



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

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ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

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AUGUST MEETING

The meeting will be held Wednesday, August 21st at 7:30 p.m. in the Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd and Eagle St., Anchorage, Alaska. After the business meeting, Willy Hersman will present a slide show on his hike of the Continental Divide Trail.

MINUTES FOR THE JULY MEETING

Minutes for the July Meeting were unavailable at press time.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ice Climbing Class

The annual MCA technical ice climbing school will be held the last weekend in September. The course will consist of one classroom session - which is mandatory - and two days of ice climbing at the Matanuska Glacier. This class is for learning the basics about vertical ice climbing (i.e. waterfalls and gullies) only. No glacier walking techniques are planned! The size of this year's school is to be 40 students. Present dues-paying members will have priority. They will be able to sign up at the August meeting. Further details will be published in next month's SCREE. Those interested in instructing should contact Terry Becker at AMH (272-1811).

Thanks to Dave Staeheli for his slides of Mt. Drum and the MCA huts at the July Meeting.

MCA Library Additions

The MCA library has three new titles, all published and provided by the Mountaineers of Seattle.

Tired of dealing with Alaska's slide alder and devil's club as you flounder your way into the high country? Pick up "A Guide to Trekking in Nepal", by Stephen Bezruchka, with a forward by Sir Edmund Hillary. Nepalese forests aren't known for slide alder, but they do offer substitute joys such as leeches. All you have to do is prespire or otherwise radiate body heat and they flock to you. As Bezruchka writes: "You may find it amusing to tease the critters with your finger as they scan their suckers (trying to reach the source of digital heat) while attached to a leaf or rock." Keep in mind, though, the author allocates two paragraphs to leeches and 352 pages on the customs, country, language and how to get along in Nepal.

"Timberline--Mountain and Arctic Forest Frontiers" is a wonderfully illustrated documentation of North America's arboreal boundaries. The book is a clear interpretation of the trees you see as you pass the last stands of dwarfed spruce and other species while scrambling in the Chugach or hiking in the Gates of the Arctic. The author, Seven F. Arno, is a forest ecologist with the U.S. Forest Service in Montana. Timberline is illustrated by Ramona P. Hammetly, a native of the Puget Sound area.

"Pages of Stone", by Halka Chronic, is a large-format, well-illustrated geology of the national parks and monuments in the Rocky Mountains and Western Great Plains.

The MCA Vin Hoeman Library is located at Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking, 2633 Spenard Road. Those checking out books will be asked to present a current MCA membership card.

Mark Skok

TRIP REPORTS

Baleful

Webster definition: "Harmful or threatening harm or evil; ominous; deadly."

Our plans to climb Baleful Peak began last summer, August 1984, when four of us, John Dunlap, Suzi Noldan, Ron Van Bergeyk and I climbed Bashful Peak. Although we couldn't see Baleful for the clouds, we knew there lurked a remote mountain with fewer summit attempts than Bashful. Our ascent of Bashful, according to the summit register, was the first in the last four years, and only the twelfth in the last 24 years.

Bashful and Baleful are accessed by the East Fork trail near Eklutna Lake, south of Bold Peak. Bashful, at 8005 feet, is reportedly the highest peak in the Chugach west of Lake George, with Baleful close behind at 7920 feet. Eklutna Lake lies at roughly 1000 feet.

This year John couldn't accompany the three of us to Baleful. July 4 we biked around Eklutna Lake and hiked up the East Fork trail about 3 miles; past the valley with twin waterfalls that marks the access (between the falls) to the valley between Bold and Bashful, which is used as the base camp for climbing Bashful. We started climbing up into the next valley just south of the spectacular waterfall on an old sheephunter's trail. Too soon the trail ran out and we were left bushwacking with heavy packs through dense alders and devil's club, reminiscent of the bushwack to Bashful. Hours later we arrived at base camp at about 3000 feet elevation near the end of the valley. Sheep were everywhere.

We were off at 5:15 the next morning up the Red Spot Glacier through what we called the "death funnel", since any avalanches flowing from anywhere in the steep bowl above (with seracs) obviously funnel through this neck. We climbed frozen snow above the bergschrund to the col at 6200 feet, arriving at 8:30 a.m. Surprisingly we found bear tracks going over the col and down into the next valley.

The climb from there involves ascending the ridge to the summit. Numerous giant gendarmes, appearing impossible to climb with the loose rock, made the ascent difficult and dangerous. Sometimes over, sometimes around; the climbing is slow. Twice we belayed rock pitches and once a steep frozen snow traverse on the shady side of the mountain. Another steep snow traverse on the sunny side of the ridge resulted in many huge wet snow avalanches gouging deep grooves and falling to the valley floor thousands of feet below. We clung to the rock to safeguard the traverse. We had one final rock climb on better rock (but still not good) to the summit, arriving at 2:30 p.m.

The skies were clear and the view was fantastic. The summit register on the south summit indicates only two other ascents: the first by Vin Hoeman in 1965 and another by Greg Higgins in 1981. Past SCREEs also indicate another ascent by Duggan in 1981 (before Higgins). The first two climbs followed the long West Ridge from near the East Fork trail. We followed Higgins' route which

is obviously faster.

The long downclimb to the 6200-foot col was without mishap although difficult. We kicked off more avalanches and descended the tracks through the "funnel" and across the avalanche debris to the valley floor and camp at 8:45 p.m.

Mike Miller

Katmai 'Valley of 10,000 Smokes'

June 28-July 7, 1985

We left Anchorage Friday p.m. on MarkAir, transferred to a Peninsula Air Goose at King Salmon, were bedded down at the Brooks Camp tent area by midnight, and departed 9 a.m. Saturday by 4WD GMC van for the trailhead near Three Forks shelter.

But with "spring" some three weeks late and a very hot day, the van could not cross the third tributary of Margot Creek, so our adventures started early. With the help of the van drivers, and a winch, we got a line across the stream and all crossed - with varying degrees of success.

Six miles farther, at 80 deg. in the shade, we elected to overnight at Three Forks overlook to enjoy the view, literally "out of this world". We hiked down to the former bridge site across the Ukak River (4' wide at the top and tremendous volume and velocity) and elected not to traverse either the Knife Creek side of the valley nor try for Katmai Pass and the route beyond, due to the high waters, snow levels and lack of the bridge.

The next 5 days were a combination of nice weather and outstanding, colorful scenery - especially the rivers that have cut so deeply into the "mother rock" and the former fumarol formations - along with some fog and cold rain. But we were spared the infamous Katmai wind. However, the leaky shelters on Baked Mountain were welcome security.

Day hikes took most of us along Knife Creek and toward the glaciers, around Broken Mt. to some active fumarols, and around the original source, Mt. Novarupta, now a steaming lava core. The hot gases and ground nearby have created a little green oasis in "death valley" at one spot.

The highlight of the trip commenced with the evening ascent of Baked Mountain by Jane and Linda (of the Jane and Linda show), who took off in dense fog. As the fog thinned, more hikers got the urge. Well the fog never did lift, but we all ended up on top anyway, breaking out above the fog! Sunset, about 10:30, was gorgeous - just the snowclad tops of Katmai, Trident, Mageik, Martin and a few others showing, with a few wisps of steam. The only other occupant of the valley, "Chip", had come up with us, so we had several group photos taken.

We left Thursday a.m. in a dense fog and reached our River Lethe snow bridge crossing by compass course. Since the fog was lifting, we left our packs

(risk of bears much lower here with no vegetation) and took off southerly through the cinders, mud and snow. The "rocks" take some getting used to - they float, and are very abrasive.

A beautiful spot, out of the breeze, and in a warm sun, overlooking a lake (mostly ice now) and two waterfalls marked our turnaround and lunch spot at the base of Mt. Mageik. We overnighed at "6 Mile" (where a medium size bear passed within 30 yards of our tents) and continued northwesterly to cross Windy River at the "braids" again, well above the usual crossing. Saw a moose and a large brownie with cub along the way.

The road to Three Forks Shelter had no fresh auto tracks and the journal there revealed no one since we left, so we knew we had Margot Creek to cross. We got there hot and footsore about 7 p.m. and found the torrent worse than before and in a whole new channel. Exploration enabled us to cross a couple hundred yards downstream only to find vehicles had not reached there, either. So we limped on another hot mile to the 2nd crossing - it was crossable, (all eight of us were pretty good in rivers by now) and beyond it we found fresh vehicle tracks. So we camped on the road, 1/4 mile beyond at a nice overlook. Got picked up the next day, Saturday.

Sunday was fish and bear watching at Brooks and breakfast at the lodge. We marvelled at how the rangers keep bears and people apart! That evening we flew home, arriving in Anchorage after 9 p.m.

We had hiked about 70+ miles total, and crossed significant streams 6 times, learning that a fixed rope works well if you use both hands on it and stay downstream, and a stiff pole works better than a ski pole, and you must use both hands on it and not stare at the water. Experience is the best teacher and All hikers should have some, say on Campbell Creek.

Our group of eight was just the right size to handle rivers, fog, camp spots and stay sociable - and this particular group was as fine a bunch of hikers and friends as I have had the privilege of being with. They were: Don Hansen, Mark Findlay, Michael Rees, Ed Bovey, Linda White, Jane Stammen, and Sandi Foster.

Bill Wakeland

Mt. Sanford - A Wilderness Ski

The black and white Super Cub touched down on the newly exposed tundra of early May and skidded to a halt. Four more flights by pilot Lynn Ellis brought in the rest of the party, Pete Fitzgerald, Tom Henry, Alan Johnson and Jeff Peterson, to the landing strip at Windy Ridge, at 3600 feet near Mt. Sanford (16237), the northernmost giant in a chain of sleeping volcanos in the Wrangell Mountains.

A late breakup allowed us to set out immediately on skis, pulling our heavily-laden sleds behind us. Our excitement levels jumped as the distant summit dome peered through the clouds. We travelled across open rolling tundra

to the snout of the Sheep Glacier, 8 miles away. Bird songs serenaded us and several caribou crossed our path. Red foxes were spotted stalking parka squirrels on the snow. Spring was in the air.

Once on the glacier, the largest crevasses on the climb were encountered in an icefall at the 7700-foot level and we crossed them on snow bridges. This brought us to our camp at 8000 feet and two subsequent camps put us at approximately 11500 feet, within striking distance of the summit.

At 9000 feet we skied past a 1000-foot wall of polished ice, which we called the "cleaver". The weather had been favorable to our high camp and we were excited about a push for the summit, but on the eve of our first attempt a hard southwest wind began to pound us. That night we clung to the mountainside for dear life in our two tiny tents as the storm increased in intensity. The wind howled like a banshee all night and into the next day. None of us had ever been in a storm of such intensity so high on a mountain and so far from the car! It was spooky to think that only a thin layer of nylon cloth was all that shielded us from obliviation. The snow walls we built turned out to be snow traps. When the tent walls sagged over our heads, it was time for some lucky person to venture out into the storm and dig out. The 2 a.m. shift was most popular.

Our third morning of waiting broke clear, calm, and -12 deg. F. We had survived the wrath of the mountain king! Tom, Pete and Alan decided to head down the mountain while possible to meet our scheduled plane pickup at Windy Ridge. Jeff and I elected to stay one more day and go for it.

Bidding the others goodbye, we took off for the summit, 4000 feet above, and four miles away. Travel to 13500 was rapid, but as the slope steepened above that elevation, our rapid gain of altitude started to take its toll. Our initial excitement was short-lived. I felt like someone was pinching my lungs in a vice and Jeff was developing a bad headache. Wispy cirrus clouds approached from the southwest. By the 15000-foot level a whiteout was around us. It was a difficult decision to turn back, but as we descended the cloud over the summit made us temporarily glad.

Camp was made at 8000 feet, where, to our surprise, the recent storm had left two feet of fine fluffy powder snow on the lower mountain. It was waiting to be cut by a few telemark turns. Skiing downhill, roped, pulling sleds turned out to be a real challenge, but we amazed ourselves by getting in some turns without crashing, or falling into hidden crevasses.

Back off the glacier and 6000 feet lower, we enjoyed lunch in the mid-May sun, our noses sensing the smells of organic life. We caught up with the others at Windy Ridge, much to their surprise and relief. The next day Lynn Ellis returned us to Chistochina Lodge, civilization, and an orgy of cheeseburgers, pie and ice cream.

Joseph Kurtak

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

- August 10 CRESCENT LAKE
12 miles, 850 elevation gain, easy. Trip may be extended to overnight. Contact leader for details. 55 ways #9. 8 a.m. UAA
Leader: Don Hansen 279-0829
- 11 GLEN ALPS TO INDIAN VIA SHIP LAKE
15 miles; 2100' elev gain; moderate. One way trip with car shuttle. 55 ways #32. Meet 8 a.m. UAA parking lot.
Leader: Kathy Burke. 346-2841.
- 17 MCA PICNIC
Eklutna Lake Campground A
- 17-18 PETERS HILLS
8 miles; 1500' elev gain; easy. Four-wheel drive volunteers needed for this trip to the south side of Denali. Call leader for details. 55 ways #47.
Leader: Harmut Pluntke 279-9252
- 24-25 PETER'S CREEK VALLEY
Leader needed.
- 31-2 LOST LAKE
14 miles. Climb Mt. Ascension too. 55 ways #11. Meet 9 a.m. UAA parking lot.
Leader: Willy Hersman 338-5132
- Sept. 7 FULLER LAKE
Leader needed.
- 8 SUICIDE PEAKS
Leader needed.
- 14 THE WEDGE
11 miles; 2500' gain; moderate. 55 ways #32. Meet UAA at 8 a.m.
Leader: Bernie Helms
- 21 INDIAN CREEK PASS
12 miles; 2100' gain; moderate. Probable side trip to lakes above pass. 55 ways #27. Meet 8 a.m. UAA parking lot.
Leader: Jim Pommert w:563-3583 h:344-5656
- 28- 29 ICE CLIMBING CLASS
Leader: the venerable Terry Becker

Oct. 5-6 SWAN LAKE
28 miles; 1500' elev gain; moderate. In by Devil's Creek trail, out by Resurrection Pass at Cooper's Landing. Overnight in Swan Lake cabin. 55 ways #14. Meet 7 a.m. UAA parking lot.
Leader: Jim Pommert 563-3585 344-5656.

Here is the schedule of mid-week hikes to be held in the evenings, usually on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. There are not designated leaders for these hikes; simply meet at the UAA parking lot at 6 p.m. (unless otherwise stated). If you want more information about the hike, contact one of the committee members. Phone numbers are listed below the schedule.

August 13 WINNER CREEK GORGE
7 miles, 200' gain, easy.

21 RENDEZVOUS PEAK
3 miles, 1500' gain, easy.

27 FLATTOP
4 miles, 1350' gain, easy.

THE LEADER IS REQUIRED NOT TO LET INADEQUATELY EQUIPPED HIKERS PARTICIPATE ON THE HIKE.

The hiking committee is seeking suggestions and leaders for week-long, weekend, and day trips. Contact: Jim Pommert 344-5656 work: 563-3583; Jane Stammen 563-7703; or Linda White 274-4989, or Kathy Burke 346-2841.