

MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

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MEETING, MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 18

Since Labor Day is the first Monday in September as usual, the MCA will not meet until September 18th which is unusual. The third Monday in September, the 18th, is an arbitrary date dictated by the availability of Willow Park Recreation Hall. The MCA will meet at 8 p.m. and Dr. Bill Davis, late of Colorado, presently and fortunately for us, a member of the Alaska Methodist University faculty, will show his slides of "First Ascents in the Northern St. Elias Range".

In October the Club will revert to its usual schedule, the first Monday - October 2nd. This will be the annual meeting - time for paying dues and electing new officers!

TRIP SCHEDULE

September 16-17 - Juneau Lake - A fairly long drive but at the ride's end a 6 mile hike over a good trail. There is a comfortable cabin, if not already occupied, for the overnight camp. Howard Schuck 114 SK 29448

September 30-October 1 - Rabbit Creek Area. This will probably be a one day affair. Contact either H. Schuck or Gwyn Wilson

There will be a Sunday outing on Byron Glacier under the direction of Bill Davis. The date will be determined at the September 18th meeting.

EASY ONE DAY HIKE or "My Introduction to the MCA" by William E. Davis

It started one Saturday afternoon. As I rested from the week's hard labors, thoughts of lazy relaxation filled my imagination. The telephone rang. "This is Rod Wilson", it said. "How about an easy one day hike to-morrow? Nothing very hard - just the thing to keep in shape." My mind was still filled with visions of loafing and lounging so I hesitated; but soon the idea of an easy stroll through grassy meadows overcame my laziness and I agreed to go. An easy one day hike would be just the thing to help me to forget the woes of the world and the labors gone by.

I suppose the answer to my next question should have given me a hint. "When do we leave?" I asked. "Oh, about 4 o'clock tomorrow morning," the telephone replied. "I see," was all I could answer. "O.K. I guess I'll go. See you then." The thought of the early departure was vaguely distressing but, after all, it was just a one day hike and it was going to be easy.

So the next morning (July 16th) - promptly at 4 - I met Rod. The informality of the day's arrangements soon became apparent: the rest of the party, Gregg Erickson and Ed Fisher, didn't arrive until half-past four. True to the spirit of the hike, Gregg had slept until about 4:20 when Ed's great rattling of doors and windows had awakened him. Once we were assembled, we consolidated our loads and all took off in Rod's Jeep.

Our first interesting event occurred near Fort Richardson. We noticed a young lady standing down the middle of the road. Just as we passed her a horde of Military Police descended on us and her. Not being used to being engulfed by police, we paused but only long enough to find they were not interested in us but in her. The rest of the day this incident provided food for thought. Several theories were proposed but no one could decide what the most plausible one was. Everyone agreed - poor girl!

About this time, I began wondering where we were going. After all, I only knew it was to be an easy one day hike. "Well," I was told, "to Bold Peak, except that the Army calls it Eklutna Mtn., and it really doesn't have a name." "That's nice," I replied, "Just like all the other Alaskan mountains."

Soon we turned off the Palmer highway and started the climb to the lake. Along the way we chased a moose and two calves and a single moose. I was intrigued with Rod's driving. Every time a target such as the moose would appear he would go even farther. I also noted that when the road became a tank track it was a signal for more speed. You can imagine what happened when we left the tank track and started up the steep trail to the snow measuring station.

Our leader noted that this was a different approach to Bold. "How nice," I thought, "to make our one day hike an exploration, too." The jeep trail finally died out not until we were above timberline. Everyone knows the advantage of this and we appreciated it all the more later in the day. No bush.

So, about two hours after we left Anchorage, our easy stroll began in earnest. First, we wandered up a lovely alpine valley. There was nothing wrong with this ex-

cept that after a while it began to rain. At the head of the valley, there was a short but steep climb to a pass. In keeping with the Himalayan tradition of naming geographical features in the native tongue, we christened this place the Hoo La. Also in keeping with the Himalayan tradition, we found this to be the windiest spot on the hill.

We were on what I guess is a north-running ridge. At least what we could see of the ridge seemed to run north and north-east. The trouble was that above the pass everything was in clouds. This didn't seem to discourage anyone, though, so we pushed on. What I should say is pushed down. We had to break the Number 1 rule of mountaineering and lose altitude. Skirting around the flanks of the ridge, the climbing began in earnest.

First we had to cross a couple of snowslopes. Nothing wrong with that except they were steep and there was no run out at the bottom. Just rocks. Then we had to regain the ridge. Scree, talus, loose boulders, fog, rain and wind. A typical Alaskan hike? I began to wonder.

After a while, we disappeared into the clouds and never were quite sure where we were going. But we seemed to be on the ridge since what we were walking on and climbing over dropped off on both sides. Of course, the higher we got the colder it got and soon the rain turned to snow. So did the terrain underfoot.

Slowly but surely we made our way along and got more and more disenchanted. A couple of times we sent Gregg on ahead to see what he could see. Of course, he couldn't see anything but once he hallooed back that the summit was just 15 yards ahead. It seemed too good to be true - and it was. It was a summit but just of another point along the ridge.

Finally, about 3:00 p.m., we decided to give up. We knew we couldn't be too far from the top but the whole thing just seemed too much. Besides, the only reason I climb mountains is to lie on the top and bask in the sun and soak up the view. There would have been no basking and soaking that day so we turned back. Looking back on it now, we are all sure we were 15 yards from the top - but then 15 yards is 15 yards and sometimes they can seem like 15 miles.

And so the descent began. Naturally, it was just like the ascent. Slippery, wet, cold, talus, scree, boulders, and snow. Then, too, there was the climb back up to the Hoo La. Don't forget we lost altitude when we came over the hill. For some reason Gregg kept apologizing for not getting us to the top - as if he were responsible for weather. We kept apologizing to him for being so slow - as if we had known what we were getting in for. The only sensible remark made during the whole descent came from Rod who said, "Let's go home."

By the time we got back to the Jeep it was about 9:00 p.m. and then we had to coax the Jeep back down the trail, negotiate the tank track, and get back to Anchorage. It was getting on to midnight when we finally made it... Good old Gwyn, following her husband's orders to come looking for us if we weren't back on time, met us on the highway with spare parts for the Jeep. We didn't need them.

And so ended our easy one day hike - and my introduction to the MCA. About 4,000ft. of altitude gained, 14 hours of walking, another 4 of driving where no car should ever go, rain, snow, fog, and wind but no summit. Of course, I had been in the Alaskan mountains before so this wasn't an introduction to Alaskan climbing. Just the way the MCA does it. Hereafter when I settle down for a nice easy weekend of loafing, I think I'll try to avoid any easy one day hikes which are advertised as just the thing to help relaxation along.

CROW PASS - August 20 "A Sunday Stroll"

by Jackie Horning

Our mission - to examine the old miner's shack in the pass and determine what repairs would be required to make it a habitable MCA shelter.

Sunday morning 7 of us - Anne Babski and her son Bill (newcomers to MCA), Irma Duncan, Lois Willard, Ruth Schmidt, Elinore Schuck and Jackie Horning left Anchorage for Girdwood.

The weather conditions were marginal as we left and grew steadily worse the closer to Girdwood we got. By the time we parked the cars on the Crow Creek Rd, it had started to rain - we resigned ourselves to a damp outing!

We followed the road (It's passable with 4-wheel drive clear up to the old mine ruins) then took off along the narrowing valley into Crow Pass. As we scrambled up the last scree slope beneath the cabin, we caught sight of two more MCA members. They were Bosco and Belay above us - starting down - they had already given the cabin their inspection. So had Helga and Gwyn who were following not far behind. They (Helga and Gwyn - not their climbing canines) greeted us with the flat statement: "There's nothing left of the cabin but a pile of junk and lumber". We continued on to look ourselves. The "pile of lumber" turned out to be 3 1/2 walls with a partial roof - to be more specific - three walls are in pretty good shape (no boards missing) - of the fourth wall only the 2x4 studs remain. The roof is intact except for 4 missing boards.

In my estimation, a 6 to 10 man party could convert the cabin into a habitable shelter with only one weekend's work. The minimum investment in materials would be several yards of roofing paper and about twenty 1"x12"x10' boards - and somebody's 4-wheel drive vehicle to haul the material as far as the old mine ruins.

About the big problem - vandalism? It would seem that wanton vandalism would be more likely to occur where there is no evidence of ownership or use - "who cares

if I destroy an abandoned shack?" - However, a building in good state of repair might not invite such vandalism (or am I just a dreamer?) At any rate, a sign on the side of the cabin with a MCA emblem should convey the idea that this building was a shelter - to be used but not abused.

I'm in favor of giving it a try. Let's see what will happen.

GLACIER SCHOOL August 25, 26 and 27

by Bob Hall

The Glacier School started off with a moonlight hike up Byron Glacier and ended with a demonstration of how to evacuate a glacier in a rain and windstorm. Sandwiched in between was an abbreviated course on glacier climbing for the beginners and novices attending.

The advance party of Paul Crews (School Director), the 2 little Crews, Bill Morris, Gregg and Trygve Erickson, Bob Hall and John Dillman left the parking lot at 10:30 p.m. Friday, and after hiking 1 hour 20 minutes reached the camp area and set up tents by flashlight. This night climb was one of the highlights of the trip, but each climb obviously should be limited to the less dangerous areas of a glacier. Portage Glacier Lake seemed to be at our feet, with the ice bergs, glaciers and snowfields so bright they almost glowed. Paul Duncan and Bill Davis arrived at 1:30 a.m. and had to let everyone know it.

Paul Crews got everyone up bright and early Saturday morning. After a hearty "Helga Bading special" (oatmeal), the 2 Paul Crews, John and Gregg went down to fetch the rest of the Duncan family, Howard and Elinore Schuck, Jackie Horning, Marjorie Prescott and Lois Lillard. They ended up carrying the extra gear of these people. The others remaining in camp chopped out a tent space, found a latrine area out of sight of camp (no mean feat on a wide open glacier with a mixed party - no bushes on a glacier), and went for a stroll on up the glacier.

After an early lunch the School started in earnest. Paul was given a real assist when Bill Davis turned out to be a top instructor and made good use of his knowledge of psychology as well. He started out with a brief lecture on the whys and hows of knot tying and rope management.

Paul had surveyed the route a couple of weeks earlier and planned for a simple hike over the lower ice falls Saturday to get people use to crampons, ice axes, ropes, self arrests, etc. Sunday was to be a little more technical. This is what he learned, but the constantly changing characteristics of a glacier were shown when on Saturday we found our route cut twice by new crevasses. The last one required setting up a time consuming rappel to get down. Although it was the first rappel for many, and the first on ice for others, everyone did well once they were coaxed over the edge - Bill Davis again. We got back to camp just in time to cook supper before bedtime.

Helga just missed the spaghetti, arriving in camp about 9:00 p.m. Saturday, climbing with her lantern to keep from falling into one of those "deep blue holes". She also brought an end to the beautiful sunny weather we had been having. Sunday morning a rain and windstorm soaked some of the tents and caused us to abandon any further training and also the glacier.

We found the new Club tent* to be a good one and fine to have on overnight trips. We had 5 people in the tent at one time, with several stoves going at once. The people also learned tents leak when touched during a rain storm.

Other things learned:

1. Glaciers are wet.
2. Glacier climbing is not very tiring because of the slow cautious pace required.
3. Crampons are necessary anytime out of the tent.
4. Food requirements
5. Moving on or off steep and dangerous parts of a glacier is possible - but slow and requiring planning.

Although weather shortened the course, everyone seemed to feel it was fun and worthwhile, and that they were now a little better qualified for glacier climbing. It removed some of the mental barriers.

The Club voted to purchase a light weight Logan tent at the August 7 meeting. It arrived in time to be christened at the Glacier School. From the reports of the weather the new tent was well doused: