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ANNUAL MEETING

Wednesday

October 19th, 7:30

Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets
Downtown Anchorage

Slide Show: Sean Clarke will show slides of Denali's *Muldrow*.

TRIP REPORTS

D-6 Day Trips

by Josh Sonkiss

In addition to providing access to the greater peaks in the western Talkeetnas, the Hatcher Pass area offers an excellent selection of smaller peaks which are aesthetic and easily climbed in a day, including the drive out and back. Here are two of them.

Point 5950 (T20N, R2E, S5, NW $\frac{1}{4}$). In late September of 1993 Mel Brennan and I set out from the Reed Creek trailhead to climb Point 5950 on the ridge approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile northwest of Lynx Peak. Several weeks before, we had attempted to climb the peak from the small unnamed glacier to the north, where the peak appears as one of several formidable-looking spires. Our efforts were thwarted when what seemed to be the highest of these fell far short of the true summit. With the benefit of a map, however, the

location of the high point is obvious and offers an easy and scenic hike from Reed Lakes.

While the peak could probably be reached by scrambling up the ridge from Bomber Pass, we chose to ascend the milder slopes directly to the north of Upper Reed Lake. We then traversed the broad ridge west, following an unmapped pocket glacier that reaches a small saddle with summit blocks rising less than a hundred feet on either side. After scrambling up the north peak, it appeared that the south summit was higher; in another ten minutes we'd scrambled to its top. We found no sign of a previous ascent on either summit, though it seems likely that others would have hiked this peak for its fine view of the Bomber Glacier, Reed Lakes and the headwaters of Bartholf Creek. We built a small cairn on the south summit before bidding farewell to summertime and returning to our car. Round-trip time was about six hours.

Lower Tower. Every so often, bad weather - never to be confused with sloth - reduces plans for an ambitious weekend expedition to a leisurely Sunday

outing. It was on just such a weekend in July that Dave Hart and I embarked on the Reed Lakes trail yet again, setting our sights on the 6129-foot summit of Lower Tower. Named for being six feet shorter than Higher Spire, its neighbor to the northeast, this is the easternmost of the three prominent peaks visible in the Hatcher Pass area when driving north on the Glenn Highway toward Palmer. Lower Tower is a fine choice for a day trip, boasting a bushwack-free approach and firm granite that stays solid underfoot, even in boulder fields.

From the parking lot, we hiked down the old mining road to the Reed cabin. From there, a trail heads northwest into the hanging valley of Glacier Creek, past a dilapidated tram tower and the burned-out ruins of the Snowbird Mine. As we climbed through the talus spilling off the flanks of Didilkama, patches of stubborn snow offered a path of lesser resistance to our upward progress, if punctuated by an occasional plunge into crevasse-like motes around the hidden boulders.

After two hours of hiking, we reached the saddle at the edge of Snowbird Glacier, about 1000 feet below the summit. Starting up the talus-strewn ridge, fresh bootprints testified that we were on the right track, and indeed we had seen what looked like figures on the summit earlier on our hike. An uneventful scramble over boulders and a couple of exposed but low-angle slabs brought us to a col beneath the summit block. Here we were startled to find a group of UAA mountaineering students, comfortably bivouacked among the boulders while awaiting the return of their compatriots who had gone to the summit.

The sure-footed would not require a rope for the final two pitches to the summit, but the AWS team had roped up at this point. We elected to follow suit, since a convenient series of slings had been left for us to clip into. In fact, we were glad to have the rope as there is a short step on the ridge which requires a move or two of down climbing at about 5.7. A few minutes of traversing the broad ridge and we stood on top, soaking up the view of Snowbird Glacier and Higher Spire, a fine-looking peak which would have to wait for another day. We descended the way we had come, leaving the students behind to rappel one by one down to the glacier. Our round-trip time was about seven hours.

Didilkama

by James Larabee



In September 18th three MCAers experimented with becoming bi-seasonal by climbing Didilkama Peak. Didilkama is in the Talkeetna Mountains near Hatcher Pass and due east of the Lane Hut. Climbing at this time of year frequently means beginning somewhere within the full glow of autumn, ascending into winter, and then descending back into autumn. However, we never experienced the latter third of this equation as the overcast descended and dumped two inches of new snow. Suddenly winter, which had been lurking only in the higher peaks, crept down to the level of the Lane Hut. The new snow made travel through the talus fields slow and slippery.

You might call our trip the "Attrition Expedition." Seven of us signed up to go but for various reasons it came down to three of us climbing the peak. Despite the snow and low visibility we enjoyed the climb which was largely a non-technical walk-up with the exception of the summit, a 30-foot tower of rock. The new snow made the tower more challenging but we found routes we liked along its backside (southeast side).

The other bi-seasonals were Peter Clifford and Matt Nedom.

Arrigetch Peaks - Gates of the Arctic - The Three B's Trip

by Don Hansen



The nine Arrigetch trip members that included Charles Lane, Fred Kampfer, Bill Wakeland, Mike Paden, Pam Page, Allen Johnson, Elizabeth Dahl, Dianne Fallon, and me, got together at Frontier Airlines in Fairbanks under sunny skies and warm weather for the flight to Bettles. We got to Bettles that morning but our backpacks and other gear did not arrive until later, so our arrival by Brooks Range Aviation to the Circle Lake drop-off was delayed until evening. The weather at Circle Lake was warm, overcast, raining and "buggy." How buggy? When I arrived on the second flight the first five people greeted us with headnets on. After pitching our tents we all ended up eating our evening meal with headnets on (a first for most). Because Circle Lake was known for its food-stealing black bears, most of us stored our two weeks of food in the so-called bear-proof barrels available. At about 3:30 AM I thought I was dreaming when somebody yelled, "There's a bear in camp!" But



unfortunately it turned out to be real. A mid-size black bear circled through our camp brushing up against the tents (Dianne's and Elizabeth's tent) and biting holes in one of Mike's large fuel bottles. The bear then proceeded to the bear-proof barrels, popping the lid off the larger barrel containing food of most of our group and began chowing down two weeks of provisions. All the yelling and banging of pots and pans had no effect. A well-thrown large rock that met its mark on the butt got his attention and he ran for the brush at the end of the lake. We quickly removed all the food from the barrel and decided to brake camp and head for the trail to the peaks. The bear had not done too much damage to the food supplies except for the consumption of Allen's chocolate birthday cake and some of his oatmeal breakfasts. We had enough extra food to replace the breakfasts he lost. The three miles from Circle Lake to Arrigetch Creek was as brushy as ever from that of my 1988 trip, and the mosquitoes followed us all the way. We continued to wear the headnets even while bushwacking through the alders. It took us several hours to get to the creek and find a trail. We camped on a small bluff above the roaring creek and collected an arsenal of rocks and set up trip wires, etc. to alert us of another visit from the Circle Lake bear. Fortunately we were never bothered again by that bear, or any other bear on the trip.

On the following day we traveled the six or seven miles to the forks of Arrigetch Creek following a sometimes well-marked trail along the creek that was a challenge to follow when we encountered a number of large boulder patches in our path. After boulder-hopping and reconnoitering the route we eventually found the trail on the other side of the boulders and arrived at the forks in the late afternoon. We set up our four-day camp in the same place we used in 1988 on a hill just above where Arrigetch Creek splits into two forks. One fork flows from the south, draining the sharp-pointed granite spires called the "Maidens," and the glaciers and azure lakes of the high "Aquarius Valley." The main fork of Arrigetch Creek follows from the west-southwest, draining a beautiful broad valley surrounded by precipitous peaks, such as "The Devil's Horns," the "Matterhorn," and a huge vertical granite wall called "Xanadu" in the *American Alpine Journal*.

We spent the next two days exploring Aquarius valley and the main Arrigetch valley. In 1988 the day we visited Aquarius valley it was overcast and drizzle. This time it was sunny and very warm and the lakes and glaciers were shown in their azure splendor. I went through at least two or three roles of film as I hiked up to the highest of the deep blue lakes and the glacier extending down from the summit of

the ridge between Arrigetch Creek and Hot Springs Creek to the south. Our visit to the main Arrigetch valley was also sunny and warm with perfect reflections of the mountain spires in calm pools of the creek, as it spread across the flats in the upper part of the valley. After Mike, Elizabeth, Dianne and I boulder-hopped up the left side of the valley, we joined up with Bill and Charles in the ascent up the glacier moraine near the head of the valley. There were spectacular views of the peak I call "The Saddle," Bill calls "The Battleship," and Charles calls "The Tape Dispenser", and the glacier surrounding it, and the vertical granite at the head of the valley. Some of us spotted a couple of shy sheep on the moraine above us as we ate lunch. Meanwhile, Pam and Allen hiked up another ridge on the side of the valley and saw several sheep and spectacular views of another glacier and granite spires hidden from our view below on the valley floor.

After spending four nights at the Arrigetch camp we traversed up and across the gentle ridge above, traveling northwest higher above the creek to avoid the brushy trail. We doubled back above the creek, crossing one drainage without losing elevation. This drainage had two beautiful clear water streams and lots of flowers on its green terraces. The second drainage we crossed required losing and regaining about 500 feet; we then headed south to the pass between Arrigetch and Hot Springs Creeks. We arrived at the pass late in the afternoon and set up our tents at good sites on a bluff above a small lake. Early that evening we were rewarded with the sighting of a large blond grizzly coming through the pass. It paid us no mind as it swam directly across the lake, stopped on the other side to rub its belly on a rock and proceeded down the other side of the pass. It was Dianne's first sighting of a grizzly bear. A pleasant experience for her and the rest of us, contrasted with our earlier encounter with the pesky black bear. We spent the following day in the pass with all of us eventually hiking up a 5,000-foot peak that has spectacular views of all the Arrigetch and Hot Springs Creek granite spires and glaciers. We followed Charles' lead when he got up at sunrise on the clear morning to climb the peak which is a deep walk-up from the lake across tundra and scree slopes to a stair-step rock ridge to the summit.

The next morning we descended from the pass to Hot Springs Creek, crossing the drainage coming from the pass and climbing slightly to the crest of a long ridge that leads down to the creek on gentle tundra slopes with blueberries and great views down the Alatna River and up Hot Springs Creek. Near the foot of this ridge we encountered a spruce forest and alder brush that we were not looking



forward to, but Bill found a good game trail that led us gently down to the creek and to the same lichen-carpeted site we used in our 1988 trip. That night and the next day it rained most of the time, but not hard. Hot Springs Creek became a torrent, however, inundating the hot springs located about one and a half bushwacking miles above our camp. Bill and Elizabeth braved the rain and brush to look for the springs, under the ragging torrent, while the rest of us laid back and read books, maps, etc. The rain stopped early in the evening and the next morning the creek had settled down. On our journey to Takahula Lake, our pick-up location, we found a good creek crossing site about a half-mile downstream from our camp where the creek forks. The going down the right side of the creek was pretty good for the next couple of miles and we found a gravel bar where we dried out wet socks. The next day we proceeded southwest above the creek, traversing upward somewhat to avoid bushwacking on our way to the pass between Hot Springs Creek and Takahula Lake. We camped just above the pass on a tundra knoll after about five hours of bushwacking. We wanted one more night in alpine habitat before descending to the brushy flats of the Alatna and Takahula Rivers.

The next morning in the fog, we followed the drainage down to the Takahula, avoiding most of the brush and finding a game trail on the right side of the drainage. We left the Takahula River about one mile from the lake and crossed a forested knoll and followed more game trails to the lake. The best place to camp at the lake is on the south side where there is a sandy beach and strip of flat green camp sites among spruce trees. We met a group of rafters there who were being picked up the next day. They had portaged from the Alatna River. We spent our last full day before the plane picked us up, under sunny skies, drying out our gear, swimming in the lake to cool off and hiking around the lake to the portage trail and to the Alatna River. Brooks Range Aviation pilots Jay Jaspersen and Steve Ruff picked us up at the lake in two Beavers in time to catch a Frontier Air flight to Fairbanks. We pigged-out at Pike's Landing near the airport.

This was one of the most enjoyable backpack trips that I have led in spite of the three B's: bugs, brush, bears. The trip members were wonderful company and I'm grateful for all their cooperation and good spirit in the face of the three B's.

Hut Site Ramblings

by Willy Hersman



ver Labor Day weekend Kneely Taylor, Bill Spencer and I spent several sunny days in upper Moose Creek drainage. We intended to explore some of the area, do some climbing and eat blueberries. I was hoping to find a new hut site for the club's next hut, if and when it happens. Moose Creek is a logical choice to extend the hut system in the Talkeetnas to the east.

We entered the drainage by hiking up the Little Susitna trail and then over a 5250-foot pass just south of Telemint, a route which leads to slow-going through brush on the Moose Creek side. There is a horse trail along the creek which begins somewhere after the end of the Buffalo Mine Road. What this trail is like in the middle and lower sections is still unknown to me, but judging by the upper section, I doubt even the horses like it. Still there is access from the highway, maybe even better access in winter.

A new hut site would ideally have one-day access from the road, it would have running water, pleasant surroundings, one-day climbs to do, good skiing nearby, minimal avalanche danger getting to it, difficulty for snow machiners to reach it, be one day away from another hut, and have good potential to lead towards another hut site. The site we saw on our second day fit all these criteria with one exception: snow machines could probably reach it. I am not convinced this disqualifies it, however. It is about 6 to 8 hours coming from the Mint Hut over Grizzly Pass and about 8 to 10 hours going to the Mint Hut (more uphill). Another pass, about two hours from the site leads to the Granite Creek drainage and lots of new exploration and climbing. Views of many of the Mint peaks are excellent and the immediate surroundings are very pleasant. On September 4th, we climbed the 6780-foot peak just above the hut site, naming it Dnigi, which is Denaina Indian for moose.

On the 5th Kneely and I took off about a half hour behind Bill to climb Peak 6486. Finally away from our snail's pace, Bill was gone. When we reached the base of the mountain he was already descending from the climb to meet us. He had plenty of energy left to go for another one. We didn't see him again until dark, after he'd packed up, made three attempts on another peak and moved up valley to our next campsite, below Spearmint. He still beat us. The climb of 6486 was an easy scramble, though the footing was poor in the scree below the ridge. There was no evidence of previous ascents, but a 1972 *Scree* article says it was climbed by Larry Swanson on May



3rd. No name given.

Our loop was completed the next day, going over more familiar terrain through Grizzly Pass, down to the Mint Hut and out on the trail, which is in need of brushing again.

Elections

The following nominations have been made for the October election:

President	Mike Miller
Vice President	James Larabee
Treasurer	Ron Rickman
Secretary	-
Board	-
Board	-



AAC 92nd Annual Meeting

The American Alpine Club will host its annual meeting December 2-4 at Snowbird, Utah. Scheduled speakers include: Greg Child, John Middendorf, Bobbi Bensman, and Marc Twilight. There will be slides of recent expeditions, discussions, awards and silent auction of equipment. All are welcome. Contact the Golden, Colorado headquarters for information: 303-384-0110.



MINUTES

SEPTEMBER MEETING

September 21st 1994. Dave Hart called the meeting to order and had new members introduce themselves.

TREASURER'S REPORT.
\$9296.12

COMMITTEE REPORTS.

Training.
Ice Climbing School announced.

Parks Advisory.
Chr. Scott Bailey presented the club with The Turnagain Arm Management Plan, in the form of a booklet and folder packet, as a public review draft. It consists of plans by the State, among other things, to make public lands along Turnagain Arm and within the management area more accessible to the public, as well as trail construction, public use cabins, recreational resorts (near Winner Creek and Glacier Creek), and protection and preservation. Anyone interested in the draft can find it at the Vin Hoeman Library (A.M.H.) or contact Scott at 273-4282.

Library.
Librarian Joe Kurtak announced that Marcy Baker at A.M.H. has done some reorganizing of the library and spruced up the place. The old recliner needs to be replaced; Joe is looking for suggestions. Joe is also looking for a locking bookcase for the club's more valuable books, which sometimes "walk away." Books are being counted for inventory and a record is being prepared for filing. Joe asks that if anyone has an overdue book, please return it as soon as possible. Joe can be reached at 345-5512.

OLD BUSINESS.

Dave Hart reported on the MCA board meeting.

Dave Hart reminded the club that we need a new refreshment person, or there will be NO refreshments! All purchases are immediately reimbursed.

NEW BUSINESS.

Dave Hart moved that the club spend \$200.00 on new library books. Motion seconded and passed. There was also discussion about buying a locking bookcase; no motion.

Jonathan Rose announced a new gear sign-up program at A.M.H. for club gear.

Mr. Azegami conveyed that he had a worn-out peak register from Penguin Peak, and another member said he had one from Indianhouse Mountain and inquired as to the policy of archiving the old registers. Willy Hersman suggested they be turned in to the Vin Hoeman Library or to him or to Tim Kelley. Please put a new one back up on the summits. Don Hansen suggested that volunteers lead club trips to those peaks to replace the registers. The Secretary suggests that if anyone leads a trip to a summit, please check on the register status before and after the trip, letting Willy or Tim know about registers which need replacement.

Dave Hart reminded the club that elections will be next month. No nominations taken.



ANNOUNCEMENTS.

AWS gear swap is September 23rd at UAA's Campus Center.

National Trails Symposium to be held at the Egan Convention Center next week.

Some members asked about the **Chugach Park Watch** program.

Dolly Lefever has information on an **Everest Expedition**. Contact her at 243-7027.

Richard Baronow is seeking information about peaks near **Friday Creek**. Contact him at 345-1500.

Thanks to **Tim Kelley** for presenting the Mountains of the Month, Penguin Peak and the ridge above Turnagain Arm, and lesser visited peaks west of Turnagain Pass.

Thanks to **Dave Hart** for his show of Mt. Hunter.

Respectfully Submitted,

Roy Smith

EDITORIAL

Latest Lawsuit Fiasco

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Willy Hersman

On July 7th, US District Court Judge William J. Rea ordered the federal government to pay \$1.7 million for injuries to three hikers and the death of one hiker, who were victims of a lightning storm on Mt. Whitney in 1990. Thirteen hikers took shelter during the storm in the old stone hut on the summit of the mountain. The roof of the hut, built in 1909, was made of corrugated metal. The result of a metal roof in a lightning storm is predictable - it acts as a lightning rod. Attorney for the plaintiffs stated that the government was guilty of willful misconduct and that "(The hut) was a trap to these hikers, who were all very reasonable and intelligent people and thought they would be safe inside." Judge Rea agreed, saying in his opinion, "...despite the knowledge that a dangerous and potentially life-threatening condition existed, (the government) failed to erect any signs or other warnings concerning the hut and its dangers during the five years preceding this accident."

Signs about lightning? Life-threatening conditions in the wilderness? I long for the good old days when people were responsible for their own actions; when people knew that wilderness always has its dangers. Reasonable and intelligent people? Most of us have learned by the time we leave grade school that metal conducts electricity. Do we also need a sign to remind us? How about signs at the base of every mountain, "Danger: you could fall, be buried in an avalanche, get hypothermia, frostbite, be inspired by the view and become an environmentalist, etc., etc." Any so-called intelligent or not-so-intelligent person who crawls into a tiny metal-covered building on the highest point in the lower 48 in a lightning storm is the one who is irresponsible, not the government.

What next? Maybe the next time I go out on a climb and the weather keeps me in a snow cave and I'm late for work, I can get compensation for it. Just hire some unscrupulous lawyer and sue somebody with money who did not warn me that the weather can be foul. The precedent set by such lawsuits as the one for Mt. Whitney is bad news for all of us who enjoy the outdoors. When government agencies are held responsible for nature, who can blame them for closing it all down? Stay home everybody and watch television. The streets and woods are too dangerous for you.

MCA Trip Classifications

The classifications below do not take into account individual trip hazards such as river crossings, scree slopes, snow fields, bears, etc. Trip leaders are required to inform the trip participants of any such hazards either verbally, on the sign-up sheet, or in the trip description. Leader approval is required for participation on all trips.

NON-TECHNICAL: Following are a few standards used to classify non-technical trips. The classification is made in terms of hiking distance and altitude gain. Many trips are not on established trails.

CLASS A: Easy hikes with a maximum distance of 8 miles for day trips or 4 miles per day for overnight trips. Altitude gain up to 1200 feet.

CLASS B: Trips involving a maximum distance of up to 12 miles for a day trip or 6 miles per day for an overnight trip. Altitude gain of 1200 to 2500 feet.

CLASS C: Trips up to 15 miles for a day hike or 8 miles per day for an overnight trip. Altitude gain up to 3500 feet. Scree, steep grass or other rough terrain problems may be encountered.

