

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

September 2014

Volume 57 Number 9



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**Program: Fredrik Norrsell and Nancy Pfeiffer present kite skiing the Arctic
Coastal Plain.**



Life's a bit like mountaineering—never look down.

-Edmund Hillary

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

www.mtnclubak.org

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

Join us for our club meeting at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, September 16, at the BP Energy Center, 1014 Energy Court, Anchorage, Alaska.

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

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Cover Photo

Kevin Cooper with a full pack ascending fixed lines up the initial two pitches to begin the final ascent of Mount Johnson. Photo by Ryan Jennings.

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for the *Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcascreed@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 24th 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. 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 submit captions with photos.

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Climbing Notes

Sam Zmolek reported that on July 16 Candice Young and he climbed Peak 1954 in the Small Bay and Ugadaga Bay drainages of Unalaska Island, dubbing it Misty Mountain. He also reported climbing Peak 2650 in the Shaishnikof River and Uniktali Bay drainages on Unalaska Island on July 26.

Steve Gruhn and Dave Hart climbed Peak 6150 in the Alpine Creek and Windy Creek drainages of the Clearwater Mountains on August 9.

Steve Gruhn and Ben Still climbed Axis Peak (5161), Peak 4759 in the Crescent Lake and Kenai Lake drainages, and Mortar Mountain (4730) in the Kenai Mountains on August 20. Ben also climbed Right Mountain (5085) the same day. They found cairns on or near the summits of each of these peaks.

We look forward to reading detailed accounts of each of these climbs in an upcoming issue of the *Scree*.

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

⇒ **MCA Ice Fest.** September 27-28. See page 3 for more information.

Volunteer Needed

The MCA will be needing an Assistant Scree Editor starting in April 2015 with the May 2015 *Scree*. The position requires the use of Microsoft Publisher (or similar) software and requires approximately six hours per month. If interested, contact Steve Gruhn at scgruhn@gmail.com.

Online? Click me!



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

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

Ice Fest 2014



Want to learn to ice climb or improve your current techniques?

When: September 27th – September 28th, 2014

Learn modern ice climbing techniques, rope management skills and socialize with other local climbers in a weekend out on a local glacier. All abilities welcome. Must be at least 18 years old.

Cost: \$75. NO LATE REGISTRATION AVAILABLE THIS YEAR. Registration ends September 21. (MCA membership required \$15-20).

Visit www.mtnclubak.org and the Training webpage for more info or email: mcaicefest@gmail.com.

Contact: Jayme Mack,
907-382-0212

Reality in the Nutzotin Mountains

Text and photos by Carl Battreall

Our objective, Peak 8514, or Hidden Peak, rises above the huge lateral moraine. We named it Hidden Peak because it was almost always hidden from view.

"I think we might try and climb something," I said to Sy Cloud, my longtime partner of Alaskan adventures.

"Really? What mountain? Where?" he responded with a mixture of skepticism and intrigue.

"Well, I need to photograph in the remote Nutzotin Mountains, but I am willing to take a few days off and focus on climbing a peak. None of them have names; don't even know if they have ever been climbed?" I replied.

That was all that needed to be said to seal the deal; remote, no names, unclimbed.

The Nutzotin Mountains are the far eastern anchor of the Alaska Range. Tucked in behind the mighty Wrangell Mountains, and lingering on the Canadian border, the Nutzotin Mountains are rarely visited by climbers, or anyone for that matter. The majority of visitors visit the historical mining town of Chisana. Gold was discovered there in 1913 and the rush lasted until the early 1920s. There are a few old buildings standing and about 20 hardy residents.

After a seven-and-a-half-hour drive from Anchorage, we arrived in McCarthy. It was mid-May, and the town was still waking up from its winter slumber. Buildings were partially boarded up and only a handful of people mingled around, the majority at the bar. Our cell phones didn't work, so we couldn't contact the pilot, Gary Green of McCarthy Air. We went to his shop and office, but it was locked up and stuffed to the ceiling with

unopened boxes. We went to the bar and were quickly hustled to the side of the building by an uncharacteristically Alaskan, well-groomed, young man.

"Hey, guys, could you hang out over here for a few minutes, we are filming a shot of the front of the building," he pleaded.

When asked about "what" they were working on, we learned that McCarthy had fallen victim to the new Alaskan disease, the reality show.

Since October, a film crew had been filming, interviewing and generally probing the full-time residents of McCarthy. The crew bolstered with great pride about the project, but all Sy and I could think was that it was going to be another highly manipulated, over-dramatized show that had a very little to do with what Alaska was really about, what it meant to go on a true Alaskan adventure, what real wilderness was.

Most Alaskans have grown tired of seeing our beloved state get turned into a Hollywood fantasy. Reality shows and fictional movies, that are so absurd, so mind-blowingly stupid that the whole world thinks that Alaska is full of uncultured idiots with quick tempers and that going into the Alaskan wilderness is a sure ticket

to death, a suicidal mission into such extreme wilderness that only the most macho of people would dare go.

This interaction made us desperate to get out of Dodge. Ironically, only the Los Angeles film crew's cell phones worked, so I borrowed one and gave Gary a call. He had an interview



Our objective, Peak 8514, rises above the huge lateral moraine. We named it Hidden Peak because it was almost always hidden from view.



Our pilot, Gary Green of McCarthy Air.

with the film crew at 2:00 p.m. and would meet us afterward, around 3:00 p.m., in front of his office.

Sy and I loitered in sunshine, looking at brochures on flightseeing and glacier hiking. When Gary showed up he was flaunting a clean, red-and-black plaid flannel shirt and a cowboy hat. Sy wondered if it was for show or if that was how he really dressed. After some chitchat about all our shared acquaintances, he got down to business. He didn't have a key to his own office, but did have a credit-card swipe for his iPhone.

"How much was I going to charge you again?" he asked.

"Five hundred dollars apiece," I said.

"Right," he replied, unaware at the killer deal he was giving us. The other pilots I called wanted \$850 apiece to fly to the same spot; needless to say, I was pleasantly surprised when he quoted me \$500, round trip.

We loaded into his tiny truck and bumped along the dusty road to the "McCarthy International Airport." Gary filled the plane while we shuttled gear and packed the plane, loading the "sharps" – ice axes, climbing gear, poles, and all other accessories – in first, followed by packs.

"Okay, where are we going again?" Gary asked.

"Ugh ... Baultoff Creek," I said with apprehension.

"Yeah, right, get in." Gary gestured and we squeezed into his tin can, a silver, polished Cessna 180. He skipped the usual flight jargon, either assuming we had spent enough time in bush planes to be unnecessary or he wasn't quite in the tourist groove yet. Gary's casual demeanor was both refreshing and a little disconcerting. Within seconds we were buzzing into the Wrangell Mountains. I have experienced at least 50 bush flights in the mountains of Alaska, but this was my first time through

the Wrangell Mountains and I was blown away. Imagine desert and ice together. We swerved between huge, crumbling plateaus of red rock with glaciers dripping from their flat tops. It was a vision of the Earth's past, when the ice of the poles pushed much closer to the Equator, a few hundred million years ago. Off to the south we could see the massive white world of the Bagley Icefield and its countless ice-clad summits, some of the tallest in North America.

We shot out of the Wrangells over some rolling hills. It was a shock to go from those massive peaks to what appeared to be a flat landscape. I felt like it was criminal to leave those mighty Wrangell Mountains, and for what? A small collection of

insignificant humps? But the deeper we plunged into the Nutzotin Mountains, the quicker I forgot about the Wrangells and grew excited by our chosen mountains.

We raced into Baultoff Creek in a rage. The plane rattled and roared. I saw the strip ahead of us and figured we would do a pass over, there was no way we were going to land at the speed we were going, I was wrong. We touched down on the overgrown landing spot like a jumbo jet, skidding with flaps down. Before I could get my bearings, the plane was being whipped around 180 degrees, sputtering to a stop.

After unloading Gary asked, "So, when am I picking you guys up?"

"Ugh ... Sunday morning," I said with a concerned tone.

"Right," Gary nodded with a smile.

"We will be here by Saturday afternoon, so if you want to pick us up that night, you know, if the weather looks bad for Sunday, that would be fine," Sy said. Sy had to be back to work on Monday and was a little worried by Gary's nonchalant reply of our chosen pickup date.

I had been feeling lately like my wilderness journeys had been getting watered down. The last six or seven trips I have had a satellite phone. When we first started using them they were ONLY for emergencies and at five bucks a minute, there was no way we were going to make late night calls to our girlfriends.

But now you can rent one for a \$100 a week with 20 free minutes. They are no bigger than a large Smartphone. They had become a mandatory piece of gear. The problem was that we were using them for non-emergencies, like calling family on a daily basis, getting frequent weather reports, calling the pilot early for pickup, just because we wanted to go home. In a fit of

rebellion, Sy and I decided to forgo the SAT phone. We could only rely on the pilot's word that he would come on the date we chose.

Gary raced out of the mountains as quickly as he came and a calming silence overtook us. We stood motionless, enjoying the cool wind, the sound of the creek and the splendid landscape.

We lumbered under our heavy packs up Baultoff Creek. The rotten overflow ice was still solid and made for easy travel up the river bed. The same could not be said for the lingering snow, which had absolutely zero strength. One wrong step and we were up to our knees in watery slush. The patches became more frequent, so we choose to climb over hills and loose rock than suffer through the foot-numbing smoothie.

Another piece of technology I had come rely too heavily on was Google Earth. I have come to rely on its high-resolution images to choose photography locations and routes through remote wilderness. However, much of Alaska has poor image quality and the Nutzotin Mountains were one of those areas. This meant we had to rely on our 60-year-old topographic maps and our years of backcountry experience. This just added to the value of our journey and simply made every decision more rewarding.

Tired and hungry, we made camp around 10 p.m. We watched pink light dance on the rounded peaks as we relaxed on the

tundra. We were entertained by the cliff-side antics of Dall sheep. With warm food in our bellies, we came to the conclusion that few things are better than a spring evening in the Alaskan wilderness.

The next morning we slogged up to our chosen base camp, at the base of the massive terminal moraine of the Baultoff Glacier. It was getting harder and harder to avoid the patches of soft snow, so we took are chances on the unstable, lichen-spotted boulders of the moraine. We were often seduced by the smooth ease of the snow, quickly cursing our poor decision as we struggled to extract ourselves from the frozen mush.

After we established camp, we went bounding across the moraine, free of our heavy burdens. We hunted for views of the surrounding peaks. I had picked a handful of peaks that, from looking at the map, could have potential for fun climbing. None of them had names nor any recorded ascents. The fact that we had to make our own route decisions, no guidebooks to refer to, no beta from others, was so liberating, so exciting, that our stomachs ached with anticipation and anxiety. High up on the moraine a large peak came into full view and instantly we knew that we would try to climb it.

I realized that I hadn't heard a plane or seen a jet since we were dropped off (and we wouldn't our entire trip), a rarity in Alaska, or anywhere in the world, for that matter. We watched a



Sy Cloud on the summit of Hidden Peak, Peak 8514, Nutzotin Mountains.

skinny, calico fox hunt ground squirrels as we told stories and shared our growing fondness for the Nutzotin Mountains.

As the evening approached, the wind began to pick up. Low clouds stretched over the summits, a sign of approaching weather. A few hours later and we were in a full-on storm. We dove into the tent and watched it bend with each punishing gust, which easily reached 45 miles an hour. Snow came whirling down from above and worked its way into every weak spot. The heavy snow began to build up under the tent's fly, coating its mesh body.

After a restless night we woke to partial clearing. With hazy minds, we dragged ourselves out into a new scene, winter. Luckily, by midday the sun was blazing again and the new snow melted quickly. During the storm, I had gotten up in the middle of the night to take a leak and walked out onto the old snow; it was firm and held my weight. That confirmed what I had suspected, the only chance we had on climbing any mountain was to leave at 3:00 a.m. and try to get back down before the snow got too soft, which was around 8:00 a.m.

After a day of lounging and exploring, Sy went to bed early. I wanted to crawl into my bag, too, but I am a photographer, driven by a subconscious force, an uncontrollable need to follow the light until it has faded into darkness. I stumbled into the tent around midnight. It's always hard to sleep before an alpine start, I was anxious about what we would discover higher up. We couldn't see the mountain, it was hidden from our camp, nor could we see the summit from our mountain-view spot; we had no idea what to expect.

Under a bright, glowing night sky, we walked up the old river ice toward the toe of the glacier. Its crusty surface made for easy travel through the jumbled moraine. With hesitation we crossed large swatches of snow and were pleasantly surprised by their firmness, we knew that once we got out of the moraine, it was all snow. We had brought snowshoes, a last-minute decision that we were happy we made. We decided not to wear them until it was totally necessary, knowing how much more slowly we would travel once they were on. We needed to move as quickly as possible in order to summit and get down before the snow softened up and would no longer support us.

About an hour up, I decided to take a photograph of Sy coming up through the moraine and then realized I had left my camera at the tent. Over 20 years as a working professional photographer and I had forgotten my camera! If I went down to get the camera, we would lose valuable time, possibly killing our summit attempt. But Sy and I knew I had to go back. We decided he would keep going up the glacier and I would try to catch up.

I dropped my pack and sprinted down the river, happy that it was still frozen enough to support myself running in boots. I reached the tent and bolted back. I did the round trip in 45 minutes.

I reached my pack and scanned the mountain, looking for Sy and was surprised to see him so low on the mountain. I followed his tracks as they grew deeper into the snow. One inch, two

inches... at about five inches, he switched to snowshoes, so I did the same.

I caught up to him as he lounged in the snow, eating a snack. The sun began to crest the distant mountains and he was enjoying its warmth. The sunlight on the snow would hasten the snow-softening process; our time was running out, it was time to push ourselves. I took over the burden of leading through the soft snow. The stellar views were becoming a distraction, a sea of endless peaks. We reached the large plateau below the main summit pinnacle, quicker than we expected. We had two ascent options. One was a huge 40-degree face, about 800 feet high. There was some obvious slide activity on the face, and after the all the new snow and wind, we decided it was too sketchy.

Our other option was the south ridge. It was a very aesthetic, narrow ridge with delicate cornices and a few steep bugles. It looked great. We decided to stay un-roped and switched to crampons. I let Sy have the honor of leading the way up the beautiful precipice. We shuffled around a few rocky sections, crampons desperately gripping the loose rock. The views just kept getting more and more outstanding. Our excitement grew as the ridge became less steep and the sky above grew larger and larger with each step. I felt like surging to the top, adrenaline at its maximum, but we both knew we needed to be wary of the Alaska Range's infamous, hidden summit crevasses.

Without incident we arrived on the skinny summit. We both smiled, it was a 360-degree view, clear as could be. The mighty Wrangell Mountains demanded our attention, rising up like frozen sentinels, guarding the sea. It was flawless, a perfect summit. Everything went as planned. It was pure bliss and, yet, I wasn't completely at peace.

I couldn't help thinking that it was all too easy. Was this really an adventure? What would others think? Dull and boring, I figured. No speed records or extreme routes accomplished, no epics, no fighting, no animals out to eat us; there was no drama, no story for Hollywood. I realized that no matter how much I had tried to avoid all the crap about Alaska and modern "adventure," it still had sunk into my own subconscious. I sat down and took a deep breath and looked at Sy, who was enjoying the moment, feet dangling off the steep north face.

I came to the conclusion that I didn't want or need any of the drama our society told me was required for a modern adventure. For Sy and me, this journey was everything we needed from the mountains. Alaska had given us the gift of true wilderness. We felt isolated and remote, but not alone. It was a classic good time, with a good friend, in a truly wild place; it was the reality of real Alaskans.

If you want to know what happened during the rest of our journey, read my post at <http://thealaskarange.com/2014/05/20/grizzly-gorge/>.

This expedition was part of Carl's Alaska Range Project. Check it out at www.thealaskarange.com.

Embracing the Choss: The First Ascent of Mount Eva

By Josh Solomon

Having arrived in Seward to start guiding for Exit Glacier Guides no more than two weeks prior, I had just barely begun to explore the mountains surrounding Resurrection Bay when fellow guides Trevor Kreznar, Andrew Farrell, Henry Gates, and I decided to make our way up the 4,993-foot Mount Eva on June 4, 2014. What better way to get my introduction to Kenai Mountains mountaineering?

With only a bit of anecdotal knowledge about the mountain and its climbing history, we scoured the internet for more information. Much to our surprise, we came upon a YouTube video put together by local climbers, Harold and Matt Faust. Their summit attempt was cut short by an exposed, chossy mess of a spire at the top of the mountain. The final shot of their lead climber grinning and turning around after only about a quarter of the way up had us wondering what we might be getting into. Nonetheless we decided to, at the very least, go play around on the glacier, or maybe even the steep snow slope up to the ridge. As probably the least experienced – and consequently the most conservative – of the group, the worst-case scenario in my mind was that we would convince ourselves summiting would be a good idea.

As to be expected with four twenty-somethings planning a day out in the mountains, our planned 5:00 a.m. alpine start time quickly turned into a leisurely 10:30 a.m. departure. After a gro-

cery-store pit stop to pick up much-needed Clif Shot Blocks, beef jerky, and donuts, we were finally on our way. I will also now admit to the fact that our ascent of Eva was assisted by a righteous 1987 Toyota Land Cruiser driven by Exit Glacier Guides owner and resident off-roader, Brendan Ryan. Brendan kindly dropped us off on the far side of Kwechak Creek, enabling us to start our trek with dry boots [*Ed. note: Although the USGS maps label the stream flowing from the Bear Lake Glacier as Salmon Creek, the Kenai Peninsula Borough and the U.S. Forest Service call that stream Kwechak Creek above its confluence with Lost Creek*].

After wandering for a few minutes, we stumbled upon the “trail” that would serve as our highway through the thick alders and devil’s club. Inevitably, it turned out to be more of a metaphorical pothole-laden dirt road than the highway we had envisioned. We quickly lost the path and decided to just truck straight up along the fall line. I emerged above timberline with more than a few imbedded thorns and a newfound appreciation for my lack-luster, but nonetheless clear, Adirondack trails back in upstate New York.

Despite the bushwhack, the meadows that opened up in front of us were spectacular. The recent snowmelt had unveiled a lush-green landscape strewn across the hummocky deposits of glaciers past. We continued to meander our way to the start of the



The team all roped up and ready to go. Mount Eva and the headwall we climbed up are in the center of the photo. Photo by Andrew Farrell.

glacier at the top of the bowl. The four of us geared up and tied into the rope with Trevor up front, followed by Henry, me, and Andy. After running through some potential crevasse rescue scenarios, we embarked across the mostly snow-covered ice that stood between us and the peak. From this point, the glacial travel was fairly straightforward as we were able to avoid the major icefalls and find safe snow bridges over the few menacing crevasses along our path.

After about 4,000 or so feet of elevation gain, we were staring straight up the 45- to 50-degree headwall of this large cirque. A bergschrund about a third of the way up the slope below the peak

sent us farther to the climber's left on a more indirect route. The 6-foot-7-inch man-child, Andy, took the lead up the snowfield, with his long legs creating impossibly large steps for the rest of us sub-6-foot folk. As I hopped along between postholes up to my upper thighs, I began to question my efforts to mimic my father's stylish short shorts and gaiters look from photos I found of him mountaineering in the Brooks Range in the late 1980s. I like to think he would be proud of my look.

We crested the ridgeline about 100 meters north of the summit. My stomach lurched as I peered over the other side with the massive Bear Lake Glacier almost half a vertical mile beneath me. I glanced at it just long enough to appreciate the beauty, but not quite long enough to psych me out of what lay ahead of me. Then we began our traverse along the ridgeline. After just a few steps, everything I had heard about the Seward rock quality was confirmed. My crampons scraped across the loose rock,

occasionally dislodging basketball sized chunks of this fissile slate. The handholds that were supposed to be preventing me from ending up as glacial sediment in the lateral moraine on the side of the glacier weren't much better. We continued along through this for what seemed like an eternity.

After the traverse, we skirted around just below the summit spire and found ourselves at the exact point where our YouTube inspirations stood just a few years before us. Looking up the obvious zig-zagging line, we couldn't help but feel like it would go. It was clear that the rock was unstable and protection would be minimal, but it was definitely doable. After a few minutes of amping himself up, Trevor Kreznar tied himself into the sharp end of the rope. He then methodically navigated the face, stripping off loose material before feeling confident enough to trust his hands and feet on the metasedimentary rock beneath him. I nervously watched him pick his way up this route, constantly wondering whether this risk was worth taking. Anxiety amongst those of us watching and Henry belaying was apparent, as our normally enthusiastic

and chatty crew turned silent. Even with all that was at stake, Trevor's experience in the mountains allowed him to remain level headed and continue what was turning out to be more of a free-solo up the summit spire. A wave of relief rushed over all of us with the eagerly awaited "Off belay!" call.

Once Trevor reached the top, the rest of us climbed up on a top rope he had built off of a horn on the summit. Of course once on top rope, it was nothing more than a leisurely 5.6, or so, pitch of rock to the top. Once on top, the world was laid out in front of us. The small coastal town of Seward was swallowed whole by the gargantuan landscape of Alaska. Views truly don't get much better than that.

We stayed up there long enough to get our team summit photo and began our two pitches of rappelling back down to the snow. An extended glissade down the 45-degree snow slope brought



The team summit photo. From left to right, Trevor Kreznar, Josh Solomon, Andy Farrell, and Henry Gates. Photo by Andrew Farrell.

us back down onto the glacier. The already-dwindling supply of Shot Blocks was devoured within a few minutes of beginning our long descent. About three hours later, we stumbled up to the car, drove back to town, and celebrated with a victory burger and beer at a local bar. We wondered who else had been up there, thinking at least one or two of the

local guys had done it. After contacting the MCA, it turned out we had gotten the first recorded ascent.

My first foray into the Kenai Mountains proved to be both exhilarating and rewarding. It's funny how a little bit of exposure and lackluster rock quality can turn an avid East-Coast sport climber into a shaky-legged Elvis impersonator. Mount Eva pushed me outside of my comfort zone in the perfect way. I learned that mountaineering is about managing risk, not avoiding it entirely. With the right equipment, experience, and crew of great mates, getting a little uncomfortable can be just what you need and really the reason many of us are out there doing what we do. I can't wait for the next adventure and another opportunity to shake in my boots.

Augustin Peak

Text and photos by Ben Erdmann



Augustin Peak from the Trident Glacier.

In retreating back home from the Shadows Glacier after the successful line on the east face of The Citadel [*Ed. note: See the November 2013 Scree*], we flew southeasterly over the dividing granite spines and through the quiet corner of the triple-forked Trident Glacier arenas, the agitated mass of Augustin Peak owning the landscape. For a year this remote region of a far-removed range collected logistics surrounding our anticipated return.

Our research yielded the reports (Gwen Cameron wrote up well in an *Alpinist* article) easily found on the internet, but with minimal documentation, without photographs, and from over 30 years ago. Through more local in-person inquiry Jess Roskelley and I ended up in the Talkeetna log cabin of a longtime National Park Service Ranger staring through a magnifier over a light table and slides older than either of us. The well-worn collection of stacks of papers at the NPS hinted with a single-line description of Augustin Peak: an ice face on the northeast aspect.

After the Kichatna Mountains flushed themselves of a dozen-day storm, Jess and I simul-climbed the northeast face, up and down, in a day.

The weather window brought in the first glimpse of spring to the glaciated world, the smell of green from the upper Yentna forks and into the Susitna expanse wafted in. When Roskelley and I regained the glacier and our skis, we encountered a single butterfly,



Jess Roskelley on the summit of Augustin Peak.

spread in full pose, poised at the lip of our track. The three-hour ski back to our base camp unfolded in the blissful glow of a climb and the laughter of being greeted back by butterflies, one after another until there were dozens, all standing straight at attention along the double line of our ski track, as if the warm winds of spring brought them into the sterile glaciated world, and with the turn of the sun around the shoulder of some mountain, a shadow and rapid drop of temperature brought them in ... aiming for the only reference in a homogenous spread of ice.

“Stairway to Heaven” on Mount Johnson

By Ryan Jennings



Route of “Stairway to Heaven” on the North Face of Mount Johnson. Photo by Carl Battreall.

In early 2014 Kevin Cooper and I, both from Colorado, received a great boost toward making dreams reality when we were awarded the Mugs Stump Award to attempt a line on the North Face of Mount Johnson within The Great Gorge of the Ruth Glacier in Denali National Park. For this we are extremely grateful and yet apprehensive. Will we have the skills and determination to remain faithful to Mugs’ ideals? Will we have the strength and endurance? Will we have the initiative?

Our obsession, the North Face proper, is an alpinist’s dream and simultaneous nightmare. A pyramid-shaped wall dripping with veins of white rises vertically 4,500 feet above a valley of chaos. A hanging corner high looks promising, though, like chocolate coating over an already sweet treat. It is obviously more than worthy of an effort. Hanging seracs block access to the wall. Approaching alone presents significant challenge. The wall rears up like a giant wave and curls overhead when below. The lower wall is less slabby than one would wish, noticeably void of cracks, and heavily guarded by a giant roof cutting across much of it. Also lacking cracks, this roof appears near impossible to bypass. Just gaining access to the snowfield above could possibly be the crux of the route.

Doug Chabot and Jack Tackle are the only successful team to have ascended the North Face previously via a large gash on the far right of the wall. An *American Alpine Journal* account of their eventual ascent of “The Elevator Shaft” in 1995 contained a large photo of the North Face appearing near the beginning of their story. [Ed. note: See page 72 of the 1996 AAJ.] The photo stops me, captivates me and immediately starts a long-term obsession. It sweeps me and, as it would turn out, my soon-to-be partner Kevin Cooper up in a nearly 20-year affair with ice, rock, and the ultimate, and for us inevitable combination, alpine mixed. Upon reflection the synchronistic nature of events that unfold seems hand delivered from the cosmos.

This is not the first time we’ve been here. In 2003 we attempted this face, but quickly fell down “Shaken, Not Stirred” on the nearby The Mooses Tooth formation, our warm-up route, when a fixed anchor gave way. We go home early, but alive.

Since then we take on families and jobs. Time is tight; money is tight, and yet the dream still remains. Responsibilities and commitments hold firm, bodies age, and yet we know we must go. I’ve stared at the face on my screen for the past four months and I’m attached to the idea. The previous year has been good for our psyche. We have squeezed in some impressive ascents

back in Colorado and our focus is strong. The timing would never be better.

Arriving in Talkeetna late in the evening April 20th, we have finally returned. We awake the next day and make our way to Talkeetna Air Taxi to hop a quick flight onto the Ruth. As the pilot swings close to our wall, reality sets in. The wall is beyond my imagination and more void of features than I'd imagined, taking on a blank slab appearance for most of the lower and middle sections and steeper than I'd thought. My thoughts on the outcome are not good.

After taking in the grandeur of The Great Gorge and setting up camp, we head to the wall. A slightly steep climb up 60-degree snow, left of the hanging seracs, deposits us safely at the base. We've picked out two possible options, but we will attempt the

more slabby-looking left line we hope will lead to the left edge of the giant roof and onto the snowfield above. There we believe the true start of our climb will present itself.

After crossing the bergschrund Cooper sets off up the wall. His first swings bounce off rock, but the thicker névé is solid and quickly he is high above me fighting to get protection in a steep left-facing corner. I later learn multiple Black Diamond Peckers protect this section of M6, but cracks are present and inspiration abounds.

Returning a day later, we ascend our rope and I rack up. Mushrooms of snow hang in my way below the roof, but soon I'm riding the last one with solid gear above in the roof. A blank slab works around the edge of the roof. Thoughtful mixed moves on solid granite stretch me out left into a thankfully protectable, yet improbable, micro-corner leading straight up to the snowfield. "Hell, yeah, we're in there!" I shout in celebration as loud as possible while I quickly set up a belay. Could it be so simple? I can't believe we are on the wall! We fix a line and return to camp. Our plan has always been to take it slowly, step by step, and so now we wait patiently for the proper weather window.

May 1st dawns and we awake relaxed. It's obvious today is the day. Packs loaded, we ski the half hour downglacier and run up familiar ground to the fixed lines. Kevin starts up first and proves the large overhanging 'schrund crossing on Jumars will be hard. An hour later and we are both at the high point.

"Watch out!" I yell as another spindrift avalanche deposits snow to the left of Kevin as he traverses right, high on the hanging snowfield over the giant roof below. This traverse is easy, but



Ryan Jennings climbing out of the Hideaway bivy to start Névé's Nightmare pitch at the beginning of Day 3. Photo by Kevin Cooper.

the protection, or lack thereof, is foreboding. At the belay the anticipation is unbearable, but I feel we have luck on our side, techniques in our quiver, full packs of gear and skills to test. We arrive at a cave below Pitch 4 to a constant stream of spindrift and debris falling from above and fear lurks.

The now-dubbed Safe House belay cave provides shelter as we wait out falling debris dislodged from the day's first rays far above. Sounds of falling ice and the hiss of spindrift bring visions of the consequences of being hit should I decide to begin. Fear thumps in my brain as possible scenarios swirl. A calm air finally settles in, though, and I stand to start. Long leashes hold my harness to my seemingly solid picks and I'm comforted. A solid piece presents itself quickly, and then 20 feet higher, another, less solid. Then the inevitable; protection ceases and I waste half an hour fighting to place my final option, a vertical picket. I finally give up and decide the angle must ease just above the next bulge. "Just keep going!" I murmur, but salvation is much further over that bulge than I fathom. Three and a half hours and 700 vertical feet later, I still search for a belay.

Forced to climb 100 feet up and left of the start of the next pitch to finally get gear, I have set us up to have to down-climb to begin up the thickest névé on the vertical next pitch. It looks overhanging at one point, but I think I see possibilities for pro.

"Kevin sure will be scared up there!" I laugh to myself.

"What do you think?" I state as Coop arrives at the belay, hoping for some sign of motivation.

"That went well!" he confirms. "You should continue leading."

I cringe, but agree we had a rhythm for the past few hours and I'm riding on fate now. We brew up while I contemplate and then head out. We are some 1,500 feet up the wall and committed. All doubts of safety and sanity are held at bay. My only hope, an overlap far above and right will take a piece before Kevin is forced to pull the anchor and down-climb to the start of this pitch. If not our ropes will arch free from me to him and we will once again be untethered to this wall.

The wall steepens as I approach the overlap and quickly I see it's too steep below to reach the potential cracks. Tackle's comments on monolithic granite repeat in my ears, "No cracks guys! No cracks up there, I bet." I curse my earlier brashness.

I yell down to Cooper to remove the belay and begin following. I fear him slipping as he descends to the base of the pitch. I hang once again on six-inch-deep and now-vertical névé. My calves scream and I focus on surmounting the most immediate bulge above. Unfortunately, the névé remains steep for as far as I can see, but now it is thinner and less consistent. I want to cry. I do cry and then continue. Left, right, up, back down, left, then right. I dance in the direction the most solid snow takes me. Still no pro and we've been climbing for a long time. Roughly 600 feet out again and I spy a corner above and left. I need salvation! A dangerous, large snow mushroom hangs above this only corner, but I'm done. The threatening mushroom is less frightening than to continue on with no protection, so I belay.

Prayers take up my time at the belay as Kevin climbs to my position and finally takes the rack. Moments later he heads off into impending darkness and I finally am relieved. We're already twenty-something hours into our adventure and yet we've only climbed five pitches. We are well past the point of no return and I fight to hold back fear of the unknown.

Kevin traverses right 20 feet from my belay and up. He calls down for more screws and I'm elated. Then time passes until the rope comes tight. "He has to almost be there," I tell myself. Hours later I begin to worry we won't find a bivy spot. This pitch, 450 feet of WI4, turns to snow over slab halfway up, but eventually ends at the base of the corner in an alcove big enough to dig two body-sized platforms. Upon my reaching the belay, we dig platforms for the night and settle in as the sun begins to rise. We awake in full sun.

The corner above appears lower angle at first with a few steep sections to navigate. It has a much more chimney-like appearance than I had imagined. After breakfast I start up, find a tunnel, avoid the first chockstone, and then skirt up a short snow ramp to what appears to be a "game-on" chimney. It gets extremely tight at one point, but leads through one of the steeper sections. I work my way up, but fear I will not fit through the tight spot. The brittle rock falls apart when trying to place crampons on tiny crystals and I fight the squeeze after removing everything from my person. I barely squeeze through, shredding all my clothing in the process. We deem this pitch "The Shredder." At M6, it is our seventh lead. Kevin follows for the first time on ascenders and I haul the packs on a micro-traction.

More chimney and off-width on worse rock takes Kevin up an

impressive lead that includes one key Big Bro placement. I Jumar, then take on a more moderate stretch of névé packed in the corner, unfortunately ending in another chimney feature capped by hanging snow. Chimneying up again, I find tiny gear placements on the back wall and one high in the back of the chimney. The hanging snow looks desperate, so I search for other options. I find an M5 traverse out left onto the face that leads to thicker névé, similar to that we had climbed the day before. Working my way across the traverse I hook névé and surmount an AI5 bulge and place a decent screw in the first water ice we had seen since the night before on Pitch 6. Kevin follows and we carve out two seats in the steep snow face in which to sit and brew up. We brew up dinner and take short catnaps as the sky turns dark. Comfort is short-lived, however, and soon Kevin starts up the next pitch.

An AI4 pitch leads into the night, stretching the rope to 180 feet before ending at an entrance to a cave. Shouts of joy rain down as Coop excavates an opening and flops in. On the go now for 40-plus hours, we are quick to dig the cave out enough to provide two beds side by side with feet hanging out. We pass out in seconds again as the sky begins to turn light. The Hideaway bivy is comfortable and we don't want to leave, but two hours later we awake due to the heat of the morning sun. Ice from the top of our cave drips and we know we need to get a move on or be forced to wait for cooler temperatures. We fear the minimal snice packed in the corner and warm temperatures of the day ahead, and so I set off on Day 3.

Névé's Nightmare pitch (named after Cooper's daughter, Névé) melts away at my feet. It's AI5R snice packed into the corner. It's beautiful! Numerous sections almost prove to be showstoppers as bulges prove problematic in the soft, thin snice. A day later this pitch would not have been climbable, it would melt out too much in the next day's morning sun. Our timing is impeccable.

Now we are close to the top of the corner. Kevin leads 90 feet of AI4 and quickly sets up a belay. "Looks good up here. Multiple options, it looks like. You're psyched!" Kevin proclaims. I arrive and only see one option, continuing up the corner on a snow ramp left. We hoped to head right to the summit snowfield here, but it's obvious we won't. Easy snow leads up 100 feet and rounds a corner. After the bend the couloir narrows into another chimney feature, but the rock is different here. Blocky, crumbly, non-consolidated stone falls away with every tool placement. Big blocks pull out, solid gear is hard to come by and it only gets steeper. Our training in Redstone, Colorado, proves invaluable here. The choss is similar. Tools swing into mud until they stick. The climbing is tedious and time-consuming. No anchors, no solid stone, no way out! I calm and look high and left. A short 20-foot crux leads to a snowfield, which might hold an anchor in its right wall. Then another short 30-foot stretch of steep rock leads to another snowfield stretching up to a black corner we had viewed from base camp. The black corner we know reaches the ridge. I pull the final 20 feet of M6R and belay in the wall.

"Here's the aider, you're going to have to aid this next 30 feet," I insist as Coop re-racks. Refusing, he starts up with

determination, quickly dispensing the steep pumpy M6 section to my amazement and delight. Unfortunately, finding a solid belay seems much harder. Two hours later the heavens finally provide one small vein of solid granite with one small crack in which Kevin secures a medium Lowe Ball and one small #00 cam to serve as my anchor. I arrive, serve up a mean grimace, grab the rack, and continue on.

The black corner is overhanging, but not too much so. I call down for the daisies and aiders, get some pro at a crumbling bulge, surmount it, and scramble up to the base of the corner. What I find was delightful. The rock again changes to solid stone. A perfect splitter appears in the back that looks easy to aid. Thirty feet of aid followed by mixed climbing to a short snowfield and the ridge. "We're home free; I got this!" I yell down. A "Caaaw, caaaaw!" resounds from below and spirits are high. I aid, then step into another 40 feet of well-protected M6. The last piece of pro, a BD Pecker, seems fitting. On follow, Cooper sends the corner only to fall at the top, pulling into the M6 section. He thinks it would go free at M7.

Sitting at the screw belay just below the ridge with the sun setting, we brew up more water. We drink up, take some celebratory photographs and send Kevin off. "So ... should I just go to the ridge and walk up to the summit?" he asks. I'm a bit more apprehensive and upon reaching the ridge he calls down for the rack. A final headwall blocks our way. He will have to traverse left onto the East Face and then back to the ridge.

As the rope comes tight, I start to follow. Time seems to stand still as we slowly ascend for hours.

"Did you see the northern lights?" he shouts down.

"What?" I reply, annoyed I couldn't hear well.

"Did you see the northern lights? Turn around!"



Kevin Cooper heading back to camp after a reconnaissance mission to the base of Mount Johnson. The Gargoyle is visible at right. Photo by Ryan Jennings.

I turn and catch a most magnificent sight. I find it very fitting as to be granted a view of the northern lights on the summit push. Our dreams are coming true, the stars have aligned, the heavens have shined down, and we are on our way to the summit. I shed a brief tear and continue following the rope to the pyramid summit and Kevin's waiting smile.

Twenty years in the making has come to fruition! We stand atop our dreams after only giving ourselves a five percent chance in hell. Everything leading up to this moment seems destined. I've never felt so connected to fate. A storm is brewing to the west and the wind is cold. We take the mandatory summit photos and I begin down the South Ridge. After 100 feet I turn and snap a few more photos showing my tracks leading back alongside the rope to Kevin's headlamp shining from the highest point. I turn and head down.

Aside from two core shots in the lead line and some seriously scary seracs hanging overhead, our descent is uneventful. Mid-morning finds us back at the base of the wall and Paul Roderick flies overhead as we sit exhausted on our packs. Tilting his wing he salutes our efforts and we're glad he knows we're OK. The gesture is grand to us in our depleted state. We knew he and Tackle were concerned and anxious for our return and we were grateful to know someone was thinking of us.

Conditions on the wall were exactly what we had hoped for, although more protection would have been appreciated. We did come prepared to run it out and possibly simul-climb long stretches on névé, but I don't believe either of us truly understood the length these pitches would extend to. We agreed our 20-plus years of climbing together gave us the trust required. I never once thought about my partner falling.

Upon returning to camp and removing socks and boots, neither Kevin nor I can walk or touch our feet to anything. We crawl

into the tent on our hands and knees and lay in agonizing pain from apparent trench foot. Our tents have melted out during our time on the wall and camp is a disaster. Shawna Cooke and Steve Job of Seward save the day, though, with a care package from Jack Tackle and Fabrizio Zangrilli. A minute earlier I had stated, "I would give anything in the world for a beer right now." The care package contains a couple PBRs, a carton of cookies, some salt-and-pepper chips, and other great items. We feel blessed by the arrival of these angels. We thanked them a hundred times over and later thanked Tackle once back in Talkeetna. He thought it looked like a pretty cool route.

"Stairway to Heaven" AK 6, A1 M6 WI4 AI5+ X, 4,000 feet

Twentymile Transect

March 21-25, 2014

Text and photo by Wayne L. Todd with Carrie Wang



Carrie Wang at the end of the Twentymile Transect shortly before commencing the bushwhack and coming to the cabin.

[Ed. Note: This is the third of a three-part story. See the July and August Scree for the first and second parts, respectively.]

The Exodus:

Almost 4,000 feet of vertical “relief” awaits us on southerly slopes. We ditch the original plan of descending the lesser-angled south ridge, as directly below us (southwest) doesn’t look bad and we don’t want to traverse. Initially it’s a fun ski of large turns on lower-angle snice with the sled swinging wide. The angle increases, as does the sled pull, especially on turns, and the sled begins flipping. Fuel is transferred to a pack. As the angle increases even more (linear or exponential relationship between angle and pull?), I need to edge hard to hold and now only make Z turns, and occasionally unwind the very twisted tow rope. A helmet and axe would be more comforting than just the Whippet I’m holding, as a slip here would be quite “unpleasant.” At one point I ski directly to a 10-foot cornice wall and then have to side-slip down. Continuing down on the steep hardpack burns the legs and the mental energy.

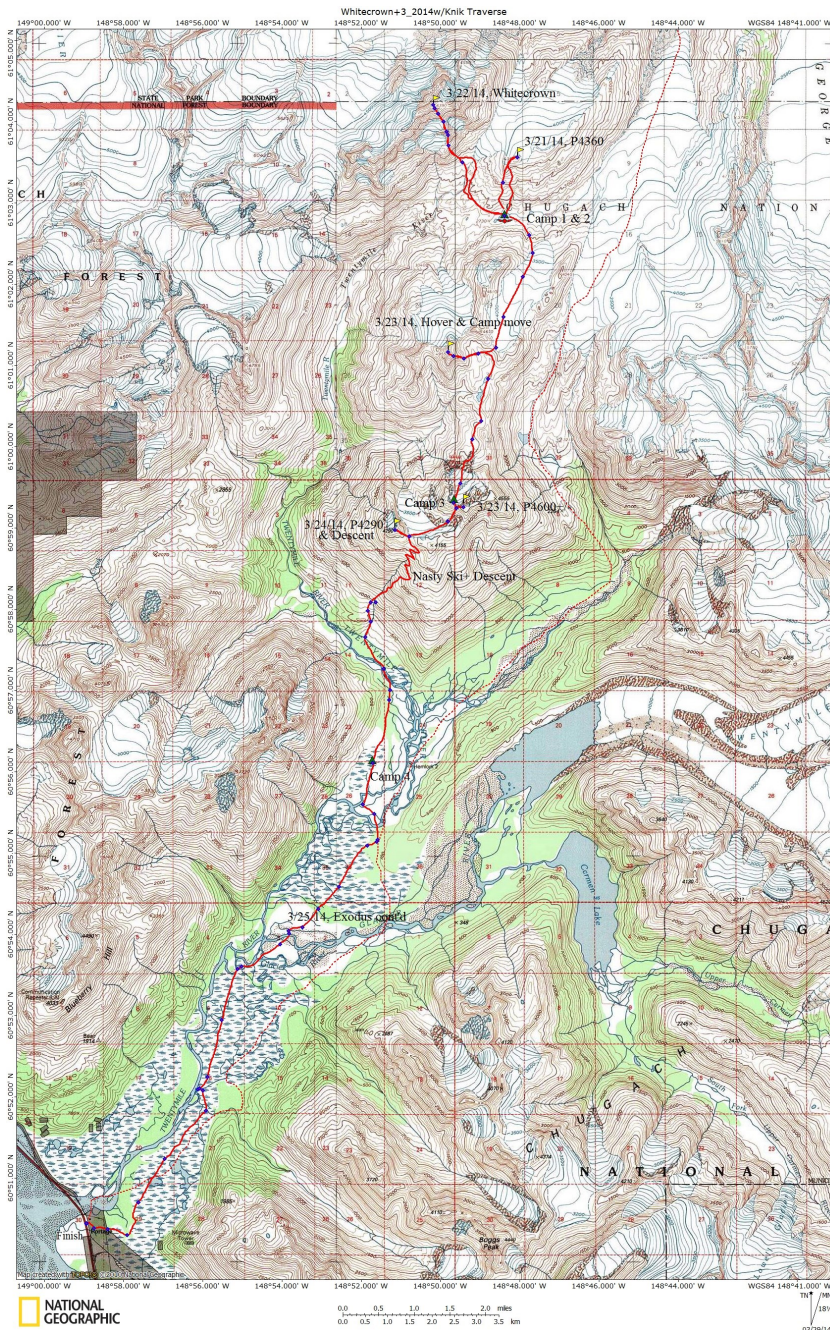
Eventually we’re on chunky avalanche debris. Enough! So we transition to crotch-deep post-holing with Carrie leading and me still wrangling the sled. We want off the slope before it heats up any more – and it is already hot. We get cliffed out at brush line, so then get to traverse in isothermic snow, with skis still on

packs, snagging brush. Another short plunge-step slope and we segue to low-angle firm snow. Ahhhhh. (Stick with the original plan unless ground-truthing shows significant reason to alter said plan.)

We continue boot hiking through modest brush, then traverse alongside a real stream glistening in the sun. Birds are heard. A fly buzzed by. We’ve entered spring! On the flats and out of harm’s (avalanche) way, we take a long break and I gratefully pass off the sled.

Winding through the willow/alder mix with skis over firm snow, we travel about 1 mile per hour. At a stream we make numerous trips over a narrow snow-covered log. Amazingly, no one falls in. The few other streams encountered, getting larger, are more intelligently crossed using the Wiggy’s Waders. Open snow patches occur more frequently, more appreciated by Carrie, the sled puller. We look at digital pictures taken from on high a couple times to assist our route selection. Animal tracks of moose, beaver, and hare get more frequent, especially along waterways, with an occasional coyote/wolf or wolverine/bear track.

Once in the broad open valley, we make camp at 7 p.m. With minimal ground snow, we carefully stomp out a tent platform. I have the “wise” idea to Ziploc-wash my socks and underwear.



brush and prolific tufts of shrubbery. We have a long, good stint of hard, smooth snow with little brush punctuated by sun glistening off frosted plants and small ice streams. Thoughts of an easy and early exit are verbalized. Occasionally we follow streambeds to avoid brush, but they typically run perpendicular to our route and sometimes the ice doesn't hold our weight. Dwarf brush areas slow us slightly. A rear binding break is repaired, though no longer needed.

We make the Glacier River at 10:30 a.m. and cross knee-deep water. Judging by the adjacent snowline, the water gets much deeper later in the day. Though now proficient at crossing with the waders, it still requires a second trip to bring the sled across. We're excited at snowmachine tracks, thinking we have a smooth route out. Following the tracks on the creek ice, we encounter more and more open sections, requiring the standard de-skiing and sled ferrying. Bailing into heavy brush forces us briefly back on cracking and collapsing ice. When no longer practical, we bail off again and skin across snowless ground. Actually Carrie is skinless having the broad-scaled skis, which are the preferred set-up on the flats. Traveling gets quite good again, though now on pure ice, or thin snice only inches thick, with marsh plants fingering through. The Twentymile River below the mouth of the Glacier River is now quite big, so we angle left and eventually get stuck between the river and a slough, just behind two moose, which we disturbingly lose track of. Back to Wiggy's and an ice, silt, and water crossing.

Approaching civilization, we encounter bird blinds and bicycle tracks, but rather than arc wide left (southeast, a known route), we impatiently try straight ahead. We continually bump along brush line until a clear cleft and think we're minutes from the truck. The cleft quickly segues to a path, then road, then structure. Odd, I've never seen this and strikes of Hansel and Gretel. We skirt by on the road confident of a finish just seconds away and WHAT, a

After wringing, I assume they'll dry overnight so I sleeve them over branches and ski tips. Alpenglow remains on peaks to the east long after we're in shade (blocked by Kinnikinnick Mountain).

Unsure of our remaining exodus effort of 9 miles and wanting to be across the Glacier River before afternoon warming (and melting), we're up at 5:30 a.m. Some of my time is spent extricating a frozen sock from a shaped ski. Not wanting to cut the sock off, I wear the ski tip under my warm layers until the sock thaws enough to pull it off. Good thing for a second pair of socks.

With sun on the horizon and the top of Kinnikinnick, we Wiggy across the Twentymile River. Initial ski traveling is mostly open, but we enter a brush zone for a frustrating and slow bit. Unlike our exodus of 2012 with too much powder (over a 10-foot base), we are now seeking snow to avoid, or at least minimize, the

30-foot-deep mucky chasm blocks our exodus. The chasm has had various structures across, now all in states of collapse at the bottom. Wiggy's on, carefully step and slide down the steep muck, cross water partly on submerged ladder, ascend frozen muck on opposite bank, repeat with next load, avoiding the quicksandy feeling area, and constantly aware that this will all be underwater in the next six hours. Wow, O.K., we're now more than ready for the nearby transport. We hear highway traffic nearby as we follow this road that seems to go and go with mini-brush blockades. It's another beautiful day, but we've had enough adventure. Abruptly the road opens up at the north end of the massive train depot parking lot and there sits the truck 50 yards away, concluding a varied eight-hour day and an amazing five-day traverse.

The weather for the trip was: Day 1: warm and super sunny; Day 2: warm and super sunny; Day 3: warm and

MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska (MCA) was formed in 1958 to promote the enjoyment of hiking and climbing in Alaska and the exploration of its mountains. We welcome all who wish to become members.

Participate and Learn: The MCA conducts scheduled hikes and climbs led by experienced club members, technical mountaineering and climbing courses, and other instruction throughout the year. The club maintains seven mountain huts in the nearby Chugach and Talkeetna mountains. The MCA's Vin Hoeman Library contains hundreds of books, numerous periodicals, bound volumes of the **SCREE**, and a 'Peak File' with information on local climbs. The club has climbing gear for trips and training, including ice axes, helmets, crampons, snowshoes, and avalanche beacons.

Stay Informed: The MCA publishes a monthly newsletter, **SCREE**, and emails it to all members. The **SCREE** contains announcements of upcoming events, the hiking and climbing trip schedule, and trip reports written by club members.

Monthly meetings: The third Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the BP Energy Center at 1014 Energy Court (in Midtown Anchorage just south of the main BP building). Special events or changes to the meeting will be noted in the **SCREE** and on our website at: www.mtnclubak.org.

- **Complete both pages of this form. Write neatly!** To participate in club-sponsored trips, **EVERY MEMBER** must read and complete the Release of Liability Agreement on the back of this application.
- Please make checks payable to **Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc.**
- Mailed **SCREE** subscriptions are \$15 additional per year & are non-refundable. (1 **SCREE**/ family).
- Annual membership is through the 31st of December.
- Memberships paid after November 1st are good through December 31 of the following year.
- If applying by mail, please include a self-addressed, **stamped** envelope for your membership card.
OR you may pick it up at the next monthly meeting.
Our address is: **PO BOX 243561, Anchorage, AK 99524-3561**
- **Note: Mailed applications may take up to 6 weeks to process.** Thank you for your patience.
- **To join right now, sign up online at www.mtnclubak.org**

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|--|--------------------------|--|--|
| New | | Date | |
| Renewal | | Name | |
| 1 YR. Individual \$15 | | Family Members | |
| 1 YR. Family \$20 | | | |
| 2 YR. Individual \$30 | | | |
| 2 YR. Family \$40 | | | |
| How do you want your SCREE delivered? (check one or both) | | | |
| Electronic (free) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Email delivery | |
| Paper (add \$15/YR.) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Postal Service (not available outside the United States) | |
| Street or PO Box | | | |
| City/State/Zip | | | |
| Telephone | | | |
| Email Address | | | |

_____ I am interested in joining a committee (Circle which ones: Programs, Hiking & Climbing, Huts, Geographic Names, Peak Registers, Parks Advisory, Equipment, Awards, Membership, Training, or ad hoc committees).

_____ I am interested in leading a trip.

Do not write below this line: _____

Pd: \$15 \$20 \$30 \$40 \$15 for paper **SCREE** \$30 for 2 years of paper **SCREE**
 on Date: ___/___/___, Cash or Check Number: _____

Membership Card Issued for Yr: _____
 Address Added to Mailing List

Revised 1/10/11

SIGN AND INITIAL THIS RELEASE OF LIABILITY— READ IT CAREFULLY

I _____ (print name) am aware that mountaineering and wilderness activities (including hiking; backpacking; rock, snow, and ice climbing; mountaineering; skiing; ski mountaineering; rafting and packrafting, kayaking, and use of remote backcountry huts) are hazardous activities. I wish to participate and/or receive instruction in these activities with the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc. ("MCA"). I recognize these activities involve numerous risks, which include, by way of example only, falling while hiking, climbing, skiing or crossing rivers or glaciers; falling into a crevasse or over a cliff; drowning; failure of a belay; being struck by climbing equipment or falling rock, ice or snow; avalanches; lightning; fire; hypothermia; frostbite; defective or malfunctioning equipment; and attack by insects or animals. I further recognize that the remoteness of the activities may preclude prompt medical care or rescue. I also recognize that risk of **injury or death** may be caused or enhanced by **mistakes, negligence or reckless conduct** on the part of either my fellow participants; MCA officers, directors, instructors, or trip leaders; and the State of Alaska and its employees regarding MCA backcountry huts. I nevertheless agree to accept all risks of **injury, death, or property damage** that may occur in connection with any MCA activity, including use of MCA furnished equipment and MCA backcountry huts. **(As used in this agreement, MCA includes its officers, directors, instructors and trip leaders.)**

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

GIVING UP MY LEGAL RIGHTS I agree to give up for myself and for my heirs all legal rights I may have against the MCA; my fellow participants in MCA activities (except to the extent that insurance coverage is provided by automobile insurance policies) and the State of Alaska and its employees regarding MCA backcountry huts. **I give up these legal rights regardless of whether the injury, death, or property damage results from mistakes, negligence or reckless conduct of others.** I understand this agreement shall remain in effect until I provide a signed, dated, written notice of its revocation to the MCA.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

MY PROMISE NOT TO SUE I will not sue or otherwise make a claim against the MCA; my fellow participants in MCA activities (except as noted above for automobile accidents); and the State of Alaska and its employees regarding use of MCA backcountry huts, for **injury, death, or property damage** which occurs in the course of my participation or instruction in mountaineering and wilderness activities. Any lawsuit relating to MCA activities or this release shall only be filed in Anchorage, Alaska. The provisions of this release are severable and if any part is found unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall remain in effect.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

MY RELEASE OF LIABILITY I agree to release and discharge the MCA; my fellow participants in MCA activities; and the State of Alaska and its employees regarding use of MCA backcountry huts, from all actions, claims, or demands, both for myself and for my heirs, dependents, and/or personal representative, for **injury, death, or property damage** occurring in the course of my participation or instruction in mountaineering and wilderness activities.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

MY PROMISE TO INDEMNIFY I will pay all expenses, including attorney fees and court costs, that the MCA; my fellow participants in MCA activities; and the State of Alaska and its employees may incur as a consequence of any legal action arising out of **injury, death, or property damage** suffered by me in connection with any MCA activity or the use of any MCA backcountry hut.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

MY CONSENT TO MEDICAL TREATMENT I consent to any hospital or medical care that may be necessary as a result of my participation in MCA activities. I understand and agree that I am solely responsible for all charges for such medical treatment, including evacuation and/or rescue costs.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THIS AGREEMENT, UNDERSTAND ITS CONTENT, AND RECOGNIZE IT IS A BINDING LEGAL AGREEMENT

Dated: _____ Signature: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if under 18): _____

Revised 2/19/09

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

| | | | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| President | Greg Encelewski | 360-0274 | Board member (term expires in 2014) | Andy Mamrol | 717-6893 |
| Vice-President | Carlene Van Tol | 748-5270 | Board member (term expires in 2014) | Elizabeth Bennett | 830-9656 |
| Secretary | Matt Hickey | 651-270-4492 | Board member (term expires in 2015) | Rachad Rayess | 617-309-6566 |
| Treasurer | Stacy Pritts | 538-7546 | Board member (term expires in 2015) | Joshua Clark | 887-1888 |
| Past President | Jayne Mack | 382-0212 | | | |

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

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address below. If you want a membership card, please fill out a club waiver and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter or have questions about your membership, contact the Club Membership Committee at membership@mtclubak.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. Articles should be submitted by the 24th 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@mtclubak.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: Stacy Pritts - membership@mtclubak.org

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vicky Lytle - hcc@mtclubak.org

Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008 or huts@mtclubak.org

Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127 or stugrenier@gmail.com

Scree Editor: MCAScree@gmail.com Steve Gruhn (344-1219) assisted by Elizabeth Ellis (elizabeth.anne.russo@gmail.com)

Web: www.mtclubak.org

Find MCAK listserv at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/MCAK/info>.

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