

**SEPTEMBER MEETING**  
**Wednesday**  
**September 16, 7:30 pm**  
**Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets**  
**Downtown Anchorage**

Slide Show: *Charlie Sassara* will show us what he and others have been up to in the Wrangells lately. ■

**TECHNICAL ICE CLIMBING CLASS**

place: Matanuska Glacier  
 date: September 26 - 27

fee: \$30.00 covers access to glacier, camping and club equipment replacement

meeting: Thursday, September 24, Pioneer Schoolhouse 7:00 PM. This meeting is mandatory, so plan to attend.

coordinator: Nick Parker

The ice climbing class is for all levels of experience from beginner to leader. We will present the techniques necessary to become at least a competent second on steep ice. We will not emphasize glacier travel techniques.

**PRE-REGISTRATION WILL BE REQUIRED.**

Sign-ups are at the September meeting for MCA members only. Potential instructors need to call the coordinator, Nick Parker, or Shawn O'Fallon at 272-1811.

An equipment check will be done at the organization meeting on the 24th. Students are required to bring their boots, and crampons for inspection. Club equipment will be handed out. (The club has limited supplies of crampons, ice axes and helmets.) **Fees will be collected.** Questions will be answered. **ALL STUDENTS MUST ATTEND.** AMH, on Spenard Rd. also rents boots, crampons and ice tools for people signed up for the class. Some equipment is sometimes available from instructors, but you should not count on it. Club crampons are not designed for serious ice-climbing; you should consider other options. For this class all attendees must have helmet, crampons, climbing harness, ice axe, two locking carabiners, and climbing boots.

AMH has new Koflach and Scarpa Inverno boots in rental, \$12.00 for the weekend. Nick and Shawn will bring the new AMH "demo" tools and crampons to the Thursday meeting. The store will also have 15% discounts on ropes and some good deals on ice tools during September.

The school will begin at 9:00 am on Saturday, September 26th, at Matanuska Glacier at the parking lot closest to the glacier. Plan on leaving Anchorage no later

than 6:30 am or go up Friday night (no extra charge in the campground). Please leave your dogs, cats, horses, llamas, and other four-legged things at home.

### Course Goals

- Learn a useful and safe technique for climbing ice in the alpine and waterfall environment.
- Learn to use modern tools and equipment in order to insure maximum safety and speed while climbing.
- Learn and practice all of the basic state of the art rope management techniques; including a fundamental knowledge of knots useful for alpine climbing.
- Learn and practice basic climbing techniques, with emphasis on skills most useful for winter (and ice) climbing.
  - Belaying the leader, through mechanical devices and non-assisted or traditional technique.
  - Building safe anchor systems regardless of the terrain or conditions.
  - Route-finding to rapidly and safely achieve the goal without having unnecessary objective hazards.
- Achieve a climbing and fitness level to assure basic competency in alpine winter climbing.

### Equipment for Ice and Winter Alpine Climbing

#### Technical gear:

Ice axe - your basic tool, most useful in the 55 cm to 60 cm range as the primary tool. Modern ice tools have curved or re-curved picks with serrated teeth for maximum holding power in most ice conditions. Taller climbers or those who primarily are snow-climbers will prefer a 70 cm axe. The second tool will be in the 45 cm to 55 cm range, specialized for steep water ice-climbing. A great variety are available, so try to use as many styles as possible to find the tool that best suits your style.

Crampons - rigid 12-point are the best choice for ice climbing. The new one-buckle system is *far* superior to the neoprene straps for attachment. Footfangs are an obvious choice also.

Helmet - a must for the beginning to experienced ice climber; ice hurts.

Boots - double plastic or leather. Plastic boots are the warmest and as stiff as the best leather without breaking down. Alveolite foam inner boots are the best liner yet made, in terms of warmth vs. weight

- Neoprene socks or booties which are loose fitting are also helpful.

- Neoprene or cloth/insulated overboots are necessary for altitude and all but spring conditions in Alaska. A margin of warmth must be maintained for safety.

Harness - must be adjustable with wide leg loops, that will open up to put on over all your various clothing systems. Most modern styles have this capability.

Ice Screws/Spectres - you should employ a variety of types and lengths to accommodate varying ice conditions. Pound-in and screw-in types of various lengths should be carried on the climbing rack.

Ratchet wrench - is very helpful, especially for leading steep ice with older screws.

Carabiners - you must have three large locking type and several regular carabiners. As you increase your proficiency and the difficulty of the routes you lead, you will require increasing amounts of hardware to protect your leads.

Slings - you will need to carry several of varying lengths, plus you should have a quick-draw for each ice screw you carry on the rack. You will also need several two-meter lengths of 6 mm to 8 mm perlon for prussik slings and other specialized uses for which tubular webbing is not suitable.

Special mechanical devices - jumars, figure-8, and other gizmos will be used and discussed to establish their relevancy to ice and winter climbing.

#### Clothing Systems for the Winter Alpine Environment:

The clothing system should layer well and be adaptable to a variety of uses and temperatures. Strive to use the minimum amount necessary to reduce both weight and bulk. The use of pile and (gor-tex-et-all) should yield a warm and light suit able to keep you warm in anything short of a blizzard. An expedition parka and/or suit would be the final layer.

Socks - light wool or poly liner, heavy wool or pile outer. Or a neoprene sock, especially built for climbing. Capilene, wool or blends all are used.

Legs - poly or capilene long-johns in various thicknesses. Salopettes or pile bibs. Mountain pants or a mountain suit. Bibs - or a one-piece suit are the best choice because they eliminate the waist hassle.

Torso - Bib pile or insulated suits are the best choice. Poly or capilene t-neck tops.

Pile or wool sweater. Down vest. Mountain anorak or parka.



Hats and mitts must be warm and wind proof. A balaclava or face mask should be carried. Waterproof shells for the mitts are necessary.

#### Gaitors

Everything in the clothing system should have long zips or full side zips, so they can be easily removed or put on.

## TRIP REPORTS

### Mt. Logan's East Ridge

by Dave Hart



At 19540 feet (1992 GPS survey) Mount Logan is Canada's tallest mountain and the second tallest peak in North America. It is located in the Icefield Range of the Canadian Saint Elias Mountains, a scant forty miles from the Gulf of Alaska. Arguably described as the most massive mountain on earth, Logan has forty square miles exceeding 15000 feet in elevation. Its notorious storms are a result of its massive height and proximity to the Gulf. Surprisingly, as of 1997 only 1490 people have attempted to climb the mountain since its first ascent in 1925. Approximately one-third of these have reached its true Central Summit, most via the King Trench Route. First climbed in 1957, Logan's East Ridge is rated an Alaska Grade 3+ with mixed rock, snow and ice climbing on slopes angled up to 60 degrees. Minor cornicing and several knife-edge ridge traverses also add excitement to the route. Its popularity is second only to the King Trench where upwards of 75 climbers may attempt the summit each season, compared to an average of 20 climbers on the East Ridge. Since the East Ridge ends atop Logan's smaller East Peak (19400+), most climbers turn around here due to fatigue, weather or snow conditions. Consequently, the success rate of East Ridge climbers who continue the two miles to the true Central Summit has been historically estimated at only about 10%. We hoped to be part of this small fraction.

Our trusted pilot, Paul Claus of Ultima Thule Outfitters, ferried our group of five climbers - Paul Barry, Kurt Bauer, Bob Hempstead, Harry Hunt and myself - from Chitina to Mount Logan on May 2, 1998. Bad weather forced Claus to leave us below McArthur Peak for two days until he could shuttle us to our 7700-foot base camp just north of the East Ridge on May 4. Claus' landing site is only ¼ mile from the base of the ridge - much closer than the other two air taxis which deposit

climbers a full day's ski from the route. This same morning, Claus shuttled a trio of very experienced Montana mountaineers to the East Ridge. For the next 22 days we would leapfrog up the mountain with Joe Josephson, Jack Tackle and Jeannie Wall. They were wonderful folks and it was a pleasure to share the route with them.

During the next six days, we could climb on only two. By May 8 we had moved up to our spacious Camp 1 at 10400. We bypassed an intermediate campsite where we gained the ridge at 8800. From 9000 to 10400 we found mixed rock and snow scrambling and used occasional running belays for protection. Most parties may want a few nuts to supplement the abandoned fixed line anchors that litter the lower ridge. Initially the history of these abandoned fixed lines was somewhat intriguing, but ultimately they appeared as nothing but trash left by those too lazy to clean up after themselves.

Our morale was beginning to wane; we had left home ten days ago and here we were still at Camp 1. Fortunately, May 11 dawned cloudless. That morning we dropped down to retrieve a food cache at 8800 feet before continuing up the ridge. From 10400 to 11800 the firm 40 to 50 degree neve snow slopes made for wonderfully secure though exposed climbing. We placed occasional pickets to protect the steeper bulges. Our rack of four pickets and six screws was adequate for our early May conditions. Mid- to late-season climbers would likely encounter more ice and might consider a couple extra screws in addition to a few nuts.

"Nice lead, Harry. Looking good!" I shouted to our Mountain Yeti as he balanced himself across the crest of a knife-edge at 11700. To his right: 4000 feet of exposure. To his left: 3,000 feet. Harry was in his element. We all followed in turn, clipping our rope through pickets as we tip-toed along. We cached our loads at a protected site at 11,800 feet before returning to Camp 1. We found no suitable campsites between 10400 and 11800.

The next morning we packed up Camp 1 and reached our 11800-foot cache by noon. Between here and 13300 was the technical crux of the route. Snow and ice slopes up to 60 degrees made for superb climbing. Our early-season ascent provided secure step-kicking up the steep snow. Later in the season these slopes would turn to ice. We passed a nice campsite at 12500 and continued climbing up the exposed ridge. The snow and ice slopes ended at 13000 feet at which point we faced a four-pitch knife-edge traverse. Again, adequate snow helped speed our progress through this crux which we prudently protected with running belays.

We had pushed all the way to the top of the



ridge proper to the point where it intersects the Logan massif. Past accounts describe this as the end of the technical difficulties, although I for one would contend this. In any event, we dug a bombproof campsite for our two tents, then dropped back down to retrieve our 11800-foot cache that evening. It was a long day, but a great feeling to finally have all our gear with us above the crux at Camp 2. Up to this point we had climbed the entire route using one ice tool and one ski pole. Due to good snow conditions we only used our second tools to down-climb some of the steeper icy sections on our descent two weeks later.

*"Argh... You suck!" I'm not sure who I was cursing; but it sure felt good to let my frustrations fly as I floundered through the breakable crust, wallowing through my morning lead. We would later learn that a NOLS Trio two days in front of us spent all morning gaining only 300 feet up this same section. We finally reached 14200 feet where the NOLS Trio had built a snow cave. We continued on to 15100, cached our gear and returned to our fortress at 13300. A couple small steep bulges and a few crevasses were the only technical challenges of the day. The next morning we cached our second ice tools, extra hardware and some food (bad, bad, bad...) at 13300 before moving up to 15100. Here we dug a wonderfully protected Camp 3 below a large bergschrund crevasse. We were all beginning to feel the effects of the altitude so it was nice to relax in the warm afternoon sun. The entire coastal Saint Elias Range was spread out before our eyes, most of which was now below us. Mounts Vancouver, Cook, Hubbard, Alverstone, Kennedy, Steele, Lucania and Bear were visible from our awesome perch. This afternoon was certainly one of the reasons we each continue to endure the discomforts of mountaineering.*

If only our pea-brains would similarly remember the subsequent morning, we might give it all up in a heart beat. 6:00 AM the next morning was one of the most terror filled moments I've experienced in the mountains. All five of us were instantly woken to the sound of snow and ice chunks hitting our tents. The sound of big chunks auguring in next to us was unmistakable. "That's it, I knew it was all over," Kurt later confessed. The barrage lasted less than 20 seconds, although it seemed longer. We hopped out to assess the situation. Amazingly, the tents were undamaged. "No way, where'd that come from?" someone posed. Not ten feet from Harry and Bob's tent was a crater the size of our latrine. "That's it. We're out of here. Moving camp," Paul said, reading our minds. Our entire 50 foot by 50 foot campsite was sprinkled with debris, although only a few of those were large enough to do substantial damage. Still, it only takes one. Two hours later we were moving camp up the mountain. As we crested a rise we got a good view of the source of our scare: a small solitary exposed serac 700 feet above our campsite. Deceptively, it appeared harmless even then.

"How many pickets do we have left?" I asked once everyone regrouped at our 15600 belay stance. We had just climbed four pitches of 45 degree neve snow and above us looked to be more of the same. Paul grabbed our two remaining pickets, then started up the headwall. Thirty minutes later we were having lunch on the eastern edge of Logan's amazingly huge summit plateau. At long last we could sprawl out without fear of falling off the earth. We continued up to 16100 where a bergschrund crevasse had trapped sufficient snow to dig a campsite. Harry, Paul and I descended to retrieve our 15100-foot cache while Bob and Kurt prepared our Camp 4 from which we hoped to summit after a day's rest. What a great day - sunny, warm and cloudless. It was almost spooky - lunar, as Kurt described. That afternoon the NOLS Trio passed our camp on their way down from their summit bid. They had reached the saddle between the East Peak and true Central Summit only to find the Summit shrouded beneath a lenticular cloud. To their credit, they opted to nab the lower East Peak and descend - the approaching storm threatening to trap them up high. I was more than a little envious while offering them congratulations as they headed down. We went to sleep that night hoping for just a couple more days of good weather. Considering our prior five consecutive days of decent weather, we knew our time was running short. Little did we know how short.

We spent the next two days, May 16 and 17, tent bound at our high camp as 30-40 mph winds scoured the summit plateau and the temperature dipped to fifteen below. With a week of food and two weeks of fuel remaining, we were in no hurry to risk frostbite from the seventy-five below wind chill on our summit day. The wind mellowed on the evening of the 17<sup>th</sup> and our new found Montana friends wasted no time in joining us at our high camp.

"Hey, are you awake, Kurt?" Paul asked. "It's calm outside; I don't hear any wind." It was 2:30 AM on May 18 and the two-day windstorm had abated. "What do you say we brew up and go for it?" With that we fired up the XGK and began our morning ritual, albeit slightly earlier than usual. By 5:00 AM our quintet had packed for the day - food, water, parka and four miles of wands. The minus-fifteen temperature was bearable due to the lack of wind and the indescribable sunrise we witnessed. The blood-red moon over Mount Vancouver will not soon be forgotten. By 8:30 AM the five of us were at 18000 feet, barely half a mile from the summit of the East Peak. It's a privilege climbing with Paul, and we've developed a tradition over the years. It's quite simple: he leads on summit day. Not wanting to break tradition, Paul began the traverse across the south face of the East Peak towards the true Central



Summit. Two hours later, we finally reached the 18700-foot col between the East Peak and Central Summit. Only 800 feet to go; we were almost there! The climbing to this point had been easy although a slip on a few of the steeper wind scoured slopes would not have been advisable.

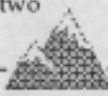
I always get nervous above high camp on summit day. Today was no different. Our twelve-hour window of good weather was quickly deteriorating. Twenty-five miles distant, the once clear Mount Saint Elias was shrouded in clouds from yet another approaching storm, our fifth in 16 days. It was a race. "Let's ditch our packs here for the final climb," Paul suggested. With that, we anchored our five packs taking only the essentials. The last mile-and-a-half proved to be the most physically and mentally draining section of the day. Above the saddle, the ridge narrowed and steepened for 500 feet. Even the perfect neve snow sans packs was a struggle. By noon, we were at the base of the final summit pyramid. There's something very aesthetic about climbing without a rope, so we opted to continue untethered for the final 10 minutes. It was a classic summit ridge not difficult enough to be of too much concern, but exposed just enough to provide the exhilaration of great climbing. Best yet, we were the only group visible on the entire mountain. Seven hours after leaving our 16100-foot high camp we all stood atop Logan's 19540-foot true Central Summit just after noon on May 18. Its tiny summit was standing room only. All other Alaskan and Canadian summits I've visited, including Denali and Saint Elias, pale in comparison to the view we experienced that fine day. Below us, the infamous Hummingbird Ridge snaked its way up the 12000 foot south face from the Seward Glacier culminating at our very perch. It was sunny, calm and five below - simply heavenly. But alas, all good things must end. Thirty minutes later we took our last photo and headed down, reaching Joe, Jack and Jeannie an hour below the summit. Joe had been to the summit years before and wasn't feeling well, so he descended with us. Jack and Jeannie continued on, reaching the top in a quickly developing lenticular cloud. Yep, party time was over.

"Time to get up, Uncle Fester," Paul and I affectionately called to Kurt. We were still at our 16100 high camp and neither Kurt nor I had left our tent since arriving from the summit three days earlier. The windstorm was howling, and Kurt and I were competing for the official title of Emperor Fester. So far it was 68 hours and counting, but I was ready to concede. Kurt, on the other hand, has this remarkable ability to shut off all bodily functions and simply fester in his bag indefinitely. It didn't hurt that we had been on quarter-rations since summit day. That evening we experienced a pivotal point in our trip. What had been limited to a heinous windstorm now dealt considerable snowfall. Within two

hours after digging out our tent, we were buried above the roof with no reprieve in sight. We discussed our options of digging out every two hours for the duration of the storm, or digging a snow cave. We opted for the latter as did Harry and Bob, while the Montana Trio held fast in their tent. At 1:00 AM, after seven hours of digging, our tent was down and we were brewing up in our wonderfully spacious three-man snow cave. Constructing the cave had exposed us to the most heinous weather any of us had ever experienced. Outside our snow walls, it was impossible to walk without being blown over. Visibility was non-existent, even with ski goggles. We couldn't see Joe, Jack and Jeannie's tent 50 feet away. Any exposed flesh risked immediate frostbite. Joe later estimated sustained 60 mph winds and gusts to 80 mph all night long. "Welcome to Mt. Logan, here's to our first week at 16100. Let's hope we get a break soon..." someone offered, as we drifted off into another Cheyne-Stokes sleep.

For the next three days, the storm continued to rage as severely as any of us had ever seen. Would it never end?

On the morning of our tenth day at 16100, at 7:00 AM Joe managed to excavate our ever-lengthening entrance tunnel. Conditions outside had improved slightly but it was now socking in again. "Let's pack up and give it a shot." Two hours later, our remaining half-day of food and gallon of fuel was loaded into our packs and we all started down the hill. Visibility was marginal, but our bamboo wands were easy to follow. Before we knew it, all eight of us had descended down to 14000 feet where we broke out of the clouds and could see once again. Our ten-day stay at 16100 was finally over! Moments later a helicopter flew overhead. Curious, we pulled out our radio and spoke with a Klauane Park crew on patrol searching for a couple of overdue climbers on the King Trench. Paul Claus also flew by 30 minutes later, happy to hear from us since we were four days overdue ourselves. Cheers erupted from all eight of us when Claus agreed to a pick-up the following day. By 9:30 PM we had down-climbed 8400 feet all the way to our 7700-foot base camp. No rappels were needed. The rich warm air was a joy to breathe. Most importantly, we had food! No more quarter-rations. Claus returned the next afternoon and ferried us to his lodge where we indulged in a much-needed sauna and Eleanor's wonderful food. Tuesday morning May 26 we finally reached Chitina, happy to bring our extended 25-day adventure to a close.



## Kongakut to Aichilik Traverse

by Don Hansen



After surviving the mob scene at Anchorage international airport, having my pack flown to Barrow, and waiting for its return to Fairbanks we finally made it to Arctic Village, but our problems weren't over yet. The fuel for our stoves that the charter pilot promised was gone along with some of his airplane fuel that he stored at the village airstrip. The pilot managed to dig up some stove fuel for us before we started up Drain Creek from our camp on a gravel bar on the Kongakut. The "landing strip" at the mouth of Drain creek was very short and coming into it was exciting, not much room for pilot error. The hike up Drain creek was pretty easy. We crossed this clear water stream many times between gravel bars along the streambed avoiding brush. Hiking up Drain creek we encounter numerous tracks of bear, wolf, moose, caribou, sheep, fox, and other wildlife. The creek's a major travel corridor. At one camp, we spotted a nearly white grizzly bear and her matching club. We watched her and the club play on the tundra bench across the creek from camp until they moved down stream. The weather was sunny the first couple of days hiking up Drain creek but, showers and a short hale storm greeted us on our gradual ascent to the pass between Drain creek and the Aichilik River. We seen many sheep on benches and mountain slopes near and above the pass. We spent two nights at a camp just below the pass on the Aichilik side. On the second day Jim Sprott, Linda White and I went for a hike up a 5,000 ft ridge in back of camp. The weather changed quickly from sun to overcast and rain as the wind shifted from out of the south to out of north and off the Arctic ocean. On our descent from the pass, we again crossed and re-crossed the drainage leading to the Aichilik. Our boots were wet most of the trip. Which was better than bushwacking or fighting the tussocks.

The drainage from the pass became the clear water "east fork" of the Aichilik. We crossed it before it joined the turbid "west fork" and crossed the later where it was braided into a few channels. From there we traveled down the Aichilik on the west side avoiding the need to re-cross the Aichilik downstream where it became quite a raging torrent after one night of heavy rain fall. The "pickup" air strip is on the west side. The route down the west side of the Aichilik was quite easy. We hiked on vegetated gravel bars most of

the way but were forced to travel across tussock meadows for about five miles where the river cuts through a hundred foot rocky embankment on both sides of the river. One morning during a rest stop we heard wolves howling and spotted two of them on a slope on the west side of the river. Julie Sprott, did her best to howl back at them and it worked. The wolves were curious enough to come down and investigate us. The pair came within about 100 yards of us before retreating back up the mountain. It was a treat to both hear and see these animals.

### For Sale

Patagonia Gridman 1-Piece Goretex Suit - Large. Never used - still in original wrapping. \$350 (\$725 new)  
Feathered Friends Rock & Ice Down/Gtx Parka. Warmest expedition parka on the planet. 1 expedition. \$350 (\$650 new)  
North Face Westwind 2-Person Expedition Tent. Bombproof Tent. 5 years old, only 3 expeditions. \$225 (\$375 new)  
Beal 300' x 9 mil climbing rope. Never used - still in original wrapping. \$150 (\$250 new)  
Beal 50m x 10.5m climbing rope. Never used - still in original wrapping. \$60 (\$100+ new)  
Koflach Valluga Randonnee Ski Boots - Size 10.5. 10 years old, but functional. \$40  
Ramer Adjustable Ski Poles. \$40 (\$80 new)  
Titanium Ice Screws. Never used - still in original wrapping. \$8 each

ADZE



### Slide Show

"Twelve Years on Everest," by Pete Athans. Sept. 14, Monday, 7:00 PM. Location TBA. Call AMH. Cost \$5.00. Twelve expeditions, five summits.



## History Corner

Joe Anders

You should never under-estimate how quickly the weather in Alaska can go bad, especially in the summer. On August 15, 1965, Dwayne Mann and Laverne Denn were bear hunting in the Crow Pass/Raven Glacier area when a snow storm struck. A 5 man party trying to get a sick youth out passed the hunters, noted they were in "pretty sorry shape" and left food, shelter and matches. They notified the RCC and the next day a search for the men started. Poor weather limited the search to ground parties and 5 days later, the bodies were finally located. One was on the Eagle Glacier trail, the other 2 miles away at the intersection of Raven and Clear creeks.

### *Officers*

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**Annual membership dues: Single \$10.00 Family \$15.00 (one *Scree* per family)**

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the treasurer at the MCA address below. If you want a membership card, please sign the club waiver found on the reverse side of this page and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter, or have questions about your membership, contact the club treasurer.

*SCREE* is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles and notes submitted for publication and other communication related to the newsletter should be mailed to Box 102037, Anchorage, Ak 99510. Articles should be received by the 25th of the month for the following month's issue. Computer diskettes are accepted, or e-mail to [mca@alaska.net](mailto:mca@alaska.net).

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be "camera ready" and pre-paid. Your cooperation will be appreciated...  
Willy Hersman, Editor, 265-6405

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