

MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 102037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

NOVEMBER 1991

Volume 34, Issue 11

NOVEMBER MEETING

November 20 7:30 pm Wednesday, Pioneer Schoolhouse, basement level, 3rd and Eagle Sts., downtown Anchorage.

Slide Show This month Jim Saylor will show slides of his favorite backcountry ski trips in the Chugach and Talkeetnas.

TRIP REPORTS

Shuksan North Face

Mike Moxness

My lazy summer of sedate backpacking trips was interrupted last month when Chris, former Alaskan and MCA member, called me from his home in Seattle. For more years than I would admit publicly, Chris and I had battled devil's club, rotten rock, and overgreased cheeseburgers in quests for Alaskan peaks. Now, after his tropic tour in the Peace Corps, Chris was in an advanced state of climbing withdrawal. The urge for numb toes, undercooked freeze-dried meals and overripe tentmates was overwhelming, so I took off to the wilds of Washington's North Cascades.

Chris' chosen objective was the north face of Mt. Shuksan, a 9000-foot peak near the Canadian border. As Beckey puts it, the north face is a 'moderately technical' snow and ice climb, linking two 2000-foot icefields split by a rotten rock band.

I spent the red-eye flight to Seattle sandwiched between two intoxicated fishermen. One passed out and toppled into my lap. The other spent the flight loudly describing to his snoring friend what romantic adventures he anticipated back in the real world. Upon arrival, Chris took my sleep-deprived state for eagerness to climb, so we headed right from the airport to Bellingham. We stopped briefly at the market for some chocolate-covered raisins and pointed the truck toward the ranger station.

In Washington, climbers and hikers must go to quaint stone buildings to register their plans. I filled out the two-page application form while the ranger explained to us that our proposed approach route was impossible. The road was washed out, the brush was too thick, and the river was too high. There were bandits, wolves and probably hurricanes waiting. As to the last item, she was correct. As she issued us our permit, in triplicate, the ranger told us we would have to drive around to the other side of the mountain, hike an extra eight miles of snow-covered road, and cross a 5000-foot ridge and under the snouts of two hanging glaciers.

As a general rule, you will not go wrong doing exactly the opposite of anything told you by a person in a green uniform. We thanked the ranger and returned to our original plan. At the end of a crumbling logging road, we parked at the top of an old clear-cut. The piled lumber slash and head-high brush led 500 feet down a steep slope to White Salmon Creek. Our planned approach angled about 3000 feet up the side of an old-growth timber ridge to the tundra below the north face.

The brushy clear-cut turned out to be the crux of the approach, although the stream crossing is best left undescribed to protect what little remains of our reputations. A hundred feet above the river, the fabled brush disappeared. The traverse was relatively enjoyable, consisting of very steep, shady, timbered slopes. Four hours after leaving the truck, we were comfortably puttering about inside Chris' Bibler tent perched atop the ridge just off the side of the face.

Chris graciously allowed us to sleep in until 5:00 am. By 8:00 we were strung out on the traverse, an initial wake-up run from the camp ridge across a steep, slushy snow band to the base of the face. Excitement is added by the fact that you are traversing directly above a 1000-foot rock cliff.

The face's lower snowfield averages about 50 degrees and is a slog familiar to former Chugach climbers. The main thrill is crossing several deep runnels carved by avalanches from overhanging seracs. The largest of these ditches was about 30 feet deep with vertical to overhanging sides. It resembled the gutters of a bowling lane, which was sort of an unsettling analogy to contemplate from the bottom. We had been warned about it by a British climber who had been unable to find a way out of it for several hundred feet. He described the experience as 'a bit gripping.' Those familiar with climbers from across the sea will understand that this should be translated as an admission of pure, unmitigated terror.

We paused at the lip to agree that if the seracs above let go while either of us were in the tube, we'd unsnap the rope so as not to drag the other climber down. Of course I had no such intention and mentally resolved to take Chris with me. Luckily the billions of tons of ice stayed put, and our noble compact went untested.

By mid-morning, we were at the top of the first snowfield. Between the top of the snow and the rotten schist rock band, a slender snow bridge slanted up and over the mother-of-all moats. This was an Alaskan-style, starve-before-you-hit-bottom crevasse. About 15 feet left of our little bridge was a three-foot-wide strand of gravelly snow and ice that angled up the wall and through a slot in the rock band. Thinking light thoughts, we tip-toed over the bridge, slithered across a couple of 5.7 moves and pulled up onto the much more satisfactory ice.

Two hundred feet up, the slot opened onto the upper icefield, which is steep enough to require front points and double tools. We grabbed a quick lunch of chocolate-covered raisins and started up around 10:30. The climbing was airy, but secure. Looking between your heels, you could see the White Salmon Glacier, 3500 feet below. Sooner than expected, we topped out onto the summit plateau, where life became interesting.

Shuksan's summit plateau is a rolling shelf of ice several hundred yards across. The summit was about 200 feet up an easy rock pyramid at the far side. We stopped about halfway across the plateau for more raisins and noted that the sky had turned deep gray. Unbeknownst to us, the ranger-described hurricane was pounding at the other side of the mountain. When we reached the base of the

pyramid, the storm flopped over the top and nailed us with buffeting winds and horizontal winds and horizontal rain. It was at this point that I discovered my Goretex parka was still folded in the tent, filling that annoying dip under my sleeping pad.

Our planned descent had been down the easy, but heavily-crevassed, Whit Salmon Glacier. With near-zero visibility and only the vaguest idea of local geography, we chose to follow our tracks down the face. It is a wonder what drenching rain will do to formerly firm snow. Downclimbing was somewhat like backing down a 2000-foot ladder in soggy bedslippers while someone sporadically bats you in the side of the head with a pillow.

We arrived dripping wet at the slot through the rock band. In the relative shelter of a rock overhang, we ate more chocolate-covered raisins. It was late afternoon, and with a little more than half of descent still remaining, Chris told me that he had forgotten his headlamp. Suitably inspired, we attacked the rock band. I belayed Chris down the skinny snow strand to the lip of the bottomless moat. His first three attempts to cross met with no success. He disappeared around the rock corner. After 30 minutes of tugging and muttering, there came a triumphant shout of "off belay." I gingerly reversed my position and backed down the snow strand.

As I came around the corner, I saw Chris happily hunkered down on the far side of the chasm. The rope hung horizontally 20 feet between us. He calmly informed me that I only needed to traverse the vertical, rotten rock face next to me to reach our snow bridge, which was now looking markedly limp in the rain. Once there, I could dive (fall) backwards onto the sloping bridge. The bridge was now about 18 inches wide and unconnected to my side, but I'd be fine as long as I landed in exactly the same position as he did. Oh yes, he was sorry, but the first step on the traverse, which had been a crumbly mass of wet snow and pebbles pasted to the vertical schist, had now fallen away. I muttered something ungenerous about the courage of his having a top-rope, but my grumbling was lost in Chris' cheery assurances.

Chris did, however, admit that he had always admired my ice hammer and wondered if I might throw it over before climbing. After staring into the undercut chasm for several minutes, I climbed a few feet up the strand and hammered a picket into the snow for a rope. Chris observed the obvious fact that a picket driven into a foot of slush would hardly slow down a free-falling climber and that the only practical effect would probably be that the picket would fall and hit me on the head. Such is the potential for self-delusion that I found myself following Chris' instructions with enough confidence to pause at the snow bridge and contemplate the depths.

At nightfall, we sat in the tundra to pull off crampons and harnesses. Thirty minutes later, we were snoring away, damp but warm. The wind hammered the Bibler down on onto our heads, but it mattered not at all. We dreamed of chocolate-covered raisins and cheeseburgers.

Ridge Running North of Eklutna Lake

Tim Kelley

Around 8:00 in the morning of Sunday, September 22, the fog over Anchorage burned off to reveal a crystal clear fall day. I did have plans to work on my house, but decided that a day like this dictated hills before hammer, so I headed to Eklutna to hammer some hills.

I decided to traverse the ridges north of Eklutna Lake from the trailhead to Bold Creek valley and back, a rough estimate of the distance being 25 miles. There are nine peaks on this route ranging from 5080 feet to 5745 feet. Six are official peaks, the others are sub-peaks, having less than 500 feet vertical separation. Though these peaks have been climbed for millennia by four-legged mountaineers, most rarely see human traffic.

From the trailhead I headed up the Twin Peak trail until it broke out of treeline, from there I headed to Peak 5450. Skier types, like myself, consider peaks like this great training mountains. With a constant grade and solid footing you are able to maintain a high, constant heart rate and a good burn in the quadriceps. An hour and a half from the parking lot I was on the windswept top. I found two cairns but no sign of the Army rations pepper can that gave the name "Pepper Peak."

Following hunter's footprints to 5080, I then ascended Peak 5455. Here I found steel cable remnants and an old steel pipe (anyone know the history of this?). Heading east, I descended and then climbed Peak 5285. There was no cairn here but I'm sure hunters have passed this way before.

A series of sheep-engineered sidewalks allowed rapid ridge-running despite strong gusts from the east. I found a cairn on sub-peak 5385 on my way to Peak 5732 which forms the head of Goat Creek valley. The last mile of scrambling to the summit kept me entertained with wicked wind blasts coming from the Knik valley. The winds would scatter small rocks around and blinding termination dust spindrift would cease progress at times. At the top I searched for but found no cairn. I built one and dropped an orange juice bottle register in it.

From the top I quickly descended east to a col where I hid behind a rock for a respite from the wind, to eat and rehydrate. I had been going for 4 1/2 hours, the winds were pretty bad but the cloud ceiling was above Bold Peak at 8000 to 9000 feet. Visibility was good so I decided to continue.

From the col I followed old bear tracks SE to the top of the ridge and then SW to a small pile of rubble, sub sub-peak 5420. SW of here is a point on the ridge marked 5191. This point is referenced in the Scree by Tony Bockstahler (see July, 1970). I didn't head toward it, instead I made a small cairn and headed SE to Peak 5430.

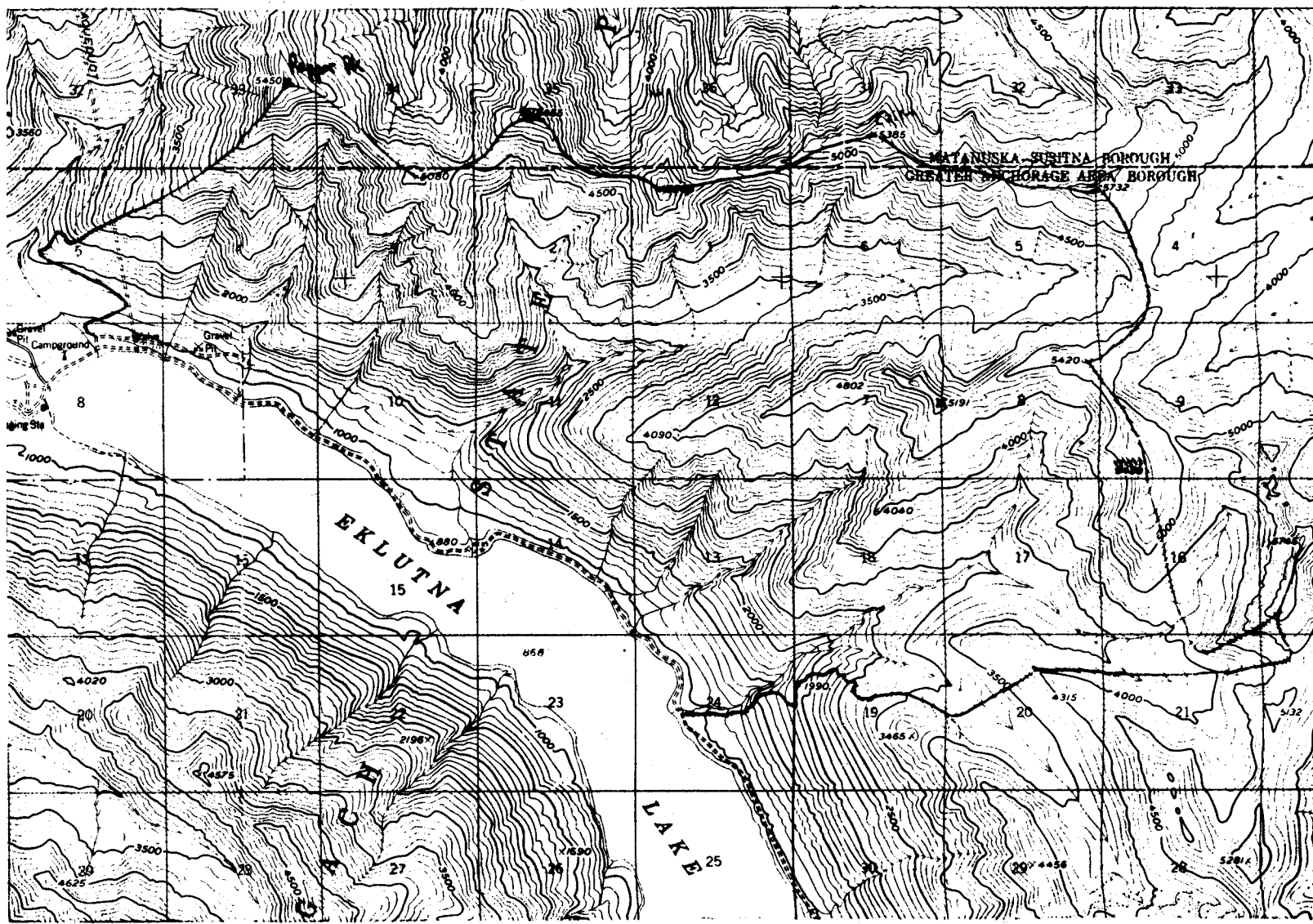
On this peak's flat summit the wind was really arching over it. I thought my lips were going to be sandblasted off by gravel and graupel. I tossed a few rocks together on the high point of the summit ridge and staggered SE into the wind. "This wind is too much, I'm out of here," I said to myself, and descended into the valley N of Bold Creek. From here there are good views of solifuction lobes on Peak 5745.

Lower in the valley the wind diminished, but with Peak 5745 so close I decided to buck the blasts one more time. From the valley floor I scrambled standard Chugach crud for 1500 feet to the ridgetop. Near the 5500-foot level it was interesting to find a band of rounded riverbed rocks. On top of the

ridge I again had to contend with the gusts whipping out of Hunter valley. Following the ridge 1/2 mile N, I reached the summit. I found no cairn so I built one and left another OJ bottle register.

Heading S I grabbed a scree slope and pedaled back to the valley floor. Going W I crossed over the ridge into Bold Creek valley and descended the old jeep trail to the Eklutna Road. I met some sheep hunters who said that the night before while camped below Bold Peak, williwaws had been playing with their tent. the micro-bursts would completely flatten their tent and then lift it off the ground - with them inside!

Five miles of road-running (they've sure done a lot of work on the road) brought me back to the trailhead 10 hours from when I started. With a wind-reddended face and a body trashed to contentment I was happy to chalk up another day of Chugach ridge-running.



Gates of the Arctic

Don Hansen

Saturday the 20th of July, ten of us including: Bill Wakeland, Jim and Julie Sprott, Fred Kampfer, Gill and Breck Tostervin, Kathryn Engle, Charles Lane, Stan Aursund and I flew or drove to Fairbanks and took Frontier Air to Bettles and chartered a Beaver with Brooks Range Aviation owner and pilot, Steve Ruff for Chimney Lake in the Gates of the Arctic National Park. It took most of the day to fly the ten of us in to the lake in two trips and after setting up camp at Chimney Pass just above the lake some of us explored a little near the pass and a few others tried fishing in the lake. Breck caught one northern pike for dinner. The following day, Sunday, under overcast skies, we headed down the pass for Clear River and traveled on gravel bars along the river past the forks of Holmes Creek and just past Pinnyanaktuk Creek toward a pass that would lead us to Marshall Lake and Doonerak Mountain. The fog lifted and patches of sunshine began to appear. We spotted several sheep on the ridge that connects with Midnight Mt. We decided to turn around here rather than lose several hundred feet elevation to get to the lake. On the map this looks like it would be the easiest route to the summit but probably above our climbing abilities with the exception of Jim Sprott. We did not bring a rope long on the trip.

On Tuesday we broke camp and headed upriver for St. Patrick's Creek and followed up the creek valley along gravel bars with some bushwacking since the creek was high and multiple stream crossings would have meant wet boots to take advantage of gravel bars on either side of the creek. We found a great tundra campsite where the creek forks, overlooking the valley below. The following day a number of us climbed up Wein Mt. overlooking the valley while others relaxed in the sunshine. We had great views of the upper spires of Doonerak's west face from the ridge leading to the summit of Wein Mt. Bill, Jim and I scrambled up a scree slope to the lower part of the ridge leading the summit Wein from that point and examined the impressive west face of Doonerak before scrambling along the ridge to the summit of Wein Mt., from which we could see the west fork of the Koyukuk River, the Summit Lake pick-up point, Amawk, Apoon and other mountains mentioned in Robert Marshall's book. The view from Wein Mt. was one of the main highlights of the trip. The following day we headed up to St. Patrick's Creek Pass and the two lakes we could see from Wein. Bill mentioned that we might want to set up our next camp at a pretty turquoise lake located to the east of the pass, which he and his son had found on the 1983 club trip. Bill, Jim, Julie, Stan, Kathryn and I hiked over to the lake and decided it would be a great campsite out of the winds that prevail in the pass. After the afternoon grunt up a higher plateau over to this higher azure lake, surrounded by a ridge on three sides, we set up a camp that would last us for the following three nights.

The next day a number of us climbed up Amawk Mt. under partly sunny, overcast, and foggy weather hoping for good views of Apoon Mt. to the east but mother nature kept this mountain in the clouds until long in the afternoon after we had descended the ridge leading down Amawk Mt. After returning to camp we found out that we had some trouble with marauding ground squirrels that had chewed on Charles' boots and were searching through our camp for whatever goodies they could carry away. Charles had other bad luck when he accidentally pushed the trigger on his bear counter-assault canister while scrambling up the ridge in back of the lake spraying cayenne pepper over part of his shirt and pants. the following day Bill and I climbed the ridge above the lake and scrambled along and over interesting but rotten rock and took pictures of the lake and camp. Jim caught up with us as we followed the ridge. Stan took a different route up the ridge and so did Breck, Gill and Charles who slid down a snow slope from the notch in the ridge on the far side of the lake. Julie and

Kathryn went part way up the ridge while Fred stayed in camp and kept the squirrels at bay.

We headed down the other side of the pass and Amawk Creek for the Koyukuk in the rain and set up a welcome camp in a stand of cottonwoods on the left side of Amawk Creek where it meets the river. We built a fire on the gravel bar next to camp and dried out our clothing when the rain stopped and the sun came out late that afternoon and evening. The next day most of us went on a day hike down the Koyukuk to Bombardment Creek with views of Doonerak's north face. Breck and Gill tried fishing along the way but had no luck in the high and fast moving water. The following morning was sunny as we headed up the river to Alinement Creek and our next campsite on a knoll just above the creek and near the lower end of the Koyukuk canyon. We spent three nights here before heading up to Summit Lake. Bill and I explored the lower part of the Koyukuk canyon while others caught grayling in Alinement Creek or climbed up the ridge in back of camp and on the following day Bill, Stan and I climbed up a nameless mountain north of camp (about 6800 feet) the highest point we reached on our trip but smoke-haze from fires burning in the interior of the state masked our views. The next day we headed for Summit Lake, our pick-up point. The first mile we hiked along the river edging our way on rocks and through some brush where a trail leads us past a canyon fork on the right side of the main canyon to a switchback game trail that climbs steeply up to a bench on the other side of this canyon which I named the "Jaws of Death" after its sharp, jagged black rocks. The first mile along the river after Alinement Creek is the route to take because it avoids having to drop into the black side canyon and climbing up the other side. The one-mile climb up from the river to the bench and upper plateau was a grunt but was less tiring than the five miles of tundra tussocks to Summit Lake. We set up our camp on the west side of the lake about 150 yards away from an old hunters' shack built before this area became a park. The last day before our pick-up on August 3, some of us hiked up to a lake above the pass as the clouds moved through the pass and the others relaxed and played cards. Saturday, the fog and rain moved in and fog was down to the lake surface despite the wind. No weather for flying. Finally, by late afternoon, the fog began to lift but the wind blew stronger as the weather continued to move through the pass. At about 9:00 pm someone spotted but could not hear the Beaver coming up the pass from the Koyukuk. Steve Ruff, the pilot, ferried five of us to Long Lake down the Koyukuk to be brought back to Bettles in a 185 and quickly came back for the rest of us within one hour before the weather went down again and flew us back to Bettles that night. We all caught the early afternoon flight on Sunday on Frontier Air to Fairbanks one day later than planned.

MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER MEETING

Karen Cafmeyer conducted the meeting, beginning with the introduction of new members and guests. Over 100 people were on hand.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Money Market	-	\$3285.19
Checking Acct	-	584.47
Petty Cash	-	52.10
Total		<u>\$3921.76</u>

NEW BUSINESS

Pete Sennhauser advocated that the club take a stand against the capture of local Dall sheep for the zoo. No motions were made.

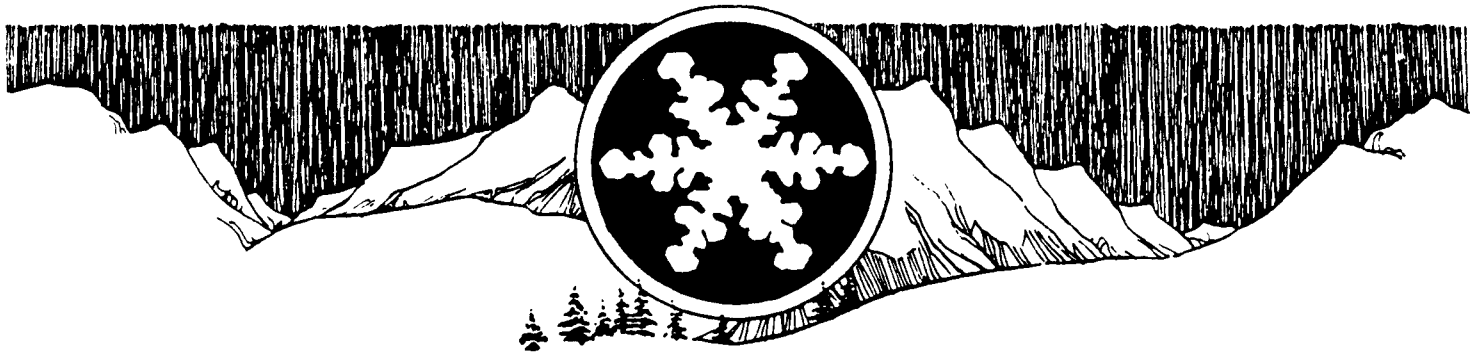
Election Results:

President - Dan O'Haire
 Vice President - Joel Babb
 Treasurer - Chris Tomsen
 Secretary - Pam Bohl
 Board of Directors - Dolly Lefever, Paul Berryhill, Don Hansen

Respectfully Submitted,

Mindy Baum

PLEASE POST



ALASKA MOUNTAIN SAFETY CENTER, INC. and the ALASKA AVALANCHE SCHOOL

1991-92 SCHEDULE

Date	No./Name Workshop	Location	Cost*
1/4	1. Avalanche Hazard Recognition Workshop	U of A, Anchorage, Library, R. 118	\$ 18
1/31-2/2	2. Backcountry Aval. Haz. Eval. & Resc. Techniques	Hatcher Pass, Talkeetna Mts.	\$170
2/7(e)-9	3. Level II, Aval. Hazard Evaluation Refresher	Talkeetna-Kenai Mts.	\$115
2/16	4. Avalanche Hazard Recognition Workshop	U of A, Anchorage, Library, R. 118	\$ 18
2/21-23	5. Backcountry Aval. Haz. Eval. & Resc. Techniques	Hatcher Pass, Talkeetna Mts.	\$170
2/28(e), 29	6. Level II, Steep Terrain Aval. Haz. Evaluation	Anch.(e), Talkeetna, Chugach, or Kenai Mts.	\$ 50
2/29-3/1	7. The Art of Snow Shelter Construction	Hatcher Pass, Talkeetna Mts.	\$ 75
3/7-9	8. Backcountry Aval. Haz. Eval. & Resc. Techniques	Hatcher Pass, Talkeetna Mts.	\$170**
3/10(e), 3/12-15	9. Safe Glacier Travel & Crevasse Rescue Workshop	Anch.(e), Matanuska Glacier, Chugach Mts.	\$205**
4/10-12	10. Technical Mountaineering Skills Workshop	Turnagain Arm, Chugach Mts.	\$180
Open	Custom Workshops for your Organization	Open	Open

Abbreviation: (e)= evening session

* Cost does not include required reading materials, food, or travel but in some cases, does include accommodations (see below).

**The dates of these workshops coincide with the University of Alaska's and the Anchorage public school system's spring break.

Release of Liability Agreement

I, _____, am aware that mountaineering sports (including rock, snow and ice climbing, mountaineering and ski mountaineering) are hazardous activities. I wish to participate and/or receive instruction in these activities with the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc., ("MCA"). I have full knowledge of the dangers involved, and agree to accept any and all risks of injury or death that may occur.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

Giving Up My Legal Rights

By signing this Agreement, I agree to give up for myself and for my heirs, certain legal rights which I may have in the event I become injured or killed while participating or receiving instructions in mountaineering sports with MCA. I am giving up my legal rights against MCA and my fellow participants in MCA activities. As used in this Agreement, the word MCA shall mean the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc., and all of its leaders, instructors, guides, assistant guides, officers, and directors.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

My Promise Not To Sue

I agree that I will not sue, or otherwise make any claim against MCA or my fellow participants in MCA activities for injury, death or damage to me or my property which occurs in the course of my participation or instruction in mountaineering sports.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

My Release of Liability

I also agree to release and discharge MCA and my fellow participants in MCA activities from all actions, claims, or demands, both for myself and for my heirs, dependents, and/or personal representative, for injury, death or damage to me in the course of my participation or instruction in mountaineering sports.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

My Promise to Indemnify

I agree to pay all costs and expenses, including attorney's fees and court costs, that MCA may incur as a consequence of any legal action arising out of injury, death or damage to me or to someone else as a result of my conduct.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

My Consent to Medical Treatment

I consent to any hospital care or medical or surgical diagnosis or treatment which may be necessary as a result of my participation in activities with MCA. I also understand and agree I am solely responsible for all applicable charges for such medical treatment, including evacuation and/or rescue cost.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

I understand that the MCA requires that I execute this Agreement as a condition of participating in mountaineering sports with MCA. I also understand that all the terms of this agreement are binding upon me, my relatives, heirs, dependents, and/or personal representatives.

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THIS AGREEMENT AND FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS CONTENTS. I AM AWARE THAT THIS IS A BINDING, LEGAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN ME AND MCA AND I SIGN IT OF MY OWN FREE WILL.

Dated: _____ Signature: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if under 19): _____

Accepted for MCA by: _____ Dated: _____

MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

OFFICERS

BOARD

President	Dan O'Haire	561-1141	Tom Choate	333-5309
Vice-President	Joel Babb	688-3885	Don Hansen	243-7184
Secretary	Chris Tomsen	428-2250	Dolly Lefever	243-7027
Treasurer	Pam Bohl	688-3885	Paul Berryhill	248-6271
			Karen Cafmeyer	345-7546

Annual membership dues: Single \$10.00 Family \$15.00
Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the treasurer at the MCA address.
Please sign and mail the club waiver found on the reverse side of this page and include it and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to receive your card.

SCREE is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles and notes submitted for publication and other communication related to the newsletter should be mailed to my address at 3324 Lee St. #2, Anchorage, Alaska 99504. Articles should be received by the 25th of the month for the following month's issue.

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be "camera-ready" and pre-paid. Your cooperation will be appreciated. Willy Hersman, Editor, 338-5132.

DUPLICATION: Mark Findlay

MAILING: P. Berryhill, D. Willworth