



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA
AUGUST 1977

BOX 2037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510
VOLUME XX, No. 8

I N M E M O R I A M

LINDA HESTING
JEFF MOELLER
DON PAHLKE

An alpine tragedy has taken from the Club's fellowship three of its most vibrant and active participants. On August 6, 1977, the trio, while roped-up and descending the knife-edged northwest ridge of Carpathian after a successful ascent, suffered a sudden, fatal fall into a steep rock gully above the Skookum Glacier. Don's dog Smokey, which was roped in with the party, also perished in the fall.

The subsequent search operations for the missing climbers, carried out in weather which deteriorated at times to almost unbelievable hypothermic conditions with rain, 35 degree temperatures and 90 knot winds, involved the heroism, sacrifice, and skill of many volunteers. Special recognition and thanks must go to pilots Ron Cunningham and Jack Lee, the Rescue Coordination Center at Elmendorf, volunteers of the Alaska Rescue Group and friends, the Anchorage office of the American Red Cross, and the owners of Portage Chevron station and cafe who supplied base camp communications and supplies for the week-long search and recovery efforts. They, and others unnamed, deserve the thanks of us all for a struggle against impossible conditions to discover the fate of the missing party and to recover their remains.

It simply doesn't seem possible that these three strong, active, experienced climbers, who only last month gave a fine slide show of their challenging climbs of Troublement and Montana Peak in the Talkeetnas, could be so suddenly and finally gone from the climbing fraternity. But it is over, and their memory must live on in their exploits and the good times recalled by their friends in the mountains.

Because of the nearness to the Scree publication date, it has not been possible to print individual tributes to these three fine people. Those wishing to memorialize them in the newsletter may submit their material through the MCA post office address for publication in the September Scree.

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska extends its condolences to the families and friends of Linda, Jeff, and Don.

AUGUST MEETING

Wednesday, August 18, 1977, 8 PM, Pioneer Schoolhouse, Third and Eagle, Anchorage. The program will be GARNETT ROEHM with slides of the 1977 Denali Sourdough Commemorative Expedition, a two-month epic on Mt. McKinley.

HIKING SCHEDULE

- August 13-14 LOST LAKE, near Seward. Leader, Dick Ulrich, 277-5551, ext. 136, office; 279-5758, home. Hike 11 in "55 Ways." Meet at 6 AM at Fred Meyer.
- August 20-21 SHIP CREEK TO INDIAN. Leader, Bill Stivers, 277-2869.

*****TRIP REPORTS*****

MATANUSKA MATTERHORN (PALMER THUMB)

5450'

July 19, 1977

by GREG HIGGINS

I have thought about climbing this prominent sky-line protrusion above Palmer since 1972, but every time I started out previously the trip was curtailed either from bad weather or a sick companion. This time I carried sufficient gear to wait out any storms and traveled alone.

The trip up Lazy Mountain in light rain was uneventful. I spent the night high up on the ridge about 300 feet below the summit of Byers beneath an overhanging rock wall. By 8 o'clock next morning the rain which had been pounding all night decided to stop so I went up to the summit of Byers to dry my gear and watch the weather. There are three small containers on Byers, and a good canister and register are needed.

I left Byers at 1:15 after finally deciding that the weather was at least not going to worsen from its present cloudy state. After a few minor route-finding problems along the ridge I reached the summit of the "Matterhorn" at 4:15 PM just in time for the only clear skies of the afternoon. After building a cairn and placing a register I made the return trip back to Byers and Lazy Mountain while watching booming thunderstorms off in the Knik and Matanuska Valleys.

HOMICIDE - 4660'; POWERLINE PASS PEAK - 5000'

July 22, 1977

by GREG and LORETTA HIGGINS

Loretta and I left Glen Alps about 10 o'clock Friday morning and began the slow trudge back towards Powerline Pass into dark and glowering skies. We ditched our overnight packs on the back-side of Ptarmigan, ate lunch, and continued our hike up to the notch.

Loretta waited below while I traversed across the broken rocks below the ridge that leads to Homicide, reaching the top of the ridge at its low point on the west side, then from there to the top at 4 PM. The register was encased in a torn plastic bag and the contents were soaked. Only two previous recordings were legible: the 1968 trip of the Bludworths and the 1972 climb of Larry Swanson and Art Ward. After drying the original slips at home, a third entry dated 6-27-76 became visible, but the names were not legible. When I had finished building a cairn and placing a good

(continued at bottom of page 6)

*****TRIP REPORTS*****

ARCTIC WILDLIFE RANGE

July 15-30, 1977

by DONA AGOSTI

Members of the group: DONA AGOSTI, Leader, ALMA BEST, KERRY BARKER, STEVE HART, CHUCK HEATH, SALLY HEATH, PAT KAMPFER, GENE KLYMKO, ROSEMARY KOBUS, JOHN IOHFF, BARBARA MIRACLE, JOHN NEVIN, ROSE STAUFFER, LINDA MONSARRAT, JOHN SUDDOCK.

Our fifteen arrived in Deadhorse-Prudhoe Bay promptly on Friday, July 15, but from then on the key word was flexibility. Fog in Kaktovik-Barter Island was too thick for Era Helicopters to take in its Twin Otter. Wien closed its terminal each night at 9 PM, and thereupon the waiting room became a sea of sleeping bags. They also provided hot water for freeze-dried dinners. Four lawyers somehow managed to find a client at Kodiak Camp and Rosie Stauffer, whose brother formerly supervised NANA's operation, prevailed upon the present superintendent to give a few assorted favors such as a free tour of the Prudhoe Bay area, a trip which usually costs tourists \$75 each. The sun finally found Barter, and we hustled off to the island Sunday afternoon. Walt invited us to use his modest home for the night; others pitched tents on the village green. The fog moved in again about 5 PM and it was so heavy the tents sagged. Next day about 5 PM WALT AUDI began moving us out to Hulahula Lake in his 206, the first time he had used this larger, 5-passenger plane for gravel bar work. The last load touched ground at midnight. The weather above the fog layer over Barter was bright and beautiful. On one of his return trips, WALT brought out a dead, rabid wolf and the Fish and Wildlife man who had been exposed.

The crowd began moving up stream at a leisurely pace next morning. A couple moderately fast streams gave some crossing practice and a couple falls were recorded. CHUCK "IZAAK WALTON" HEATH found ten grayling in an upstream hold and treated us to a fish fry. We camped opposite the easterly bend in the Hulahula River. Nine sheep were sighted on the slope behind us. Rain began falling about 11 PM and stopped around 5 AM. It was a pleasant sunny day as we climbed a ridge overlooking the Itkillik tributary and the unnamed river to the south which we would be following upstream for several days. We soon descended to the river bed because of ankle-breaking tussocks. We stayed on the west side, following game trails most of the day. The river became very wide and braided, with little vegetation to speak of. We set up three camps that night from seven to ten miles upstream. No animals this day, but lots of plovers and sandpipers. That is, we thought there were no animals until we passed the party upstream next morning and learned they'd had a scary encounter with two grizzlies. BARBARA MIRACLE remembered to blow her whistle as the bears moved determinedly towards them and the bears veered left to a side valley. Later that day we crossed Guilibeau (or Echolz) Pass which was a stairstep climb through rocky cliffs at about 5000 feet. On the other side lay a lovely alpine lake with grassy tenting sites. We took a picture of the entire group to commemorate our crossing of the Continental Divide. About 6 PM the rains came, and came, and came. I don't ever remember being in my tent during a combination cloudburst-hailstorm before. JOHN NEVIN watched it all from a 6000 foot ridge and there wasn't a drop of rain on him. Next morning we saw new snow where he had been sitting. The rain continued all night and a few hikers got wet. Before leaving we entered our names in the cairn built by an army party in 1960. Descending from the pass brought a few thrills next day. Water was high and necessitated some roped crossings. There were also a few very steep ravines which involved a choice of scree-mud kickstepping or the canyon quickstep. We camped that night on a broad, grassy outwash plain--quite a change from our previous camps. About three miles downstream we could already see the Chandalaar Valley. A steep bank off the plain gave good wind protection for cranking up mountain stoves that night. LINDA had dislocated her elbow in a fall that day and we consulted the first aid book. A few sprinkles as usual that night, but again bright sunshine in the morning. We stayed high and left as we rounded the corner eastward towards the Chandalaar headwaters. Overflow ice could be seen

(continued)

ARCTIC WILDLIFE RANGE continued.

where the Chandalaar turned south. A few miles upstream, after we had again descended to easier walking on the wide, river flats, CHUCK HEATH found another good grayling hole and supplied our dinner once more that night. At this point, we crossed the tributary and headed southwesterly towards the lake, one of two which sat on either side of a very prominent ridge at the head of the valley. This "bump" stood out quite plainly far down valley. We planned to stay here a couple days. WALT AUDI arrived in his Super Cub with our food drop next day about 6 PM. His first pass over netted one food box from about 20 feet up. The next two passes were just that. Then we were all astounded to see him swoop down and land in about 100 feet on the shore of the small lake. He unloaded the boxes and told us Ernie Vien was having problems and couldn't pick us up July 29 and that he would do it instead. Then he picked up the tail of the plane, turned it around, taxied to the end of his "runway" and swooped up and out of the canyon. This man is one incredible pilot. He is able to land by the seat of his pants in Barter, even though the fog is at ground level and 500 feet up. We heard more than one plane turn back to Deadhorse when they arrived over Barter and saw the pea soup.

Gusty winds the next day didn't stop ROSEANNE, ROSEMARY, JOHN NEVIN, and ALMA BEST from exploring a valley and lake to the west and south. ROSEANNE and JOHN also climbed a 6000 foot peak and were able to get a 360 of where we'd been and where we were going. CHUCK and GENE KLYMKO went fishing and four of the group moved ahead. The rest of us climbed the ridge above camp or read and rested. CHUCK also reported seeing two grizzlies heading right for us. STEVE HART reported a broken finger which he splinted with two other fingers.

Next day we found overflow ice covering about a 1/2 mile area of the valley. Some of it was ten to fifteen feet thick and a dazzling blue color. It was in contrast to the late summer landscape everywhere around. Right after this we began to encounter tussock swamps and going got really tough. Exhaustion was the word that night, but luckily we found another grassy, flat outwash among the braids of a lively stream. We lolled on the stream bank in the hot sun next morning, reluctant to shoulder packs for some more swamp fighting. We should have followed the longer, but drier, Sheenjek tributary bed, but elected to try cutting high along the Double Mountain area. There was just no way to avoid bogs, so we finally battled our way back to the river flats and willow patches. We later caught up with the advance party who had camped on the flats. That night a mystery pilot flew over and dropped a map indicating a new pickup point 10 miles upstream on the Sheenjek. It seems the area near Double Mountain was under water. This news caused an early departure next morning, since we now had 13 rather than 3 miles to our final destination. However, despite our delayed start from Hulahula, we still had two days to pickup day. We beat our way through brush, blueberries, bog and bears to the Sheenjek. Rather than follow the contour of the mountain upstream, we made a beeline for the ice overflow directly ahead. For one thing, we wanted to photograph the caribou sitting on the ice, and for another thing JOHN NEVIN had camped there the night before and had to be told about the change in plans. This was one of the few times on the trip when I was really scared, because as I crossed the swamp I sank almost to my hips and the suction of the mud almost caused my boots to pull off. I just kept moving and we finally dropped our weary bodies on the banks of the Sheenjek. Four miles upstream we all finally got together once more--those who had stayed behind to climb mountains, those who had rested and those who wanted to go ahead. About 10 PM friend Griz showed up and the sight of 15 rigid bodies, nine tents, and as many cameras must have made him decide to pick blueberries some other place.

The temperature at 10 AM the next morning was 85 degrees and by the time we reached what we thought to be our pickup point it was near 100. CHUCK heard shooting across the Sheenjek near a white tent and went across to investigate. The water was waist high until he stepped in a hole and it was shoulder high. A couple men came forward and immediately asked if we had any food. One who was into Zen and said he had par-

(continued)

ARCTIC WILDLIFE RANGE continued.

tially cleansed his Karma with a trip from Prudhoe Bay to Arctic Village, said he had flown back here with a friend several days ago and intended to finish his cleansing by walking to Arctic Village. They guessed the gravel strip was around somewhere. Ernie Wien had flown them in just three days ago and had probably then flown over us and dropped the note. One mystery solved. Our camp that night was on a grassy bench above the broad river bed. Behind us were cave-pocked cliffs sheltering a noisy bird population; across the half-mile wide river bed was a rolling green valley; all along the opposite bank were eroded mountains in fanciful shapes; along our bench, we had crossed miles of stone and yellow grass reminiscent of a desert or South Dakota plain. Because of the intense heat the glacier-fed Sheenjek was roaring over its banks far across the valley.

We had expected Walt early the next day, but when he arrived at 3 PM he explained he had turned back when he didn't like the sound of the engine. He had called Air North to tell them we would be delayed. When ALMA, ROSIE and I got off the first flight at Arctic Village we scattered to do our errands. They found the gal who could open the grocery store so we could buy groceries for the Karma Kleansers; I battled with the phone in the Village Council office and, after being cut off three times on my call to Fairbanks, finally arranged for two Air North planes to pick us up at 6 AM the next morning. Then we arranged for dinners at the lodge and walked the mile back to the airport in the hot sun. Walt was back for the second trip and we loaded the groceries in his plane and watched him change a tail wheel tire. By this time we were so warm that ALMA and I raced for the lake at the edge of the airport, set up our tent, and dived in. Later the home-cooked meal at the lodge was a welcome change from freeze-dried fare. That night we watched the loons on the lake and listened to the wolves far away answer the dogs in the village. The full moon glistened on the water. At 5 AM I wandered through the trees trying to find tents, then at 5:30 we heard the plane land on the field above us. At 6:10 we were off to Fairbanks in two planes and intended to stay on the ground for an hour or so. The Wien manager asked if he could borrow our plane to take firefighters to hot spots, so we went off to look for breakfast and sights. We were turned away from the Sourdough Inn because it was too early but the Kuchen Inn welcomed us at 8 o'clock. The village has grown since my visit in 1972. There is a new State of Alaska building, a new Alaskan Commercial store and gravel roads. We visited the Episcopal Church with its display of gorgeous beaded altar cloths, the cemetery and the original fort.

We returned to Fairbanks about noon and not a person batted an eyelash when we heard the Wien plane was delayed by fog. Where? Prudhoe Bay. Some of us took the Alaska flight home, but it was a dead heat to Anchorage. It was difficult to explain our feelings. We had matched wits with nature, viewed scenery without equal, felt scare and elated all at once and been awed by the grandeur of our surroundings. Re-entry would be difficult.

THERE (SORT OF) AND BACK AGAIN
by EL ROJOHOMBRE

Foraker has a west side, a rather lonely piece of country previously devoid of perlo nylon, and MSR stoves. First there were six up the Swift Fork of the Kuskokwim. Some fine staggering through the boulder fields of the lower Chedotlothna Glacier. Didn't know where we were going but we went anyway, up another glacier over a 7000 foot pass to a glacier known as Herron.

A bit of a storm blew by one day, caused the creation of a sagging-roofed snow cave by the destruction of a tent pole. Storm finally became bored and blew away to places unknown so we crossed the Herron and followed suit. Up between the forks of the Herron to a skinny little ridge. One look at this narrow bit of tiptoeing and
(continued)

THERE (SORT OF) AND BACK AGAIN continued,

we were four. Out onto the north face of the west ridge in order to avoid a bit of rock. Hard blue ice soon festooned with ropes and screws and pickets. An eighth inch of crampon point in the hill over way too many feet of down. Kept looking up. A bit of a snooze in an igloo-closed 'schrund. Snoozed long enough for the bottom to leave the top a half inch farther behind.

Another day of up to the crest of the west ridge. And a couple nites in a cave sounding more like a bowl of rice crispies than a hole in chunk of ice. Did a lot of sweating on the west end of the Whales Tail (hill 13,300), only a little of which was the result of climbing in the sun. A drafty 'schrund that nite in the saddle above the crunched-up Lacuna. Anchorage twinkles away south. Up early to climb a hill. Easy hiking to 13,600 where the sudden demise of a couple steps resulted in the abrupt departure of two from the ridge. A kindly 'schrund about 400 feet below halted this rapid descent but not before inflicting a useless ankle on each descender.

A bit of a breeze, a bit of a cloud, and a highly entertaining traverse to a flat spot usable by machines that fly, and then there were two. A traverse of the Whales Tail got us the view of a cloud. That descent of the west end of the Whales Tail in a storm and white-out created many thoughts about a lack of sanity, as well. Followed the moon home. Sat about for three days trying to seal out the wind and snow. Used a blazo can to avoid trips outside.

Weather finally permitted a descent. Other fellow must have grown tired of my pace and suddenly belly-flopped into a tobogan position. A persuasive fellow, he convince me to go along for the ride. I called it quits 300 feet below by sticking a leg in a crevasse.

It is hereby recommended that ultrarapid descents of steep snow slopes be avoided as it is hard on the body. This idea was strongly emphasized during the following three days and 25 miles. The first couple days of April witnessed a sorry caravan staggering across the Herron, thru the Chedotlothna and down the Swift Fork. Packs should not be made to hold ninety pounds.

Came a plane and then there were none.

HOMICIDE AND POWERLINE PASS PEAK continued from page 2.

register, I packed up the original sign-in slips for the library and rejoined Loretta below.

We then hiked up the slope leading to Powerline Pass Peak ridge, and ran the ridge to the top at 7 PM. Grace and Vin Hoeman's 1968 ascent was the first recorded one though they stated that they had found fresh footprints and a good cairn on reaching the top. In a cold biting wind we quickly re-copied all the original entries and then carried out the originals for the library.

No minutes have been received at press time for the July meeting. They will be printed in the September Scree.
