


the **SCREE**

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

August 2007

Volume 50 Number 8



**Ability is of little account without opportunity
Napoleon Bonaparte**

**Flute Peak
Pepper Peak
Upcoming Ice Festival
The 'Couple' Trip
POM – Helios Peak**

Monthly Meeting

Wednesday, August 15 @ 7:30 PM

**Program: Climbing and Tramping on New Zealand's
South Island with Mark Miraglia**

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

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

Join us for our club meetings the 3rd Wednesday of the month at the First United Methodist Church, 9th and G Streets next to the Philips Building (you may use marked parking after hours)

Contact information is provided on the back page or visit us on the web at www.mcak.org

Cover photo: Ross Noffsinger in the snow gully to Flute Peak. Photo by Randy Howell

Article Submission: Articles and photos are best submitted on the web at MCAK.org. You can also attach a word processing document to an email. Due to formatting problems please do not submit material in the body of an email. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. To get on the cover a photo should convey the feeling of mountaineering and show human endeavor.

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POM, Peak of the Month - Helios

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

August 2, 6:00 p.m. Peak 4009
(Four Mile Creek and Thunder Bird Creek)
Class D, 3,800 feet of elevation gain, 9 miles round trip, Contact leader at least 24 hours in advance of trip. Leader: Steve Gruhn
steven.gruhn@hartcrowser.com, 868-9118 (w), 344-1219 (h)

August 4 – 8 Mint Hut maintenance trip
Class D. elevation gain 2400 feet, 17 miles round trip, Contact Greg Bragiel 569-3008 or unknownhiker@ak.net

August 9, 6:00 p.m. West Ptarmigan Peak (4911)
Class C, 3,000 feet of elevation gain, 7 miles round trip, Contact leader at least 24 hours in advance of trip. Leader: Steve Gruhn steven.gruhn@hartcrowser.com, 868-9118 (w), 344-1219 (h)

This colorful moth was spotted July 4th above Symphony Lake



Patrick Fleming Photo

Flute Peak

by Ross Noffsinger



Randy Howell topping out.
Photo by Ross Noffsinger

On June 17, Randy Howell and I headed up the south fork of Eagle River to climb Mount Ewe and Flute Peak. We dropped our camping gear at the top of the waterfall and headed up the Flute Glacier to scope out potential routes. Flute has two main routes: one is accessed from the Flute Glacier and consists of a 900 foot snow gully that splits the west face; while the other is up a snow ramp accessed from the Organ Glacier. Both routes lead to a summit block that can be climbed with relative ease but is quite exposed.

Not sure which route to try, we opted to take the advice of Wayne Todd who recommended the west face snow gully but suggested we climb Ewe first so that we could scope out the route. Other than occasional showers of sleet and rain, the climb up Ewe's east ridge was pleasant and straight forward. Wayne's advice paid off by providing the perfect vantage point to view the gully. The crux is a bergschrund near its base. Depending on the time of year, the schrund can be difficult to cross, but it was still early enough in the summer that it looked passable.

Ross on the Summit block
Photo Randy Howell



The following day we made our way up the Flute Glacier to the west face gully. We crossed the schrund at the base of a large runnel where the consistent flow of snow had created a bridge. Splitting a large cliff face, the gully is an exhilarating snow climb, somewhat similar to the linear accelerator on Troublemint. From the top of the gully it's a short scramble to the summit block and with a few rock moves you're on top.

While on the 6610 foot summit I realized that I was uncomfortably warm. At first, in disbelief, I tried to ignore the heat because the temperatures had been in the upper 40s to low 50s. But it was just too hot to ignore, so I checked the thermometer strapped to my pack. It read 99 degrees F! I told Randy and he checked his thermometer. It read 92 degrees F. Since we were in cloud, direct sunlight

was not causing the extreme readings. Neither was body heat. It had to be some strange atmospheric greenhouse and/or magnification effect. The summit was probably within 100 feet of the top of the cloud so a lot of light was getting through while the less energetic infrared radiation was apparently being trapped. If anyone else has experienced this phenomenon or knows its cause, please let me know.

Once off the summit block, the temperature was noticeably cooler. We descended our ascent route and had a leisurely hike back to the trailhead.

For other accounts of ascents, see the March 1969 Scree by Hans Van der Laan (original ascent), the September 2001 Scree by Wayne Todd and the October 2004 Scree by Steve Gruhn.

Randy Howell on Ewe peak with the snow gully and Flute peak in the back



Ross Noffsinger Photo



Pepper Peak (5423 ± 23), Western Chugach

by Steve Gruhn



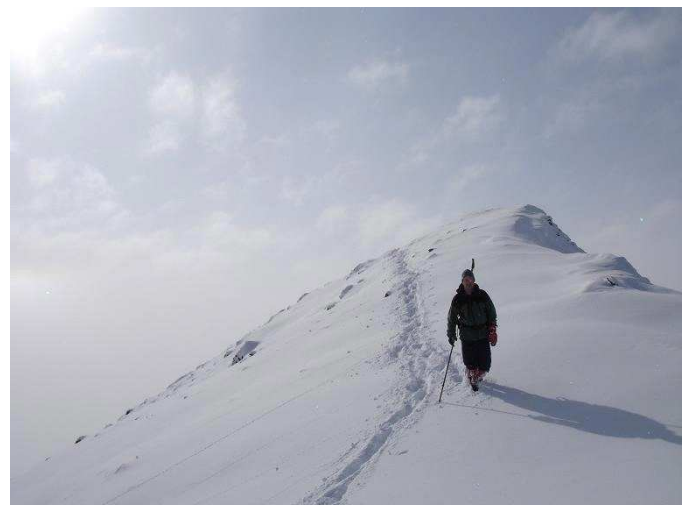
Mark Kimerer, Jennifer DuFord, and I left the Eklutna Lake Parking Lot around 6:30 a.m. on March 24, 2007, for a hike up the Twin Peaks Trail. Although it was the first Saturday of spring, we saw no one else all day long. Perhaps it was the 7 inches of fresh snow that kept the others away.

We hiked up to the first bench on the trail and then struck out directly up the southwest ridge of Pepper Peak. The snow was a slog at first, but then we found some really hardpacked “snice” under the fresh snow. That made the footing more treacherous than I had hoped, but we were soon out of that and trudging up the ridge.

The day was gorgeous and we seemed to spend a fair amount of the day near the top of the clouds. We saw several neat atmospheric phenomena – parhelia (sun dogs), sun pillars, and ice halos (at both 22 and 46 degrees from the sun) – that were the result of the sun’s rays hitting the ice suspended in the air. A large

flock of pipits and the occasional ptarmigan added to our enjoyment.

Jennifer opted to wait below while Mark and I climbed to the summit of Pepper Peak, reaching the top at about 12:15. We had originally planned to continue on to Salt Peak, but the soft snow had slowed our travel, so we opted to make this a one-peak day.



After the obligatory summit photographs Mark and I headed down. On the descent I found some more “snice” and went for an unplanned



glissade down the south side of the ridge, ripping my wind pants. But soon we were back with Jennifer, who was waiting patiently in the sun.

We continued down the ridge, but instead of descending to the first bench where we had started off trail, we decided to avoid the “snice” and dropped toward the trail above Thachkatnu Creek. After a bit of snow wading, we reached the trail and made our way back to the truck.

It was a short day in the mountains and we hadn't climbed as much as we had wanted to, but I was happy nonetheless. The sun dogs, halos, pipits, fresh snow, and camaraderie were memorable. And after all, aren't memories the reasons why we climb?



Ice Fest Corner by Jayme Dixon

SAVE THE DATE.....

Don't forget to mark your calendar for the upcoming annual 2007 MCA Ice Climbing Festival. The festival will be held Friday, September 28th – Sunday, September 30th and is being put on by the MCA Ice Festival Committee.

New this year is pre-registration via regular US mail. A registration form will be printed in the Aug. and Sept. Scree. (*next page, Ed.*) Just print this form off and mail it to the address provided, with a check or money order made out to MCA. Once your payment is received you will officially be registered for the weekend. Although, you may pre-register we will be having late registration at the September general meeting and at the mandatory Ice Festival Participant meeting on Wednesday, September 26th at 7pm. Remember all participants must have a current MCA membership.

Also the MCA Ice Fest Committee is soliciting instructors for the '07 Ice Fest. Lead instructors must have already taught at a previous festival and assistant instructors will be approved based on experience. Ultimately all instructors will have to be approved by the MCA Board of Directors.

The Ice Festival is one of the biggest MCA functions to date and requires a wealth of volunteers; the Ice Fest Committee is also soliciting volunteers for late registration at the September general meeting and for the Participant meeting on Wed., Sept. 26th. Interested parties should contact the Ice Fest Coordinator.

If you have any questions please call or e-mail the MCA Ice Fest Coordinator:

Jayme (Mack) Dixon at (907)382-0212 or (907)245-3251, e-mail: mca_icefest@yahoo.com

MCA ICE FESTIVAL REGISTRATION AND QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions: Please answer all applicable questions and submit with money to the Ice Festival Coordinator.
Mailing info on pg. 2

1. Have you attended a previous MCA Ice Climbing Festival?

Yes No

If so, what experience level? (please circle one)

Novice Beginner Advanced Beginner Intermediate Advanced

2. Do you have previous experience with: (*circle all that apply*)

- a. Walking in crampons
- b. Belaying/belay commands
- c. Ice climbing (*if you circle this option please answer questions 2a & 2b*)
- d. Rock climbing

2a. If you have ice climbing experience, how many times have you been?

- a. 1-3 times
- b. 4-6 times
- c. 7-9 times
- d. 10 or more times

2b. If you have ice climbing experience, do you have experience leading? Please explain (i.e. climb names, rating and dates).

3. Please list one goal that you have for this weekend?

4. Special Requests:

Instructors: _____

Want to be paired with friends: _____

Contact information:

Name: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

Emergency Contact:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Relationship: _____

PLEASE SUBMIT REGISTRATION AND MONIES TO:

(please include a check or money order for \$50, all monies should be made out to MCA)

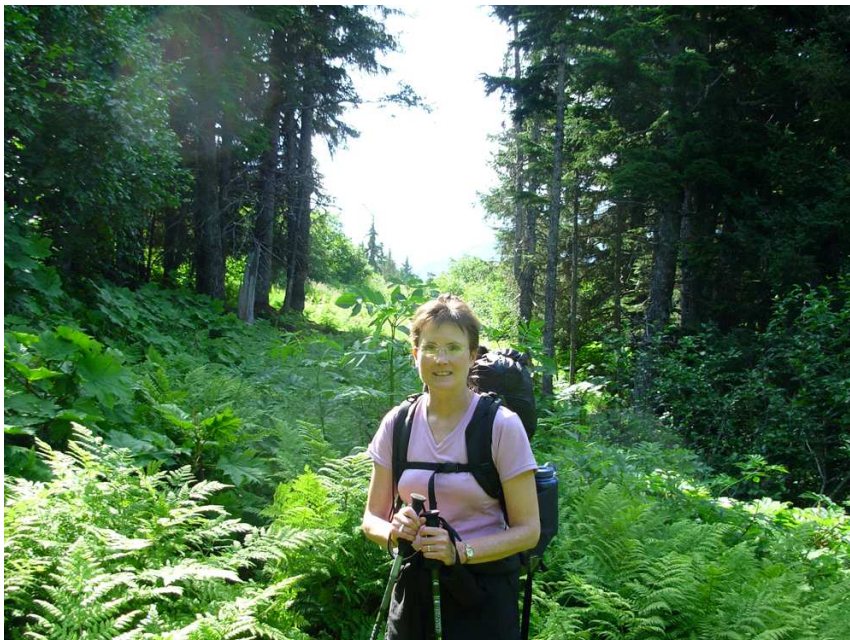
MCA ICE FEST COORDINATOR

830 BRINY CIRCLE

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99515

The 'Couple' Trip, 2007

by John Recktenwald



Marcy on the winter cat track to Powder Hut
Photos by John Recktenwald

This year, Greg Bragiel's 'Couples trip' to Powder Hut was going to be down to 3 couples from the 6 or 8 couples of a few years ago. Oops, Saturday morning, Greg Bragiel, the organizer, called to tell me that one couple had bailed and that Mary Beth was sick so they couldn't go either. It was up to us. With some prodding from overeager Marcy I 'decided' we would go. I penciled out a map on a torn piece of notebook paper from Greg's directions. It is interesting how quickly the scale changes as the edge of the paper approaches. Greg asked several times if I wanted some GPS coordinates. Nope, I'd do this the old fashioned way.

With the trusty hand forged map and a 25 cent compass embedded in the top of one of my trekking poles, I had the 'two essentials' and off we went. We managed the gravel Winner Creek trail with some skill but soon we were slogging up a Winter cat track in Summer. At least it was a nice summer day, hot actually, and, well... muggy, with bugs, oh, and brush.

OK, no problem, after several hours we made the landmark avalanche control platform, just a little bit

to go. Hmm, Several more hours of roaming around could not produce a hut. My map clearly said 'nasfh9w3hfbaviu3 and left right left right', so why couldn't we find it?

Nevermind, we found a beautiful alpine meadow in a bowl with several streams and a pond. I lay down in several spots trying to find that perfect spot, visualizing my second favorite activity: sleeping on the heather in our floorless tent. As I was lying there enjoying the sensations, Marcy delivered one of those mixed messages: 'Look, a bear', A good news bad news moment. Yes he certainly is a big handsome fellow and yes we can go now. We made quick work of the downhill and were in bed by midnight.

Marcy with a potential tentmate



Join the gang for the couple's trip next year. Don't worry, I will not be leading it.

Peak of the Month: Helios Peak

by Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Kenai Mountains; Grant Lake Peaks

Borough: Kenai Peninsula Borough

Drainage: Falls Creek and Grant Lake

Latitude/Longitude: 60° 26' 43" North, 149° 15' 1" West

Elevation: 5584 feet

Prominence: 1434 feet from Peak 5850 near Falls Creek and Grant Lake

Adjacent Peak(s): Solars Mountain (5354) and Peak 5850

Distinctness: 1001 feet from Solars Mountain

USGS Map: Seward (B-7 NE)

First Recorded Ascent: July 5, 1969, by Harry and Winford "Dub" Blutworth

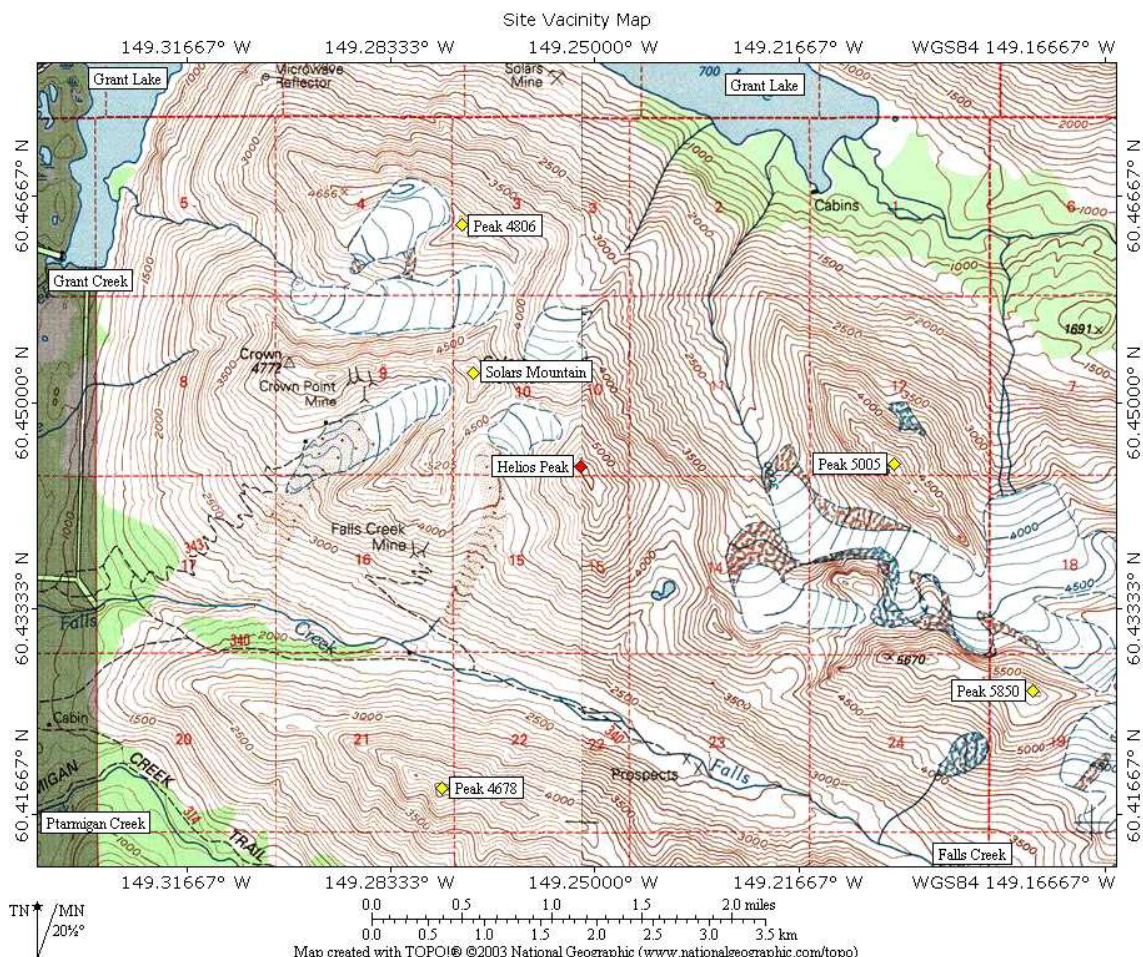
Route of First Recorded Ascent: North ridge from Solars Mountain

Access Point: Crown Point Mine road

On July 5, 1969, in rainy and windy conditions, brothers Harry and Dub Blutworth climbed Solars Mountain and descended its southeast ridge to a

notch and then continued east to climb the easy scree ridge on the north side of Helios Peak. They reached the big summit boulder and descended down the south ridge toward Falls Creek. Their trip report appeared on pages 6 and 7 of the August 1969 Scree.

After Solars Mountain was named after the nearby Solars Sawmill at the southwest end of Grant Lake and the Solars Mine near the south side of Grant Lake, Vin Hoeman reportedly decided to name the peaks in the area after a theme of Greek mythology. Unaware of the proposed theme of Greek mythology, Wayne Todd and Ben Still climbed Helios Peak on August 28, 1998, and proposed the name Tangent in the register they left. After climbing it in 2002, Willy Hersman asked Wayne if he could change the name to be consistent with Hoeman's theme of Greek mythology and then named Helios Peak after the Greek god of the sun.



MCA Trip Classifications

The classifications below do not take into account individual trip hazards such as river crossings, scree slopes, snow fields, bears, etc. Trip leaders are required to inform the trip participants of any such hazards either verbally, on the sign-up sheet, or in the trip description. Leader approval is required for participation on all trips. **NON-TECHNICAL:** Following are a few standards used to classify nontechnical trips. The classification is made in terms of hiking distance and altitude gain. Many trips are not on established trails.

CLASS A: Easy hikes with a maximum distance of 8 miles for day trips or 4 miles per day for overnight trips. Altitude gain up to 1200 feet.

CLASS B: Trips involving a maximum distance of up to 12 miles for a day trip or 6 miles per day for an overnight trip. Altitude gain of 1200 to 2500 feet.

CLASS C: Trips up to 15 miles for a day hike or 8 miles per day for an overnight trip. Altitude gain up to 3500 feet. Scree, steep grass or other rough terrain problems may be encountered.

CLASS D: Hikes and climbs with an altitude gain of over 3500 feet or a distance of greater than 15 miles for a day-hike or greater than 8 miles a day for an overnight trip. Peaks in this classification may require minimal climbing skills.

CLASS E: Hazardous climbing conditions or stream-crossing conditions may be encountered. A basic mountaineering course may be required.

TECHNICAL: Technical trips are open to all qualified climbers. However, the registration on any particular trip must be restricted to a safe and manageable number of climbers. Registration is made directly with the leader, who determines the qualifications needed for the trip.

GLACIER TRAVEL: Trips requiring roped travel over glaciers. Knowledge of crevasse rescue, and ice axe and crampon skills are required. Basic understanding of ice and snow anchors also required.

FIFTH CLASS: Trips which involve fifth class climbing. A Basic Mountaineering course or equivalent is required. Knowledge of belay and rappel techniques and placing anchors is required. Climbing difficulty varies widely with each trip.

TRIP PARTICIPANTS have the obligation to acquaint themselves with the nature of the trip and to verify that it is within their capability and experience. Anyone wishing to participate in any trip above CLASS A must have completed one or more trips of the next lower classification, or the equivalent.

Approved: MCA Board, February 15, 2000

General Rules for MCA Sanctioned Trips

1. Proper equipment is available from the trip leader.
2. No dogs. (Among the reasons are bear problems.)
3. The trip leader can require special equipment and refuse participation to any person that is ill-prepared (e.g. inappropriate clothing/gear).
4. The leader's suggestions are to be followed. Do not go off alone, return or rush ahead without his (her) permission, and don't ford a stream before the leader assesses the situation. Remember, this is a club trip and the leader must know where all participants are. Anyone separating from the group without the leader's approval is no longer considered a participant the MCA Sanctioned trip.
5. The trip leader has the authority to split the group (fast and slow), dependent upon current conditions. However, he/she must appoint a qualified co-leader to lead the second group using the guidelines specified in the current Trip Leader Responsibilities.
6. Trip participants who, in the leader's opinion, put themselves or other members of the group in danger by disregarding the leader's suggestions, shall be subject to sanction by the club. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, reprimand at general meeting, exclusion from future trips, termination of annual membership, or lifetime exclusion from the club.
7. You must sign up on a trip roster (club meetings) or contact the leader, and you must have signed the club waiver to be on a club trip.
8. If you find you cannot participate after signing up on the roster, please let the leader know, both for transportation and gear-planning and so someone else can go. If you are the leader, help find a replacement.
9. Total number of people on club trips:
Minimum: 4 (for safety reasons)
Maximum: Leader option, depends upon the trail and campsite conditions, but generally limited to 12 in trail-less areas or State/ National Parks
10. Firearms are not encouraged, and please let the leader know if you want to carry one - it will be leader's option. Aerosol bear repellent is preferred.

Approved: MCA Board, February 15, 2000

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President Sean Bolender 333-0213
Vice-President Annette Iverson 222-0581
Secretary Bridget Paule 230-9903
Treasurer Travis Taylor 382-4823

Board member Steve Gruhn 344-1219
Board member Don Hansen 243-7184
Board member Randy Howell 346-4608
Board member Andy Rembert 688-3230
Board member Sara Ellen Hutchison 382-7097

Annual membership dues: Single \$15, Family \$20

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 treasurer. The Post Office will not forward the newsletter.

The 'Scree' is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be submitted on the web at www.mcak.org or e-mailed to the Scree Editor. Articles should be received by the monthly club meeting (third Wednesday of the month) to be 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 'camera ready' and pre-paid.

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

Mailing list/database entry: Yukiko Hayano and Randy Plant 243-1438
Hiking and Climbing Committee: Randy Howell – 346-4608, Jayme Dixon – 382-0212
Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008
Calendar: Stuart Grenier 337-5127
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