



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA
OCTOBER 1976

BOX 2037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

VOLUME XIX, No. 10

OCTOBER MEETING

Wednesday, October 20, 1976, 8 PM, Pioneer Schoolhouse, Third and Eagle, Anchorage, Alaska. The elections will be followed by a double-feature program.

Mini Show. Barney Griffith will narrate a twenty-minute film of the kayaking of Devil's Canyon. An Anchorage boater, he joined the Dr. Blackadar--ABC-TV group that paddled the canyon in early August. The TV production is scheduled for next spring on ABC's American Sportsman. Potential hikes in the area will also be discussed.

Maxi Show. A slide program of the MCA-sponsored Brooks Range Hike will be presented.

HIKING SCHEDULE

- October 16 and/or 17 Hike, weather permitting, to Palmer Creek Area near Hope. Over-nighters may wish to camp in Coeur d'Alene campground. Meet at 7 AM at Fred Meyer parking lot. For additional information call 279-2901.
- October 23-24 Open. Call the Hiking Chairman at 279-2901.
- November 14 Sunday Prospect Heights to Middle Fork. Moderate ski tour to point overlooking Anchorage. Meet at 9 AM at the Fred Meyer parking lot.
- November 20 Saturday Hatcher Pass/Snowbird Mine Ski Tour. For all abilities from beginning to advanced. Beautiful Talkeetna Mountain country an hour from Anchorage. Meet at 8 AM at Fred Meyer.
- November 26-28 Thanksgiving weekend Overnight to be announced. See November SCREE for details.

MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING, MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

Wednesday, September 15, 1976, Pioneer Schoolhouse, Third and Eagle, Anchorage, Ak.

The meeting was called to order shortly after 8 PM by President BILL STIVERS. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved. There was no climbing or treasurer's report. DONA AGOSTI announced that there would be a climb of Peak 5,450 on Sunday the 19th of September and a hike up McHugh Peak the following weekend. TERRY BECKER gave details concerning the Ice Climbing School. Following the break for refreshments, DICK TERO presented a very interesting movie of a kayak trip down the Alsek River, and of the hike out. The meeting was adjourned.

David Newcombe, Secretary

PRESIDENT'S PEN

As we approach the October election of Club officers, we have one nominee for each office. The floor will be open to any additional nominations during the October meeting. The election procedure will be expedited as conditions permit. The following members have accepted nomination for the office indicated:

President: TOM MEACHAM
 Vice-President: JOHN PINAMONT
 Secretary: DAVID NEWCOMBE
 Treasurer: JAN LEMKE
 Board Member: BILL QUIRK
 Board Member: TERRY REES
 Board Member: PAUL DENKEWALTER (for Pinamont's uncompleted term)

I thank all officers, committee chairmen, and instructors for their invaluable support of Club operations during the past year.

ICE SCHOOL

On September 26, which turned out to be a beautiful day, 23 people showed up at the Matanuska Glacier for the technical ice school. It was gratifying to see more female students, contradicting the "he-man" image of ice climbing. All in all it was a very satisfactory day, with everyone having a good time in the process of learning a new skill. A special thanks goes to DOUG BILLMAN, BILL BRICKLEY, PAUL DENKEWALTER, JOHN DILLMAN, BRUCE HILLIARD, BARRY KIRSCHER, NICK PARKER, MIKE RICHARDSON, and GIL TODD for their instruction and assistance.

Terry Becker

BASHFUL - 8005'
 August 20-22, 1976
 by Garnet Roehm

On one of those classic early morning starts at 4:30 in the afternoon, GUNNAR NASTJUN, JACK DUGGAN, LINDA HESTINGS, and I were at the trailhead by the East Fork of the Eklutna River. A pleasant 1.5 mile walk along the River brought us to a turnoff that leads up to two waterfalls where the trail ends. We skirted to the left of the waterfall on some rock and immediately bushwhacked our way to the right. This brought us to a talus runoff which lead through the alders. A traverse across more scree and the terminal moraine of the dirty glacier that lies between Bold and Bashful put us on a steep grassy North Slope of the West ridge. We topped the ridge at 3500' and camped a little lower. Saturday morning we pushed on up the ridge which proved to be fairly easy going with two or three belays required above 7000'. Reaching the summit at 5 PM on what had to be the clearest day I've ever spent in the Chugach mountains. We could see every one of the range's major peaks. Just after we reached the summit I thought I felt a shake and asked the others if they had. LINDA's reply was "I don't know about you, but I've been shaking all the way up this ridge." (5.3, epicenter north of Illiamna.) This was the eighth recorded ascent. The first was another MAA team in 1959 which included ROD WILSON.

ALYESKA MOUNTAIN RIDGE - 1976

Seward D-6

August 21, 1976

Charles A. Kibler

I decided nice sunshiny days like this are best spent hiking along ridge tops for maximum views, so today I picked this ridge--the one running between Alyeska ski slope and Turnagain Arm. I started up the large avalanche chute just before Kern Creek, which avoids all trees and brush at this end. As usual with ridge hikes on clear days, panoramic views (in this case of Turnagain Arm) start immediately, and last to the end of the hike. After gaining the ridge top, I followed it NW to the highest point, Peak 4435' (Max's Mountain?). This route is an easy stroll that can be done by anyone. No cairn on top, so I built one with no register. Since returning by a different route is always more interesting than retracing steps, I continued north along the ridge over VABM Win 3939' to the Roundhouse. This ridge has a few jagged steep sections that almost require rope, especially if wet, windy, or snowy. Those with a fear of rugged ridges should descend NW to the Winner Creek Trail for their alternate return route.

HATCHER PASS TO HOUSTON

Peaks 4800', 4900', Government Peak - 4781'

Anchorage C-7, C-8, D-7, D-8

July 31 - August 2, 1976

Charles A. Kibler

Friday evening we drove to Hatcher Pass, and under clear skies climbed 1000' to VABM Hatch 4811' just south of the pass (no register) where views of Mt. McKinley and the Alaska Range, the Chugach Mountains, and the jagged granite core of the Talkeetna Mountains to the NE--which would be seen constantly until noon Sunday. We then continued 1 1/2 miles south along the easy ridge to the ridgeline overlooking Palmer, where we camped on the ridge top with a view of Palmer, Anchorage, Knik River Matanuska River, and the Talkeetnas from our tent. It turned out that there are plenty of places all along this ridge for a tent.

Saturday morning we took a short sidetrip SE 1 1/2 miles to Government Peak, 4781', signed the register, and enjoyed the scenery while leaving our tent up for late-comers to find us. We then ate lunch back at our camp on Peak 4800' amid the scenery signed the register, and moved on 6 miles west along the easy ridgeline overlooking Palmer, over the highest peak in the area, 4900'--signed previously only by VIN and GRACE HOEMAN, to VABM Grubstake, 4516'. Needless to say, we were accompanied by all the previously described panorama all the way. It must have been this and the clear cloudless skies and 70-80 degree sunshine we had all weekend (the entire hike was made in shorts) that resulted in the unusual turnout for this trip: CHUCK HELLER. Since CHUCK didn't have a car, he volunteered to camp at Grubstake and take a shortcut out the next day in order to drive my bug from Hatcher Pass to Houston. Verdict: He says the road going up Grubstake Gulch is driveable, so leaving that way would make a nice one-day ridge hike. Meanwhile, I hiked 6 miles further west along increasingly flat ridge, carpeted by grass and various flowers, and camped at VABM Con. 3137'. West of Grubstake, Mt. McKinley is seen in its full height, and an interesting geologic pattern of about 100 lakes is seen to the SW in the Big Lake area.

Sunday morning I headed NW toward Mt. McKinley down the last two miles of open ridge picking blueberries along the way. I then took a bearing west over one mile of forest toward a swamp in front of a lake which the sled trail crosses. The forest turned out to have a grass or mossy floor for easy walking, and abuts the tundra-covered ridge with no brush transition. I then followed this trail 14 miles SW to Houston. (Another shortcut out would have been to head for the Willey Creek bridge

Hatcher Pass to Houston continued.

The trail is similar to the upper part of the Chickaloon-Knik-Nelchina trail, but with three feet of grass--often hiding the mud--due to no summer use. The swamps the trail crosses are not churned up, and are easy to cross. The trail has been flagged by snowmobiles in the winter, but many are down and the location is vague in a few spots. Game trails follow much of the trail.

Hatcher Pass to Houston in which the ridge is gained via Grubstake Creek should make a much more scenic winter ski tour than following the valley to Willow. Between Hatch and Cone, water was obtained from the remnants of snow cornices.

BENIGN PEAK, 7250'

August 21, 1976

by S. L. Crawford

The climb scheduled for the weekend had been postponed, but with good weather forecast I got out my maps and drove up to Eklutna Lake Saturday morning for a look around. I decided that if I could thrash my way up the wall overlooking the Army parking lot, through the alder and around the waterfalls and attain the higher valley above indicated on the map (Anchorage B-6), I might have a go at Benign Peak.

The alder looked worse from below than it proved, though it took a good hour or more of struggle, aided by patches of plump watermelon berries under the alder, before I got up to where the slope flattened into the higher meadow. The weather was splendid--warm, cloudless, and still. I followed the meadow up, continuing on the rock tailings indicated on the map, until the vale swung gently enough to the left to reveal the upper ice field and menacing headwall immediately below the peak. To gain the north ridge by climbing the headwall did not seem feasible; but to my left was a gully which appeared to lead directly up to the NE ridge, to the 5400' finger contour below peak 6100'. The gully was mostly mud, left behind by recently melted snow, which meant one foot of slip for every two gained. From there a moderate scramble up the rock ridge to the 6100' highpoint, where at last the formidable tower capping Benign Peak loomed straight ahead.

It was now almost 3 PM. Spread out before me to the south were Bellicose Peak and the Eklutna Glacier, further to the left the Mitre, Bashful, and Bold. Below me I saw an alternate route back, scree slopes almost all the way to the stream in the broad basin between Bellicose and Benign, which dropped down a gap in the wall onto the glacier; then a couple of miles further to the car.

Meanwhile, the drop down the present gap between point 6100' and the top of Benign looked like much more than the 200 feet the contour lines indicated, with 1300 or more feet up from there still to go. I ate a bit of lunch while enjoying the view and resigned myself to merely drop into the gap and descend on down from there. But once into the gap, I thought I should continue just a ways to see what difficulties there might be. So remaining mostly to the left of the ridge, once or twice having to drop down a bit and go further left, I was pleased to reach the summit at 5:25 PM.

The registry in a small glass jar under the top rock of the summit cairn indicated ascents by Vin Hoeman and Art Davidson on August 5, 1962, and by John Samulson on July 22, 1967. By now some clouds had come up to hide the top of Bold, and mist swirled over Bellicose, although views up the Eklutna Glacier remained clear. In descent I followed a narrow scree gully between steep walls, having to pick my way down slowly over frequent ten foot drops until the gully broadened out below the gap. Then it was a quick descent over to the stream from Bellicose. The stream branched and fell in two spectacular waterfalls over the upper part of the valley.

Benign Peak continued.

Once onto the glacier, the main hindrance was the fading light at 9 PM. I had to follow the stream all the way down to the auto bridge and return up the road in the starlight. Having left my car at 10:20 AM, the round trip took just twelve hours.

FRIDAY CREEK
August 10-21, 1976
by Mark P. Fouts

Clear blue skies, green mountains, and a cool breeze lured CHARLIE HAMMOND and MARK FOUTS deep into the North Side of the Knik Basin on August 10, 1976. Soon, however, our burdensome loads (70-plus pounds) were squeezing the sweat from our bodies. Carelessly, we chose the wrong road fork which subsequently cost us two days of hard traveling. The first day drug on as the brush thickened, mosquitoes jabbed about for blood, and the endless moose trails led us further into the unexpected two day safari of jungle travel. The first crossing of a small, lazy river was more than the average "see-saw" across stepping stones. I slowly felt my way across the river until my bare feet left the muddy river bottom and to my amusement I found myself swimming! After reaching the opposite shore and climbing the bank I began to relay loads in plastic bags until the chore was completed.

After two days of bushwhacking, game trails, creek crossings and unexpected ATV trails, CHARLIE and I wormed through the last patches of alders late Thursday evening. A persistent overcast finally blew away, leaving only a brisk wind to maintain the coolness of an Alaskan evening. The next morning we began the trek up to gain the ridge. Several lambs and ewes observed us from the ridge line, disappeared, but we spotted the same herd across a small valley upon cresting the next ridge line. The first knoll (5048') had a 1950 survey marker. CHARLIE and I mounted a higher point, overlooking the Knik Glacier, Mt. Gannet, Goode, and many other fantastic creations of nature! Lunch, a small bag of gorp, and the climb continued. The loads haunted our mental concentration to endure the fatigue, tense muscles; yet another high point was reached. The view--my eyes could not seem to be content with all to be seen! To our relief a summit finger extended from the main ridge to a high point of 5380'. Without a pack, just an ice ax, register and pen we trucked on over to Castle Rocks (unofficially). This name aptly describes the four pillars that cap the rocky peak. We sighted our high base camp from the main ridge and hiked over to a soft high point to descend on yet another finger to the base camp. The sheep herd, once again, ran in fear back to the slopes of Castle Rocks. Supper was freeze-dried meat and vegetables and hot chocolate. The following day, after heavy loads for four days, the load would be whatever could be stuffed into a small day pack! Saturday morning the wind was not alone--clouds began to boil over the ridge. Yet blue sky was visible in spots, so CHARLIE and I scrambled up to the main ridge, crossed one pinnacle (5345'), traversed the second (5610') and climbed Mt. Vah (unofficially) 5705'. The rapid descent across a snow field led us into the main valley below our high camp. Before we rounded the corner to climb back to the base camp ridge we were surprised by two hunters on horses. Earlier we had noticed their tent in the valley and had hoped to meet the owners and ask about a faster route out of the Knik Valley. We had a nice chat and learned of a well-worn moose trail up Friday Creek. We returned to camp and I recorded the day's events.

The next day was spent in the tent due to unfavorable weather. We did, however, move base camp to a lower elevation based on our new knowledge of the route out via Friday Creek. Monday was also spent in the tent. Tuesday, August 17, the weather cleared a bit and we began to hike up Friday Creek. Once again we were faced with the process of removing our pants, boots, and socks to cross the glacier-fed creek. The rocks even felt warm after crossing the wearing little creek! Three hours and 45

Friday Creek continued.

officially), elevation 7060', was the third mountain without a trace of mankind. I built a cairn and placed a register inside the stack of rocks. The descent was hairy in spots, sighted several half-curl Dall Sheep rams, then "booked" on down the mountain.

Bad weather forced us to spend another day in the tent, and after one more day hike, the trek out began. We traversed along the left side of Friday Creek following a moose trail until we reached the rock bars of Friday Creek. Soon the thick brush funneled CHARLIE and me into wading Friday Creek out to the Knik River. Finding the ATV trail was a relief. We walked until 7:30 PM, camped, and spent the last night on the Knik flats. I burned my rotten two-year-old wool climbing pants right there on the flats! Walked out in my shorts, concluding another chapter in the ol' Journal

PEAK 5450
September 19, 1976
by Tony Bockstahler

On Sunday morning, September 19, the following drove to Eklutna Lake: DICK HAYEK, GI YDANEZ, BRIGITTE RESSEL, DONA AGOSTI, and TONY DOCKSTAHLER. We parked at the picnic area at the north end of the lake, just beyond the gate which designates the limit of winter maintenance on the road. We then followed the stream through the campground until we saw the trailhead sign across the stream, which is easily crossed.

We followed the trail described in "55 Ways to the Wilderness" for East Twin Pass, taking the left fork at about 100 yards beyond the trailhead. However, we followed the trail only about a mile to the fourth switchback, where a trail is visible going straight up the ridge to Peak 5450 across the valley from the Twins. The trail goes steeply up the tundra ridge for about 1000 feet of elevation. Then the pitch eases to pleasant ridge walking. We encountered snow at about 4000 feet and continued on to about 4800 feet, where we turned around due mainly to a brisk, cold wind; also, the ridge ahead was rocky and snow-covered. On a warm sunny day I'm sure we would have gone on. We came down easily, though slowly, due to many stops for blueberries, which were profuse along the ridge.

ANOTHER USELESS CLIMBING STORY

It must have been one of them new fangled wickless candles, but that low-life climbing shop had forgotten to include instructions on how to light the thing. So there they were, deep in the darkening wild of Alaska with a non-functioning candle. Now being great, though quite disreputable, mountain climbers, the two scraggly folks in that tent below a hill called Icefall, solved yet another crisis by finally figuring out where that other candle, the one with the wick, had gotten to.

Not too sure what those fellows were up to. They'd dragged a long and crooked bunch of steps up the College Glacier that second day of October. Wrapped those footmarks all about the tent, then hauled them off toward that ol' Icefall hill. Now, this hill has a rather hasty south side, one which leaves the glacier in a bit of a hurry to get to the top. Had to do a lot of kicking to get those hoof prints to stick to that hillside, and even then a whole packet of those steps got stuck on by only a little piece of the front. They even poked a picket in one to keep it from falling off. So, anyway, they kept pummeling these foot holes into that hillside, until they reached the top of the thing. The fellows looked around, hollered and generally made fools of themselves for a bit, then started down.

Another Useless Climbing Story continued.

But they left all those unsightly holes, the whole bunch! This rather upset that ol' yeti, so that night he hauled in a bunch of the local clouds. The gathering wasn't quite finished when those ill-bred folk got up and left, but shortly thereafter the yeti was shaking snow out over everything, mumbling in self-righteous indignation about those odiferous tourists.

El Rojohombre
