

**"Don't worry about failures,
worry about the chances you
miss when you don't even
try."**

– Jack Canfield

the **SCREE**

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

August 2018

Volume 61 Number 8



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Peak of the Month: Oakham Peak

Monthly meeting: August adjourned for the summer.

September meeting: Wednesday, September 5, at 6:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center. Billy Finley will give a presentation on ski mountaineering in the Alaska Range, Chugach Mountains, and Talkeetna Mountains.

"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."

This issue brought to you by: **Editor**—Steve Gruhn **assisted by** Dawn Munroe

Cover Photo

Jess Roskelley rappels off Mount Huntington.

Photo by Clint Helander

AUGUST MEETING

Monthly meeting: Adjourned for the summer.

SEPTEMBER MEETING

Wednesday, September 5, at 6:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center, 1014 Energy Court, in Anchorage.

<http://www.alaskageology.org/graphics/meetingmap.gif>

Billy Finley will give a presentation on ski mountaineering in the Alaska Range, Chugach Mountains, and Talkeetna Mountains.

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

MCA Ice-Climbing Festival September 21-23 at the Matanuska Glacier

Learn how to ice climb or improve upon your ice climbing techniques. This is a two-day instructional ice-climbing weekend. All abilities welcome. Must be 18 years old. Some equipment is available to borrow. Mandatory meeting Tuesday, September 18th, location and time to be announced. Registration is available online beginning September 1 at <http://www.mtnclubak.org>. Registration will close September 14 and late registration is not available. Cost: \$85 (does not include: rentals, gas, or food) plus MCA membership. For more information contact: MCA Ice Fest Coordinator Jayme Mack, mcaicefest@gmail.com or (907)-382-0212.

For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit <http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?uaction=members.form>.

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Climbing Notes

Tim Kelley emailed to report that on July 18 Nate Warren and he climbed Peak 1950 above Dangerous Passage on Chenega Island and found no sign of previous ascent.

We look forward to a detailed trip report in an upcoming issue of *the Scree*.

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 11th of each month to appear in the next issue of *the Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. Do not submit photos embedded in the text file. Send the photo files separately. Send high resolution file photos separately, including captions for each photo. 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. Please submit at least one vertically-oriented photo for consideration for the cover. Please don't forget to submit photo captions.

Choate's Chuckle - Tom Choate

Q: Why did the rock jock bring along his reading material on the climb?

Answer on page 17.



Where can you find this ghoulish face? Answer in the September issue of the *Scree*.

Online? Click me!



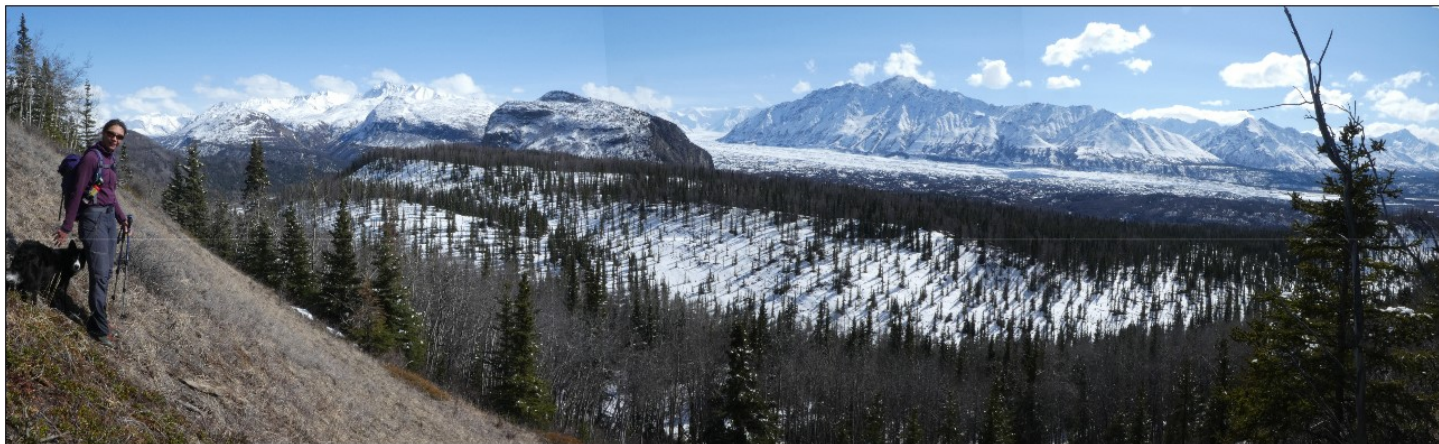
Check the Meetup site and Facebook for last-minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

Peak 2986, Talkeetna Mountains

Overland route

Text by Wayne L. Todd, with Carrie Wang and Madison

May 2, 2018



*Carrie Wang and Madison with Lion Head and Mount Wickersham in the background.
Photo by Wayne Todd*

Continuing with a mountain bump theme, we drive north on one of the few nice late-spring weather days. We are comprised of Carrie, Madison (a borrowed border collie), and me.

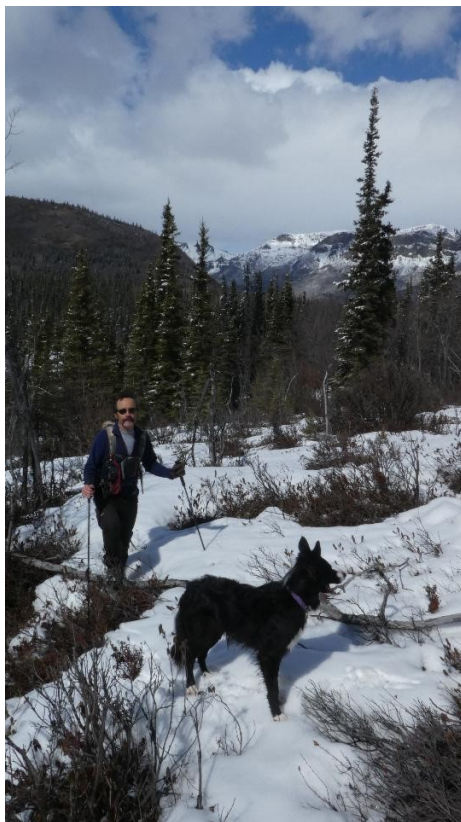
I've tried to access this peak previously from the south, but I found access blocked by private roads. If there is southern access, it would be much shorter and easier, and possibly a fun mountain-bike ride.

As we drive through the Matanuska Glacier area, we are shocked at how much snow remains, even at lower elevations. Had we known, skis, or even snowshoes, would have been procured.

We hike from the east, on an old, steep roadbed, directly across from the campground pull-in above Caribou Creek. Initial mud quickly segues to snow, knee-to thigh-deep isothermic snow. The smart action would be to go elsewhere, but it's a gorgeous day, it's been a long drive and it's only two miles to the peak. We post-hole along at a pace just below sweating level (*adagio*). And shouldn't post-holing be called foot- or boot-holing? Wherever practical we hike on snow-less (or at least less snow) south-facing banks. Madison leaps and bounds, making many, mini-

trails punctuated with snow divots, mostly in the wrong direction, though. Watching her makes me more tired than the actual post-holing.

After half a mile the road abruptly appears to end (a snow-free vista might show otherwise). We ascend a mostly snow-free bump and have views of our objective AND a phenomenal view of the white Chugach Mountains (from Fog Peak to Mount Wickersham to the "A" peaks) to the Talkeetna Mountains' Castle Mountain to Sheep Mountain with Anthracite Ridge and Fortress Ridge, all with a very forested foreground (rather atypical for our mountain trips).



*Wayne Todd and Madison connecting dry spots.
Photo by Carrie Wang*

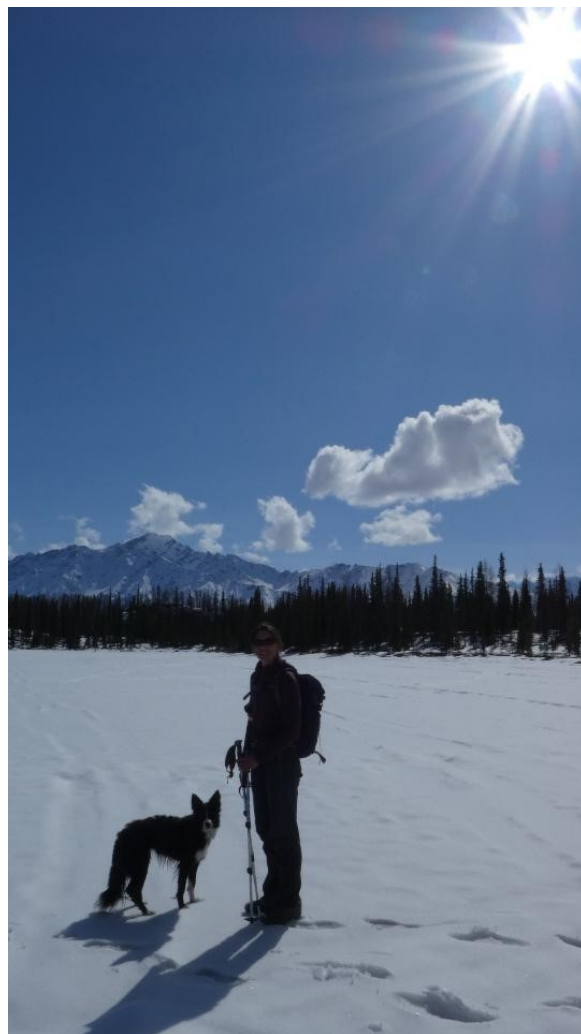
Down the ridge, across the lake, through the woods and to an obvious all-terrain-vehicle trail/road we go. The "packed" snow on the trail is enticing, but still doesn't hold body weight. Regardless of boot type, soaked feet are in. We ditch the trail for a short, dry, pocked-brush route to gain the south slope of Peak 2986. Soon we're on top for even better views of our surroundings. As per the spring norm, it's a bit windy, but I still de-sock for the pleasure of temporarily dry feet.

The dog, despite all the leaping and post-holing, is still amped to continue. But in making less than a mile an hour to get here, we are not continuing. As the trail is quite close to the top, we pleasantly hike down a mostly snow-free switchback, but at the next corner increasingly-deep snow awaits. We soon bail on the trail (which probably goes to the private property, anyway) for a short distance until intersecting our ingress route.

As we now have a trench to follow, we make better than one mile an hour on the return (*andante*).



*Carrie Wang and Madison wading in the snow.
Photo by Wayne Todd*



*Madison and Carrie Wang silhouetted on a lake.
Photo by Wayne Todd*



*Carrie Wang on Peak 2986. Lion Head on the right.
Photo by Wayne Todd*

Squeegee the 3rd Eye: Deep Wilderness Ski Alpinism in the Eastern Wrangell Mountains

Text by Mat Brunton



Little Deborah as seen from Peak 10630 (aka Tarnworth Peak).

Photo by Taylor Brown

Our mind-blowingly vast Alaska wilderness and public lands provide unique experiences for exploring human potential and the further reaches of human experience. Getting inserted deep into a wilderness larger than the nation of Switzerland (i.e. Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park and Preserve) is, as Alaskan big mountain guru and Valdez local Taylor Brown would say, a squeegee for the third eye. The heady experience of undertaking serious and technical skiing and climbing missions in one of the most wild, remote, and unknown nooks of our wondrous planet and being completely dependent on self, partner, and pilot can impart deep revelations into the nature of self, other, and reality (if one opens the mind and listens).

In early winter of the '17-'18 season, Taylor and I set aside two weeks in late May to fly into the Wrangell Mountains or University Range for ski alpinism. As spring approached and parties throughout Alaska were getting spanked by weather in the mountains or weren't even able to fly in, we hoped our two-week allotment would align with an overdue high-pressure system. After extensive weather obsessing in the short term leading up to our trip, it looked promising. But, as the short term shortened, it again became questionable.

We pushed back our earliest planned departure almost a week, hoping for improvement in the forecast, and finally pulled the trigger and drove to Tok (with a Glennallen rendezvous, given our different origins) on Monday, May 14, despite a mixed bag of a

forecast. We spent the night with our pilot, and the most gracious and hospitable of Alaskan hosts, Zack Knaebel of Tok Air Service in his beautiful cabin in a serenely quiet Tok birch forest. He fed us tasty caribou steaks and a flavorful salad.

The next day started casually as the forecast remained questionable. A lazy morning began with coffee and a tropical fruit breakfast provided by Zack. Tentatively, we decided we'd get our stuff sorted out for flying and make our way to Tok Air Service headquarters, hoping more hemming and hawing over various weather resources would give us the confidence we needed to commit to an attempted insertion via Zack's Cessna 185 Skywagon.

By mid-afternoon, the forecast remained uncertain. After all, there were no webcams in close proximity to the range, no real-time weather data, and not much action in the park prior to summer. Although some corners of the giant Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park and Preserve see a bit of humanity in winter and spring, most of it remains an unknown void. Zack wasn't feeling confident about a reliable window until Friday, but Taylor and I didn't want to spend days hanging out in Tok. As Taylor has spent years guiding and doing personal trips in Wrangell-Saint Elias, and Zack has decades of experience as a pilot for outdoor folk of various persuasions venturing into the range from the north side, I left it up to them. I don't know how the final decision came to be made, but by 2-ish in the afternoon, Taylor must have convinced Zack it was good enough to go, and felt confident enough to risk



*Chisana Glacier camp at about 8250 feet
Photo by Taylor Brown*



*Melting out camp.
Photo by Mat Brunton*

our money on the attempt, and Zack was loading our gear into the Skywagon.

We flew over the Mentasta Mountains and up the Nabesna Glacier as Taylor had options in mind. The BIG mountain lines of objectives one and two were quickly nixed due to conditions, level of commitment, lack of mellower alternatives in the area, and the questionable weather forecast. Soon we were heading east toward the University Range, but Taylor had an obscure and potentially user-friendly zone in the eastern Wrangell Mountains in mind: the upper Chisana Glacier.

After an extensive flyover of the Chisana Glacier region, Zack put us down in an ideal location for a ski-peakbagging binge at 8250 feet about 3 miles south-southeast of one of the higher peaks in the area named Little Deborah (according to its larger likeness in the Hayes Range). We took some time for a photo op with Zack and his plane, but he quickly boogied out, considering the encroaching cloudbank from the south. Taylor and I set up the Bomb Shelter and Megamid and settled in for our first night – stoked on the successful insertion, ideal surface conditions, and 320-plus centimeters of snowpack on the glacier at about 8250 feet.

Wednesday, May 16, we awoke to what ended up being our best weather- and snow-conditions day of the trip. It was quickly decided that the basin to our north, formed by the south face of Little Deborah and surrounding peaks, was to be our first venue. We bee-lined to the south ridge of Little Deborah, finding easy passage west of the crevasse field between about 9000 and 9500 feet. We climbed steep, wind-blasted, and icy snow up the south ridge from the col to the summit with ice tools. We negotiated a few crevasses on the ridge that had thin, rotten coverage – which became a theme of the trip: crevassed, icy ridges rife with body-width cracks that had superficial, faceted bridges that could be hard to see (especially in flatter light) and were completely unsupported. The Wrangells are such an icy range it's hard to tell how much of the mountains are actually rock, given how covered they are in ice – and that ice is very cracked up!

The summit of Little Deborah was in classic, big mountain alpine conditions with an already stiff wind, exacerbated by it being the highest peak within miles. The 50-plus-degree iciness, wind, exposure, and cracks spanning from the south ridge through the south face had us down-climbing a bit from the summit before stepping into our skis. After re-negotiating the most prominent ridge crevasse, we were making careful, scratchy jump turns and hopping smaller ridge cracks before getting pitted for a few softer turns above the bergschrund jump.



*Mat Brunton on the summit of Little Deborah.
Photo by Taylor Brown*

We rendezvoused a couple hundred feet below the col between Little Deborah and the peak to her south, and then headed up that 10250-foot point (which we dubbed “Little Debbie”) via its north ridge. Of note, due to glacier recession and melt-out, the slopes of many of the peaks in the upper Chisana area have more relief than appears on the map. From the summit of Little Debbie we descended an east-facing shoulder in flat light and blowing snow via a sidewalk-width path of softer, more recent, windblown snow between glacier ice. That made for reasonable turns, but hid crevasses, and one jump turn resulted in my uphill leg punching into a thin crevasse boot-top deep. After that incident, commitment had to be made to linking bigger, smoother, and faster turns to reduce the potential for further crevasse incidents.

We continued south from the base of Little Debbie toward Point

9310, and attempted it via its north ridge. That ridge started out with straightforward travel, but a large overhanging cornice forced us onto the west face. After getting around the cornice and back on the knifey north ridge, the last push had extensive exposed, steep glacier ice. Having not gotten a good view of the south ridge and south side of the summit, we thought we might end up on a small and super-exposed summit pinnacle hemmed in by extremely hard glacier ice below the summit snow patch that would be difficult to down-climb and hard to anchor into for rappel from the summit. We decided our horizontal front points were not up for the task, and skied the steep east face from just below the summit.

We continued our southerly trajectory from there and headed up the prominent 9450-foot peak that formed the southwest corner

of this basin. We climbed the north-northeast ridge to the summit. That feature was one of the most fun and most aesthetic climbing and skiing features of the trip: a sharp, knife ridge from the summit that turned into a giant Wrangell spine on the descent as it turned northeast toward the glacier basin. The upper 500 feet was a 50-plus-degree slide-for-life off the west side of the sharp north ridge with big exposure down the gnarly northwest side of the mountain. It then bent skier's right (northeast) into that giant, aesthetic spine feature, which held softer and very pleasant snow back to the basin. From the basin we made a long, downhill push back to camp with considerable double-poling and a bit of skating.

On Thursday, May 17, we found ourselves camp-bound due to 30-plus mile per hour winds that continued through the day after raging through much of the late night and early morning. Taylor remarked about the "Mat Brunton Cross-Fit" of spending the day fortifying our camp. We had fun getting lifted by "burning fingers," and lifting snow blocks, as we worked on



Taylor Brown climbing a steep, icy, east-facing chute to gain the peak-laden ridgeline east of camp.

Photo by Mat Brunton

rock, juggling up a large horn on climber's right. We climbed the two prominent points on the map leading to the 9550-foot high point. While climbing the second point (fourth bump) we noticed a very appealing ski lane on the first point (third bump), and decided to return to ski it after a descent of the second point – rather than continuing along the broadening ridge to the third point



Taylor Brown on the south ridge of Megamid Peak near the summit.

Photo by Mat Brunton

our Chisana Glacier engineering project.

On Friday we awoke to calm winds, but questionable visibility. We decided to head due east from our camp to bag points along the ridgeline leading up to the 9550-foot high point in the center of Section 24 on the map. We climbed a steep, icy, easterly chute to gain the ridge that ran to the southeast. Gaining the second prominent bump required some technical climbing on a strip of snice and alpine-glacier ice.

We even got to grab some Wrangell rock, juggling up a large horn on climber's right. We climbed the two prominent points on the map leading to the 9550-foot high point. While climbing the second point (fourth bump) we noticed a very appealing ski lane on the first point (third bump), and decided to return to ski it after a descent of the second point – rather than continuing along the broadening ridge to the third point (sixth bump) and high point of the ridge. We skied steep, northerly faces off those two points (both of which had much more relief from glacier melt-out than the map suggested).

After those ski descents we headed about two miles north-northeast to the prominent 9605-foot point, which we dubbed Megamid Peak due to its resemblance of the classic glacier cook tent. We gained the sharp south ridge at about 8700 feet and took it directly to the summit. We then descended the south ridge from the summit on skis, avoiding

the extensive exposed alpine-glacier ice.

From the base we headed about a mile west to climb a beautiful, long, steep face up to another 9450-foot point, which we then descended. That point and its southeast face provided some of the most consistently steep turns of the trip. We rallied a couple miles south back to camp, making it all the way there in downhill mode with extensive double-poling and some skating after a detour to avoid crevasses. Of note, cloud cover and warm temperatures



Mat Brunton skiing Peak 9450.

Photo by Taylor Brown



Another 9450-foot point Taylor Brown and Mat Brunton climbed and skied. Peak 9450 is behind and to the left.
Photo by Mat Brunton



Taylor Brown on Peak 10630 (aka Tarnworth Peak)
Photo by Mat Brunton

that day contributed to a greenhouse effect that really warmed the snow on most aspects. Snow conditions changed from wintry to melt-freeze that night.

Saturday we were again camp-bound due to snow, wind, and visibility. We had ample time for sleep, lounging, and wilderness meditation.

Sunday began questionable with some wind and poor visibility in the zones we had not yet ventured to. We enjoyed a very leisurely start to the day, which included a long nap after breakfast. Awakening from the nap, the visibility had improved and winds abated. We suited up and decided to head to the prominent 9550-foot pass above a modest icefall between two of the gnarlier peaks in the area (Peak 10630 and Peak 10565 [Ed. note: Peak 10630 is known on bivouac.com as Tarnworth Peak; Peak 10565 was called Peak G by surveyors working for the International Boundary Commission]). We also wanted to reconnoiter and witness the stunning east face of Point 10150, which we had noticed the day before and had dubbed “The Face of God.” It turned out to be about 1,200 feet of STEEP slide-for-life snice with some serac-fall exposure to access (midday Monday after overnight snow, daytime warming, and increasing solar radiation a large serac fall occurred in the approach path).

After scoping The Face of God, we made it to the pass and were directly below the large east face/ridge of Peak 10630, which was the highest peak in the area and for many miles. We soloed up about 1,200 feet of steep snice and, for a couple-hundred-foot stretch, nearly impenetrable, alpine-glacier ice. A short, but very exposed, walk along the corniced summit ridge took us to the top. We then soloed back down the 1,200 feet of toe-banging goodness, alternating between full swings with the ice tools where



Mat Brunton on the summit of Peak 10630 (aka Tarnworth Peak).
Photo by Taylor Brown

there was harder ice, and more casual mid- to upper-shaft sticks in the snice. We descended severely wind-affected snow from the pass back to camp with the by-now-typical Chisana Glacier skating and double-poling along the flats.

Sunday night provided the biggest snow event of the trip with a few more inches (we received 1 to 2 inches Saturday night), which greatly improved snow conditions from the nasty, variable melt-freeze and wind-affected mank of Saturday. As it had then become clear that the basin south of Little Deborah provided the most consistent sucker hole of good weather on questionable visibility days, we headed back to that zone for unfinished business.

The day began with a mellow, but heavily crevassed, ascent of the prominent 9550-foot point west of Megamid Peak. We climbed it via its northerly ridge from a saddle northwest of the summit and descended its west face. We then headed back northeast to the saddle and ascended the other 9550-foot point northwest of the first one and just east of Point 9371 on the map. We dubbed that point “Ancient Cornice,” as millennia of southerly winds have created a seemingly soon-to-fail serac-cornice along the leeward

north side. We weaved through numerous ridge crevasses, and then descended a steep and aesthetic southerly ramp-couloir feature from the summit back into the basin.

We bee-lined west back to Point 9310 for another attempt at its summit – that time via the south ridge. That route proved much more reasonable than the north ridge, and a whippet and crampons put us on top. We descended southeast from the summit on skis, and then headed back to camp for lunch and hopefully an afternoon session back to the higher peaks south of camp. Decreasing visibility and increasing winds nixed that p.m. session.

We awoke Tuesday to more of the persistent southerly winds, but they were moderate and only annoying rather than outright uncomfortable and stifling. Visibility was also questionable: more of the same. We decided to inReach Zack for a weather update. After doing his weather research (which he told us later took 1.5 hours), he pinged us back with disheartening news: the weather looked to be getting nastier for the next couple days and he did not expect a reliable window to get us out before Saturday, and maybe not until the following Monday.

With our camp significantly melted out from a week's worth of living, our sleeping spots feeling less like beds and more like lazy-boy recliners, and the daunting thought of having to chisel out a new camp in the increasingly firm spring snow and refortify it for more potentially stormy weather, we decided to see if Zack could sneak in that day for the pull out. With thermal troughs throughout the state, rain and poor visibility in Tok, southerly flow, and nothing promising from his pre-flight assessment, Zack was very skeptical. We assured him we were under a big blue hole with at least 15 miles of good visibility in all directions. He told us not to lie to him. After reiterating, giving him our estimate of wind speeds, and suggesting the Chisana River-Chisana Glacier route looked promising for his access, he told us to be ready for pickup in 1.5 hours.

We were skeptical, too, especially as the weather definitely did not seem to be improving, and neither of us expected Zack to put himself (or more of our hard-earned money than necessary) at risk to get us out. We made plans to break camp in a way that could easily be reset up if Zack didn't show – basically packing everything up and preparing the tent and 'mid for ripping out, but leaving them in place until we had a visual on the Skywagon.

After those preparations we had about a half hour to spare, so we went to work on a runway for Zack, given the decreasing visibility and potential for a flat-light landing. He provided us with a few large, black contractor bags to fill with snow to mark a landing zone, which we developed further with our wands and a skin track grid (that was rapidly being erased by the increasing winds).

As the 1.5-hour mark approached, we had become very doubtful

about our prospects of getting out that day, given the deteriorating weather in our zone, crap conditions near Tok, and ominous clouds outside our 15 mile blue-hole radius. After 1 hour, 38 minutes, and at perhaps the peak of our doubt, Taylor saw and heard the Skywagon in the distance. Approaching threshold wind speeds for flying, we crossed our fingers that Zack would have a successful landing. We packed the tent and 'mid in short order, Zack made his landing, and we rallied the gear on sleds over to the plane. Zack loaded while we deconstructed our makeshift LZ, and we were airborne.

Given our luck, Taylor convinced Zack to give us a recon flyby of Mount Allen on the way back to Tok. Although Zack said, "We might get our ass kicked," he obliged and made a few circles. We then flew over the Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge and the eastern Mentasta Mountains in good visibility, before descending into the rain as we neared Tok. From past experience, I figured Tok was always a bag of sunshine. However, it poured rain that night (and the following day) but Zack's cabin was serene. He grilled up salmon and we provided some leftover base-camp tortillas and cheese with fresh fixings from Three Bears for a big dinner.



Mount Allen and its striking west face.

Photo by Mat Brunton

It would be impossible to speak highly enough about the friendliness, hospitality, and wonderful service provided by Zack Knaebel, owner and operator of Tok Air Service. Likewise in regard to the knowledge, planning, and friendship of Far-FarGnarGnar guru, Taylor Brown. We also can't go without mentioning the pioneer of the upper Chisana Glacier region, Danny Kost. He made a few excursions into the area in the late 1990s and early 2000s, climbing numerous (likely first ascent) peaks, including Little Deborah, Point 10150, Peak 10630, and the two 9550-foot points we climbed and skied in the basin on the south side of Little Deborah.

The Southeast Ridge of Mount Huntington (12240 feet), Alaska Range

Text by Jess Roskelley; photos by Clint Helander



Aurora borealis over Mount Huntington.



South ridge of Mount Huntington in 2016 showing the 2017 route of Clint Helander and Jess Roskelley.

There are two types of alpine climbers: climbers that plan, dream, investigate, and make alpine projects their lives; and then there are climbers that go with those guys. I fall into both categories, but being a free agent ready to get psyched at a moment's notice on a great plan is what I live for.

I was most of the way through a 10-hour day of welding steel, face down in a cloud of smoke, getting ready to run home and finish some drywall before going to the rock gym when Clint Helander called. Clint, an Alaskan transplant, described his next objective to me – the South Ridge on Mount Huntington.

"Interested?" he asked. "It's never been climbed."

"Yeah, dude," I said without seeing a single photo. "I'm in."

Recently back from Patagonia, the daily grind of 10-hour work days was already starting to rub me the wrong way. I was just starting to think about the logistics of leaving for a week or more when I realized I had jumped the gun.

"I better ask Allison first to make sure we have nothing going on," I quickly added.

I met Clint in 2015 in Patagonia. We didn't climb together, but we summited Fitz Roy at the same time and walked out together. I knew Clint's name from some of the big climbs he had done in the Revelation Mountains. They marked the farthest western part of the Alaska Range. Clint had gained the reputation of the expert in that area. After Fitz Roy, we hung out in El Chalten for the better part of a month, flyfishing, telling stories, and waiting for good weather.

Clint was born in Omak, Washington, a short 160 miles west of Spokane, where I live. At a young age he moved to Alaska to go to college and it had been his home ever since. We hit it off, as both of us knew many of the great lines in our generation of movies, like *Unforgiven* and *Pulp Fiction*, an essential quality to getting through a lot of bivouacs.

I learned long ago from my dad, John Roskelley, one of America's most prolific Himalayan expedition mountaineers, that it was a mistake to *tell* my mom he was going on a trip.

"Joyce, I promise you this will be the last expedition," he told my mother before leaving for Dhaulagiri in 1973. It was the beginning of over three decades of climbing in Asia, summiting on peaks such as Nanda Devi, Makalu, Gaurishankar, and many others. I specifically remembered as a kid, one instance of dad announcing his next expedition at a large dinner with family and friends. When looking at my mother on the other side of the table, I knew she had just learned of the trip herself. I remember that technique of "asking" didn't go well, either.

"Allison," I began, after we had a few beers and a pizza at our Spokane home pub, the Flying Goat. "I got a call from Clint Helander today and he wants to do this ridge on Huntington up in Alaska in a few weeks. It'd be a quick trip; nothing too long. I can get Adidas to pay for my share. Do you mind if I go?"

She agreed. In fact, I almost felt as if she wanted me out of the house. "Absolutely," she said. "Go for it." She was super supportive and knew I'd be a miserable guy at home if I didn't go. She was also planning to go on a canyoneering/stand-up pad-

dleboarding trip to Utah with some other Adidas girls around that time, so it worked out perfectly.

Clint requested that I take a look at the photos to make sure I was psyched. The toothy-looking ridge was nasty looking, for sure. Stretching about two miles in length, the south ridge had five distinct sub-peaks that looked like super objectives in their own rights. It was crowned with cornices that protruded from the ridge like giant waves and bivouac spots would require a lot of chopping and digging.

“So, this is the reason it’s still unclimbed,” I thought. “Well, it’s about time I did a major ridge and this is as good as it gets.”

We decided to give it a go on the first good streak of weather, so I packed a bag of gear, stuck it in a corner of my gear room and periodically threw some items in it. Originally, Clint told me we would try for the 20th of April, but I knew just as well as anyone in the alpine game – alpine climbing depends on the weather. Usually I’ve had good luck in the Alaska Range getting two or three good days on the weather report, but for that climb we needed five to eight days – preferably more than less to give us some breathing room.

On the 16th of April, he texted, “It hasn’t really snowed in six weeks and the weather looks good for 10 days. You better get up here.” That was the starting gun. I bought a ticket for the next afternoon and dropped all my spring yard work to finish off my packing. I also had to find a dog sitter for our two dogs, Mugs and Bentley, a furry duo that seemed to repel dog sitters faster than we could find them. After some calling and panic, Allison, who was still in Utah, found one of her friends to come and bail me



Jess Roskelley at the beginning of the ascent.

out.

I arrived in Anchorage the night of the 17th. Clint picked me up at the airport and I crammed into his Subaru along with his roommate’s giant dog, my bags, and all the base camp food he had just purchased at Costco.

“We’ll repack all this food and organize our climbing gear at the house,” he said. “Tomorrow we should leave here early, pick up any additional items we may need, and meet my buddy Conor at a private strip outside of town who will be flying us in.”

I checked the weather on our way to the airstrip and our 10-day window of good weather was suddenly down to five or six. That made things tight and we both knew it.

In the past, I had always flown out of Talkeetna with Paul Roderick, who owned Talkeetna Air Taxi, but because we were in a hurry Clint had arranged for Conor McManamin to fly us to the base of Mount Huntington.

The funny thing about that climb was that from the second I left my house in Spokane Washington, I felt the stress of a timeline. I always try to be Johnny-on-the-spot with weather, but this was different. Just one snafu could waste hours or even a full day – and we didn’t have time to spare.

Conor landed us at 8700 feet on the Tokositna Glacier at 2:00

p.m. on the 18th. The air temperature was warm and, importantly, there was no wind. We pitched our base-camp tent between the take-off and landing zone on a pre-used tent site, threw everything we weren’t taking on the climb into it, finished loading our packs, and hefted them onto our shoulders. Heavy loads are the only downside to alpine climbing. I looked at my 40-liter pack and it looked as though



Jess Roskelley performing a little a cheval.



Jess Roskelley traversing the south ridge of Mount Huntington.



Jess Roskelley settling in for a bivy.

it was going to rip at the seams, and then I realized I forgot to add my Nalgene bottle. Somehow, I stuffed it in the top and was ready to go.

The Alaskan “midnight sun” was still high in the sky at 4:45 p.m. as we took off on what we both thought may be a fool’s errand. We started down into aptly named “Death Valley.” The heat of the day was on us and it took us a couple of hours of descending to reach the west side of Huntington.

“That’s a hell of a serac sitting over our path,” I said, as we continued through a crevasse field so diced and sliced that 20 feet of straight snowshoeing was a blessing. “Better pick up the pace under this one.”

Clint lead the way through the labyrinth of cracks until it was dark enough that the flat white light clouded our vision and drained our courage to continue any longer. We pitched our tent on a large island of snow surrounded by deep, icy crevasses.

On the morning of the 19th, Clint and I got up late, but by 10:30 a.m., we were around the corner of a buttress below the southwest face and at the base of the south ridge. It was so hot on the glacier that we both took off our long underwear adding even more weight to our packs. We were now at 5700 feet and below the beginning of our route to the first sub-peak on the ridge.

The south face of Point 9460 was a long, steep, snow slope with rock bands. If it had snowed any time in the past couple weeks, that slope would have been perfect terrain for an avalanche. I expected the snow to be soft and knee-deep, but to my surprise even in the heat of the day the snow was firm in the permanently etched, half-pipe runnels where snow had carved paths down the face. Around 9 p.m. that night, we reached a perfect bivy site more than halfway up Point 9460 and collapsed on the

wide platform. Both of us were dehydrated and chilled in our sweat-soaked clothes. We were excited to be off the approach, but wondered what adventures were in store for us.

Early on the morning of the third day, we reached the top of Point 9460. We found one rock with a couple of poor piton placements, but we managed to pound them in enough so we could set up a rappel. That was our first crux of the ridge – the mental crux. Billowing clouds had snuck up the ridge behind us.

“Well, this looks like it,” Clint said. “Once we rappel into this couloir we’re pretty much committed.”

“Weather’s supposed to be good for the next few days; let’s do this,” I replied.

I rappelled down the overhanging face into a couloir, which was stacked with loose blocks. Again, piton placements were limited. I realized I was in the rockfall zone if Clint were to kick anything off. I yelled up at him and let him know I was in the line of fire. He acknowledged it and kept rappelling. I put my pack over my head just in case. We rappelled once more until we found what we thought could be the best way to traverse the ridge to the next peak. By that time, it was foggy and had snowed a couple of inches. It wasn’t long before we were in the midst of small spindrift avalanches and we could hear larger ones through the fog.

“We can count out trying to rappel down either side of the ridge if we have to retreat,” I said.

“These spindrift avies will sweep us off with any more snow.”

After several hours of traversing under large, looming cornices, we found easier ground that put us on the second peak [*Ed. note: Peak 9850*]. It was getting dark and we agreed to stop for the night at the first good bivy spot. After a 150-foot pitch, Clint anchored off and started to belay me up.

“Hey, Jess,” he yelled, “have I got a surprise for you!”

When I arrived at the bivy, he pointed at an ice chunk with old aid ladders, an old can of Chevron white gas and 35 Evernew pitons made by a Japanese company that ceased to make pitons and now manufactures titanium cookware, which I assumed was more lucrative. We tied off the ropes and began to chop away a platform big enough for our First Light tent. That process took several hours due to the fact that instead of both of us widening and leveling the platform, we also worked at chopping the gear out of the ice left behind by the 1978 Japanese expedition. The 13-man expedition from Sapporo, Japan, spent a month slogging up to the second tower before they retreated and abandoned the route because of bad snow.

The morning of the April 21, our fourth day, we took time to dry out our bags and to properly rack up our gear. We each added seven Japanese pitons to our rack, knowing we would use them all as we yo-yoed up and down the ridge. Clint led the first pitch and we made the top of the second sub-peak where the real traversing began. Several hundred-foot towers capped the ridge, forcing us to traverse the steep west side. For hours, we traversed up and down large snow flutings with thousands of feet of close-to-vertical slope below us. Whoever was leading down-climbed the 85-degree sections of snow, putting in protection, as the follower would keep some tension to act as a belay. The follower was stuck taking out the protection and down-climbing incredibly steep terrain, risking a long pendulum with potentially serious results.

Climbing steep, overhanging powder is a talent unto itself. Clint’s experience on other climbs in Alaska really helped on that section. He seemed to shuffle through it without a hassle. That was some of the scariest snow climbing I’d done and without a doubt the technical crux of the ridge. Around 9 p.m., we made it to the base of the third peak, which was lower than we

had been when we started that day. We were disappointed in how far we had gotten, due to the amount of technical terrain. As the sun faded, we found another bivouac spot on the ridge that was so small there was no room to move without moving together. We slept tied in and ate dinner as it turned completely dark.

“Wow! Check out the sky,” Clint said as he watched an incredible display of the northern lights dancing across the sky. “It makes me realize just how insignificant we are in nature’s world.”

The weather on the 22nd was still holding. Clint had done a lot of research on the ridge and we had both speculated that the third tower would be rather simple. Once underway, though, we knew we were wrong. After placing a couple of our newly acquired Japanese pitons, we made two rappels down the west side of the ridge. Clint set off first and climbed a mega-sized 800-foot block of granite. The climbing was spectacular. He moved back and forth, snaking through a couple chimneys, one of them overhanging. He belayed me up under a perfect crack.

I torqued my two tools in and placed my feet on a ledge. “It doesn’t get any better than this,” I thought.

I set off on a beautiful vertical crack with tiny flat horizontal edges that seemed to be made for a pair of tools and crampons. After a while I came up to a beautiful hand crack toward the top of the peak. It looked perfect. I took my gloves off and racked them with my screws. I hand-jammed up to a block that I could hook my tool behind. After a few more moves, I reached the top of the crack and wished there were more. Soon, we were on the summit of the third peak.

We stared at Idiot Peak, the highest of the sub-peaks, and agreed on a line that looked doable up the south face. Grateful, we pounded in a couple more of our new stash of pitons and



Jess Roskelley points down the south ridge of Mount Huntington.



Jess Roskelley traverses past a cornice.

made two rappels over the cornices and down the north face of the third tower, which brought us to the base of Idiot Peak. When we had checked out our proposed line from the top of the third tower, we had noticed what looked like a large flat bivouac platform a quarter of the way up. The climbing was excellent and we moved quickly, as it was getting late. I had taken the last block and was disappointed when I reached what we thought was going to be the best bivouac on the entire route.

“Hey, Clint! There’s no bivouac here,” I yelled. “We have to find a place higher up.”

A few hundred yards later, I located an indent on a steep ledge big enough for us to lay down without setting up the tent. In the last few minutes of light, we rolled off a couple of the big rocks crowding our platform, and then organized our gear and cooked a meal before laying out our pads and sleeping bags. We dubbed the platform Idiot Bivy, and it turned out to be the best night’s sleep for me on the route, complete with another night of the northern lights trailing through the sky.

We were up early. According to our weather report, snow and wind were expected earlier than we had hoped. When we checked out our intended route up Idiot Peak from the top of the third tower, it looked steep and convoluted. We simul-climbed near the top of Idiot Peak, passing by an amazing cave that would have been a world-class find for a bivouac site the night before. Clint stopped and belayed me to his belay spot near the top of Idiot Peak. I racked the gear and traversed the steep south side of the summit, periodically climbing in-between the massive cornices to find the best place to rappel to the ridge below. The soft ice we traversed near the top was difficult to protect with screws and impossible for a picket. I found what I thought to be the best place to rappel, but the ice was no good for a V-thread. I belayed Clint to me on a marginal screw and two good tools slammed into the ice. He looked over the side and found blue ice on the underside of the biggest cornice and then began to slither his way over the ledge and under the cornice that soared out over our heads. I followed shortly, and we made a perfect V-thread while looking at our final objective.



Jess Roskelley climbs along the south ridge of Mount Huntington.

With the clouds beginning to make an appearance, we spotted the best route.

“Looks like we need to stay right of the south ridge,” I said.” We both agreed that, with the weather coming in, that was the most direct line to the top.

We knew that Jay Kerr, Jeff Thomas, David Jay, and Scott Woolums had climbed the Southeast Ridge route [*Ed. note: See pages 468 through 472 of the 1980 American Alpine Journal*] and that looked like the route topo we had seen. To get there, we made three rappels down the north face of Idiot Peak, hanging up our rope on the last rappel. After a few minutes of yanking on the rope, punctuated by some colorful epithets, Clint went up part-way and managed to get it unstuck. I then traversed the short ridge between Mount Huntington and Idiot Peak, which took us to a ledge where we ate and took a short break before our final push.

With the summit of Huntington in sight, we started to allow ourselves to feel there was an end to that ridge after all. With balloon-like cumulus clouds pouring in, we began the last phase of our journey to the summit. After a quick rappel, Clint led the first block on the final push up the Southeast Face of Mount Huntington. It was hard work as Clint post-holed up multiple pitches on a wide snowfield capped with

a massive overhanging serac.

Although exhausted, we pushed hard and made great time up the face. Clint stopped and brought me up out of the way of the serac that crowned the entire summit. I changed out my gloves and stared at a picture I had taken on the top of Idiot Peak to make sure we were on the right route through the maze of granite above us. I set off and was soon climbing bullet-hard gray ice as visibility in the thick cloud was quickly disappearing. By that time my tools and crampons felt as though I were trying to penetrate the ice with those foam noodles kids use for a day at the pool. I spread my screws out long distances, occasionally setting a cam in perfect chunks of granite protruding from the ice. After climbing along a few hundred-meter blocks, I reached the summit ridge and brought up Clint.

“Weather’s coming in hard,” Clint said. “It might be best to touch the summit, get a few photos, and then descend toward the couloir. We can set up a bivy, get out of the wind and get

some rest.”

“Yeah, that sounds like a plan to me,” I replied. We didn’t know if we could find the descent in that weather.

Clint grabbed my picket and walked to the summit and I followed. We were bundled in every bit of clothing we had.

As we made the summit, visibility dropped to almost zero and the wind found every opening in our clothing. It was not a glorious summit to be on at that time. We wanted to celebrate, but it wasn’t over yet. Cold, hungry, and mentally exhausted, we took a couple of pictures in the sea of white and then walked down the ridge to set up our tent and crawl inside. Within several minutes, we had our stove purring to melt ice for water and were munching on the last of our food, a couple of protein bars. We fell asleep almost immediately.

On April 24th, Clint and I woke early and packed up everything. The weather had not improved and, again, the visibility was zero. We had hoped to find anchors or V-threads down to the West Face couloir. Clint, who had climbed Huntington before, had descended the same route, so we buried a deadman on the edge of the ridge and he rappelled down and looked around for the descent.

“Jess!” I heard him yell from below. “I don’t know if this is the route – there’s no sign of any fixed gear and I can’t see s--t – I’m coming back!”

My hands and feet were cold; we were both low on energy and we hadn’t hydrated the night before – all the classic symptoms for a mistake. Given the seriousness of our predicament, we agreed to set up the tent again and hunker down until we had better visibility.

We had one protein bar and one fuel canister left. Enough to keep us going for a bit and we were hopeful that the visibility would get better. We set up the tent and crawled inside, frustrated, but content. Although it was nasty outside, the filtered sun still warmed the tent enough to keep us warm and dry out our bags while we took a nap. The wind and the visibility stayed poor throughout the afternoon.

I had brought an extra battery bank for my iPhone and we watched *The Count of Monte Cristo*, slowly nibbling on our last candy bar while trying to forget we were still perched in a major storm just below the summit of Mount Huntington. Then a quote from the movie caught my attention: “All human wisdom is contained in these two words – ‘wait’ and ‘hope’.” A coincidence? I knew it was another line I had to memorize for future trips.

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We ate the last protein bar that night and deep in my pack I found some bouillon cubes, which provided a burst of flavor as we sipped on poor man’s soup before bed, and then fell asleep to the arrhythmic battering of the wind against our tent.

We weren’t enveloped in cloud soup the next morning, so we repacked our gear and tent quickly before the little visibility we had diminished. After some down-climbing and one rappel, Clint found a rock anchor that set us on a spindrift descent of 15 or more rappels down the West Face couloir. At the base of the wall, we crossed the bergschrund and could see our tent on the glacier through the clouds. It was 2:30 in the afternoon as we hustled down the glacier, passing two teams relaxing at their tents.

“They must think we rose from the dead,” Clint joked.

“Well, it’s been eight days,” I replied. “What else could they think.”

Around 3:30 in the afternoon on April 25th, we sat in our base-camp tent and ate all the candy and sea-salt chips we had from Costco. We cracked two mostly frozen IPAs and sat there, feeling extremely fortunate to be down, content, and happy with our accomplishment. A few days later, the weather cleared and TAT came in and flew us out. Yard work was looking pretty good then – at least for a while.



Jess Roskelley (left) and Clint Helander on the summit of Mount Huntington.

French Forge New Routes in the Revelation Mountains

Text by Mat Rideau; photos by Antoine Rolle



Lower part of the Revelation Glacier.

Having read Clint Helander's stories about the Revelation Mountains, it occurred to us that the "Revs" seemed to be the perfect place to fulfill our dreams of adventure and unclimbed walls. After days of preparing gear and food, a gorgeous flight with Paul Roderick, and a warm welcome from Andres Marin and Clint himself, intent on climbing new route on Golgotha, we first had to deal with unsettled weather, heavy snowfall, and furious winds.

When the first good weather window appeared, an obvious gully on an unclimbed 7963-foot summit to the north of The Apocalypse caught our attention. At 4 a.m. on 2 April, we were at the base and started to climb. Entering this deep dyke was something like a mystical experience, and the pitches offered us incredible ice and sections of steep, hard-packed snow. After nine hundred meters and fourteen hours of climbing, we were stopped below a 40-meter roof of black, compact rock. A hard pitch of aid-climbing pitch, or loose and illogical mixed climbing could have led us to the col and then up the easy final ridge, but that was not the way we wanted to end the route, and so we chose to rappel down. We were back at the base after a 24-hour round trip. So close, yet so far.

Bad weather then set in once more. We played the waiting game at base camp. Cooking, listening to music, preparing the gear, and doing a bit of skiing around the camp were our daily routines. For-

tunately three days of good weather were predicted just before the plane was scheduled to lift us back out. Due to frostbite to my toes I'd gotten while skiing back to camp, I had to let my friends go climb on their own, and did whatever I could to support them.

A day after skiing the south face of The Sylph, Antoine Rolle, Thomas Auvaro, and Jeremy Fino attempted the direct gully up the northeast face of Seraph. Six hundred meters of climbing, including some technical mixed pitches at the start, led all the way to the summit. They followed an obvious corridor back down to the base and returned to base camp 14 hours later to enjoy a good meal and a small glass of whiskey. Nice day out!

Last day, last try! The idea was to return to our first unclimbed summit and establish an easy route up the mountain's south face, but a strong and warm wind forced us to change plans. We examined possibilities on drier north faces and on 9 April the guys went to the northeast face of Hydra Peak. Climbing past multiple pitches of delicate mixed terrain along a diagonal ramp,

they managed to reach the summit at dawn to enjoy an unforgettable view across the endless wilderness of Alaska. The excitement was evident on our four faces when we all rejoined after this last beautiful day.

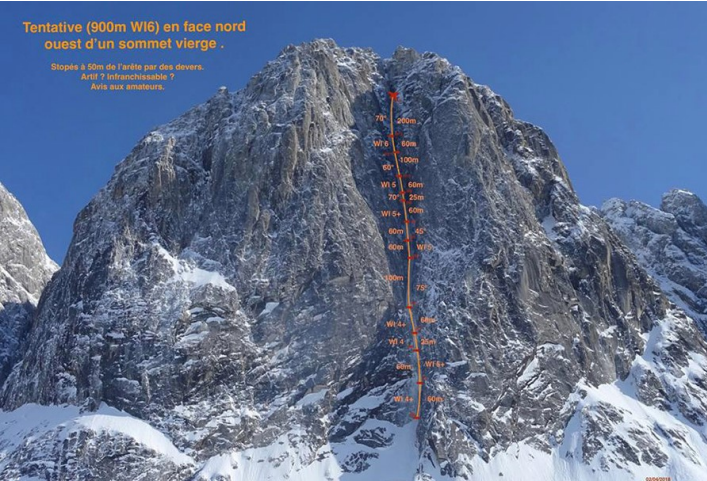
We were picked up by Paul the next morning, the time had come to go home. But we were all already talking about when our next trip would be...



Base camp in the snow cave for Thomas Auvaro, Jeremy Fino, and Mat Rideau.

Summary

Peak 7963, north face - attempt on unclimbed summit (W16, 90° névé, 900 meters) Thomas Auvaro, Jeremy Fino, Matthieu Rideau, Antoine Rolle on April 2, 2018

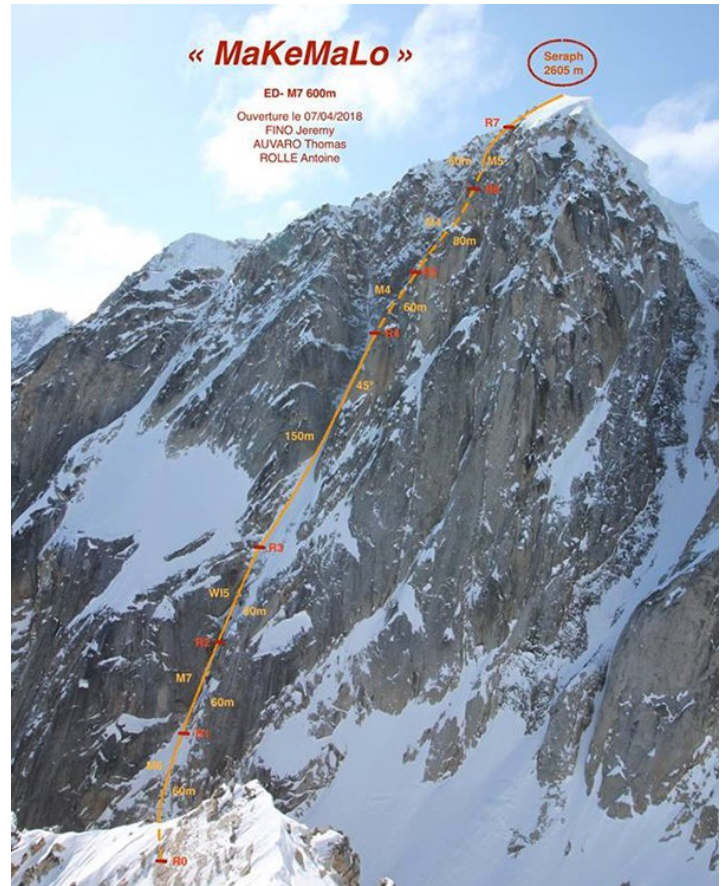


The Sylph, south face - Thomas Auvaro, Jeremy Fino, Antoine Rolle on April 6, 2018



The team wishes to thank [Petzl](#), [SCARPA](#), Blue Ice, and Chillanka for their support to the team and the project. Antoine is sponsored by [Petzl](#), [Karpos](#), [SCARPA](#), Blue Ice, Masherbrum, and Snowleader.

Seraph, northeast face - “MaKeMaLo” (600 meters, M7) Thomas Auvaro, Jeremy Fino, Antoine Rolle on April 7, 2018



Hydra Peak, northeast face “Fa Pa Caou Per Aquí” (600 meters, M8) - Thomas Auvaro, Jeremy Fino, Antoine Rolle on April 9, 2018.



Choate's Chuckle - Tom Choate
A: He heard one pitch was an open book.

Slope Mountain (4010 feet), Endicott Mountains, Brooks Range

Text and photos by Lupe Lunde and SPHP



Nearing the mysterious mountain out on Alaska's North Slope. Photo looks southwest.

Day 23 of Lupe's 2017 Dingo Vacation to the Yukon and Alaska!

August 22, 2017, 11:37 a.m., 57°F – Two days ago, Lupe had seen a lone mountain shrouded in clouds and mist. The mysterious peak had proven to be the only one of any significance west of the Dalton Highway on her entire journey across Alaska's North Slope on the way to Deadhorse. Many far more impressive peaks of the Brooks Range had been visible to the east, but none were accessible. Lupe would have had to ford the Sagavanirktok River to get to them. That one lone mountain to the west, however, had looked like access might not be an issue.

Heading south on the Dalton Highway, this mountain is once more in view. Lupe will soon be close to it again. The weather is fair, with mostly sunny skies. Maybe Loop will be able to climb this peak? It looks easy, not craggy at all; it's just a large hill. However, this is no ordinary hill. It is out on Alaska's North Slope farther north than any other mountain Lupe has ever climbed. The prospect of seeing the North Slope from that lofty height is exciting.

[12:03 p.m., parked at the start of a trans-Alaska pipeline access road west of the Dalton Highway. On the other side of the highway, a different side road heads east. A street sign says "Slope Mountain Camp 1" - The lone mountain west of the Dalton Highway must be Slope Mountain! Even though it's still several miles off to the southwest, it's the only notable peak anywhere in this vicinity. Lupe is ready for action! It's not clear if she will have to ford any streams, but it's worth a reconnaissance trip. If Loopster can get to the base of Slope Mountain (4010 feet), success seems

assured!

The first part of the trek is a cinch. Lupe and Slow Plodding Human Porter (SPHP) follow the access road to the trans-Alaska pipeline, then turn southwest along the service road. The plan is to get as close as possible to a large saddle between Slope Mountain and a lower hill before striking out for the saddle.

As Lupe follows the pipeline, it becomes apparent that there is almost certainly a stream between here and Slope Mountain. A telltale line of tall bushes 0.25 mile away runs along the lowest part of a large drainage. The only way to find out how big the stream might be is to march right on down there.

Away from the service road, the tundra becomes increasingly boggy and full of tussocks as Loop makes her way down a gentle slope. Upon reaching the bushes, she crosses a couple of abandoned stream channels. Forcing a way through the densest bushes, Lupe arrives on the bank of a small river.

The stream is deepest near the opposite bank, and appears to be at least knee deep on SPHP. Bushes crowding the far shore look like they might make getting out of the stream difficult, and the current is fairly strong. Yes, the river looks fordable, but SPHP isn't eager to take it on. Lupe will have to swim, which she hates, and it isn't clear where she can get out on the other side.

Lupe and SPHP stand there, pondering the situation. Things don't look much different either upstream or downstream. Hmm. So close, yet so far! The stream isn't dangerous, but SPHP finally de-

cides it isn't worth risking slipping and falling in. The river is just a little too deep, and the current a little too strong. The Carolina Dog has a blast sniffing and exploring all the way back to the Dalton Highway.

2:03 p.m. – Once back at the G6, SPHP continues driving south. Even though Looper's initial reconnaissance hasn't produced the desired result, perhaps there is an alternative? Maybe a route to Slope Mountain exists which avoids the river, or at least crosses it at a more favorable point?

Not until Lupe is south of Slope Mountain does SPHP find what looks like the most promising approach. Shortly after the Dalton Highway crosses the small river (signed Oksrukuyik ... something or other) that blocked Lupe's first attempt, SPHP parks the G6 at a small pullout near the top of a rise. This pullout is 100 feet south of Milepost 297 on the east side of the road.

Across the highway, a long, golden slope beyond the trans-Alaska pipeline leads toward the mountain. No major drainages can be seen between here and Slope Mountain's summit. The summit is once again miles away. Loop faces a long trek to a big ramp leading up to the top of the mountain. Nevertheless, the American Dingo shouldn't have any problem getting there from here!



Lupe ready for another attempt on Slope Mountain. The summit is on the left. Photo looks north-northeast.

2:33 p.m., 57°F – This time the Carolina Dog follows the trans-Alaska pipeline service road northeast until it starts to lose elevation. She then leaves the road, turning north to begin the long, steady trek up the golden slope leading to Slope Mountain.

Unsurprisingly, much of the tundra is spongy and wet. Tussocks slow SPHP's progress, and make the gentle climb far more energy draining than it would be on firmer terrain. Wide bands of greener vegetation mark the course of numerous little streams seeping and trickling down the vast slope. Loop and SPHP plod on and on, aiming for the lower end of a huge, golden ramp, an obvious route to

the top.

Nothing changes until Loop reaches the base of a steep rocky hillside. An easy scramble brings Loopster up onto the ramp she has been aiming for all this time. Part of the ramp is strewn with loose rock. The rest consists of still more spongy, damp tundra.

The rocky parts of the ramp are easier traveling than the tundra. For quite a long way, Lupe sticks to the rocky southeast edge of the ramp. When the rocks eventually give out, she crosses the tundra to the base of the higher ridge to the northwest.

Lupe and SPHP follow the base of the higher ridge, staying near the area where the rocks and tundra meet. Many rocks have broken into relatively thin flat layers. In some places, they form a sort of natural flagstone pathway.

Loop hasn't quite reached the end of the big ramp when SPHP figures maybe it's time to climb up onto the higher ridge. This involves another quick, easy scramble. Once up, a large tower is in sight only 200 yards off to the north. The tower stands at the summit.



Almost there! Lupe discovers this big tower at the summit of Slope Mountain. Photo looks north.

Mechanical noises are coming from a couple of sheds near the tower. The summit area is 5 to 10 acres in size, and covered with small rocks and sparse vegetation. To the north and east, a lip of the mountain drops off rather sharply, but the resulting cliffs aren't high. Passing by the tower, Lupe sees two cairns ahead.

The largest cairn is a tower of flat stones near the north edge.

More than 50 feet to the west, a faded orange wind sock flies above a much smaller cairn. This cairn is decorated with antlers. Although it had been sunny and comfortably warm when Lupe struck out for Slope Mountain, a chilly south breeze is blowing now. The sky has clouded over to a considerable degree. To the south, a dark approaching line of showers can be seen north of the

Brooks Range. With the weather deteriorating, Lupe isn't going to be able to stay up on Slope Mountain for long. That is a shame. The views of Alaska's North Slope are fantastic!

Off to the west is a 6-mile-long row of big rounded hills featuring sweeping curves. These hills are roughly 400 feet lower than Slope Mountain. Lupe can see the top of Imnavait Mountain (3702 feet) 10 miles away beyond them.

To the north, dim beneath a purple-gray sky, Alaska's featureless North Slope stretches away to a hazy horizon. The Sagavanirktok River is in view many miles away to the northeast. Both the trans-Alaska pipeline and Dalton Highway are visible closer by in this direction, too.

The best views, however, are of Alaska's mighty Brooks Range running 180° from the northeast around to the southwest. Lupe can see many fabulous snow-capped peaks.

It's disappointing to have to depart so soon, yet it's the prudent thing to do. Loopster stands sniffing the breeze for a final few moments, while SPHP scans the glorious views from this mountain farthest north of all the peaks Lupe has ever climbed.

On the return, Lupe follows the huge ramp back down to about where she first reached it on her way up the mountain. From here, the Carolina Dog takes a more direct route down to the trans-Alaska pipeline. Thankfully, the rain showers never do catch up with Loop, having drifted off in another direction - 8:40 p.m., 51°F.

Revised and condensed from an upcoming post at adventuresoflupe.com publishing in August 2018.



Lupe had tremendous views of Alaska's North Slope. The Sagavanirktok River is seen in the distance. Photo looks northeast.



Lupe at the smaller cairn. Photo looks northwest.



The Accomplishment Creek valley (center). Photo looks southeast toward the Brooks Range.



Lupe could see many impressive snowy peaks of the Brooks Range. Photo looks south-southeast.

Nantina Point (6850 ± 50 feet), Western Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Brendan Lee



Nantina Point (left) and Mount Yukla (right) in February 2018. Nantina is an inspirational peak that towers above the Eagle River.

May 24th, 2018 – As I finalized my packing and prepared to load up my truck an ominous text from Nathan Hebda showed up on my phone "Good luck in the Icicle Jungle." Nathan had ventured through this fabled Chugach bushwhack a few years prior and his sentiment seemed to reflect the popular opinion of the Icicle Creek drainage – it was a world class bushwhack. I wondered what was awaiting me and Dan Glatz.

Big alpine lines existed on Nantina Point's north face, which rose more than 3,000 feet from the Dishwater Creek drainage, but for that late May trip, I was interested in the tame southern slopes. When I conducted my research for southern routes on Nantina Point, I wasn't able to find much. In the November 1993 *Scree*, Tim Kelley reported climbing the southern slopes of Nantina Point for the first ascent. Regarding the approach through the Icicle Creek drainage, Tim echoed the words of the legendary Vin Homan: "Yukla Valley is a terror." However, Tim alluded to the fact that he found a more reasonable approach, which was more in line with the experience Dan Glatz and I had while venturing into that part of Chugach State Park.

At 6:30 a.m., Dan and I were trekking down the Iditarod Trail from the Eagle River Nature Center. About 4.5 miles after leaving the Nature Center, we had the Icicle Creek drainage in sight; perhaps that was where the suffering would begin. We noted a rock bluff to the north of the Icicle Creek; we climbed up and to the north of that bluff, then swung around to the southeast into the drainage, staying above Icicle Creek. We found a reasonable approach into the Icicle drainage that way, but let me clarify that that was rea-

sonable by Western Chugach standards and that approach still involved crawling, beating back devil's club, the infamous alder freestyle-swimming technique, and backtracking to find a better way forward. Alas, six hours after leaving the Nature Center, we arrived at our camp at about 3000 feet in the Icicle drainage, it was 12:30 p.m.

Our original plan was to get an alpine start on Nantina in the morning, but we agreed that we had enough time and favorable temperatures/cloud cover to attempt Nantina in the afternoon. Re-energized from lunch and feeling faster with lightened packs, we tromped up the terminal moraine of the Icicle drainage, running the same approach one would for Mount Kiliak. From my research, there was a massive cirque below Nantina's southern slopes at 5500 feet, but the only question was how to get there. We noted two possibilities: 1) A narrow gully with possible 5th-class climbing to get out of, and 2) a possible ramp that connected the cirque with the Kiliak approach. The narrow gully was ringing with rockfall, so we opted to try to find the mystery ramp. Through the scree and snow we slogged up to 4500 feet and believed we had the ramp in sight (climber's left), the only question that remained – did it go?



Dan Glatz booting up the mystery ramp, wondering what awaits at the top.

Dan led the charge up the mystery ramp, which was surprisingly steep toward the top. As he reached the top of the ramp, he yelled down that we were cliffed out, which was terrible news, but then I looked up to see the smile on his face that told the real story – that ramp was our ticket to the cirque. I topped out the ramp to confirm he was joking with me, and to my delight we

had a clear view of multiple snow couloirs that went from the cirque to the summit, beautiful! Thank you, Google Earth! (Note: We found a cairn at the top of the ramp so someone else had been utilizing that ramp for access.)

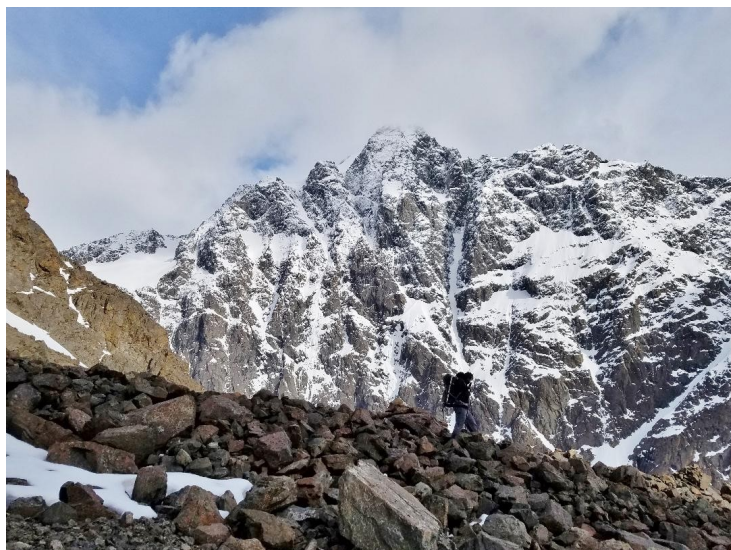


Dan Glatz booting up the final 1,500-foot couloir to the summit of Nantina Point.

We booted across frozen snow, occasionally punching through, but a little post-hole here and there helped to keep the flat terrain interesting! We aimed for a snow couloir on Nantina's south face that ran from the summit at 6850 feet to the cirque at 5500 feet. Before we climbed Dan and I took careful note of the usual suspect signs that were present in spring snow climbing. The snow was frozen on that after-

noon, but there was overwhelming evidence that place was active on a hot, sunny afternoon. We agreed that if we began to encounter dangerous and wet snow, we would find another way or try again in the colder morning; fortunately that was never an issue.

We took turns booting up the frozen snow for the final 1,500 feet. We were thankful to have crampons as the snow was frozen solid in some areas. Finally the snow gully deposited us on the summit ridge, and I peeked over the edge to confirm that face was just as steep as it looked from the Dishwater drainage – confirmed! Dan led the final steps to the summit and 4.5 hours after leaving camp, we stood atop Nantina Point. The views were spectacular, that



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peak was just shy of 7000 feet, but it's overshadowed by its bigger 7000-foot neighbors all around. The views of Mount Yukla's North Face were stunning from the summit of Nantina. We signed into the register, which was an old vitamin jar placed in 2011.

Our trip down to camp was uneventful; seven hours after departing camp, we were back. We cooked food, enjoyed the scenery, and discussed future trips into the Chugach as we pointed out the peaks and landscapes in the distance. It was a wonderful evening to relax in the valley of the Evil Spirit (Nantina), the Boogeyman (Kiliak), and the Eagle (Yukla). Our casual conversation was occasionally interrupted by the distant rumble of rockfall down Mount Yukla's north face. The next morning we slept in until 7 a.m. and departed camp shortly thereafter. As we navigated the alder of the Icicle jungle we looked south across the valley and could see a large black bear stalking a mountain goat. This episode went on for 15 minutes until the black bear put a charge on the goat, to which the goat retreated to the safety of cliffs.

We finished the hike out and arrived at the Eagle River Nature Center in the afternoon; victory lunch at Pizza Man was clutch. Overall, Nantina was an amazing journey with incredible views. The bushwhack into the Icicle Valley probably gets worse as summer goes on, so be warned. That was a fun snow climb; and I imagine it's mostly scree in the summer months. Guarded by alder, devil's club, scree, and streams, those remote and quiet corners of the Chugach State Park are a natural paradise well worth the difficulty of the approach.



Left: Descending to camp under the towering north face of Mount Yukla.

Above: Interesting formations of rock in the Icicle Glacier Valley.

Peak of the Month: Oakham Peak

Text by Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Eastern Chugach Mountains

Borough: Unorganized Borough

Drainages: Lake Creek and Larsen Creek

Latitude/Longitude: 61° 9' 38" North, 143° 43' 34" West

Elevation: 7593 feet

Adjacent Peaks: Peak 6820 in the Lake Creek and Larsen Creek drainages, Peak 7170 in the Lake Creek and Klu River drainages, and Peak 6735 in the Larsen Creek and Klu River drainages

Distinctness: 733 feet from Peak 6820

Prominence: 2643 feet from Peak 7750 in the Lost Creek and Klu River drainages

USGS Maps: 1:63,360: McCarthy (A-8), 1:25,000: McCarthy A-8 NE

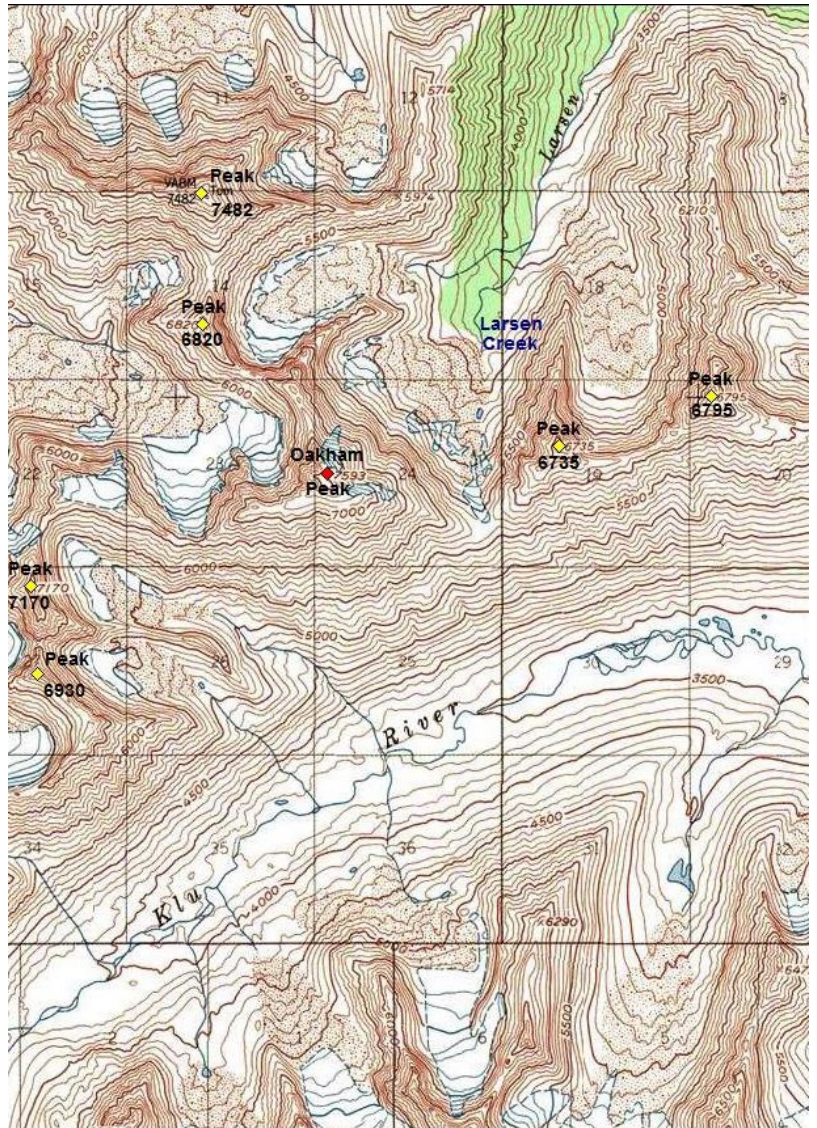
First Recorded Ascent: This peak might be unclimbed.

Oakham Peak is the highest peak in the Tebay River drainage and is in the Wrangell-Saint Elias Wilderness of Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park. It is the 33rd-most prominent peak in the Eastern Chugach Mountains (the portion of the Chugach Mountains east of the Copper River).

Bivouac.com assigned the name Oakham Peak to commemorate an English castle in the town of Oakham in Rutland, England. Oakham Castle was constructed between 1180 and 1190 for Walchelin de Ferrieres, a Norman baron and captain of King Richard I of England (also known as King Richard the Lionhearted).

I don't know of any ascents of Oakham Peak; yours could be the first.

The information for this article came from <https://bivouac.com//MtnPg.asp?MtnId=36042>, from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oakham_Castle, and from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walchelin_de_Ferriers.



View northward from the summit of Hanagita Peak. Starting with the sharp peak slightly left of center, the skyline peaks are (from left to right): Peak 7170, Peak 7482, and Oakham Peak. Photo by Danny Kost.

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Jess Roskelley climbs up the south ridge of Mount Huntington.

Photo by Clint Helander

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