

# the **SCREE**

## **Mountaineering Club of Alaska**

**August 2011**

**Volume 54 Number 8**



### **Monthly Meeting:**

**Wednesday, August 17, at 6:30 p.m.**

**Program: Climbing in Little Switzerland by David Lynch**

***"All our dreams can come true, if we  
have the courage to pursue them."***

***--Walt Disney***

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**Peak of the Month – Mount Foster**

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**Indianhouse Mountain**

**No Doubts on Redoubt**

**Magpie Peak**

# The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

[www.mtnclubak.org](http://www.mtnclubak.org)

*"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 third Wednesday of the month at the BP Energy Center, 900 East Benson Boulevard, Anchorage, Alaska  
[www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC\\_map\\_06-04-03.pdf](http://www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC_map_06-04-03.pdf)

**Cover Photo: Scotty Vincik on the summit of Mount Mausolus as the light begins to fade. The main spine of the Revelation Mountains is visible behind him. Photo by Clint Helander.**

## Article Submission:

Text and photography submissions for the *Scree* can be sent as attachments to [mcascree@gmail.com](mailto:mcascree@gmail.com). Articles should be submitted by the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month to appear in the following month's *Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. 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.

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On-line? – click me



For best viewing of the *Scree* on a monitor using Adobe Reader, click on 'View' and 'Full Screen.'

## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

We need some trip leaders to volunteer their time to lead some trips. Please help out!

## Training Schedule

The MCA Annual Ice Fest will be Friday, September 30 - Sunday, October 2, 2011. For more information check-out the MCA web-site or e-mail: [jaymelynnemack@gmail.com](mailto:jaymelynnemack@gmail.com).

## Thank You

We would like to thank Todd Miner, Executive Director of Cornell University Outdoor Education, for donating pickets, ice axes, helmets, and other mountaineering gear to the MCA. We will make good use of this equipment in our training classes.

## Video Link

Here is a link to a very nice high-quality climbing video showing Ueli Steck doing a speed solo ascent of the Eiger in record time.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G-dPjDYVKUY>

# Peak of the Month: Mount Foster

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Coast Mountains

Borough: Municipality of Skagway

Drainages: Boat Ramp Glacier, Homan Lake, and Silt Lake

Latitude/Longitude: 59° 47' 50" North, 135° 28' 48" West

Elevation: 7127 feet

Prominence: 2177 feet from Peak 7639 in the Boat Ramp Glacier, Chilkat Glacier, and Silt Lake drainages

Adjacent Peaks: Peak 6350 in the Homan Lake drainage, Peak 6450 in the Homan Lake drainage, Peak 7639, Peak 6450 in the Homan Lake and Silt Lake drainages, and Peak 5810 in the Boat Ramp Glacier and Homan Lake drainages

Distinctness: 1277 feet from Peak 6350

USGS Map: Skagway (D-2)

First Recorded Ascent: August 1906 by the International Boundary Commission's U.S. Party on Taiya River, headed by Ora Miner Leland

Route of First Recorded Ascent: Chilkoot Trail to Chilkoot Pass

Access Point: Dyea

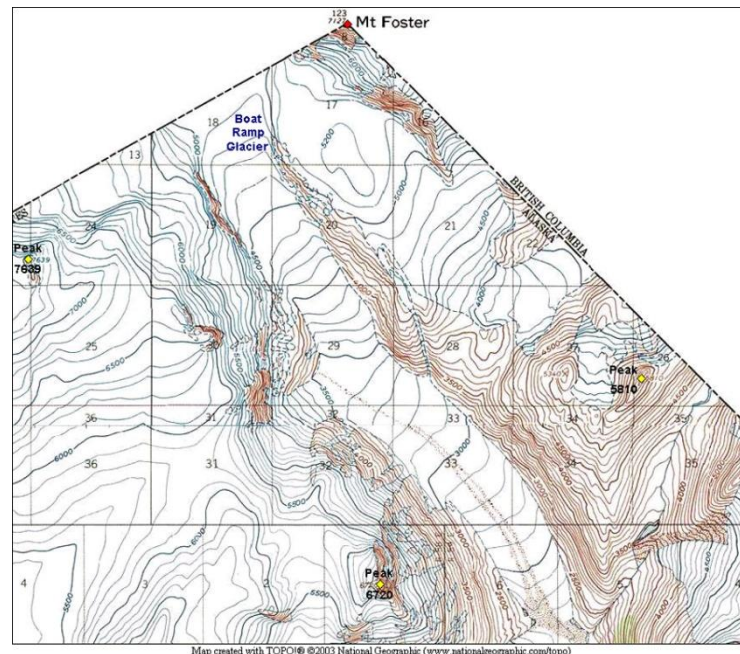
A dispute over the Alaska-Canada boundary arose during Russian occupation and continued after the U.S. purchased Alaska from Russia in 1867. The U.S. claimed a boundary that was no less than 35 miles from the coast. Canada claimed a boundary of 35 miles from the mouths of the fjords and British Columbia claimed a boundary that included most of the mainland of southeastern Alaska and several islands in the Alexander Archipelago. The gold rush of 1898 brought the issue to a head. In

1903 the Alaska Boundary Tribunal met in London, England, to determine the fate. The U.S. had three representatives on the tribunal, Canada had two, and Great Britain had one. After several tie votes, a compromise was struck that favored the American claim.

In 1904 the U.S. and Canada set out to survey the boundary between Alaska and Canada. In southeastern Alaska the process involved establishing points at intervals some distance from the coast boundary. The line between the points would be the boundary. Several survey teams were sent out to various regions along the boundary. Representatives from both nations were on each survey team. Due to the length of the border, the rugged country it crossed, and the short field seasons, the survey teams would take over a decade to complete their work.

In 1906 the U.S. Party on Taiya River set out by boat from Skagway to Dyea to begin packing up the Chilkoot Trail to Chilkoot Pass to resume its survey work that had been left unfinished the previous autumn. Ora Leland was the engineer in charge. Samuel L. Boothroyd, Wirt F. Smith, and 14 other workers assisted him. George White-Fraser was the Canadian representative.

Cloudy weather prevented the team from viewing distant survey points, but the surveyors busied themselves with establishing survey monuments so that they would be ready for those rare days with decent visibility. In August 1906 the team established a survey marker atop Mount Hoffman and border monuments on either side of Chilkoot Pass and atop a 6988-foot peak. Monument 120 was



established on the east side of Chilkoot Pass, Monument 121 west of the pass, and Monument 122 atop the 6988-foot peak (Boundary Peak 122). A steel drill projecting about 3 inches above the rock in which it was set served as Monument 123 on the summit of a 7127-foot peak (Boundary Peak 123). Sightings were then made from Mount Hoffman and Boundary Peak 122 to Boundary Peak 123 to establish its position.

In 1923 Lawrence Martin named Boundary Peak 123 for John Watson Foster (1836-1917), who served as Secretary of State from 1892 to 1893 under President Benjamin Harrison. As an agent of the U.S., Foster participated in the Alaska Boundary Tribunal in London, England, in 1903. One of his grandchildren, John Foster Dulles (Washington Dulles International Airport in Virginia was named in his honor), also became Secretary of State (serving from 1953 to 1959 under President Dwight Eisenhower).

In 1927 Boundary Peak 122 was named Mount Van Wagenen in honor of James H. Van Wagenen, the chief engineer of the U.S. section of the International Boundary Commission.

In late May 2002 Ross Bamford, David Ehlers, David Foster, and Luke Murray, attempted to climb Mount Foster. Temsco Helicopters helicoptered the party to a spot low on the Boat Ramp Glacier. After establishing a high camp below the south face of Mount Foster, they were kept tentbound by fog, wind, sleet, and rain. When the weather broke on May 31, they resumed their climb, but were turned around 200 feet below the summit by a rock wall, for which they lacked appropriate gear. A 20-foot gap separated them from one of the several summit spires. The party returned to Skagway on June 3.

Information for this article came from pages 62 and 170 of the International Boundary Commission's [Joint Report upon the Survey and Demarcation of the Boundary between Canada and the United States from Tongass Passage to Mount St. Elias](#), published in 1952, and from the May 31 and June 14, 2002, issues of the *Skagway News*.

<http://www.skagwaynews.com/sportsrec053102.html>

<http://www.skagwaynews.com/sportsrec061402.html>



David Foster in front of Mount Foster.  
Photo by David Foster.

## Embarrassing Moments in the Great Outdoors

by Frank E. Baker

If someone tells you he's never had an embarrassing, awkward moment in Alaska's great outdoors, he's either a victim of amnesia, lying, or the kind of disgustingly perfect person that is hard to stomach.

By jettisoning our egos and agreeing to poke fun at ourselves, we easily double the number of entertaining stories we can tell to friends and family. For people like me, it triples my chances.

For example, several years ago on a summer hike up O'Malley Peak southeast of Anchorage, I forgot my hat – a serious mistake for someone with thinning hair. Realizing I would risk severe sunburn on the top of my head if I didn't cover up, I looked for a handkerchief or anything that might do the job. If I used my T-shirt, I'd risk burning my shoulders and back. It was a crucial decision: I would have to use my underwear.

They were blue jockey underwear and fit snugly over my head. Scrambling down the peak into the Powerline Valley, I passed a young couple who looked at me strangely and smiled. It didn't register until I passed two other hikers who nearly doubled over with laughter as I approached. My head was still adorned with jockey underwear.

Farther down the trail, with no one in sight, I removed the underwear. Recovering from the grips of embarrassment, I began to contemplate the upside. Perhaps underwear

atop the head could someday become an REI outdoor fashion statement.

On another summer mountain trip with temperatures soaring into the 70s, I decided to go with shorts. I finally descended down to a small lake where a few other hikers were sitting, enjoying a picnic lunch.

"We think we saw you coming down," said a young woman. "Weren't you the guy wearing white pants?"

"No," I responded. "I was wearing shorts. The white you saw was my legs."

These experiences are starting to make me feel like an Alaskan version of Rodney Dangerfield.

On yet another hike with friends, I had a nature call and had neglected to bring along toilet paper. We were high on the mountain and the only thing available was snow. I can tell you, if you don't already know, that crystallized snow is more abrasive than sandpaper. In fact, sandpaper is velvet by comparison. For the rest of the day I walked in a rather stiff, ungainly fashion, wondering if anyone noticed. They probably did, but knowing about some of my other bizarre exploits, like wearing underwear on my head, they undoubtedly didn't want to ask any questions.

These are all true stories and I needn't say that names have been changed to protect the innocent, because mine is the only one mentioned. If I related any more of these tales I'd be subjecting myself to even more kibitzing than I already receive, so I'd best desist.

Even though I now always bring along a hat – rain, shine or snow – I've sometimes considered bringing along an extra set of jockey-style underwear in case I feel compelled to make an original, outdoor fashion statement.



The upper half of the west face of Mount Mausolus. Two thousand five hundred feet of continuous ice led to an unprotected simul-climb up 400 feet of 60-degree snow to the summit (hidden from view).

## Mount Mausolus

By Clint Helander

The first time you see Mount Mausolus, your eyes almost blur out of focus. The complicated west face flaunts all a mountain can offer. Gothic cornices droop over snaking, cliffed-out couloirs. Hanging glaciers defy gravity, while house sized blocks of dispelled ice rest broken several thousand feet below. Granite towers jut

skyward in iconic profile. There seems to be no logical way to crest its snowcapped summit. Located in the Revelation Mountains, Mausolus is a peak of utter isolation. It is a perfect mountain. And, until March of this year, it was unclimbed.

At 9,170 feet, Mausolus is comparably small when measured against most Alaskan standards. It is the sheer mass and technicality of this massif-like peak that make it impressive and simultaneously terrifying. From the air, it dominates the horizon. In his 1968 *American*

*Alpine Journal* entry, famed mountaineer David Roberts called Mausolus a “hopeless labyrinth” and “perhaps the toughest climb in the range.”

It was those few words and a single stunning photo taken from a local pilot that harvested my fascination with Mausolus. As I grew from a young, inexperienced newbie to a competent and confident alpinist, my highest goal was to make the first ascent of this incredible mountain. For the next four years, every swing of an ice tool, every sit-up or evening ski centered around my distant and improbable dream. My mind was occupied at all times by the mountain.

In 2008 I received my first grant from the American Alpine Club that helped to fund a trip



The west face of Mount Mausolus. The 4,500-foot Mausoleum route takes the obvious snow chute to the direct ice line to the summit.



**Scotty Vincik approaching the belay on the crux pitch of the Mausoleum. Helander led the 150-foot W15 pitch on five ice screws.**

to the Revelations. With my partners partners Steve Sinor and Seth Holden, I took in the vexing oppression of such vast remoteness. With no satellite phone or even an aircraft radio, we were shackled to our own modest abilities and surrounded by some of the harshest territory Alaska has to offer. It became apparent that Mausolus was too large of an undertaking for us at the time. Plus, we were unable to even reach its base, which lies almost ten miles away by foot.

Another trip and two challenging first ascents later and Seth and I were no closer to Mausolus than when we held its photo in our

hands. Finally in 2010 we were able to land on the Swift Glacier under the west face of Mausolus. We had climbed together almost exclusively for years and reached a higher level of technical proficiency. We waited for twelve days to fly in as weather blasted the high mountains of Alaska. Simply to stand under the mountain brought me a joy that has been hard to replicate.

The heat of late May baked Mausolus and brought down an endless roar of avalanches. Seth and I stopped counting after 200 came down in one day. After watching the face for several days, we figured out a continuous pattern. At night the temperatures dropped and the face froze solid. At 11:00 a.m. the avalanches returned. Could we possibly climb the 4,500-foot face in a 12-hour push? It was unlikely.

On the sixth night, we sprinted up the couloir just to take a look at the upper bits for a future attempt. It was an agonizing decision to turn around after making quick time up the first half of the face. It was however, the only decision to make. Still, it was one of the hardest decisions I've ever had to make in the mountains.

Seth and I were evolving in separate manners as climbers and ultimately, we had different priorities. Our common ground though, was climbing Mausolus together. It was then devastating when Seth, my main climbing partner and close friend, died in a plane crash in August of 2010. Now I had a new reason to climb Mausolus – as a tribute to Seth.

I decided we had to go earlier to avoid the chance of avalanches on the gigantic face. In March of 2011, Scotty Vincik, my good friend and co-worker at

Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking, set out for a final crack at Mausolus. The weather had been perfectly clear and cold for a month and the logistical issues of approaching the mountain were made easy thanks to Rob Jones of Hesperus Air and R&R Guide Services.

We started up the face almost immediately and brought an arsenal of gear on our alpine style ascent. We knew we would only get one chance. The high pressure couldn't last much longer. Scotty and I made quick time to my previous highpoint and quickly pushed onward in to new terrain. We encountered a dozen or more pitches of extremely hard ice that was made more difficult with only six ice screws. Our rack of rock gear – camalots, pins and nuts – was effectively useless on the upper 2,500 feet of continuous ice.

A barrage of rockfall sent us hiding behind a pathetic prow of rock, where we made an emergency quasi-hanging bivy out of our slings and rope. Our friendship persevered



**Scotty Vincik cuts alpine turns on the ski out from Mausolus. Helander and Holden made first ascents of both peaks behind Vincik - The Exodus on the left in 2008 and Ice Pyramid on the right in 2009.**

throughout the night to make a miserable situation almost enjoyable. In the morning we left our excess gear and launched toward the summit, climbing unrelenting pitches of grade five water ice. At 10 p.m. we simul-climbed up the final 400 feet of unprotected 60-degree snow to the untrodden summit of Mount Mausolus. It was a euphoric feeling. It was both perfect and sad at the same time. I looked to the northwest at the Ice Pyramid, a peak Seth and I made the first ascent of two years prior. Beyond that stood the Exodus, another one of "our" peaks.

The sunset on the summit almost didn't seem real. Neither did Seth's death. His parents had been kind enough to give me some of his ashes and before we departed I left Seth there.

In the end, Mausolus, for me, wasn't just a climb. It was a milestone in my life that has come to stand for a lot. It has come to stand as a dream lived, a pillar for truth in knowing that improbable goals are the best ones to aim for. And finally it has stood to prove the fragility of life and the need to achieve those dreams as quick as possible. We never know what the future might hold.



Vincik gets "comfortable" on the hanging bivy on the first ascent of Mausolus. He sat on a sloping rock, using the rope as stirrups. There was little sleep.



Mount Sundum.

## Endicott Arm Climbing Adventure

By Ben Still

Mike Miller, Will Wacker, and I embark Juneau from Douglas Harbor Friday, July 8, 2011, with the mission to climb up Peak 7031 at the head of Endicott Arm and Mount Sundum, a prominent peak at the junction of Tracy and Endicott Arms. Endicott Arm is a 35-mile-long glacial fjord located 50 miles south of Juneau, Alaska. We are hopeful that Mike's 18-foot fiberglass boat, dubbed *Nunatak*, is up for the task of dodging icebergs and carrying gear and fuel for three people. The forecast is promising, but low clouds greet us the first 50 miles down

Stephens Passage to Holkham Bay, the entrance to Endicott Arm.

At this point large icebergs become prevalent and we keep our eyes peeled for the smaller bergy bits, which could cause our small boat problems. Cruising up the arm, the clouds darken and a light rain begins to fall. I am concerned about the weather, knowing this area tends to be even rainier than Juneau.

The last couple of miles up the arm the walls of granite steepen to near vertical or overhanging and the fjord is choked with ice. The Dawes Glacier is an impressive sight and calves often, sending out glacial tsunamis that crash up the rock walls and oscillate back and forth for over thirty minutes. Crack! Boom! A quarter-mile-wide piece of ice crashes into the water sending an enormous wave our way while our unattended boat sits anchored 50 feet offshore and we are setting up camp 100 yards away.

The *Nunatak* is thrown upon the rock slabs and ends up nearly breaking in half while all the weight sits on the motor. The second wave pulls the boat back out to sea and miraculously the boat stays afloat! At high tide we pull our slightly damaged boat up the slabs to a safe distance anchoring it with three pitons. Our camp is located on the north side of the fjord at the base of the southwest slopes of Peak 7031.



**Mike Miller makes the final moves toward the summit of Peak 7031.**

I wake up at 5 a.m. and hear the pitter-patter of rain on the tent. We sleep past our alarm, waking up around 9 a.m. to low clouds, but improving conditions. We get a light rock rack together and decide to bring only one of the double ropes and no camping gear. Having yet to see the mountain, we really don't know what to expect. Leaving at 10 a.m. from camp, we scramble up slabs and crash through alder ledges, working our way around the peak toward a southeast-facing valley. Luckily the smooth, glacial-carved slabs dry out quickly, as we find ourselves in several very exposed locations high above the icy water below, making committing slab moves lunging for alders. After three hours of alder climbing around the mountain and following some goat trails, we make it to 2,200 feet starting up the southeast-facing valley.

From here we catch a glimpse of the upper glacier, seeing many large crevasses and a bit of an icefall, but the upper 2,000 feet of the

peak is still shrouded in mist. We make quick work of the easy terrain and hike up to 3,400 feet to the base of the glacier, but here the clouds begin thickening below us and a light drizzle starts falling. We start to debate turning around and decide to at least make it up to 5,000 feet where the clouds are lingering. So we climb up 30- to 40-degree snow slopes heading into the clouds and end up gaining the southeast ridge at 5,200 feet. We follow some rock outcroppings through the mist up the ridge. At 5,700 feet we get a brief view above to lure us up the mountain. We rope up here and gain the glacier proper, weaving around some gaping crevasses.

We continue up through the mist-shrouded crevasse field, hoping to catch a glimpse of something up above, but the mist thickens, and for a brief moment, I am disoriented and can hardly tell up from down. Continuing up slightly disoriented does not feel right, so we begin to talk about turning back for the second time, and then the clouds part and we can see the rock summit pyramid is very close, but looks much steeper than anticipated. We climb up 300 feet of 45-degree snow and gain the rock ridge, we are above the clouds!

We continue up the exposed ridge on a running belay for 500 feet of really fun fourth-class climbing on solid rock. The summit is blocked from afar by what looked like an overhung wall of aid climbing, but up close ends up being really fun 5.7 rock climbing. Will leads up the final pitch and Mike and I follow to the summit. From here we can make out Devils Thumb and Mount Burkett piercing the clouds to the south.

The sun is getting low and the time is 9:30 p.m. We quickly take a bunch of photos and start the journey back down. Two 100-foot rappels bring us back to the running belay ridge, which we quickly climb back down. We follow our tracks back down into the clouds as the sky darkens. At midnight we find ourselves back at 3,400 feet and in the dark. We decide the slabs below are too dangerous to downclimb in the dark and bivvy out next to the high glacier. After 45 minutes with all my clothes on and my feet in my backpack, I wake up shivering and unable to sleep.

Soon after, I see Will get up and start running around our ledge trying to get warm. We spend the next couple of hours shivering and waiting for light. At 3:30 a.m. we have enough light to make the trek back to camp. As we climb back down through the alders and slabs of rock the weather slowly breaks and by the time we reach our camp at noon the sun is shining brightly! The rest of the day is spent sleeping in the sun and watching huge pieces of ice calve off into the arm while waiting for the tide to come back in.



**Ben Still, Will Wacker, and Mike Miller heading up the Sumdum Glacier.**



We are able to push the boat back into the water at 8 p.m. and start the journey back out through the icy waters of Endicott Arm. We put our dry suits on for this part of the ride because there is a little hull damage to the boat. We are trying to make it back to Holkham Bay so we can start up Mount Sumdum Monday morning, but there appears to be more ice than when we came in, so the going is very slow. By 11 p.m. it is dark and we are 20 miles from the Sumdum beach. There are not many icebergs at this point, but we have to slow down after a couple of near misses. Around 1 a.m. we pull up to the beach and anchor the boat out while we sleep on the beach.

We wake up to a loud cracking sound around 4 a.m. I peek out of my bivy sack and see a humpback whale slapping its tail and fins against the water just 100 yards offshore. I watch for a minute and the whale stops. Ten minutes later, crack, crack, the whale is at it again and we are treated to this for the next two hours. The sight is awesome, but I am tired and can't sleep with all the ruckus. Eventually the whale moves on and we sleep.

At the crack of noon, we are getting ready for our climb up Mount Sumdum. We bring our glacier travel equipment and sleeping bags and leave the climbing rack in the boat for this climb. Our plan is to follow the western ridge/slopes of the peak to the north of the Sumdum Glacier gaining the southern snow slopes to the summit.

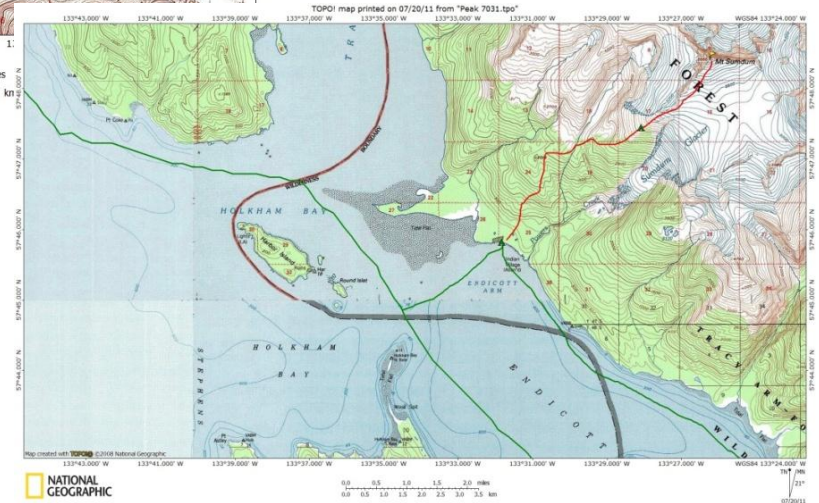
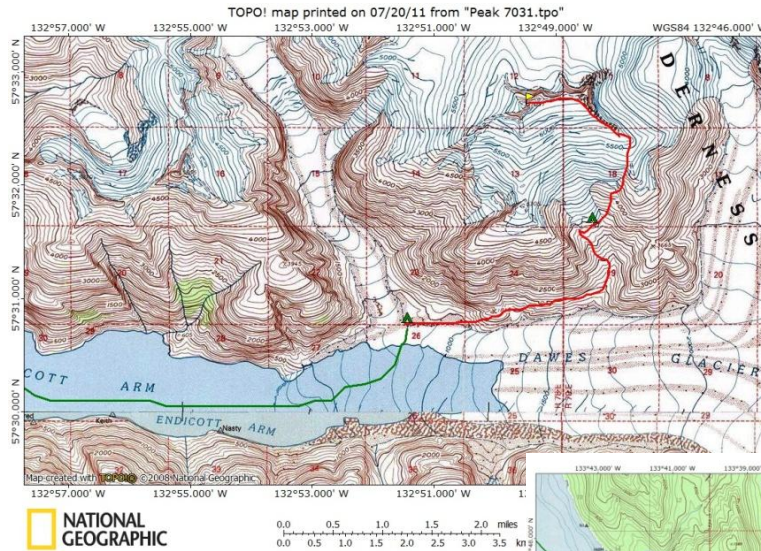
The bushwhacking here is much different and more intense with thick devil's club and blueberry bushes and the occasional tangle of wind-fallen trees. The old growth cedar, hemlock, and spruce forest is amazing, as always. At 1,800 feet we break out into muskeg meadows that connect up the crest of the ridge to tree line at 3,000 feet.

At 4,000 feet we decide to call it an early night and drop our loads and take in the amazing views of the Sumdum Glacier and surrounding waterways.

Poking around the area I come across a bunch of old rusty tin cans, old drill bits, and metal wire. This assorted garbage was left in the late 1960s when a mining company was drilling to see how large the copper, zinc, and gold deposit is. The mineral deposit, which is mostly under the Sumdum Glacier, ended up being pretty small, so they abandoned most of their stuff and left it for me to find many years later.

A 6 a.m. start the next morning and easy terrain bring us onto the upper slopes of the Sumdum Glacier at 5,200 feet by 7 a.m. Another hour of slogging up the snow slopes brings us to the summit of Mount Sumdum at 6,666 feet. We admire the awesome views and take a look down the steep northeast face of the mountain, which was climbed in the '90s and featured in *Rock and Ice* magazine. We climb back down to high camp and gather our gear stashed earlier this morning and make the trek back down through the muskeg meadows and back through the awesome brush to the boat.

We push off the Sumdum beach and motor back into Douglas Harbor late Tuesday evening grinning and talking about how fun this adventure was and our many plans for the future.





Vicky Lytle and Steve Gruhn watch the gliders.

# Four Mile Creek Circumnavigation

By Steve Gruhn

On Saturday, June 18, 2011, Vicky Lytle, Justin Wholey, and I set out up the Peters Creek Trail for what would be a memorable day in Chugach State Park.

As we hiked up the Peters Creek Trail, we noted that a caterpillar infestation had defoliated the trees. The infestation was so thick that we could hear them dropping to the ground. Caterpillars hanging on silk threads would get into our hair, eyes, packs, and clothes. Each of us had literally scores of caterpillars crawling on us. Soon we left the

Peters Creek Trail and followed the trail northward up Mount Eklutna. Fresh bear scat and tracks led us up the trail.

The caterpillar infestation was still evident up to timberline. We made slow work up the northwest ridge of Mount Eklutna and then continued southeast along the ridge between Four Mile Creek and Thunder Bird Creek to Peak 4009, beginning our circumnavigation of Four Mile Creek.

The day was warm and partly cloudy, and the

views were spectacular. At a leisurely pace we followed the ridge around Four Mile Creek to Peak 5505 at its head. The total elevation gain on this route was about 6,300 feet, but to my tired body, it felt like more.

While we took a break on the summit of Peak 5505, two gliders flew very directly overhead. It was evident that the pilots were enjoying their day, too. They flew by us eight or nine times. Ordinarily, I don't care to be buzzed by aircraft while atop a summit, but this was a neat experience. The aircraft would come within feet of us and then quickly change their direction as they maneuvered with the air currents. Vicky and Justin tried to snap photos, but the gliders' aerobatic maneuvers were a bit challenging to capture.

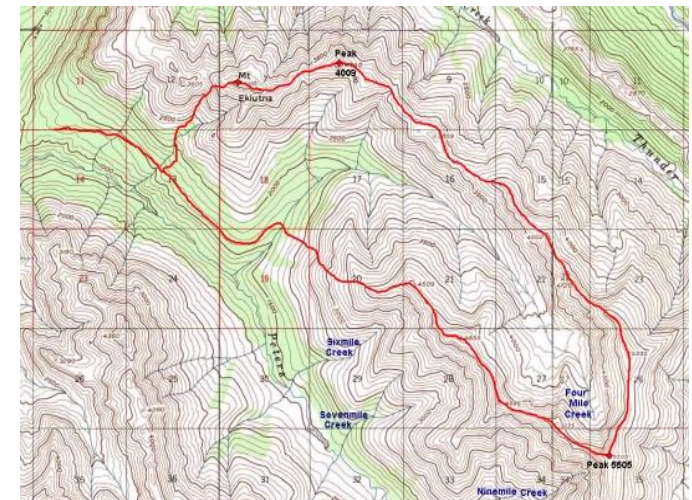
After the gliders departed we headed down the long northwest ridge to the former homestead site at Four Mile Creek. It was an enjoyable



Steve Gruhn and Vicky Lytle walk the ridgeline.

day with wonderful weather and great views. And as we descended into the timber, we found ourselves covered once again with caterpillars. But despite the caterpillars, it had been a wonderful day with neat memories of the gliders, the views, and the camaraderie.

Photos by Justin Wholey.





A view of Little and Big Arapilles.

## Hippy Jarhead Get Down

By David Lynch

We are 1,000 feet up on the south tower of the Trolls when the rain starts. Just above the gendarme, the notch, and the upper snowfield. Half an hour earlier I had half-heartedly mentioned giving up the summit and starting the descent right before Craig belled up to this chimney. I have to admit it's an awesome-looking pitch. Run-out, exposed, a tough chimney climb, I'm happy to NOT be leading this one. A huge toothpick-shaped rock leans into the chimney and ends about 20 feet up.

Craig climbs to the top of the toothpick and starts the actual chimney climb from there.

He inches his way up from there, back to one wall, feet pushing against the other, typical painful chimney climbing – I'm impressed, he pulls it off.

I reluctantly follow, flake out about 20 feet of rope, tie in with a butterfly knot and tie our packs in to the end of the rope. I grunt my way up, breathing heavy, pull the packs up and set them on a ledge at the top of the toothpick after the rope tugs on me from below. I continue up to the top of the pitch, pull the packs up, again and clip into the anchor.

I'm wiped out, physically and mentally. We've been climbing for hours and in another tough spot. Check out the right side, cliffed out below with a blank crackless face above. Straight

above looks the same – no cracks, no edges, no ledges, not even a couple good slopers. Craig wants to continue on, we're half a pitch from the summit ridge maybe one hour from the top. "How about the left side, what do you say we check that out?" he asks. Dark clouds are moving in. I remember the conversation we had hours earlier, roped up on the Pika Glacier, ready to head out...

"I'll try not to be such a pussy this time," I said with a smirk.

"Naw, man, I'll try to protect the traverses a little better."

We joked about our spat from the last climb. New to big-mountain alpine rock, the tension of glacier travel, bergschrund crossings, moat crossings, constant avalanches, wet rock, loose boulders, sketchy anchors, weathered-off climbs, hours of rappelling in snow - all had taken their toll.

I consider going for the summit again. We are one for three after being weathered off The Munchkin and The Throne and finally summiting The Throne on our second attempt. More importantly this is our last climb of the trip. We're on Day 9 of our 10-day trip to Little



Dave Lynch on the fourth-class ridge of South Troll.



**Dave Lynch with a view of Little Switzerland.**

Switzerland. After all we've endured and being snowed in for the first four days I hate to give up this climb. Unfortunately I know for certain those dark clouds are much closer than when we started that last pitch.

I plead my case a little more forcefully this time. "Dude, I gotta tell ya, I'm sketched out. We have some bad weather moving in. I'm wiped out already from the climb and I know we have hours of rappels and down-climbing to do."

Craig checks out the clouds again and finally agrees. We set up the first rap anchor. I'm first one down and I get off rappel, sling a large horn and set up the next anchor. Craig is on rappel when the rain starts.

I put on my rain jacket and winter hat. Craig puts on his puffy and we continue down. At the bottom of the second rappel we deal with our first and only stuck rope of the day. Luckily after 10 minutes of whipping it around, it comes off the ledge and falls down to us. The rope is soaking wet now and for the rest of the day we ring it out on descent as it slides through our belay devices.

Rain soaks the snow and loads the couloirs. The sound of avalanches releasing fills the valley. A couple hours into the descent our rock shoes are soaked – our feet are freezing. Fast and light is right on the ascent, but my feet could use my double plastic mountaineering boots right about now.

We realize we're out of cordelette. We've used up the chunks hanging from our harnesses and

the 50-foot coil of 6-millimeter we brought is in our larger packs several hundred feet below where we transitioned from snow to rock.

A rookie mistake. We're both thinking it, but we don't say it...we're in some serious shit here. We stuff the fear, work the descent. Continue to move to keep warm. Do what we have to do. We leave slings, nuts, rap rings, biners. We discuss it briefly and agree - gear doesn't mean shit at this point, we are going to get down.

We're cruising. Making progress. Not a lot of conversation. Craig and I have climbed together so often we've got the process wired and know what each other is thinking. Finally Craig at one of the anchor stations, "I'll feel a lot better when we get past that traverse." I laugh. I was thinking the same thing. Then we're on it. The traverse wasn't bad

earlier in the warm weather under blue skies on dry rock. And to be honest other than a couple wet-rock, small-mossy-ledge, big-drop sections it's not as bad as we thought. We free solo the section to save time.

Just beyond the traverse we start the rappels again. Snow mixed with rain now. I can't feel my feet. I find myself running this routine in my mind when I'm first one on rappel: As I back up to the edge just before I'm over the lip I picture the cordelette rolling up the horn, popping off the top. Or the pinch point we sling wasn't really a pinch point and the whole system just pulls right through. Or my harness inexplicably unbuckles itself, or the rope severs on a sharp edge.

In my mind I fall 30 feet to a small ledge below, bounce, and continue down. I wonder what I'm thinking while my body rag-dolls hundreds of feet down to the glacier. I think all of this in a millisecond. Then I tell my mind to "shut the f\_\_\_ up!" Concentrate at the task at hand. Lean back, keep my feet spread, look below, and walk my feet down the face of the rock. With each rappel the fear lessons. It's getting fun again.



**Lost Marsupial Route, The Throne.**

Finally, we're done with rappels and on the easier fourth-class section. We scramble down the ridge. The rain stops. At the top of the snow couloir we reach our larger packs. Put on some dry socks and warm our feet in double plastic boots. Fear is replaced with exhilaration. We've been on the move 15 hours and have only the couloir descent, a bergschrund crossing, and a short trip over the glacier back to camp. We know we're going to make it!

David Lynch and Craig Hastings  
Little Switzerland, Alaska Range  
June 11 – 21, 2011



Craig Hastings on Lost Marsupial



Charlie Sink on the summit of Indianhouse Mountain. Photo by Tom Dolan.

## Indianhouse Mountain

By Charlie Sink

We got to the Crow Pass Trailhead about 9:30 in the morning Saturday, June 11, 2011. The clouds were low and a Meet-Up Group was preparing to hike the Crow Pass Trail. They were milling around waiting on some members using the public restroom. We learned about the hike from a couple people who dropped off some of the participants.

I made a comment to Tom Dolan that we wouldn't be able to see anything that day and would spend most of it wandering around in the clouds like we had done before. He asked if we had passed something that wasn't so socked in. I said Indianhouse Mountain. I had yet to climb the peak. Tom wasn't keen as he had already done the peak. Yet, we surmised that we weren't going to do much around here

wandering around in the clouds. We both had forgotten our Chugach State Park maps.

Tom said he hadn't completed the full traverse of Indianhouse Mountain and agreed to go there. After getting donuts at the Tesoro Station on the Seward Highway, we got to the Falls Creek Trailhead a little after 10 a.m. I had been here about a month ago with my dog Happy and climbed up to the saddle on the south side ridge between the ridge leading up to Indianhouse and a sub-peak that capped the cliffs bordering Falls Creek to the east.



Tom Dolan after traversing Indianhouse Mountain.

During that trip, I found a brushed-out trail going down to the trail that leads from Falls Creek to Indian Creek. I suggested to Tom we go that way because there would be a lot of soft snow on the Falls Creek Trail side of the climb to the saddle. He agreed.

We found the brushed-out trail, which is not obvious or easy to find the beginning of, but found it easy to follow upward. After cresting the small hill before the shallow ridge leading up to the saddle from the highway side, the clearing of the trail ended and we bushwhacked from there. Eventually, we broke out of the brush and ascended the ridge on open ground. At around 2,000 feet of elevation, the angle relents and follows a series of steps and sheep trails up to the saddle at 3,400 feet of elevation.

From there, we turned north to begin the ascent of the ridge leading to two prominent gaps that can be seen from the highway. If one did not wish to follow the ridge, a prominent sheep trail turns right and below the rocks of the ridge and passes under the gully that leads to the summit block, which looked to be the normal route.

Instead, we wished to climb the ridge. Tom had soloed the ridge before with a short rope that he had used to rappel into the second, but larger, notch. He wanted to retrace that part of the climb. We, however, had not brought a rope. We chose to follow the ridge anyway borrowing some beta from Richard Baranow that there was a way off the ridge before the notch and began our ascent.

The ridge began easy enough. Larger boulders formed as we went along and we traversed slightly left of the ridge crest before climbing the ridge crest again. After a short scramble into the developing mist, we came to the first notch and it was easy to pass. However, the ridge crest was blocked by a

short, but difficult, wall. Again, we climbed left but onto fourth-class ground and increasing exposure. Once again, we crested the ridge. We followed the crest as close as possible, but generally climbed its right side. The ground



**Tom Dolan on a sheep trail on Indianhouse Mountain.**

was mixed from scrambling to fourth class as the ridge crest narrowed and exposure developed on both sides of us. I looked for possible downclimbing routes on the right side, the less steep and lesser-relief side of the

ridge. I could see some, but the ridge crest led us onward.

Soon the ridge crest narrowed. We came to a very narrow part of the ridge with great exposure on either side. Tom saddled this part of the ridge, climbed to a gap in the ridgeline, and bridged over to a short wall. He stepped into a corner on the left side, found footing on a slightly sloping shallow ledge while palming a groove in the vertical wall with his right hand, and turned the corner. In waiting my turn to follow, I assessed the move and the exposure and it said fifth-class climbing. I told Tom that I would wait his exploration. He said he wanted to go over and look at the deeper notch that he had rappelled into before.

Upon his return, he was lower down the face on the left side and asked if I thought that section of the wall was doable. I peered over the edge, saw some tufts of grass on a fractured face, and estimated that it was. He climbed across that section and upon his return to the ridge crest commented that climb gave him more pause than turning the corner on the ridge. It was misty and steep. Later when we could look back at this side of the ridge crest, we could assess that it was a long, steep wall into Falls Creek.

We began to look for a way down the east or right side of the ridge crest as a means to access the second notch. Richard had advised Tom to go down and to the right. We made an estimate that we could possibly down climb from where we were. There were a couple options, but I talked Tom into going over a little hump and to start descending from a gully just back from the narrow ridge crest gully. We started out turned-in, facing the wall to downclimb.

Tom quickly faced out to downclimb, which is his preferred method of downclimbing. On less critical ground, I would face out and downclimb

myself, but would face in more on steeper downclimbs, as I do not have the spider reach of Tom. I made a comment that there was loose gravel on the fractured face we downclimbed. It was steep, but we could see a ledge below, yet it was above another serious cliff.

We both faced in on the downclimb on another section before reaching the ledge. Once there we could see a way off that would lead to the gully leading to the notch. If I were to make a recommendation to other parties wishing to climb the ridge to bring a rope and rappel into the notch rather than trying to protect a following person going down the downclimb we had completed.

The gully to the second notch started out with some snow in it that we climbed. We climbed over a shallow ridge and into the gully that leads to the summit block crest. We topped out and followed the ridge to the north to the summit. It was fairly broad and found a ledge with grass on it overlooking the west-northwest ridge leading over to South Suicide Peak. There was a ptarmigan hanging around the summit cairn of rocks that did not leave even as we took pictures and had lunch. We looked for a summit register, but could not find one.

To complete the traverse we descended from the summit to the ridge leading west-northwest to South Suicide to follow the ridge to a sub-peak that lies between the two. The descent from the summit to the ridge was third- and fourth-class climbing and easy enough. Once we got to the ridge leading west-northwest, we could see the 80- to 85-degree wall that dropped off the north and right side of the ridge. It did not have ledges. The left side of the ridge crest was steep, but had some ledges between cliff faces.

The ridge crest was fairly straightforward with a sheep trail holding to the crest sometimes on rock sometimes worn in the grassy crest. We started to encounter short steps in the crest and decided to climb them. Sometimes we turned them on the left side on ledges.

One place we came to a short step that was difficult for me to climb. It had a short ledge on the right that I stood on with both feet, and then pulled off the middle face holds. A long reach to the left had handholds, but no footholds for my left foot. The seam to the right would not allow my fingers to penetrate.

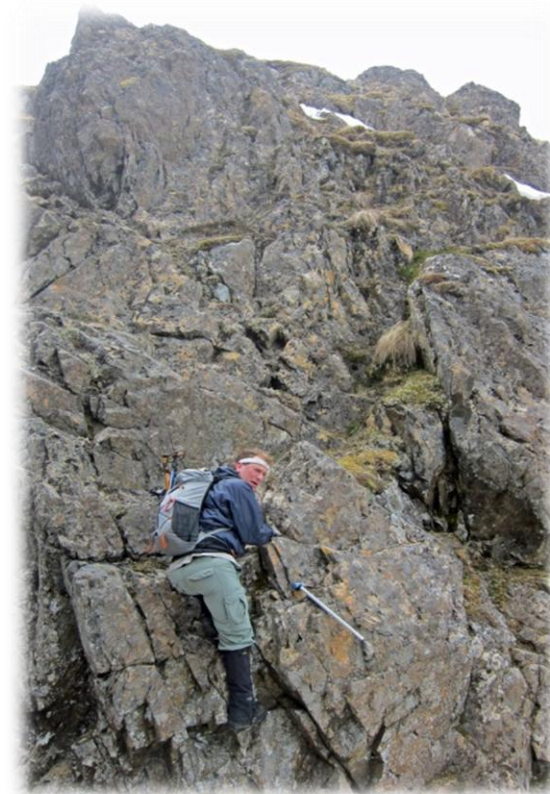
Tom used his ice axe from below to place his pick on the rock for me to find a foothold and I moved up. Tom followed me up without the benefit of the manufactured step. The right side of the crest fell below us on this climb.

Later we came to another step in the ridge. This time it was a 20-foot wall with a crack in the back. Tom ascended on face holds and grass before reaching the crack that formed about half way up the climb. He crested the climb over a vertical wall. I followed and asked him to grab my pack strap as I came up over the wall just in case. Again, the right crest of the ridge was below us. At the top of the wall was a small-diameter sling in new condition that someone had likely used to rappel off in the direction we had come for a possible ascent of Indianhouse Mountain.

We next puzzled over how to complete the ridge as it looked like we would have to descend off to the left side. Once we got over to and below the sub-peak previously mentioned, Tom went over to the right side to see if we could turn the ridge that way. He found a perfect sheep trail about a foot wide carved into the rock above the steep right face.

We experienced lots of air, but easy ground, until we came to a slanted notch. Passing through the notch made for a difficult exit down a short face to the sheep trail. The sheep obviously made a leap here. We had to use holds to find our way down.

Tom faced out and I turned around and faced in. The holds were good, but we were still hanging out over air. After a few short moves, the trail reformed and we quickly moved off the face onto easier, less-exposed ground. We climbed up onto the sub-peak for a rest, some pictures, and reflection of our completed climb. We still had to descend about 3,800 feet down the Falls Creek Trail back to my car. The climb took us about 9.5 hours.



**Tom Dolan at the fourth-class section.**



Marcin Ksok on route. Photo by Greg Encelewski.

## No Doubts on Redoubt

by Marcin Ksok

Redoubt Volcano does not get climbed often, especially when it is steaming. Yet most of us have stared at it for years as it is puffing steam across the inlet. I know I have, and most climbers have at one point or another thought about climbing it. I know I have.

Due to lack of a clear description, I spent more than the usual amount of time researching this peak. Mike Wood's and Colby Coombs' book mentions a very appealing route from the northwest that involves landing at 3,500 feet and, therefore, cutting out a lot of elevation. After reading through *American Alpine Journal* accounts, I found that the summit was never gained from that side and would involve crossing the unappealing crater. Chris Flowers, who experienced the peak from many aspects

provided a great deal of information and helped seal our route choice on the Drift River to the northeast ridge approach.

Going into an unfamiliar territory and climbing an active volcano provided a substantial amount of nervousness. We expected a substantial amount of bushwhacking, bad weather, and time commitment. Yet in early May we found an easy ski approach up the northwest glacier, 16 hours of light precipitation, and four days on route. We landed at 800 feet at midday and slogged up to 4,000 feet on moderate snow slopes.

The next day we moved up to 5,000 feet, which was about the highest point not involving technical climbing and could have been achieved on the previous day if we had started out in the morning. We realized that camping as high as possible was very important to save time due to a substantial gain in elevation, difficult route finding, and broken-up terrain that necessitated many transitions.

The morning of the climb greeted us with sunshine, multiple crevasses to be crossed, and one vertical ice step. After staring at the potential route, we did not have high hopes for summiting, yet we picked our way up the broken icefall spanned by snow bridges, both Greg Encelewski and I punching through. It has to be stated that the whole summit day kept both of us on edge; potential hazard was ever-present – especially for a team of two. It made for an intense adventure. After the initial icefall the slope eased back and we followed soft snow under looming seracs that were breaking away from the northwest ridge.

Not wasting any time, we traversed north on ice and snow debris, delicately belayed across bergschrunds, and tiptoed up a prime-angle snow slope, sticking to soft patches between hollow-sounding slabs. Finally the ridge was



Five-thousand foot camp. Route follows the icefall. Photo by Greg Encelewski.



gained, offering amazing views of Cook Inlet, mountains around us, and the steaming lava dome down below. The ridge was quite wide and offered easy options to bypass occasional seracs.

At one point we were forced to the west side on steep snow slopes, but that was about the only exciting section as far as exposure went. The ridge was easier than I had anticipated and quite a bit shorter, although at some point our view only presented what seemed an impossibly steep and exposed section, it was easily bypassed. The summit was comprised of a large cornice, which we carefully gained while on belay.

Although the top was reached, we were about as far away from safety as possible, still having to retrace our steps through the dangerous terrain. At least we now had a trail to follow. We did a fair share of skiing on the descent, but being roped made for very frustrating moments. Not far from the tent, we negotiated the icefall again, moving through narrow fins of ice on questionable snow bridges.

Returning to our sheltered camp was a great relief, now the only potential hazard was an unlikely eruption. Snow began to fall and kept us in through the middle of the next day, allowing for a bit of rest. All of a sudden the wind changed, the temperature dropped, and the clouds dissipated. At a fast pace, but fighting the sleds, we returned to the Drift River, leaving behind a very appealing mountain to be stared at from the distance again.



**Greg Encelewski near the summit of Redoubt Volcano.**



**Magpie Peak.**

## Magpie Peak

**By Charlie Sink**

To a passing a motorist on Crow Creek Road, a walker splayed his arms open like what's the purpose of speeding up the road. I left him dusted as I motored by, intent on the trailhead. Around a left-turning corner, we could begin to glimpse Magpie Peak.

The peak sets high in the corner northwest of Raggedtop Mountain and southwest of Crow Pass along a ridge. The peak itself looks like a remote miniature ridge of no note, drawing no attention and seemingly remote and indifferent. A pocket glacier hides behind an entrance to a bowl below the summit ridge.

At the Crow Pass Trailhead, the sky is clear blue. It is a beautiful day, Saturday, June 18, 2011. We arrived about 9:30 a.m., saddled packs upon our backs, and headed up the trail. We would hike up to Crow Pass. After the first set of switchbacks on the trail, we looked up the slope that is north of Magpie Peak up an avalanche gully that leads to the ridge. We were looking for an alternative route to come back down. We did not know the mountain and were looking at alternative routes.



**Tom Dolan ascending the third tower during descent of Magpie Peak.**

Soon we passed the triumvirate of waterfalls near the mines along the trail. People were sliding on the snow in the small basin above the waterfalls. Two helicopters flew overhead from out the pass. We soon learned why when we got to Crow Pass. The old hut had been taken down and the old walls of the hut were stacked like pallets ready to be lifted off. A new hut had been built just off the trail just above the lake that lies just south of the pass.

We made our way over Crow Creek and upon snow to reach the new cabin. It was well built and clean. A new outhouse stood nearby. We took a few pictures of Raggedtop and of the lake looking toward Crow Peak. Circling the lake to the north, we started up Crow Glacier Valley.

Soon we were climbing scree and glacier-carved rock. Entering the valley, pinnacles formed along the east, and left, side of the valley. Crow Peak loomed large on the right. We climbed over a terminal moraine covered in snow.

We expected to see a glacier, but only a trough formed behind the moraine. It was covered in snow and led to the col between Magpie Peak and Crow Peak. The pinnacles on the left turned into a steep wall of snow. Small surface avalanches streaked down various parts of this face.

Tom warned of the far side of the col being a steep drop down the other side. Upon arrival, the drop was there and the tilt of the rocks that made up Magpie Peak formed steep slab-like cliffs that disappeared below. A narrow, but steep, gully from the col struck downward to the basin west of us. Tom described his solo ridge climb of the south ridge leading to Crow Peak and descent off its east face. The west face of Crow Peak was very steep and the cliffs lead from its summit to the basin 1,500 feet below us where we stood on the col. We ate lunch as high cirrus clouds began drifting in overhead.

The headwall was steep, but snow conditions were good and not dramatic. We reached a bench just below the summit ridge and then the ridge. Tom reported that Steve Gruhn had said he encountered a couple areas that gave him pause. We looked along the ridge crest and could not see much of anything but a saunter across the ridge to a summit we had yet to pick out. After a couple of points along the ridge were passed, we came to a downclimb and the drop-offs on either side became attention getters.

We dropped off the west side to turn a boulder on the ridge to encounter shale-like orange rock with intermittent layers of crud sandwiched between. Even the shale-like layers would crumble under our feet. This was cruddier than even the usual crud one encounters in the Chugach Mountains. We managed to pass this saddle between the ridge towers.

Climbing over another couple of towers, we could see a couloir ahead with an overhanging cornice leaning over the west face. Approaching it, it looked narrow, but passing the back, east side of it, we came to a vertical rock face not tall, but given the consistency of the rock and its steepness, we chose to turn it on its west face. This meant climbing over and above the cornice.

Looking down the gully on its west side, one could see a steep, narrow, rock-sided gully rocketing 2,000 feet downward. A couple easy steps up the rock face brought us to a slanting shelf where the snow began again. Behind us was the gully that we were perfectly pitched above its slot. Mounting the shelf and reaching across the sloping shelf into the snow was a Braille search for a foothold beyond the shelf. It was a tense and committing moment. A purchase was found and a foot weighted. Once across we ascended the ridge.



**Southeast ridge of Magpie Peak.**

Another tower was turned before following a classic ridge climb up to the summit. It was still clear and sunny, but we could see that something would be coming in. I walked carefully over to the south face to gaze down its slopes. I made sure I didn't get too close to the edge as many point releases had occurred off that slope to its east end.

I glanced down at a hanging glacier held on a bench and spilling down the south face. At the break of the slope, I was peering over a long and wide bergshund cut across its width making the 50-degree slope I was peering down ominous and took a picture with extended hands. We retreated to some rocks that sat over the east face overlooking the circular pocket glacier below us. Mountain views surrounded us. We ate and did not stay long.

Crossing the snow and rock shelf was the only part of the ridge that held a reticent loathing on our return. The steps we had created made it easier to retrace the ridge. Coming to the shelf, I found a well-placed handhold I did not find before. When Tom used it, it started to come loose and his return was more memorable. After that move the crumbling rock section was easier to climb up than down and for some reason, some of the tension of going up was not felt as strongly as going down. Tom had said during the

climb that this was a particular climb that would probably be easier when the snow had melted away.

Once we got back to the ridge where we first ascended, we decided to find another way down. We moved north along the ridge and before coming to the steep towers along that part of the ridge, we turned east and began a descent. We found a shallow ridge that lead down to Crow Creek and near its trail. The point releases in the snow slopes we encountered were more in action as we frequently caused them ourselves. The releases started small, spread out, and continued a long ways down. Therefore, we favored the rocky outcrops along this shallow ridge. We also stayed on the snow that was along the top of this ridge.

After a while, we would whack the snow off either side of us to start our own point releases. It was ridiculously easy and fascinatingly perverse fun. Later, we exited the snow slopes and the ridge.

We found more compact snow in the gullies below that we boot skied to the creek as much as we could. We found a good descent route and another way up Magpie Peak on a beautiful summer day and we were pleased.



**Tom Dolan on the summit of Magpie Peak.**

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The 'Scree' is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be e-mailed to [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com). Articles should be submitted by the 25<sup>th</sup> of the month to appear in the following month's Scree.

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