip. That ridge on the other paw ...

You know what, Looper? That's got to be Crazy Notch Ridge (4233 feet)! It's on your list!

With a summit only a little over two miles north of the Denali Highway, what looked like an easy trek exploring the big ridge seemed a perfect choice. A few miles past the lake, the Denali Highway curved east. Crazy Notch was now less than a mile away. A dirt road on the north side of the highway provided a spot to abandon the G6.

August 26, 2019, 12:08 p.m., 47°Fahrenheit, Denali Highway Milepost 46.5 – With the G6 safely stashed, the American dingo was ready for action! Lupe took off heading northeast. Apparently getting to Crazy Notch Ridge was going to be a little more complicated than simply going straight for it. Almost immediately a

slough was in the way. The dirt road Lupe was on curved southeast back to the Denali Highway.

Eh, no problem! Lupe followed the highway 0.33 mile east to the west end of Crazy Notch. No slough here, only a 75-foot-high slope. Leaving the Denali Highway at Milepost 46, the Carolina dog began her ascent.

The whole slope was thick with bushes nearly as tall as the Slow-Plodding Human Porter (SPHP). While Lupe had little difficulty sneaking through this jungle, forcing a way higher against all the branches pushing back down the rather steep slope made progress dreadfully slow for SPHP.

The bushes were wet. Both Loop and SPHP were soon soaked. Fun, fun! Two-thirds of the way up the slope, suddenly the air was humming. Horrors! Hornets! SPHP had gone right by their nest. Unaware of the danger, Lupe stood smiling right below it!

Looper, hurry! Keep going! Up, up! Don't stop!

SPHP was allergic. No damage done. Lupe also escaped un-stung. Lucky!

Reaching the top of the 75-foot slope, the news wasn't as good. SPHP had envisioned Lupe trotting easily across a barren plain. However, it was quickly apparent Loop hadn't reached the



*Gazing back across the vast lower portion of Crazy Notch Ridge. The dried-up pool is in sight not too far away.
Photo looks south-southeast.*

broad easy part of the ridge yet, not even close. Ahead rose a hilly area crammed with bushes. An unremitting bushwhack!

That might have been the end of it, but fortunately animal trails made it possible for SPHP to push through. Each time a trail ended, Lupe sniffed out another one close by. After making some progress, the Carolina dog came to an open spot.

Encouraging! This was more like it! The open ground proved to be a rare respite, but animal trails continued to provide assistance. Carrying on, Lupe soon reached a high spot. Ahead was a ravine, about 30 feet deep. No choice, but to cross it. Going down was easy, but getting back up the opposite side was a chore.

Two more high spots, two more ravines to cross. Each time it got a bit easier. These ravines weren't as deep as the first one, and as Lupe slowly gained elevation, the bushes were getting smaller.

After climbing out of the third ravine, Lupe was finally at the far south end of the long, gentle slope leading north to the summit. This region was still thick with bushes.

Countless animal trails again saved the day. As Loopster roamed north, the terrain became increasingly tussocky. Bushes shriveled away. No rocky ground at all. If Alaska hadn't experienced a drought this summer, this whole region might have been a giant bog.

The farther the Carolina dog went, the easier the trek became. Lupe was closing in on the big rise at the north end of the mountain when she came upon a dried-up pool. The only significant feature of the hill ahead was a rocky point more than halfway up.

After crossing the dried-up pool, aiming west (left) of the rocky point seemed to be the way to go.

Near the rocky point, Crazy Notch Ridge really rolled out the red carpet for the American dingo!

The top of the rocky point turned out to be a flat, brightly decorated shelf. Looper went all the way out to the end. Off to the south, she had a grand view of the enormous lower part of Crazy Notch

Ridge she had just traveled to get here.

The summit wasn't much farther. Another 125 feet higher? Something like that. A super easy slope. Sunshine and blue sky were overhead as Lupe reached the top.

The summit region turned out to be a rounded ridgeline 1,000 feet long. The highest part was a narrower 200-foot-long section toward the west end. A disorganized heap of stones sat at the very top. Just east of the stones, a 20-inch-tall threaded metal rod stuck up out of the ground.

Although Crazy Notch Ridge wasn't at all rugged, its open summit and isolated position provided commanding views. Despite considerable haziness,

what Lupe could see was impressive!

Off to the northwest was a great valley flanked by mountains. This valley split, going around both sides of Crazy Notch Ridge to join with surrounding lowlands. The West Fork of the Maclaren River meandered east out of the valley.

In intermittent sunshine, Lupe took a break at the true summit. Large clouds sailed overhead. Distant views remained hazy as diffused smoke drifted this way from unseen forest fires raging far to the west.

After a while, Lupe explored the lower east end of the summit ridge.

A pond nestled in a saddle leading to a northeast sub-peak. Snow-capped peaks could be dimly seen beyond the Maclaren River. Less spectacular, but more clearly visible, Whistle Ridge was off to the southeast.

The views should have been awesome, but due to the smoke, weren't all they

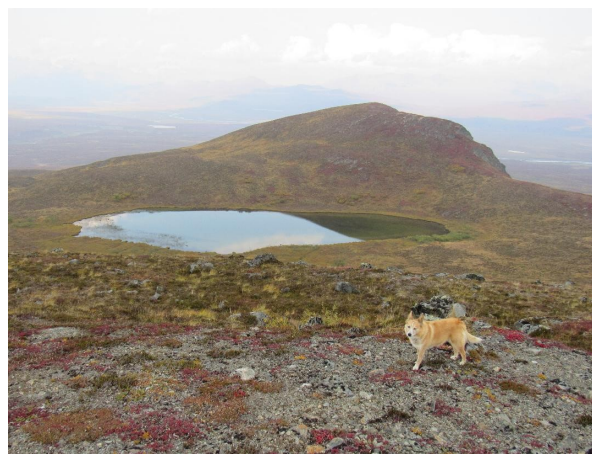
might have been. Returning to the true summit, Lupe ventured out to the far west end. The scene was even smokier here.

Despite the smoke, Crazy Notch Ridge was a terrific vantage point. Lupe and SPHP lingered a long time.

Beyond lowlands to the west-northwest, Lupe could see a large tableland. That whole region was about as high as Crazy Notch Ridge. The Clearwater Mountains beyond the plateau looked like a fun place to explore!



Valley of the West Fork of the Maclaren River (beyond Lupe). Photo looks northwest.



The pond in the saddle leading to the northeast subpeak. Photo looks northeast.

Wistfully, the American dingo sat thinking about it, but the world is a big place. Even if there was a way to cross the wet lowlands, that tableland was well beyond the limits of adventure today.

Two fabulous hours gone at the summit of Crazy Notch Ridge! The great beyond still beckoned. Yet it was time to turn back.

Lupe returned to the rocky point. Once again, she traipsed the brilliant crimson carpet on the way down to the dried-up pool.

Wild and free, Lupe roamed the vast tussocky tundra stretching away to the south.

Near the end, she was excited to see a young caribou!

Not much farther now. The Carolina dog reached the Denali Highway less than a mile east of the G6. Trotting easily along the deserted road, Lupe headed west into the golden sun. (End 7:29 p.m.)

Revised and condensed from an original post at <https://www.adventuresoflupe.com/?p=26932>.



Exploring the tundra plain. Photo looks south.



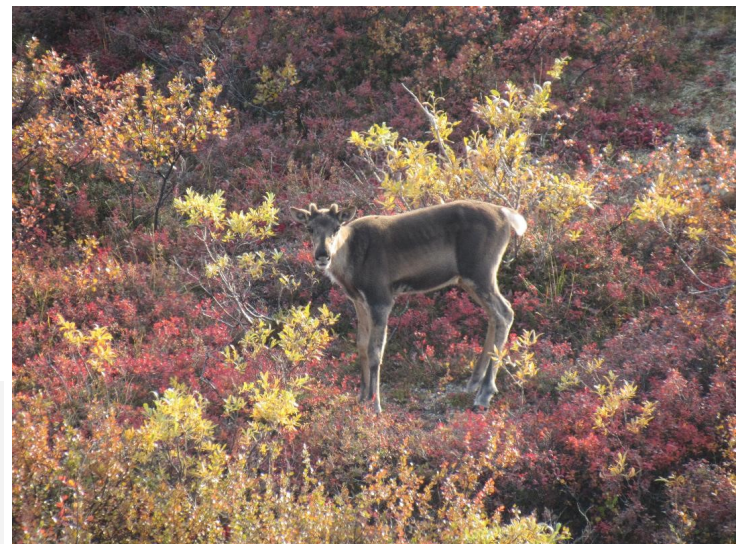
The smoky scene from the west end of the summit ridge. Strangely, the large lake in the foreground wasn't even shown on the topo map. Photo looks southwest.



Leaving Crazy Notch Ridge. Photo looks west.



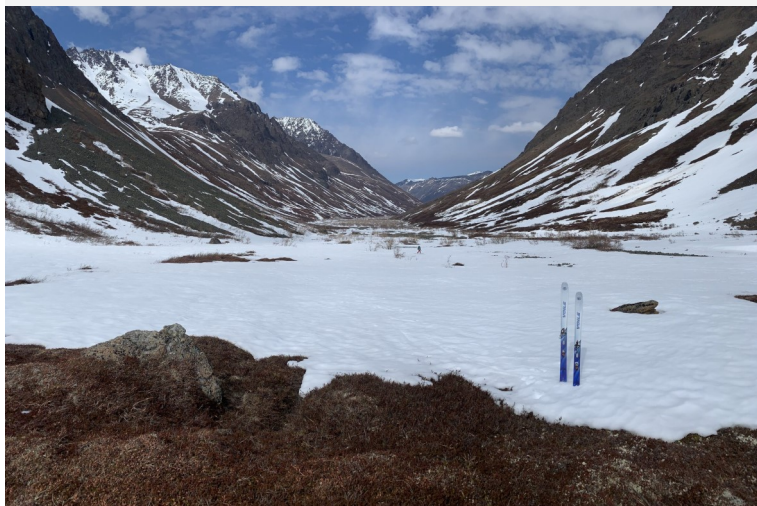
Topo map courtesy of <https://peakbagger.com/peak.aspx?pid=-82974>.



Caribou at the south end of Crazy Notch Ridge.

Moonlight Mountain (6270 feet) and Sunlight Mountain (6390 feet) Overnight, Western Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Mat Brunton



Sam Inouye approaches a perfect tundra camping pad.

I've complained a lot about Alaskan corn cycles. Considering what seems to be dwindling lower elevation snowpacks due to climate change combined with a lack of darkness, corn cycles in Alaska's mountains aren't as reliable as in lower latitude mountains (which have longer spring nights and higher elevation, road-accessible peaks). I skied the Sierra Nevada mid-May last season, and both the quality of the melt-freeze cycles and late-season access far exceed what Alaska offers (sans air transport). The same is true for southwest British Columbia, where I've spent a couple Junes.

That being said, this trip (April 29-30, 2020) did a lot to redeem Alaskan corn in my mind. I skied what was very likely the best corn of my life with Sam Inouye on our descents from Bombardment Pass (in the a.m.) and Transcendence Pass (in the p.m.) on April 29. In fact, the descent from Transcendence Pass back to our upper Peters Creek camp was one of the most surreal of my life: 3,000 feet of descent - a steep couloir transitioning to more than two miles of continuously perfect, mellow corn!

We took the easement to Ram Valley, starting around 9 a.m. and hiked to near the toe of the rock glacier as seen on the USGS map, transitioned to skis, made good time over melt-freeze snow, and were caching our camping gear in upper Peters Creek in less than a few hours. We found a perfect mound of dry tundra for the Megamid tent (so flat and soft I didn't even need my z-fold sleeping pad). While there were areas of open water in the Peters Creek valley, there weren't any close to this perfect camping spot. I was, however, able to dig a quality watering hole through about a foot of firm snow in the creek close to camp. It just took a bit of crawling around with my ear to the snow, listening for running water



The west-northwest aspect of Moonlight Mountain showing the route line to and from the summit (up the center snow line).

through thinner snow cover.

After some tundra lounging and snacking, we geared up and headed for Transcendence Pass with hopes of bagging Moonlight and Sunlight Mountains before the day was over. The climb to the top of the pass was uneventful with good conditions for efficient travel, but the more solar (Eklutna Glacier side) of the pass consisted of rotten snow and rock. We noticed an anchor, but didn't use it, instead down-climbing crud and crotch-deep isothermal muck before we could put the skis on for a short descent to the pocket glacier in the hanging valley above the West Branch of the Eklutna Glacier.

It didn't take long for us to boogie up the west-northwest aspect of Moonlight to the summit. The snow transitioned from corn to moist powder at about 5700 feet and we were able to skin to within a couple hundred feet of the summit. While it looked questionable, we took skis to the top, hoping we'd be able to make a summit descent by weaving through rocks and away from dangerous cornices along the exposed northwest ridge. Descending on skis from the summit, the cornices turned out to be not-so-dangerously overhung, and slivers of snow between rocks provided just enough passage for our skis. After a few hundred feet, the slope opened up and the angle decreased. We stopped on a mellow bench on the west face to get our cached rope and superfluous gear. Then we began our traverse east and then south to the col between Transcendence Peak (Point 6240) and Moonlight that would provide access to Sunlight.

I wasn't sure what route(s) we'd take up and down Sunlight, but an option quickly presented itself: the northwest face. As it would require losing elevation and going out of our way to get to its base, we nixed it for ascent, but kept it open as a descent option. The next option that presented itself was the west couloir. It looked straightforward.

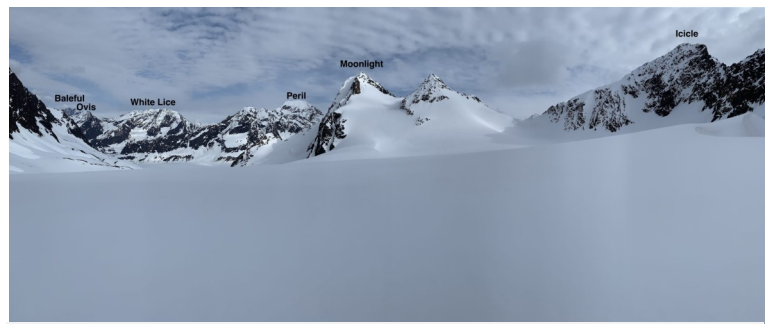
Usually, when looking straight at and up a line it looks more intense than it really is. Thus, we thought the west couloir would be no big deal. That opinion quickly changed. The somewhat-flat evening light hid the camber of the narrow crux sections, and the line seemed (counter-intuitively) to get steeper as we climbed. It was also barely edge-able, "slide-for-life" snow. Ice tools were out for the ascent (and they would stay out for the descent). We decided against a descent of the even more exposed northwest face due to the firm snow, and longer exit it would require.

The top-out of the west couloir put us just a few steps north of the summit pinnacle, which required an easy boulder problem to surmount. After taking in the views for a few minutes, we were locked-in (with ice tools in hand) for the descent. Sam went first and after a few hundred feet and the narrowest crux pulled over to wait for me. I was envious of his about-15-centimeter-shorter skis going through the icy, cambered crux. My longer skis were so cambered I worried about binding release as I side-slipped through this section while plunging my ice tool piolet canne.

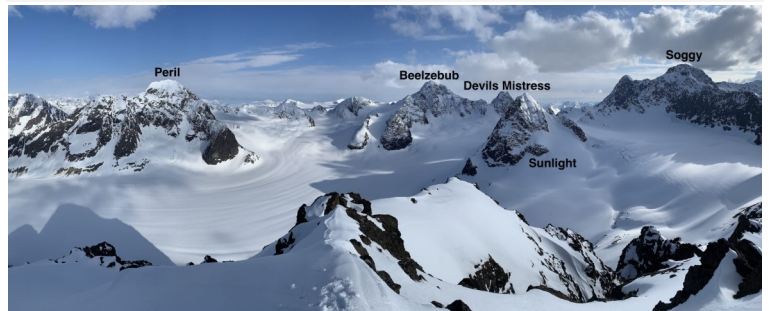
After this gripping section, I passed Sam and he followed a short distance behind as we made "Zen-edge" turns down the several hundred more feet of very firm slide-for-life. While the slope was steep, we didn't have to worry about avalanches or sloughs while skiing on top of one another given the boilerplate-crust snow surface. We stopped at our superfluous-gear cache at the base of the west couloir, re-packed, snacked, had some water, and began the boogie back up and over the Transcendence-Moonlight col and then Transcendence Pass.

After dodging some dislodged choss while climbing the rotten chimney that is the Eklutna side of Transcendence Pass, we were standing atop the pass and gearing up for the sublime sunset descent (as discussed earlier) back to camp. Several hundred feet of steep couloir on the Peters Creek side of Transcendence gave way to those two-plus miles of continuous corn. We had hot food and drink as we relaxed in our tundra recliners after a long day. A beautiful and mosquito-free night was a perfect ending to a magical day spent with the best steep skiing partner: Sam Inouye. Raucous ptarmigan sang us to sleep, although one ran into the side of the tent near Sam's head in the middle of the night.

[Ed. note: To view Brunton's video of the trip, visit <https://anchorageavalanchecenter.org/trip-reports/western-chugach/moonlight-sunlight/>.]



Eklutna Glacier peaks from the base of Transcendence Pass.



Moonlight Mountain summit view looking south.



The northwest aspect of Sunlight Mountain (with red line showing our descent down the upper west couloir).



Sam Inouye on the summit pinnacle of Sunlight Mountain.

[Ed. note: Although the peak and pass have often been misspelled as "Transcendence," Barb and Steve Johnson named Transcendence Peak in 1988 after the Carlos Santana song of the same name. To maintain historical accuracy, the Scree has used that spelling.]

The Big OhM: O'Malley Peak (5240 feet) with Meg Inokuma, Front Range

Text and photos by Wayne L. Todd

April 4



Meg Inokuma and some unidentifiable fresh tracks in the upper Ballpark.



Meg Inokuma ascending the west ridge of O'Malley Peak.

Whether a local, smaller peak or a remote large mountain, some situations may be similar, either good and bad.

On a wintery COVID-19 day, after a masked drive with all the vehicle windows open, Meg Inokuma and I hop out at Glen Alps with plans for a full day on a taller local 5000-footer. With six inches of unexpected fresh snow, and a diminished forecast, alternative plans are already head swimming. I note friends are gearing up in the parking lot with classic skis, a more suitable outing for the day. We have snowshoes, and the standard mountaineering accoutrements.

Breaking trail up the skiers' gully, we've already essentially decided just to hike up O'Malley Peak. The wind comes in gusts, which makes layering interesting, or time consuming, with transitions of upper body layers off and on. Fresh tracks that we can't determine cross the upper Ballpark. The weather is quite undecided: mostly sunny skies chase out doom-looking skies, then back again.

With the standard gully looking slightly snow wind-loaded, we opt for the left (north gully). This gully is slightly steeper than its partner, but holding less snow. Hiking up the loose rocks with occasional post-holing does not make for graceful motion, or a fast time. Our parallel, social-distancing (?) tracks across the Ballpark seem odd. Off the ridgeline, sunlight casts dramatic gendarme shadows on small turbulent clouds and air-drifted snow. Small ice sculptures ordain the rock on the north side.

Popping onto the ridge into direct sunlight, the temperature is much warmer, and the snow much softer and stickier. We post-hole along with views ranging from just the tops of peaks breaking above the cloud layer (always dramatic whether at 3000 feet or 15000 feet) to just 100-yard visibility. The day seems brighter than bright with the small airborne snow also being lit up. One glance

off the very steep north side reveals the light phenomenon of the Spectre of the Brocken, our shadows ringed by a circular rainbow.

A snice section lends to donning our Kahtoola microspikes, which are great, except they ball up with snow, just like crampons. A bit farther, I notice a human-sized hole in a small, seemingly innocuous cornice. Peering down this hole from an outstretched position reveals a hole that would likely plunge a human to a bouncing multi-hundred-foot painful death. Yikes, even on just local O'Malley!

We have semi-sunny, windy, but limited summit views, so don't loiter. We still have balling-snow issues descending our up-track. This would be great snowball or snowperson snow.

Back on the Ballpark, we can feel the snow adding an inch to our boots with every step until breaking off at almost a foot. Meg is excited to repeatedly be almost 6 feet tall, albeit briefly and with much added foot weight.

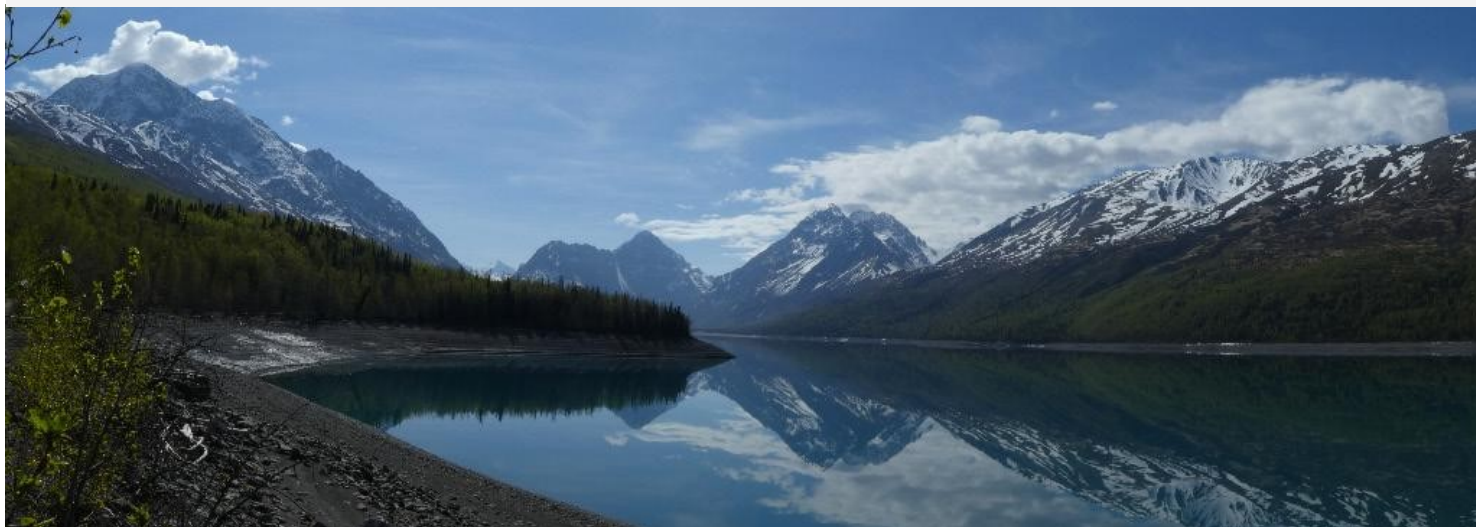
At the skiers' gully, folks, mostly skiers, are making their way up in multiple fashions – hiking, hiking with skis on pack, hiking with no pack and carrying skis, skinning up ... Skis would be mighty fine now, but we're soon back at Glen Alps after an eight-hour outing, quite the long record for O'Malley for the both of us.



Meg Inokuma (left) and Wayne Todd have the summit of popular O'Malley Peak to themselves.

Eklutna Glacier Bike 'n' Hike, Western Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Wayne L. Todd



Left to right: Bold Peak, Bounty Peak, The Mitre, The Watchman, Benign Peak, and Thunder Bird Peak with Eklutna Lake in the foreground.

Perhaps you are a hiker or biker and want to extend your comfort range just a tad? Perhaps you've just never been to that elusive Eklutna Glacier? Perhaps you haven't been to the glacier in decades? Or perhaps you're wondering about access to the glacier for a visit to Pichler's Perch or an Eklutna Glacier Traverse?

First you need a bicycle, as is indicated in the title. A suspension bike is nice for the dirt and gravel trail, ideally full suspension. Any day is a good day to go, but if you want to avoid the initial crowds nearer the parking lot, travel on a week day. The lower non-motorized trail is mostly separated from the motorized road, but if you want no motor sounds, travel Thursday through Saturday.

If you're super fit and just want to speed out there and back, you can probably achieve this in three hours. However, if you really want to enjoy the scenery, flora and fauna, take eye-candy breaks, and perhaps some, or many pictures, plan on a full day from the Eklutna Lake Campground. Anytime from mid-May to the end of September should be easy going. Remember your Chugach State Park pass or money for the parking.

After biking the 12 miles around Eklutna Lake and just shy of the Serenity Falls Cabin (SFC), stash your bike. I tend to lock mine, but

doubt anyone would find it in the woods and procure it. A more realistic concern would be an animal chewing on it, like your seat or tires, though I've yet to have this happen in decades of stashing bikes out there.



Clinging remnant ice of the "Mitre Might" ice climb.

Do not cross the bridge over the West Fork of the Eklutna River, just 150 yards west of the hut. Hike just to the right of the SFC down an obvious trail to the river flats, or hike just to the left of the SFC, finding the trail going south above the river flats. If you travel the river flats you will need to go up to the bench to gain the trail that went left from the cabin before the river forces you into the woods.

Hiking poles are nice where the trail leaves the woods. Occasional rock cairns mark the trail where you might get off route. The trail meanders on and along glacial moraine before another river-flats section. After that the trail becomes less obvious as it gains elevation up recently exposed rock with scree covering.

Why would you undertake an endeavor, you may ask, other than to see a retreating glacier?

Biking around the lake you will see many classic Chugach peaks such as Bold Peak, The Mitre, The Watchman and Thunder Bird Peak as you pedal along the pristine waters of Eklutna Lake (this

is Anchorage's primary water source). Just off-trail numerous trees, shrubs, and dozens of plants (perhaps blooming) greet you on your journey. If you look closely at the ground foliage, you will discover an entirely new world. Farther along the road Bashful, Peril, Baneful, and Benign Peaks come into view.

Anywhere along the way you might see bear (don't forget your bear spray), marmots, ground squirrels, red squirrels, or if incredibly lucky, lynx or wolverine. In the upper canyon gaze at the near-vertical walls and you are quite likely to see mountain goats. Dozens of different birds also may light up your day.

Above the forest and after a rock bench with gentle waterfalls and pools, you round the corner for a short flat gravel bar. The waterfalls cascading down are popular ice climbs in the off season with names like "Mitre Might," "Lucy in the Sky," "Hats off to Herman," "Freer's Tears," and "Road to Nowhere." Across the canyon you might spot a couple dangling ropes that were left over from a project from 20 years ago. Stay left (east) of the river.

As you gain the last elevation before the glacier, up more scoured and slightly steeper rock, you will see the thundering water in upper Eklutna Canyon and hear it even when out of sight. Do give this edge a wide berth as a slip there would be painfully fatal. Pay attention here, though, as it's fairly obvious where to go up, it's not as obvious when you return from the glacier. This section is the only one that involves any scrambling, just a few moves of minor Class 3. Take your time and find the easiest route, but do remember, whatever you ascend, you will likely need to descend.

This levels out to THE Eklutna Glacier. This is a fine picnic spot, though tends to be chilly from down-glacier breezes. From here you see the west shoulder of Ovis Peak, which is where Pichler's Perch is perched. Camping in this upper canyon isn't recommended as rockfall is a real hazard. On a recent outing there, we also had icefall hazard.

On the return, hopefully with a tailwind, you will have a faster ride with more glorious lake views and more Chugach peaks, like Mount POW/MIA, Goat Rock, West and East Twin Peaks, and Pepper Peak, and possibly more animal views.

I really enjoy this outing with a light daypack and light hikers after the years of hauling a heavy pack, sometimes foolishly on my back, sometimes in a trailer, for the myriad adventures that awaited beyond the glacier toe. On this recent outing I was surprised to see the glacier hadn't receded significantly in the last two years and that access from the rock was still quite good.



Thundering falls of the West Fork of the Eklutna River below the glacier.



Carrie Wang at the base of the Eklutna Glacier. Pichler's Perch is on the center background ridge.



Carrie Wang biking along Eklutna Lake with Bold Peak in the center and The Mitre on the right.

Mount Logan (5956 meters [19541 feet]) "Fast and Heavy," Icefield Ranges

Text by Marcin Ksok

There are many ways to climb a mountain, as many as there are climbers. We go up there for varied reasons, seeking different rewards, concentrating on different aspects of the journey. Some go fast and light, sacrificing comforts; some go heavy and slow, enjoying good meals and cozy pillows; others go somewhere in between. There are benefits and drawbacks to all styles. At the end of May 2019, Greg Encelewski, Neil Murphy, Ed Smith, and I made a go at, and attained, Canada's highest; yet each pair of climbers had a very different experience.

In 2012 Greg Encelewski and I made an early-season attempt on this mountain, but failed – mostly because of atrocious weather or lack of allotted time, the end result being the same.

With that experience heavily influencing the planning of our second trip, we braced ourselves for a long, tent-bound slog. It is worth mentioning here that, although we tried to fly in from Alaska with Paul Claus, just as in 2012, due to new Canadian border regulations such approach is prohibitive in both time and cost. It became easier just to drive to Kluane Lake and fly in with Icefields Discovery. Weather is a bit trickier as one crosses a continental divide of great height to get to base camp and delays in and out might be longer, but the crew have good knowledge of their backyard and got us in and out with minimal down time. We learned that most of May experienced foul weather and our late start (it was almost June then) might have actually been beneficial. Canadian base camp is also half a day closer to the summit.

Greg and I fly in on the second attempt and hear stories of awful weather from a starved German couple. We set up for travel and wait for Neil and Ed who are deposited quite a ways away. The weather is splendid, so the two of us start heading up the glacier and are followed by the rest of the team some distance behind. Slowly gaining elevation, we enter King Trench and for obvious sanitation reasons stop upwind of previously occupied campsites. As the tent gets pitched and dinner cooked, we expect to be joined by Ed and Neil; yet they do not arrive. We make a scheduled radio check,



Ed Smith approaching the summit ridge of Mount Logan.

Photo by Eric VanMeter

but hear nothing on the walkie-talkies, they prove useless and get ditched later.

Morning brings fair weather again, so not to waste it, we pack up and ascend the first significant rise, which puts us in good view of lower terrain. As expected we spot a team below, we should be rejoined this evening. Nearing Camp 2 at 13500 feet, we are enveloped by heavy clouds and snow and lose all visibility; we reach the destination aided by GPS loaded with way points from our previous attempt and settle down, bracing for a storm; funny that seven years earlier we got pinned down in the same spot. Conclusion is reached that Ed and Neil stopped short of Camp 2.

We spend the next day in the tent, listening to snow and wind, pondering our faith. It is known that weather rules up here; one has to make good use of travel days and use nasty ones to sit around and acclimatize.

But we get rewarded and wake up to still air and good visibility, also a set of fresh ski tracks are spotted in vicinity. Did the boys make a carry in the night? We wonder. Up the dreaded head-wall we go, not unlike the one on the West Buttress of Denali, yet earlier in the climb; therefore gear and sleds need to be dragged over it. We make the first carry up to 15500 feet or so and descend to King Col camp, which is now full of ac-



Ed Smith nearing the summit ridge of Mount Logan.

Photo by Eric VanMeter

tivity. The boys are there with stories of stove trouble and cramped tent, along is a team from Fairbanks and Colorado. We are very glad to see Neil and Ed again. Greg and I have been torn by the need to make progress up the mountain and guilt of leaving them behind. In Col Camp realization sets in that our speeds are not close to being equal, we are already separated by two days and traveling together would most likely generate great frustration for both teams, one from being slowed and other from being hurried. A reliable way of communication over satellite phone, InReach, and switchboard of spouses in Anchorage is organized and utilized for the rest of the trip, relieving uncertainties for both parties, and creating anxieties for the wives at home.

The following morning allows Greg and Marcin to reach 15500 feet and Ed and Neil to retrieve their gear from below Col Camp. We wake once again to decent, but cloudy, weather, and in very poor light slowly negotiate seracs and crevasses to gain a mere 500 feet and a flat area called the football field. The only reason we are making progress in mediocre conditions is that previous teams have wanded difficult-to-navigate sections and we are making use of their trail.

The following day a gaping crevasse, spanning some 40 feet is negotiated using a partially collapsed snow bridge and we attain camp higher than 17000 feet. My memory might be lacking now, but I do not have a recollection of that feature from 2011. Ahead are Iona Col, the summit plateau, and high camp. We are starting to wonder how much longer the good weather will last, certain of an imminent collapse.

The level of commitment is very high; therefore we drag most of our supplies over the col, a grueling task since I am certainly not yet acclimatized due to our rapid ascent. If we were to follow standard advice, then we would still be at 13500 feet; yet the weather is just too good to pass up. Besides being slow up the hills and lagging behind fitter Greg, I have difficulty sleeping, strangely not because of Cheyne-Stokes breathing, which usually gets me, not for lack of physical exhaustion and boredom because we are pulling loaded sleds uphill most days, but for what later readings have revealed to be just altitude-caused insomnia.

A new day dawns clear, so we slowly drag the loads up to the col, take a break in calm ambiance, and discuss locations for high

camp. The standard spot happens to be at 17600 feet this side of the lower, west summit. From there one traverses around the west peak before ascending the main one. We followed such strategy last time, but ran into some difficulties, which we wouldn't mind avoiding. There was regular lack of visibility, seracs, crevasses, and no direct view of objective to assess one's chances. Some take a different route and drop major elevation, but gain distance to position themselves closer to the summit. The lower base camp also offers better view of the route and skips traversing, but forces



*Greg Encelewski on the summit of Mount Logan.
Photo by Marcin Ksok*

one to regain more altitude on the return trip over Iona Col, quite a workout, as we learn later. Dropping onto the high plateau, we spot a large group traveling in the opposite direction, a guided party, which summited a day prior from alternative high camp. Since the ski tracks were laid, we choose to follow them, an easy glide and our camp is up in the early afternoon. At this point we are starting to realize that this puzzle is almost solved. Weather forecast is solid and ahead is the easiest day of the trip so far, no

sleds, no weight, no technical difficulties.

Morning brings more sunshine and warmth; on go the skis. We travel up north slopes of the west peak, and ascend to a notch north of the true summit. The altitude slows me down considerably on this section, but the main peak is in view now and sure to be attained this day. Only the simplicity of placing one foot in front of the other stands in the way and we both have plenty of will to perform that task. Off come the skis; we put on crampons and ascend final ridge – the most esthetically attractive part of the climb in my opinion. Views cannot be described, visibility is unlimited, finally the mountain gods have rewarded us. Even being slowed by the heights, we made it with plenty of time to spare; therefore, a long summit recess is in order. Congratulations take place, so many years have passed since our first try and here we are again, this time successful. We ski downhill almost to the tent, which is on a slight rise and presents a chance for a competition of who gets closer by gliding, we eat a good, hearty meal; there is no need to conserve at this point. We just have to pull over Iona Col and ski downhill for six hours to catch a plane, hoping weather holds.

Magically it does; going back uphill to get down the mountain is demoralizing and we welcome the narrow col beyond which is

what has been termed somewhere one of the best ski descents in the world. Nine thousand feet we drop and take a few tumbles, as the sleds have now gained autonomy and don't always agree on our course. I wish they were that eager on the way up. We both have rigid pole attachments this time and although a major improvement over just a rope, still not a cakewalk. Luckily nothing breaks, a bent pole is all the damage we suffer. We come across at least two other teams and around 16000 feet run into Neil and Ed. They seem to be in good spirits, still focused on the summit, still pulling up the hill. I have to be honest here and admit that Neil's offer for me to join them and try to summit again is not even considered. I end up double carrying down the headwall as my "pig" insists on trying to roll across the steep traverse; frustration sets in, but is short-lived, as an amazing ski down the trench follows. Some more cussing and backwards boot descent deposits us in Camp 1. Homeward bound we are and half glide and half kick our way down the flatter terrain to base camp. It was a long grind to get there, but this way we only have to pitch the tent one last time. Thoughts are shared regarding the rapid, uneventful trip, as if an important part of mountaineering experience was missed. It would be much sweeter if we summited after a long battle with the weather, running short on supplies and patience, returning true mountain men, not day trippers. Oh well, we did that last time. The saying rings true, it's the journey, not the destination.

Benefiting from the huge drop in elevation, I enjoy a full night of deep sleep and wake a man reborn. Mid-morning silence is broken by a drone of a single-engine plane, which transports us to another world. One of running warm water, chairs, beds, heat, people.

We seem to be momentarily stuck, though, as Ed and Neil are still at least a week away, but luck is on our side and the following day we catch a ride all the way to Tok. From there a friend, a very good friend, picks us up and we end up in Palmer, then borrow his car all the way to Anchorage. We learn that as we were blissfully ascending, enabled by the technology we carried and its ability for instant communication, a team of spouses were living through a suspenseful real-life drama as they followed our efforts. In a few days Ed and Neil persevere, successfully summit and return to civilization, although their experience was quite different from ours.

Neil's Notes and Observations:

Ed and Neil were blessed with the same great weather as Martin and Greg, but took what some would consider a more "traditional" timeline to summit a 19541-foot peak in 12 days. They employed a double-carry technique for acclimatization. Right from the outset they found that they were on a very differ-

ent travel schedule than Martin and Greg, so Ed and Neil informally teamed up with two other teams. One included two Fairbanksans.

Neil writes: *"We shared food, communication, and stove repairs/tips with them. They started out before us, but we arrived back at the hangar the same night. Bill and Benny were from Fairbanks. Dick and Ursula were two other friends."*

The other was a family-based group of three climbers from Colorado. Neil writes: *"Eric VanMeter, his father Steve, and a friend named Tom who utilized a similar schedule. They were very helpful because we had intermittent stove issues, and they helped us with the stove, among other things. They started out a couple of days before us. Some days we camped next to each other. Other days we were one camp behind them. We all summited on the same day."*

Their timeline was similar to that described in Not Won in a Day: Climbing Canada's Highpoints by Jack Bennett (Rocky Mountain Books, 1999).

Ed's and Neil's timeline:

Day 1: Land 9000 feet on the Quintino Sella Glacier. Single carry to Camp 1.

Day 2: Begin double carry to 12600 feet. Forced to stop short of King Col camp due to whiteout. Skied downhill to Camp 1 in a whiteout by GPS.

Day 3: Finish carry to 12600 feet. Two groups Ed and Neil met in Camp 1 are camped nearby.

Day 4: Single carry to 13500 feet. Meet Marcin and Greg – receive waypoints. Exchange satellite phone.

Day 5: Finish carry to 13500 feet.

Day 6: Begin double-carry up the headwall in poor visibility. Cache at 14200 feet.

Day 7: Second trip up headwall. Camp at 15500 feet.

Day 8: Finish carry from 14200-foot cache to camp at 15500 feet.

Day 9: Begin double-carry to windy camp at 17200 feet.

Day 10: Finish double-carry to camp at 17200 feet. Meet Marcin and Greg on their way down.

Day 11: Single carry over Iona Col at 18000 feet to Plateau Camp at 17400 feet.

Day 12: Summit day.

Day 13: Single carry back over Iona Col to Windy Camp at 17200 feet.

Day 14: Weathered in at 17200-foot Windy Camp by snowstorm.

Day 15: Descend to 40-foot crevasse in dense fog. Camp at 16900 feet.

Day 16: Traverse 40-foot crevasse with Fairbanks team. Camp at 14000 feet, above crux of headwall.

Day 17: Meet plane. Fairbanks team meets next plane at 9000 feet.

The two teams communicated via three-way InReach/satellite phone conversations with Ed's wife, our guardian angel, back in Eagle River. Neil's pace was slowed down by the altitude over 17200 feet and regained his original pace as he descended. This change in pace resulted in a series of communications to try to arrange a possible evacuation during the descent, which proved to be unnecessary.

Lessons Learned

High Camp:

The choice for a camp at the base of the summit climb at approximately 16900 feet offers many advantages. Just prior to a summit attempt, climbers will be able to visualize the summit area and most of the summit route. It makes for a shorter summit day – which may increase both success rates and safety. It does entail a longer uphill day to exit and to pass over Iona Col at 18000 feet before one descends to windy camp on the King Trench side at 17200 feet.

Sled versus Pulling a Waterproof Duffel:

Pulling a waterproof duffel bag has many advantages. On steep slopes one can maneuver much better with the duffel. Duffels carry less gear than sleds, which can be good or bad. At one point the climber with the sled found himself carrying all but one of the pieces of group gear, because it was just easier to throw gear into a sled, but that can lead to disproportionate group loads. If one pulls a waterproof duffel, then it would be best with a semi-rigid plastic connection, not a rope.

Pressing SOS on an InReach:

This was just the beginning of many multi-faceted conversations, not an immediate pick-up. In this case it began a process that involved Parks Canada and various flight services, including some with assets that were thousands of miles away. In Ed's and Neil's case, it started a multi-day conversation with no evacuation.

Teamwork:

Due to the difference in our Anchorage-based groups' paces from the outset, Ed and Neil informally teamed up with two groups of previously unknown climbers. While our two Anchorage-based pairs communicated in a limited long-distance manner, co-traveling with others helped Ed and Neil with communication, stove care, and crossing large crevasses, among other benefits. The key is for climbing groups to be flexible.

Skis versus Snowshoes:

While Mount Logan is considered a classic ski-mountaineering trip, our Colorado-based fellow climbers used snowshoes and had a similar summit date and total length of climb as Ed and Neil. Snowshoes can be faster going both up and down steep areas with a sled, but slower on moderate/easy slopes going down.

Walkie-Talkies:

These proved to be of no benefit and were abandoned early on. Camp 1 is actually a series of two or three smaller camps. In retrospect, Marcin and Greg were at the far end and Ed and Neil were at the near end. Despite a pre-arranged call time, even the distance within Camp 1 was too great to make contact.



*Greg Encelewski at the 40-foot crevasse.
Photo by Marcin Ksok*



*Marcin Ksok on the summit ridge of Mount Logan.
Photo by Greg Encelewski*

Peak of the Month: Thorne Mountain

Text by Steve Gruhn

Location: Prince of Wales Island; Thorne Mountains

Borough: Unorganized Borough

Drainages: Balls Lake and Upper Cutthroat Lake

Latitude/Longitude: 55° 44' 1" North 132° 53' 10" West

Elevation: 2809 feet

Adjacent Peaks: Peak 2850 in the Logjam Creek and Steelhead Creek drainages; Peak 2481 in the Lake Galea, Lower Cutthroat Lake, and Upper Cutthroat Lake drainages; Peak 1250 in the Logjam Creek and Hatchery Lake drainages; and Peak 1090 in the Steelhead Creek drainage

Distinctness: 719 feet from Peak 2850

Prominence: Either 719 feet from Peak 2850 or 2389 feet from Three Peaks (3050 feet) in the Shinaku Creek and Staney Creek drainages

USGS Maps: 1:63,360: Craig (C-3) and 1:25,000: Craig C-3 NW

First Recorded Ascent: 1949 by a USGS party

Route of First Recorded Ascent: Southeast ridge

Access Point: Lower Cutthroat Lake



Thorne Mountain is a broad, double-summitted peak and the highest point of the Thorne Mountains, a small range about 14 miles west of Thorne Bay on Prince of Wales Island. The name of both the summit and the range are likely derived from Thorne Bay, which was named in honor of Frank Manly Thorn, the Superintendent of the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey from 1885 to 1889. Thorn's surname was misspelled when originally published as Thorne Bay and the spelling was never corrected, and the same misspelling has been adopted for the community, river, lake, range, and peak.

The Andersonville logging camp was formerly located near Control Lake. In reference to that camp, Thorne Mountain has also been called Andersonville Summit.

In 1949 a USGS party took a floatplane from the mouth of the Thorne River to Lower Cutthroat Lake. The team then proceeded on foot west-northwest 0.6 mile past Upper Cutthroat Lake to a gully flowing from the south. They headed up that gully to the 2150-foot saddle on the southeast ridge of Thorne Mountain.

They then headed northwest to the summit of what they called the "highest and most southerly peak on [the] mountain top." At the summit they established a benchmark with a bronze tablet set in the top of a big boulder at the north end of the top. The tablet was stamped "Center 1949."

As a result of the establishment of the Prince of Wales Island road system in the early 1990s, Thorne Mountain can today be accessed from a state timber road off North Prince of Wales Road approximately one mile west of the junction of Big Salt Road and Thorne Bay Road. The state timber road reaches an elevation of about 1500 feet.

Despite the 1949 USGS party's claim of being at the highest peak on Thorne Mountain, there has been a bit of confusion as to the location of the true summit. The USGS subsequently published the 1:63,360 Craig (C-3), Alaska, map in 1949, which indicated an elevation of 2809 feet for the southeastern summit (and the location of the benchmark established by the USGS party earlier that year) and an elevation of 2804 feet for the summit a mile to

the northwest. In 2017 the USGS published the 1:25,000 Craig C-3 NW map, which indicated the northwestern summit was higher than the southeastern peak with the benchmark.

The information in this column came from USGS field notes available at <https://www.geocaching.com/mark/details.aspx?PID=UV6379>, from Joey Slowik's "A Guide to Hiking the Alpine Areas on Prince of Wales Island, Alaska," and from my correspondence with Tim Seaman and Joey Slowik.



*West aspect of Thorne Mountain (right) and
Point 2795 (left).
Photo by Joey Slowik*



*The Knik Knak (9553 feet) at far left on April 14, 2020, from the Pioneer Ridge-Austin Helmets Trail.
Mount Goode rises over the terrain at center.
Photo by Frank Baker*

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

May 27, 2020, at 6:00-8:00 p.m., conducted online via Google Meet

Roll Call

Mike Meyers (President) - Present
Gerrit Verbeek (Vice-President) - Present
Curtis Townsend (Secretary) - Present
Katherine Cooper (Treasurer) - Absent
Tom Meacham (Director) - Present
Jonathan Rupp Strong (Director) - Absent
Lila Hobbs (Director) - Present
Andy Kubic (Director) - Present
Heather Johnson (Director) - Present
Nathan Pooler (Director) - Present
Visitor: Kenzie Barnwell with Alaska Huts Association

Scribe: Curtis Townsend

Committee Reports

President (Mike Meyers)

- Andy purchased the tent, will deliver to storage unit.
- Majority voted yes to move forward with hats and buffs.
- Mike to research patches. Mike will send Nathan the logo.
- Mike – invite Billy Finley and Tim Silvers to attend a future board meeting to discuss website things ... on hold.
- Eight hut instructional signs being made. Talkeetna Mountains hut maps being laminated for huts.

Vice-President (Gerrit Verbeek)

- On-line meetings/presenters. Gerrit continues to look into presenters who will present on-line.

Secretary (Curtis Townsend)

- BP Energy Center has been reserved through May 2021, general and board meetings.
- Curtis has canceled all meetings at the Energy Center until September.

Treasurer (Katherine Cooper)

- REI has received an invoice for calendars.
- Budget bump for Mint Hut waste, Eklutna Traverse hut vent; see huts.

Liability Committee (Tom Meacham)

- Mike has emailed By-Laws draft to Tom for review.

Awards Committee (Tom Meacham, Charlie Sink, Max Neale)

- Board approved a nomination for an honorary member.

Trips Committee (Needs chair)

- Nathan and Tom created a COVID-19 waiver that gets signed before trips (as well as MCA waiver).
- Summer trips are postponed until further notice pending restrictions being lifted.
- June 19 – Flattop Mountain social: This will happen, but no Special-Use Permit, as we don't expect big numbers.
- July 10 – Rabbit Lake meet-up camping Friday night. This is on hold pending COVID-19 restrictions.
- August 7 – Williwaw Lakes meet-up camping Friday night. This is on hold pending COVID-19 restrictions.
- September – MCA Annual Matanuska Glacier Icefest.
- October –
- November –
- December – MCA Annual Christmas Party.

Training Committee

- Will record a trip-leader training event to use for future training.

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

- Rosie's Roost re-skin is on schedule for this summer.
- Discussion of grant money available for the MCA. Looking for a grant-application writer.
- Huts discussion with Kenzie Barnwell of Alaska Huts Association.

Mentorship (Lila Hobbs, Katherine Cooper)

- Mentorship is on hold due to COVID-19.

Communications Committee (Lila Hobbs)

- Lila has updated the board members' names on the website.
- We discussed format of the future calendar, schedule of release.

Calendar Committee (Vicky Ho, Lila Hobbs, Heather Johnson, Mike Meyers)

- Committee has formed for this year and discussions have started. Trying to use woobox as a format again. Trying to have calendars available by October this year.

Date and Location of next Meeting

- General meetings canceled until September unless we stream the meeting.
- Next Board Meeting on June 24, 2020, from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. via Google Meet.

Mountaineering Club of Alaska (MCA) COVID-19 Guidelines and Waiver

These Guidelines and Waiver apply to all

MCA-sponsored trips, events, and other Club activities

1. If I have any symptoms associated with COVID-19 virus including fever, headache, cough, respiratory congestion, body aches and/or chills, I shall not participate in any MCA-sponsored event.
2. If I am cohabitating with any person who has any of the symptoms listed in Paragraph 1 above, or who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, I shall not participate in any MCA-sponsored event.
3. If I have traveled into the State of Alaska from Outside within the 14 days prior to the event, I shall not participate in any MCA-sponsored event.
4. If I have been contacted by a health authority about my recent contact with a person who has subsequently been diagnosed with COVID-19, I shall not participate in any MCA-sponsored event.
5. I acknowledge that social distancing (at least 6 feet between persons) continues to be a best practice; and if social distancing is not possible, I acknowledge that wearing a mask is strongly encouraged.
6. I acknowledge that handwashing or using hand sanitizer is strongly encouraged.
7. As a participant in an MCA-sponsored event, I agree to inform the Board of MCA if I do become sick with any COVID-19 symptom within seven days after participating in the event, so that the other participants can be advised that a fellow participant has become sick, so that they can monitor for symptoms, and can practice recommended social distancing measures.
8. As a participant in an MCA-sponsored event, I agree to consider and evaluate my participation if I regularly are in close contact with, or anticipate coming in close contact with: people at higher than normal risk for severe illness; people 65 years or older; people who live in a long-term care facility; people with underlying medical conditions (particularly if these conditions not well controlled). For reference, see: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-at-higher-risk.html>.
9. It is recommended that anyone visiting an MCA hut should first clean and disinfect interior surfaces per CDC guidelines, where practical. For reference, see: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/disinfecting-your-home.html>.

I expressly acknowledge that naturally-occurring disease processes and risks of exposure, including the virus COVID-19, occur in all environments in which MCA-sponsored activities may occur. I acknowledge that although MCA has applied reasonable measures to avoid or minimize contact, exposure, transmittal or contamination by the virus between participants, it is my sole responsibility to safeguard myself and others in this regard. I understand and agree that if I participate in any MCA-sponsored activity, I hereby waive any claim of legal liability by MCA to me, if I contract the COVID-19 virus.

Signature of Member _____ Date _____



*North ridge of The Mitre with False Mitre at right, partially obscured by trees.
Photo by Dawn Munroe*



*East aspect of the north ridge of The Watchman from the East Fork of the Eklutna River bridge.
Photo by Dawn Munroe*

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Mike Meyers	mcmeyers24@msn.com	Director 1 (term expires in 2020)	Jonathan Rupp Strong	202-6484
Vice-President	Gerrit Verbeek	903-513-4286	Director 2 (term expires in 2020)	Lila Hobbs	229-3754
Secretary	Curtis Townsend	355-9820	Director 3 (term expires in 2021)	Tom Meacham	346-1077
Treasurer	Katherine Cooper	209-253-8489	Director 4 (term expires in 2021)	Heather Johnson	hjohnson@mdausa.org
			Director 5 (term expires in 2021)	Andy Kubic	andy.kubic@gmail.com
			Director 6 (term expires in 2021)	Nathan Pooler	Nathan.lee.pooler@gmail.com

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

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

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

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

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vacant—training@mtclubak.org

Mentorship: Katherine Cooper and Lila Hobbs—mentorship@mtclubak.org

Huts: Greg Bragiel—350-5146 or huts@mtclubak.org

Calendar: Vicky Ho—512-470-8640 or hovcky@gmail.com

Librarian: Gwen Higgins—library@mtclubak.org

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

Web: www.mtclubak.org

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

Meg Inokuma topping out on the last easy section of the south-east ridge of McCarty Peak.

Photo by Wayne Todd

Mountaineering Club of Alaska
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