



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 102037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

OCTOBER 1991

Volume 34, Issue 10

OCTOBER MEETING  
(MCA ANNUAL MEETING)

October 23 7:30 pm Wednesday, Pioneer Schoolhouse, basement level, 3rd and Eagle Sts., downtown Anchorage.

NOTE: In case you didn't notice, October 23rd is not the third Wednesday of the month! The schoolhouse will be used for an exhibit on the 16th.

We will have the business meeting, followed by elections and the annual Gear Swap. Bring in your extras and unwanted gear to sell. Climbing, backpacking and skiing equipment and clothing. Bring your checkbook for good deals.

Jim Saylor has agreed to give a short slide show of his trip to Aconcagua last winter.

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

- Oct. 20 GEOLOGY FIELD TRIP  
Do a road trip along Turnagain Arm with the author of Alaska Roadside Geology.  
Instructor: Dan O'Haire 561-1141
- 26-27 CROW PASS  
Ski nearby glaciers, do a climb. Test all the club's beacons and do beacon search practice. Class C. Bring winter gear and headlamps!  
Leader: Willy Hersman 338-5132

The Hiking and Climbing Committee is always looking for leaders. If you have an idea for a trip, whether an afternoon or several weeks, give Rex Pickett a call at 272-2851. H and C Committee: Rex Pickett, Chairperson, B. Wakeland, T. Choate, A. Shayer, N. O'Donnell, P. Kirk, C. Metzler, W. Hersman, K. Zafren, D. O'Haire, M. Bassett, K. Cafmeyer.

TRIP REPORTS

McKinley Pinnacles

Mindy Baum

Allan Shayer, Celia Rozen, Tom Woodward, Toly Zyatitsky, Rob Schwebel and I left Anchorage Friday evening of Labor Day weekend. We sought a campsite on the way up, choosing a wayside turnoff near a sanitary landfill.

We woke up early Saturday morning to the sounds and smells of Rob making espresso and headed up the highway, enjoying the sunny and cloudless day. We parked at the turnoff at mile 171 and started up the ATV trail to McKinley Pinnacles. We were pleasantly surprised to discover a well-maintained trail marred only by a few muddy patches which led us above brushline and directly to the valley. On the way in we enjoyed great views of Denali, fall foliage, and a few blueberry patches. We hiked up to the end of the valley and descended to some lakes where we made our camp. That night it was overcast with mild winds.

On Sunday, which was still sunny, Rob, Tom, Toly and I climbed Peak 5026. It was a walkup, involving a rock scramble and a ridge walk. We had a leisurely lunch on top where the wind was slight and the view clear. We descended a different ridge.

Sunday evening Rob, Tom, Toly and I walked around the lakes to view the valley and stream that feeds into Hurricane Gulch while Allan and Celia climbed Camel ridge. That night it was very clear and there was a spectacular Northern Lights display.

Monday morning, also sunny, Tom, Rob, Toly and I climbed Camel ridge. The group left early in the afternoon to hike back to the cars. All in all it was a classic trip. The weather was perfect, the views of Denali and the Alaska Range were great, the fall colors were vivid, the Northern Lights appeared, the berries were tasty, and most important of all, the espresso was fresh.

### Ptarmigan Peak, Western Chugach, Alaska

Charles Sassara

In mid-February Tom Walters and I climbed the north buttress of Ptarmigan Peak. Popular with Anchorage climbers and hikers, Ptarmigan offers easy access and numerous year-round climbing and scrambling routes. While most of the popular routes are third-class scrambles or snow climbs, there are several moderate alpine rock and mixed routes on the mountain's northern aspect.

Originally, Tom and I intended to climb a long mixed route on the northwest face that follows a weakness to the right (north) of the main north gully. First climbed in 1983 by two locals, this difficult route has yet to be repeated. In the winter of 1985, John Bauman and I ascended this face to two-thirds height, but could not connect the thin ice smears to the upper third-class blocks and snow gullies. Traversing right, we passed around the buttress Tom and I later climbed and then ascended a series of ramps and gullies to the top.

This February, Tom and I planned to traverse back to that previous high point and finish the two pitches of hooking up the NW face. However, as with the 85 attempt, the ice proved too insubstantial, so we turned our attention to the north buttress.

Though relatively short, the north buttress is a steep and prominent feature. Made up of large blocks, some up to 100 feet in length, the climbing was dominated by stemming up corners and mantling over blocks. The first pitch, which fell to me, was a tricky right-facing corner at the top of a short but steep snow cone at the apex of the buttress. This pitch was a bit short, but the belay stance was too sound to pass up.

The second and most difficult pitch started with strenuous stemming and antling maneuvers up a short wall to a left-facing corner. The corner was an absolute joy to climb, due to a convenient hand crack that graces the right-hand wall. Tom finished the lead with a 20-foot traverse to the left, to set up the belay on the buttress proper.

After several abortive efforts to ascend the rounded blocks on the corner, I traversed back to the broken corner from which Tom had exited. Continuing up the corner to a short wall, I turned a block on the right and finished the wandering pitch atop a snowy boulder. Tom led the next pitch, up a tricky ascending traverse leading back to the buttress. After a couple of moves he emerged onto the third-class snow gullies which led to the summit.

This is the sixth 5th-class route I have done on Ptarmigan in the winter, and it is one of the best. The route is safe, yet challenging, and can be accessed from either Glen Alps or Rabbit Creek. Done in winter with double ropes and ice gear, we rated it Grade III, 5.8. We call it 'Corner Stone.'

### Siri's Peak, Wrangell-St. Elias Mountains

Charles Sassara

On April 23, my wife, Siri and I, together with our friends Paul and Donna Claus, made the first ascent of a 12,200-foot border peak due west of Mt. Logan. Landing at the 8400-foot level on an unnamed glacier west of our intended summit, we established a very comfortable base camp. The following day we skied three miles up the glacier to 10,000 and camped below our route.

The next morning greeted us with absolutely cloudless skies and a temperature of -5. Up and moving by 7:00 am, our group ascended a prominent 1000-foot long gully on the south flank of the peak's western buttress. Once through this initial gully, the route wandered up through snow patches and around outcrops of rock. At times up to 60 degrees, we used running belays with rock horns and pitons. A final pitch of shattered rock through a steep chimney brought us to a glaciated plateau 1/2 mile west of the summit. We had covered nearly 2000 vertical feet of varied and sometimes loose climbing.

After crossing this high glacier, our party took a tea break while enjoying the view of the Wrangells from 12,000'. We then turned our attention to the summit pyramid and the many crevasses which guard the ridge. Two hours later, after snaking our way up and over a heavily-crevassed knoll, we stood at the lip of the last large crevasse, looking up at the opposite edge overhanging five or six feet above our heads.

Donna and Siri decided to wait it out, brewing another batch of tea on a snow ledge just inside the fissure, while Paul and I finished the last section to the summit. With some helpful shoving from the wives, we were able to climb up over the opposite overhang. After one very exposed lead of near-vertical snow on the ridge crest, and a quick but careful pitch crossing the crest, Paul and I were on top. The weather was perfect, not a cloud in the sky and only a hint of breeze. To the west and north we had unobstructed views of Blackburn and Bear Mountains, and to the east and south, Logan, King and St. Elias.

Our descent was long and uneventful, culminating in our return to camp in the fading daylight at 9:30 pm. This was Siri's first climbing adventure, so we took the liberty of giving the highest unclimbed border peak her name. Grade III.

Chugach Scrambles

Tim Kelley

On June 22 I made an ascent of Peak 5505 (Anchorage A7, T12N, R1E, S18). Starting at the Hiland Drive trailhead I ran and hiked up the South Fork Eagle River valley to Symphony Lake and then south up to an area of flat alpine meadows just west of Triangle Peak. From there I dropped down into the valley south of the ridge, went east into the cirque at the end of the valley and climbed to the col between Peak 5505 and Mt. Ewe. Heading west towards the summit I thought I spotted a cairn, but then realized I was going up a false peak. One half mile more of scrambling brought me to the true summit and a table-top size clump of tundra grass.

I looked around the summit area for a cairn but found no sign of previous ascents, so I made a cairn and left a register. Willy Hersman said he thought Jim Saylor may have been up the peak in August 1989. The cloudless day offered panoramic views from the near-Chugach peaks to the Eagle Glacier and everything in between.

On June 29, Tim Miller and I hiked over Crow Pass, up Paradise Creek to Paradise Pass, past Moraine Pass and on to the lake at the headwaters of the North Fork of Ship Creek. We left our packs at the lake and went east up the west ridge of Peak 5205 (Anchorage A6, T12N, R1E, S25). From the summit we followed the ridge north for a while, dropped down a snow chute into a bowl to the west of the ridge and then ascended Peak 5240 (Anchorage A6, T12N, R1E, S23). Again following the ridge north, with some downclimbing around gendarmes, we got to the steep section of Peak 5638 at the 5100-foot level. By traversing west, taking a scree chute to 5400', traversing scree again to a main chute directly south of the summit we made it to the top of Peak 5638 (Anchorage A6, T12N, R1E, S23).

We found no sign of previous ascents on any of these peaks, we left cairns on them all and a register on Peak 5638. Peak 5638 is the only true peak of these three, the other two don't have enough relief, but they are fun climbs anyway. We are referring to Peak 5638 as Synthesizer Peak (as it is near to, but smaller than, Organ Peak), Peak 5240 as Synclavier Mountain and Peak 5205 as Pyramid Point.

Hiking out on June 30th we climbed Peak 5477 (Anchorage A6, T12N, R1E, S29) via Paradise Valley and the col between Peak 5477 and Delgga (5510). We broke through a thick cloud layer that blanketed the valleys to the 5200-foot level. We found an old cairn at the summit and spent a long time ogli long time ogling in every direction at the who's who scene of the Chugach Mountains. All peaks over 5200 feet were sun-bathed islands jutting out of a sea of densely packed clouds.

On July 14th I biked from the Eklutna trailhead to the East Fork trail. I then ran and hiked the trail until it petered out near the 2190-foot bluff. Along the river I saw signs of footprints of a previous party hiking out. From the bluff a trail beaten through the grass suggested the party might be returning from Bashful. From the bluff I followed old blazes to a lake on the west end of a large clearing. Crossing the clearing I turned south, crossed the East Fork and climbed Peak 5010 (Anchorage A6, T13N, R3E, S15).

At the summit I was somewhat surprised to find a metal tripod and a 1974 BLM benchmark as the Chugach Park boundary is three miles east of the peak. Maybe this was a convenient place to put a helicopter down, there's just enough flat area near the summit, and use the mountain as reference for mapping.

Impressive view of Bounty Peak (6010) from here. I found no climber's cairn, I left a cairn and a register.

Speaking of mapping, Peak 5010 is on Anchorage A6, the approach is on B6. The head of the East Fork Valley is on A5, which shows vegetation on the south side of the valley up to the 2500-foot level. A6 and B6 don't show any vegetation. So if you only have these two maps, as I did, you will end up being surprised by the 1000-foot wall of Satanic Salad that greets you after crossing the East Fork!

(Editor's note: Not all trip reports received this month could be included in this issue, please look for your article next month, thanks.)

### HUT PREFAB EFFORT

Thanks to the following folks for helping out on the new hut:

|               |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| Dave Staheli  | Gretchen Staheli |
| Dave Pahlke   | Neil O'Donnell   |
| John Cafmeyer | Maxine Stoddard  |
| Dan O'Haire   | Kristan Sieling  |
| Willy Hersman | Karen Cafmeyer   |
| Kneely Taylor | Brian Mosely     |
| Chris Ernst   | Jeff Barbee      |
| Roy Snider    | Brian Carey      |

The hut is basically ready to be flown in to its location, but several items are in need. We would like to have donations rather than spend club funds for these things, so if you notice anything you can donate or scavage from someone, please notify Willy Hersman, 338-5132:

#### Tools to be left at the hut.

|                              |               |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| hammer                       | saw           |
| screwdrivers                 | paint brushes |
| staple gun                   | tin snips     |
| caulking gun                 | broom         |
| speed wrench with 1/4" drive | plyers        |

#### Hut accessories.

|                  |                         |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| stove            | pots                    |
| cooking utensils | silverware              |
| first aid kit    | bench or folding chairs |

#### Tools, not to be left, but just used for construction.

|                      |                            |
|----------------------|----------------------------|
| level                | framing square             |
| tape measure         | chalk line                 |
| nail puller, pry bar | metal punch (hole starter) |

### Hut Name.

The new hut is to serve as a "half-way" hut for getting to the Scandinavian Peaks Hut on the Matanuska Glacier. It will not have the usual capacity of the other MCA huts, mainly due to the fact that we intend to use a fixed-wing aircraft to transport it, which limits the size of everything in it. It is being built from the fund established in memory of Tony Bockstahler, former MCA Honorary, who designed Pichler's Perch in 1964 and was very active during the club's early days.

It makes sense to name the hut after Tony. Other MCA huts named for members are: Pichler's Perch, Hans' Hut and Rosie's Roost. Some ideas for this hut (and members are encouraged to come up with more) are:

- .Bock's Den (referring to its size)
- Tony's Terrace (level area adjacent to the glacier)
- Tony's Turn-Off (you have to go slightly out of your way to get there)
- Tony's Turret (turret = a little tower, this kind of stretches the truth)
- Tony's Tract (location is on a one-mile strip of tundra and brush)

### ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The following offices (and a short description of duties from the By-Laws) will be open to nominations at the annual meeting:

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| President              | presides at all regular and executive meetings;<br>coordinates the efforts of the officers and committees.  |
| Vice President         | <del>assumes duties of the president in the absence of the</del><br>president; provides entertainment at club meetings.   |
| Secretary              | records the minutes of all meetings; maintains complete historical and business records; answers correspondence; arranges for the meeting place for all meetings. |
| Treasurer              | receives and disburses all club dues, fees and monies;<br>maintains complete financial records of the club.   |
| Board of Directors (2) | acts as an advisor to the Executive Committee concerning matters of policy.   |

Nominations will be opened at the October meeting. All offices are for one year, except Director, which is for two years. The club also will need help in the next year for committee chairpersons. If you are interested in volunteering for a position, contact Karen Cafmeyer. Interest so far in holding office is as follows:

- |                 |                              |
|-----------------|------------------------------|
| President:      | Dan O'Haire                  |
| Vice President: | no candidate yet             |
| Secretary:      | Mindy Baum, Stephan Otterson |
| Treasurer:      | no candidate yet             |
| Directors:      | no candidates yet            |

JIM BRANCH

The Mountaineering Club is sad to note the loss of Jim Branch, Honorary Member since January, 1962. He is survived by his wife, Peggy, who lives in Franconia, New Hampshire, where the Branches have lived since leaving Alaska in 1966. He passed away on April 25th of this year.

Jim Branch was the first manager of Alyeska Ski Resort, from 1959 to 1966. He was always interested in helping the MCA, and helped the club rennovate an early hut, located at Crow Pass, sometimes referred to as the 'Crow's Nest.' Its shell still stands today. Jim was the first honorary elected by the club.

ALASKA SECTION  
AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB  
ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, November 9, 1991

Viking Hall, 8141 Briarwood, Anchorage, Alaska (near Seward Hwy. and Dimond)

Meeting: 4:00 pm

Potluck: 6:00 - 7:00 pm

Slide Show: Jim Donini  
15 years of alpine climbing; including Patagonia, Himalaya  
Ornico rainforest, and two new routes this year on Hunter and  
Mt. Barille

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

Karen Cafmeyer conducted the meeting, begining with the introduction of new members and guests.

## TREASURER'S REPORT:

|               |   |                  |
|---------------|---|------------------|
| Money Market  | - | \$3285.19        |
| Checking Acct | - | 207.87           |
| Petty Cash    | - | 52.00            |
| Total         |   | <u>\$3545.06</u> |

Tony B Memorial Fund - \$945.00 (Note: \$1152 has already been spent on the hut which is being built with the Tony B. Fund. Donations are still being accepted.)

## COMMITTEES:

**Parks Advisory.** Chugach State Park is considering imposing day-user fees for certain popular areas of the park. The park is also now working on its capital projects list. If you have a pet project idea for the park, now is the time to submit it.

## OLD BUSINESS

Imported ice screws purchased through the club are now available. Some which were ordered still need to be picked up.

The Tony Bockstahler Hut is now prefabricated, but it still needs a front door. The opening is 30" wide, and any length could be made to fit. Donations of a door, or money for the fund (which is now slightly in the red) would be appreciated.

## NEW BUSINESS

Elections for club officers will be held at the October meeting. Remember, that's the 4th rather than 3rd Wednesday.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

The October meeting will include a gear swap.

The municipality has completed its draft transportation plan, which is now open for public comment.

Willy Hersman mentioned progress in the Rabbit Creek access trial, pointing out the potential importance of summit registers. All those old gum wrappers and pop tart boxes you put into the registers are now exhibits in the trial. Willy suggested that it's a good idea to indicate your approach route when signing a register.

Respectfully Submitted,

Stefan Otterson

Climbing Notes

Though the planned MCA trip to Salix Peak in August blew out due to the heavy rain, the summit did not go unvisited for yet another year. Dave Logan made what is probably the second ascent of the mountain during his solo traverse from Reed Lakes and the Bomber Hut at the end of August. Dave did not find Vin and Grace Hoeman's register, but he says that he didn't take apart the cairn, so maybe it's still there.

Charlie Sassara reports that he and Dave McGivern explored a new ice climbing area in January, on the northern shore of Portage Lake, about 1/2 mile west of the pass to Whitter. It is nearly twice as wide as Five Fingers, with moderate routes up to 300' in length. On their adventure they climbed a central line on two Grade III pitches of boiler-plate ice. Descent was made via lower angle ice and one rappel.

Pam Kirk and Chris Ernst report having climbed Peril Peak on September 1st. Their route was just left of the normal route, via steep scree and rock to the south ridge, where it joins the normal route above the flat-iron. Theirs was the only ascent in 1991.