

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club

of Alaska

AUGUST 2022

Volume 65, Number 8



"The simpler we make things, the richer the experiences become."

- Steve House

**General meetings resume in September.
Enjoy your summer!**

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Full Moon Fever on Mount Hunter, Alaska Range

Granite Peak Southwest Ridge, Talkeetna Mountains

East Face of Kichatna Spire, Cathedral Spires

Kahiltna Glacier, Denali

Peak of the Month: Shulakpachak Peak, Schwatka 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—Abbey Collins assisted by Dawn Munroe

Cover Photo

August Franzen on "Full Moon Fever" on the West Buttress of Mount Stevens (the South Peak of Mount Hunter.)

Photo by Clint Helander

GENERAL MEETING

General meetings resume in September. Enjoy your summer!

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.

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

MCA Calendar

MCA is launching its annual photo contest for its 2022-2023 calendar!

Each year MCA holds an annual photo contest for its calendar. The winning photos will create MCA's 2022-2023 calendar. Photos should fall into 1 of the 4 submission categories: Hiking/Mountaineering/Slogging, Skiing, Climbing (Rock & Ice), or Scenery/Landscape. This year's calendar will be HORIZONTAL, which means we will only accept horizontal photos. Online voting will occur from August 8-15th. Photographers of the winning photos will have the opportunity to share about their winning photo at the October 2022 MCA general meeting.

Photo submissions and voting will be done from the membership page of MCA's website, mtnclubak.org. To access the submission and voting links, you will need to be a current MCA member and create an account, if you don't already have one. Once you log-in, you will need to select the News tab under Membership. There, you will see the MCA Photo Contest post. Read through the instructions and you will see the link for digital photo submissions and voting (when it's that time) at the bottom of the page. For each photo entry, you'll be prompted to provide the photographer's name, a photo title, brief caption, and general timeline for when the photo was taken (e.g., month and year).

We're looking forward to seeing all of your awesome adventures!

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



Announcements

Mountaineering Club of Alaska Ice Fest 2022

Jayme Mack Fuller has informed the Board that she will once again lead the organization of Ice Fest. Thank you, Jayme! Ice Fest 2022 will take place at the Matanuska Glacier, September 23-25. Registration will open August 16th and will be limited to 50 participants. Registration is only online. Prior to the event there will be a mandatory meeting and gear check in person, most likely the week of September 19th.

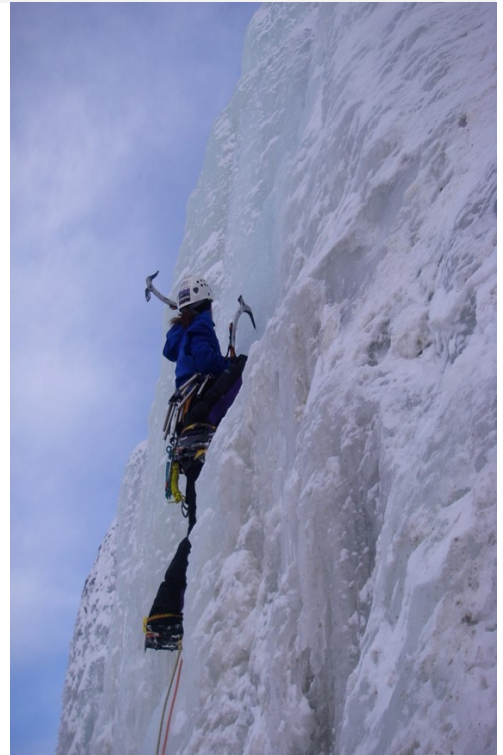
Learn modern ice climbing techniques, rope management skills and socialize with other local climbers in a weekend. All abilities welcome. Must be 18 years old. Some equipment available.

Cost: \$85. (MCA membership also required.)

Ice Fest registration is only available on Eventbrite and opens Aug. 16th. Registration will close Sept. 16th.

Visit www.mtnclubak.org and the Training web-page to register or for more info e-mail: mcaicefest@gmail.com.

Contact: Jayme Mack Fuller, 907-382-0212



Congratulations to Jen Aschoff

On June 26, Jen Aschoff reached the summit of The Mitre along with Todd Fisher, and in doing so Jen became the 10th recorded person to complete the 'Chugach 120,' a list of peaks in the Chugach State Park with 500 feet or more of prominence. The list was created by Steve Gruhn in the early 1990s and adopted into local mountaineering culture as a challenge of skill and commitment. Congratulations, Jen!

In her words: "It was hard, and you also need a touch of "crazy" to even want to try. But, I learned so much. It took me about 6-8 years to do, balancing career demands with weather/conditions and partners. The Chugach is the perfect classroom: for me, it sharpened my skills in climbing (ice and crumbling rock!), glacier travel/rescue, backcountry skiing/touring, winter camping, teamwork, route-finding, trip planning and communication."

Jen joins the following mountaineers to complete the challenge:

Jim Sayler / 1998
Wendy Sanem / 2001
Richard Baranow / 2006
Wayne Todd / 2012
Ross Noffsinger / 2016
Dave Hart / 2018
Billy Finley / 2020
Eric Parsons / 2021
J.T. Lindholm / 2021
Jen Aschoff / 2022



Jen Aschoff on Magpie Peak.

Full Moon Fever, a completely independent new route on Mount Hunter

Text and photos by Clint Helander



Full Moon Fever Route

First Ascent: Mount Hunter (14,573 feet) – Full Moon Fever on the West Buttress

Dates: May 13-16, 2022

Clint Helander (Anchorage, AK) and August Franzen (Valdez, AK)

Rating: AK 6 M7 A1 A14

Elevation Gain:

To South Summit (Mount Stevens): 5,750 feet

To North Summit: 6,350 feet

From May 13 to May 16, August Franzen (of Valdez, Alaska) and I made the first ascent of Mount Hunter's West Buttress, a distinct feature situated between the ultra-classic West Ridge and the Southwest Ridge. The feature had been attempted by Dave Wills and Dan Donovan in 2000 (See: AAJ 2000) and scoped by Jeff Benowitz and Smith Curry (See: AAJ 2001). Wills and Donovan climbed to half height on the buttress before a storm turned them around. In talking with pilot Paul Roderick and Mark Westman, both agreed that the serac guarding the buttress had retreated and melted back significantly in the last decade.

I first noticed this gorgeous unclimbed feature in 2016 on a flight tour around the range. I had previously summited Hunter twice, first via the West Ridge in 2011 and the Bibler/Klewin on the North

Buttress in 2013. Last year, I recruited August, who had climbed to the top of the Moonflower Buttress earlier in the season. I was drawn to invite August as he is developing a reputation as a talented young ice climber with lots of ambition for the bigger mountains. We attempted the route in 2021, choosing to make a base camp at the base of the Ramen Icefall, four miles away from the Denali base camp on the Southeast Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier. First, we had to solve the labyrinth maze of the broken Ramen Icefall. I had previously been through this scary complex of crevasses, but the last time there were tracks to follow. While skiing in for our first attempt, I took a 25-foot crevasse fall at the very beginning of the icefall. I was surprised to come out uninjured. After shaking myself off, we continued on our way.

In 2021 we skied to the head of the Ramen Valley and climbed two pitches of fluted glacial ice to a narrow corniced ridge beneath the looming West Buttress of Hunter. A narrow snow and ice ridge led to the base of the rocky buttress. We traversed under the serac and began climbing up an obvious crescent corner system. We climbed three pitches up the rock before a storm moved in and forced us to bivvy after 19 hours on the go. We were surprised to find an ancient bail sling on the first pitch, later believed to belong to Wills. Further discussion with him revealed that this was not the

route he had taken (he and Donovan had climbed a steep system farther to the right side of the buttress). The mystery as to who left this sling remains. Excellent rock provided thought provoking mixed climbing up to M7 A1. We bivvied for the night as warm snow soaked our tent and retreated the next morning in a storm.



August Franzen ascends Full Moon Fever in May, 2022.

August and I returned in early May 2022 and immediately set to work on finding the path through the Ramen Icefall, now all too aware of the hazards. A pair of skiers from Colorado were planning to ski the Ramen Couloir and had already made one attempt to solve the Icefall. We joined forces and soon found a safe way though, this year without any big crevasse falls. Six days of unsettled weather kept us hunkered in Denali base camp, having to practice restraint to not run through our supply of booze and junk food. Finally, on Friday, May 13, we left in unsettled weather, aware that a high pressure system was about to arrive. We carried heavy loads through the icefall and cached our skis at the base of the ridge. Two pitches of climbing up to AI4 deposited us on the rocky, corniced ridge, where we knew a spacious bivy ledge awaited. That night, the skies opened and a four week high pressure system moved in. We slept with the tent doors open and rested comfortably in our 20-degree bags.

In the morning, we leisurely drank coffee and blasted up the steep snow ridge to the buttress. We quickly reached the previous highpoint after several difficult rock pitches. The first pitch contained several small roofs and a left-trending crack

system with my crampons skittering over snow covered slabs. August took the second pitch and deviated from his 2021 route, finding a slightly easier, but still challenging variation to the left. I lead pitch three (Won't Back Down Bulge, M7) past our original high point. We could easily see our bail anchor on the bivy ledge from the year before. On the fourth pitch, August took a lead fall onto the anchor, easily assigning it as the Free Fallin'



August Franzen ascends Full Moon Fever in May, 2022.

pitch. I took a fifth pitch up a decreasing angled snow slab to an amazing bivy. That night, a full moon illuminated the sky, providing us with the inspiration to later name the route Full Moon Fever. Jack Tackle is known for naming his first ascents after Bob Dylan songs, so I guess I can claim Tom Petty as my inspiration.

Three more long and technical pitches the next morning brought us to the top of the buttress at 11,000 feet. Winds

picked up on the lower plateau as we tiredly slogged toward the south summit, 13,966-foot Mount Stevens. At this point, we had decided to try to link up all three summits, something that has only been done a few times (Jon Waterman in 1978 and Tom Choate, Dave Johnston and Vin Hoeman in 1963 on the second ascent of the west ridge, perhaps someone else has as well, but that is unconfirmed). We camped beneath the south summit, just out of the wind and dried our soaked bags in the midnight sun. In the morning, we awoke at 5 a.m. and rehydrated before departing with all our gear for the south summit at 8:30 a.m.

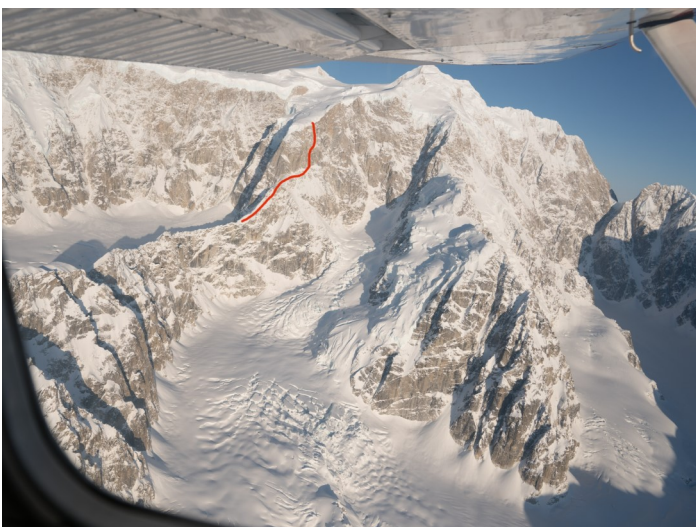
Difficult snow conditions beat us down as we broke trail through wind board snow at 13,000 feet. By 6 p.m., we stood on top of the north summit, the tallest of Hunter's three summits. We had successfully stood on all three summits. Mark Westman thinks no one had stood on top of the south summit since he and his partner climbed the south ridge in 2003. We then descended the west ridge to the Ramen Couloir, reaching the base in just 3

hours and 10 minutes and amazingly without doing any rappels. This was my third time down this descent route and by far the quickest. It wasn't over, though. We still had to post hole across the glacier and retrieve our skis. After a warm meal and lots of procrastinating, we skied away at midnight toward the Ramen Icefall and the lower Kahiltna Glacier. Five hours of hallucinating and painful travel later, we arrived at base camp at 5 a.m. after 24 hours on the go. By that time, I

knew I wasn't going to sleep, so I cracked a beer, made some breakfast, talked to a bunch of friends in base camp and soon flew out to Talkeetna and continued the celebration at the Fairview Inn.



August Franzen and Clint Helander pieced together several challenging rock pitches as they climbed Full Moon Fever in May, 2022.



Part of the Full Moon Fever route, as seen from the plane.



Snow conditions proved difficult high on Mount Hunter.



August Franzen and Clint Helander on the summit of Mount Hunter after completing the new route Full Moon Fever.

Granite Peak Southwest Ridge - third time's the charm!

Text and photos by Nate Bannish



Finally beyond the gendarmes on Granite Peak.

5.8 miles/2.7k gain to base of peak

2.2 miles/3.4k gain on the actual peak

To put it mildly, Granite Peak has been elusive. My first attempt saw me high on the peak, reaching the top of a gendarme, only to see a thunderstorm quickly bearing down. Knowing how much fun mountain thunderstorms are, I turned back without hesitation. The second try was more of a long shot – the weather was wet and socked in, and the mountain had some early snow. No thanks.

I've long pondered if I wanted to bother with a third try on Granite, but the promise of a long bike ride downhill sealed the deal (you can hike too, but it's less fun...) By 7 a.m. on July 4, I was driving toward Eska Falls.

Depending on what sort of vehicle you have, you may find yourself parking well before the real Eska trail begins. My Corolla isn't much of an offroader, so I always park in a small gravel lot before the pavement ends. The unpaved road is ROUGH!

Once on the unpaved road, you will want to keep bearing left/making left turns (small wooden signs guide you toward "HIKING"). Eventually, you'll reach a junction where the road splits into a motorized trail and the hiking/biking trail. The hiking trail is more pleasant – less steep, but definitely longer. Get ready for several miles of twisty turns, tight switchbacks, and some areas of brush.

As you break out of treeline, the mountain is clearly visible on the right, along with much of the Southwest Ridge route. Hav-

ing already done this approach several times before, I quickly brought my bike up to its usual hiding spot.

The initial climb heads up a grassy field, with long patches of turf meandering high up the peak. The easiest way up is to follow these patches, continuing on until the first rocks/cliffs rear up ahead of you, then turning right to go underneath these obstacles.



*Where Nate Bannish ditched his bike.
Granite is behind him, out of sight.*

Once you've traversed right and through some large talus, you'll find yourself in a gully filled with choss. Head up, and trend climber's right as you gain elevation. After about 1,000 feet of this, you'll come out into a wide talus field with a gendarme upward and on climber's right. Head for this gendarme!

Just before reaching the gendarme (literally right underneath it) traverse to the right of it. This is where the route gets tricky. You'll see a steep scree gully dropping downward into yet another, wider gully. Go down this steep gully.



First sight of gendarmes on Granite Peak.

Once you're safely down, you have to IMMEDIATELY head back up the very next scree gully – don't bother trying to bypass more than just that one gendarme. If you do, you'll be like me and end up having to climb/downclimb exposed 5th class boulders. I had to write an emergency message to Daniel Glatz asking him WTF to do.

If you've gone up the right gully, it will spit you out on the other side of the mountain, and from here, it all falls into place. The rest of the gendarmes are easily avoided on either side, and the climbing remains in the exposed 3rd/easy 4th class category. Once I bypassed these gendarmes, the summit came into view.

As I reached the summit, I was treated to beautiful views of both the Talkeetnas and the Chugach – Skybuster Peak loomed proud to the south, and Mount Apollo loomed proud to the north (I'm coming for you, Apollo).

Miraculously, the hot July sun stayed behind clouds for the whole ascent and most of the descent, for which I was grateful. Even so, I ended up drinking all of my 2 liters of water before getting back to the bike. It was a moderately thirsty, but entirely enjoyable shred back to the car.

[Editor's Note: 'Skybuster Peak' is a name given by Vin Hoeman to the 8,675 foot peak at the head of Carpenter Creek. 'Ice Cream Cone Mountain,' or 'The Cone' was in earlier use by the local homesteader community. After learning of the pre-existing name, 'Ice Cream Cone' was endorsed by the first ascent party of Dave Johnston, John Samuelson, and Hans van der Laan. Many continue to prefer 'Skybuster' as the more captivating name.]



This is what Nate Bannish climbed up/down because he went too far. It was not a nice downclimb.



Skybuster/Ice Cream Cone

Thunderstruck, East Face of Kichatna Spire

Text and photos by Mike “Twid” Turner



The view from Kichatna Spire.

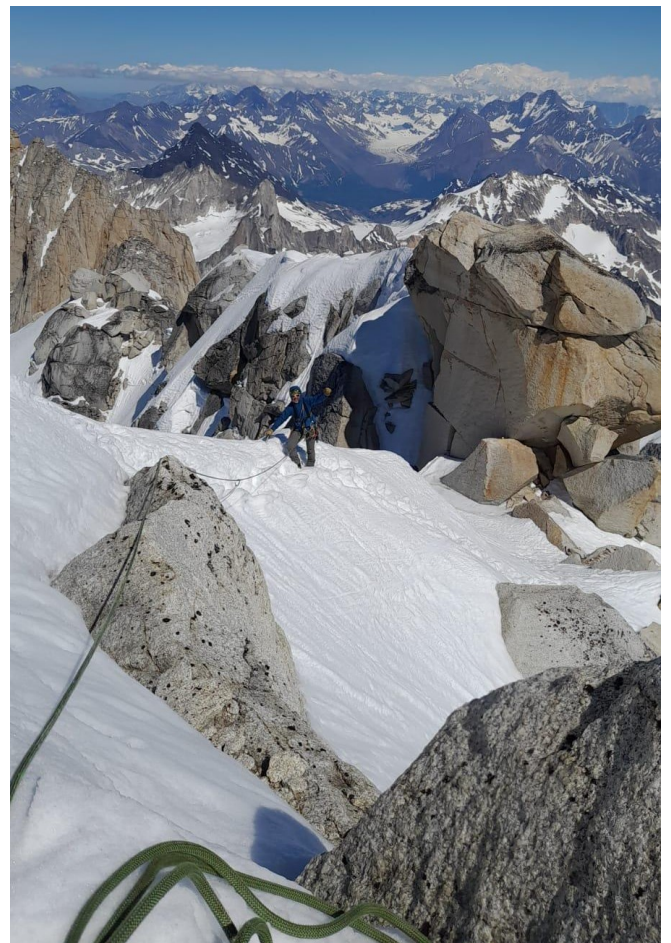
VI A3+ 6c 33 pitches 1,200 meters of climbing. Summited June 8, 2022.

Mark Thomas and I had attempted this fabulous pillar in 2000 but backed off due to loose rock. We were back again and found the 30 meters of loose rock now on the glacier!

The climb followed a fantastic corner crack up the pillar on the right side of the east face. The second pitch took two days to climb, through some blank and loosish rock over a huge roof to reach the corner. Once in the corner/crack it led pretty much direct up the left side of the orange pillar. This led to alpine mixed rock and snow climbing to the summit ridge.

The pureness of the top half was pretty special. The climbing was over 12 long days of consecutive days of effort. Most of the climbing was challenging aid/French free in a mix of freezing and warm conditions. The weather was stellar the whole period except for a thunderstorm one day which was quite spooky. We spent six nights bivvying on a small ledge.

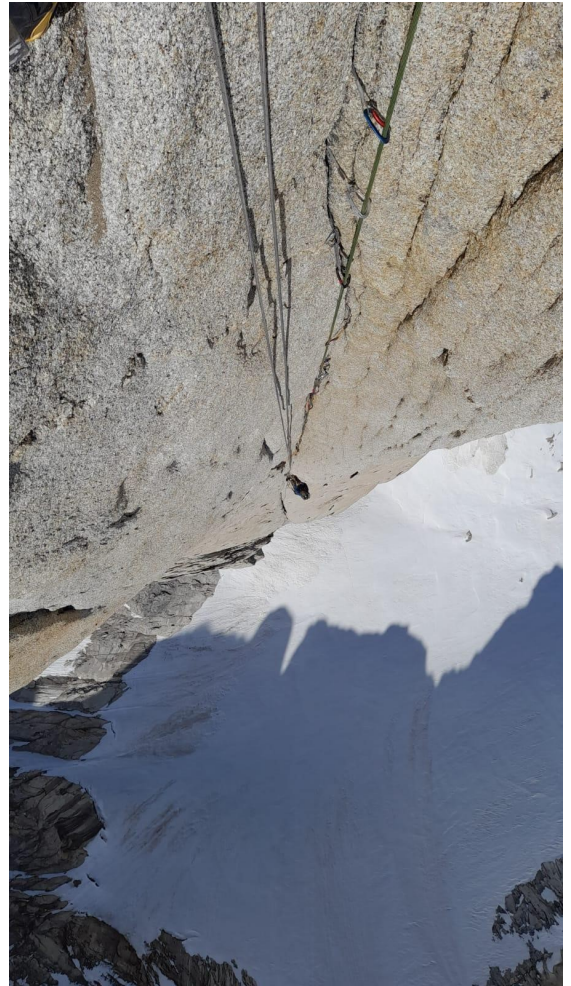
I lost 3.5 kg in weight over the climb to show the great effort we put in! It was a truly incredible summit which has only been climbed a few times over the years. An aesthetic line as good as they come.



Mark Thomas ascending Kichatna Spire.



Kichatna Spire



Mark Thomas ascending Kichatna Spire.



Thunderstruck, the route Mike 'Twid' Turner and Mark Thomas ascended on Kichatna Spire.



Mike 'Twid' Turner on the summit of Kichatna Spire.

Building Base Camp, Kahiltna Glacier, Denali

Text and photos by Chase Berenson



The trail out of base camp that eventually reaches the summit of Denali.

Almost every modern climber who has made a summit attempt on Denali has begun and ended their climb by flying in a ski-plane to and from base camp. The exact location of Denali base camp differs year to year, but it is always located on the Kahiltna Glacier at approximately 7,000 feet elevation. Climbers experience the nervous excitement of arriving at base camp and checking in for the climb, as well as the elation of arriving back at base camp after spending time high on the mountain. But as climbers are transitioning through base camp before and after their climb, they may not stop to think about how the bustling camp appeared on that lonely glacier for a couple months each year.

In 2011 I volunteered with NPS DENA 1, the first Denali National Park and Preserve Mountaineering Patrol of the climbing season. We were the first boots on the ground for the season, and we were tasked with building base camp from scratch. Due to the nature of the glacier, permanent structures can't be built on the Kahiltna; that means every structure at base camp is constructed at the beginning of climbing season and removed at the end.

NPS DENA 1 was a volunteer ranger patrol made up of seven volunteers with Park Service Ranger Roger Robinson as our pa-
Scree—August 2022

Scree—August 2022
trol leader. For the most part none of us volunteers had ever met each other or Roger until we arrived in Talkeetna on April 23 to spend a day getting to know each other, reviewing training, and getting our gear together before we all gathered at Talkeetna Air Taxi on the April 24 to fly up to the Kahiltna. TAT dropped us off at what would soon be base camp, where we found all our supplies that had been delivered by U.S. Army Chinook helicopters in the days preceding our arrival. After we jumped out of the plane we took a few moments to soak in the surroundings,



Starting to dig out and organize the gear dropped off by the Army.

but our reverie didn't last long before the work began.

Our first task on the glacier was to build a helipad. If there were any emergencies or any required evacuations, a helicopter would need a safe place to land. The best method for building the helipad was stomping in the snow. Roger measured off the four corners of the helipad while we strapped on snowshoes, and we all started marching in a single-file line until we had the entire area packed solid and flat.

Once that task was done, we realized that most of the work over the next few days consisted of digging. Luckily we had brought many shovels, because we had a lot of snow to move and holes to dig. The weatherports and other structures would have to endure through the climbing season and into July, lasting through some melting on the glacier. By digging out flat surfaces below the existing snow layer, it allowed these structures to be built in the best way for them to survive the season.

Due to its size and its location in base camp, our first structure to dig out and build was the "gas tent." During climbing season this weatherport stored white gas, but it also served as our first kitchen and dining room. It was a little too small for that purpose, but we got to know each other better over dinner that first night while all piled into the small space.

The next day we fell into what would be our regular morning pattern: After a night of sleeping with the temperature hovering right around 0 degrees Fahrenheit, we all climbed out of our sleeping bags and started thawing out when the sun emerged around 8 a.m. We didn't have scheduled work at this hour, but we generally gravitated over to the helipad to do more snowshoe stomping; it was a mindless task that got the blood pumping. Around 9 a.m. Mount Hunter started blocking the sun, so we all huddled back indoors to eat breakfast and to make plans for the day. By 10 a.m. the sun came back out from behind Hunter, and we'd jump out to tackle the day's work.

Our major task for a couple days was to dig "the big hole." This hole was the home of the weatherport that we all proudly thought of as "our" weatherport. Significantly bigger than the gas tent, this weatherport served as our primary communal indoor space. It was our living room, kitchen, and dining room. (And after we left, it was the NPS mountaineering office for the season.) This structure required a hole 12 feet wide, 12 feet long, and eight feet deep; considering the additional storage dug out around the base of the hole, we moved at least 1,287 cubic feet of snow for this weatherport alone.

Once the big weatherport was up, we wired it for technology. The big tent had a VHF radio, CB radio, AM/FM radio, a satellite weather station, solar power to keep it all running, a propane

heater to keep things warm inside, and even a vintage Coleman pizza oven! That weatherport had more comforts than some homes in Talkeetna!



Our home sweet home on the Kahiltna Glacier.



The big weatherport in the big hole.

Luckily it wasn't all work on the Kahiltna. We took a break one afternoon to experience the Alaska Range, and Roger led us out of camp for a short ski on the trail to the summit. Getting out of camp for a ski on a route that would carry so many climbers was a well-earned reward!

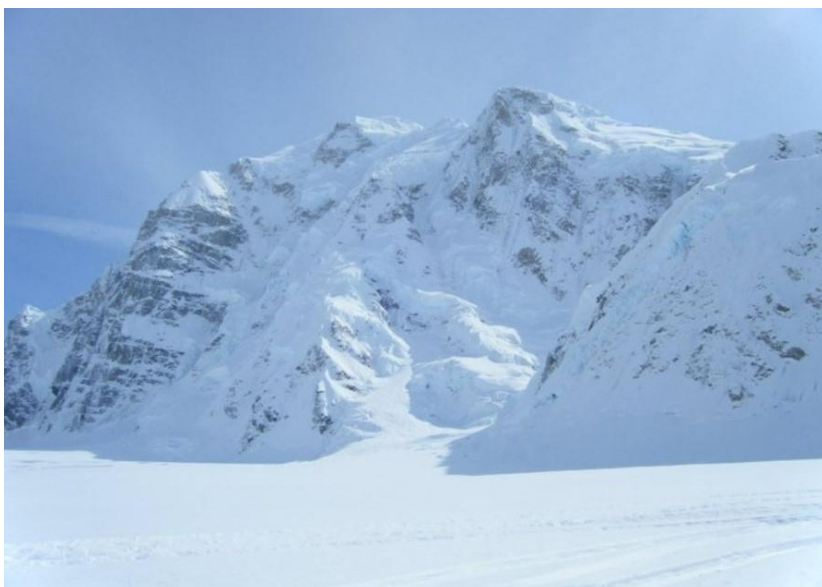
After a few days, and many more stories than can fit in this space, it was finally time to return to civilization and fly back to Talkeetna. In the three months following our time on the glacier, over 1,200 climbers passed through base camp on their Denali summit attempts. We were glad to play a small role in the experience of so many climbers on North America's highest peak.



The sun goes behind Mount Hunter at 9 a.m.



The peak of Denali as seen from base camp.



The first view of Mount Crosson while stepping off the airplane.

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

June 29, 2022, at 7:00-8:00 p.m. via Zoom

Roll Call

Gerrit Verbeek (President) - Present
Nathan Pooler (Vice-President) - Absent
Curtis Townsend (Secretary) - Absent
Katherine Cooper (Treasurer) - Absent
Coleman Ahrens (Director) – Absent
Brendan Lee (Director) - Absent
Josh Pickle (Director) - Absent
Heather Johnson (Director) - Absent
Andy Kubic (Director) - Absent
Peter Taylor (Director) - Present
Mike Meyers (Past President) - Absent

No quorum – no business conducted

Time and location of next meeting

- General Meeting (Wednesday) September 7th, 2022. T.B.A, with additional gatherings to be organized during the summer.
- Next Board Meeting on July 27, 2022, via Zoom

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Gerrit Verbeek	president@mtnclubak.org	Director 1 (term expires in 2022)	Coleman Ahrens	board@mtnclubak.org
Vice-President	Nathan Pooler	vicepresident@mtnclubak.org	Director 2 (term expires in 2022)	Brendan Lee	board@mtnclubak.org
Secretary	Curtis Townsend	secretary@mtnclubak.org	Director 3 (term expires in 2022)	Josh Pickle	board@mtnclubak.org
Treasurer	Katherine Cooper	treasurer@mtnclubak.org	Director 4 (term expires in 2023)	Heather Johnson	board@mtnclubak.org
			Director 5 (term expires in 2023)	Andy Kubic	board@mtnclubak.org
			Director 6 (term expires in 2023)	Peter Taylor	board@mtnclubak.org

Annual membership dues: Basic ("Dirtbag") \$20, Single \$30, Family \$40

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address below. If you want a membership card, please fill out a club waiver and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter or have questions about your membership, contact the Club Membership Committee at membership@mtnclubak.org.

The Scree is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes, and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be emailed to MCAScree@gmail.com. Material should be submitted by the 11th of the month to appear in the next month's *Scree*.

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be in electronic format and pre-paid. Ads can be emailed to vicepresident@mtnclubak.org.

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

Mailing list/database entry: Katherine Cooper — 209-253-8489 — membership@mtnclubak.org

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vacant—training@mtnclubak.org

Mentorship: Katherine Cooper and Lila Hobbs—mentorship@mtnclubak.org

Huts: Greg Bragiel—350-5146 or huts@mtnclubak.org

Calendar: Lexi Trainer

Librarian: Gwen Higgins—library@mtnclubak.org

Scree Editor: Abbey Collins — MCAScree@gmail.com assisted by Dawn Munroe (350-5121 or dawn.talbott@yahoo.com)

Web: www.mtnclubak.org

Find MCAK listserv at <https://groups.io/g/MCAK>.

*August Franzen ascending Full Moon Fever on the South Peak of Mount Hunter (Mount Stevens).
Photo by Clint Helander*

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