



NOVEMBER 1997

A Publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska

Volume 40 Issue 11

Box 102037, Anchorage, Alaska 99510

NOVEMBER MEETING

Wednesday

November 19, 7:30 pm

Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets

Downtown Anchorage

Slide Show: T.B.A.

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

- Nov 23 Winner Creek
Chugach Mnts. Class B. Backcountry ski/
climb in the Girdwood area.
Leader: Tom Choate 333-5309
- Dec 20 Flattop
Western Chugach. Class C. Annual solstice
sleepout. Overnight gig. Most appropriate
shelter depends on snow, weather. Only
guarantee: a long night. Bring headlamp/
flashlight/torch/candle/night vision glasses/
search lamp/beacon/bag-o-fireflies or whatever
lights it up for you.
Leader: none designated

TRIP REPORTS

Big Ice on Triangle Peak



On October 8th, Matt Porter and I spontaneously climbed an 800-foot ice route on the north wall of Triangle Peak (5450). Though we were hoping to climb lesser routes that we had spotted a few days before, a couple of factors otherwise determined our fate. First, the weather, temperature, and ice conditions were phenomenal, and second, I was leaving for the Canadian Rockies on October 11. "Well Evan, I could always come back here and do it with someone else," Matt suggested sympathetically. Any climber can guess what was going through my head next. "I guess we better have a look then shouldn't we," I replied with a smile. Matt gave a nod of agreement and we were off.

As one approaches the north wall of Triangle Peak from the South Fork trail, he will notice two



prominent gashes cutting through the face. South of these lines sits a prominent rock buttress which resembles a large nose. Our line cut up a steep gully between the gashes and the nose, and began with what looked like a 45-degree snow ramp, we scrambled on rock, kicked steps, then found ourselves front-pointing on hard ice and this was only the approach! Nearing the first pitch of the true route, we felt an ominous vibration every time we swung a tool. Gingerly moving toward the rock to find a safe belay, I realized our approach had taken us over a hollowed-out bergschrund. I was spooked and encouraged Matt to take the first lead. He eagerly accepted, sunk a screw in the lip of the schrund and moved out above the abyss.

Thin and delicate moves led to a steep section of verglas. "Good thing we brought the rock pro," Matt said as he pounded a spectre behind a flake. He continued up sparsely protected, but good ice, until he found a bomber two-screw belay. As I followed the pitch, I looked around reveling in the beauty of our position. Soon my fears and apprehension gave way to the concentration of my tool and crampon placements.

We quickly exchanged the rack and I headed up the second pitch. All went quickly until I encountered a 30-foot pillar which was thin and rotten. Fortunately, the rock to the right was solid and split with cracks. A stopper, a cam, and two spectres later, I stepped above the difficulties and looked for a belay. I girth-hitched a moss clod equalized with a stopper and brought up Matt. With only one rope between us we began to realize the seriousness of our days objective, for retreating now would be very difficult. We discussed it briefly and decided to push on. Somehow we knew it was our day.

Matt led up the moderate third pitch and established a good anchor beneath another nasty vertical section. Again we wasted no time at the belay and I started up. My protection was bad, a slung icicle and two psychological pound-ins. Even then though, I felt confident groveling in the inch-thick ice, twenty feet above my last piece. Finally, I sunk my first screw of the day, then ran it out to a beautiful belay beneath the final pitch. I brought Matt up and we took a short break, for the next section was obviously the crux. A steep twenty-foot section led to an amphitheater from which a 100-foot pillar flowed, making the final pitch quite spectacular. We put off the inevitable until we began to shiver. I handed Matt the rack, gave him a slap on the back, and he was on his way.

Running the first fifty feet out on excellent ice,

Matt finally stopped and pounded in a bomber piece. The pitch steepened to eighty degrees and ten feet later he put another screw in. The climb became vertical and Matt finally slowed. Fifteen feet higher, he struggled to get a screw to bight. "All this darn rock has blunted my screws," he gasped as he hung from his tools. Suddenly, he pulled it all together and moved ten feet higher to a small ledge. In utter relief, he placed a screw with two hands and prepared to tackle the last 20 feet of the pillar. As Matt neared the final bulge I saw the all too familiar flailing of arms, tools, and crampons. Just as it seemed as if he might roast, he pulled over the lip and hooted with joy as he secured another anchor. As I followed and looked down beneath my feet, I could only smile at the feeling of climbing such a nice route in such beautiful country.

Though the ice climb was finished, we still had 1200 feet of moderate ground to cover before we hit the summit and traversed the flanks of the mountain back to the trail. Two easy rock and snow pitches led to a spine on the north face where we continued to a running belay for 500 feet. Noticing that the hour was getting late, we unroped and moved toward a steep west-facing gully. After climbing up hard 50-degree snow we hit the summit plateau. As we neared the top ravens circled above us, almost as if to congratulate us. To the south, Mt. Redoubt shone brilliantly, to the north Denali and Foraker were capped with a pink lenticular, and to the east Carpathian and Isthmus became draped in the shadow of the coming darkness. We looked at each other, smiled exhausted smiles, and headed down into the Alaskan night.

Triangle Peak, north face, grade IV, 5.7 WI4,
18 hours R.T.

A Byron Trip Report

by Dahr Jamail



Byron Peak stands an humble 4700 feet near Portage, the highest peak in Byron Valley, close to Portage Lake. On a brisk fall morning, MCA members Jim McDonough, Ted Embs and I decided to enjoy a nice climb up the exposed west ridge leading to the summit. Having been to this area before, I knew that camping at the col at around 2700 feet would save us time and energy for the long mixed climb up the ridge the following day; for the sketchiness of this ridge would be increased greatly since we would be doing it with relatively fresh snow and ice.



We hiked up Byron Valley on Saturday with full packs, knowing we would utilize a rope, ice and rock pro on the ridge, in addition to our camping gear on the col. I'd been turned back before on this peak due to lack of hardware; this time I was determined not to have this happen again. This time we brought the sink!

After hiking up the scree and talus slopes lower down, we gained the lower reaches of Byron Glacier and happily cramponed up for the more stable footing the glacier travel provided. The trek across the glacier was straightforward and a nice "break" after the loose rock. Aside from keeping ones eye out for crevasses, daydreaming was a nice preoccupation from the slog up with the heavy pack. Once atop the lower glacier, we regained the loose rocky talus and scree, as there is a trail which leads up parallel to a waterfall. Ted and myself opted to follow the trail, while Jim had had enough of the loose rock and chose to ice climb up the gradual waterfall, albeit with a full pack. Nothing like a little ice climbing with a full pack to get the calves pumped! We met above the falls, then proceeded to hike up the rocks towards the upper glacier where we again donned our crampons. Here a short hike led us up to a small bergschrund at the base of a 500-foot couloir which leads up to the col.

A prior attempt on this peak found this particular couloir a real mess consisting of 25-50 degree slopes of absolutely abominable rock which tends to crumble in your hand, and covered with a silty stream of water sliding down atop the mud and rock mix. We had deftly named this portion "the colon," since previously we'd scrambled awkwardly up this with numbed hands and caked in mud and silt. This time, however, it was all ice and snow. Leaving our crampons on, we pseudo ice-climbed it, carefully front-pointing our way up the steeper sections until we topped out. With full packs, I felt as though I had "popeye calves" once on top.

Here we pitched camp on a nice site, sheltered by the wind by the top of a glacier to the south, and the lip of the col to the north. With our two tents nestled together, we huddled near the stove, brewing hot drinks, refilling our water bottles, and cooking a smorgasbord of dinner. As night fell the winds increased, and the temperature dropped into the single digits, so we crawled into our bags for some sleep.

Sunday found clear and calm skies. We brewed a quick breakfast, broke camp, left a cache of tents, bags, pads, and at 10:30 A.M. headed up the ridge with all our hardware and lunch. The frozen

ground was covered with random patches of snow, which grew in size as we gained altitude. We made good time up to the steeper regions of the ridge, where the rope came out for some belaying up some steeper sections. I had climbed this without the rope, and Jim asked me what my "sketch-o-meter" was reading as I did so. A valid question, for with most of this day, the run outs on either side of the ridge tended to be quite steep, with over 1000 feet vertical on both sides. Since my "sketchometer" began to give me higher readings, from the first belay on we used the rope much more.

Continuing up the ridge it consisted of loose rock, snow, and ice patches. Each step was carefully placed until we reached a large dip in the ridge. It drops about 50 feet down to the top of a couloir which is the top reaches of a hanging glacier. To continue on the ridge would entail climbing up a short but nearly vertical rock face, or traversing right around crumbly, 70-degree snow covered rock with a 1500-foot runout, or roping up and dropping down the couloir to circumnavigate this section, which is what we chose to do. Down the couloir and then traversing across it a bit, found us placing some ice protection and doing a running belay up another couloir to regain the ridge. The ridge here leads steeply up a slope of crumbly rock and snow. I led up this section, scrambling with the rope to set up a belay near some large boulders about 100 feet up. My right hand was soaked once I reached the rocks, so I slung a rock, set up the belay, and then pulled off my glove to discover a red hand. Adrenaline had masked the pain as I'd cut my thumb open on a rock and blood filled my glove. Once I belayed Jim up, I administered some impromptu first aid on myself as he belayed Ted. The exposed climbing was fun, and the views superb as the Wrangells were visible beyond Prince William Sound to the east, and the Chugach Mountains stood clear, white and prominently in the sun to the north. The ridge dropped off steeply 2000 feet to the north, down to the Byron Glacier; and to the south it fell roughly 1500 feet in a snow, ice and rock face.

Once above this rock we climbed up the corniced spine, hopping across boulders which were surprisingly loose to another platform of snow. Here I climbed up a steep section of jumbled boulders, hoping for more solid holds. Typical of the entire ridge, however, were more loose rocks, some the size of a queen sized mattress which swayed and rocked as I scrambled over them. I belayed Jim up to what we'd hoped was close to the summit. Upon finding that the ridge continued on for a good ways, Ted had had enough of the high "sketch-o-meter" readings, and opted to relax on the platform and enjoy the views whilst Jim and myself went for the summit.

Both of us had previously been denied on this peak, so we had much more motivation to summit, so as not to have to return.

The ridge from here led up more gradually, and after 30 minutes of brisk kick stepping up the steep snow slopes, and staying to the right side of the cornice, we finally attained the summit. With a hug of satisfaction, we snapped several pictures and grabbed a snack while being delighted in the views of Carpathian, the Wrangells, the Sound, and the Chugach. Summits are often fleeting, and being allowed to briefly visit this one was a gift made all the sweeter after previous attempts that had come up short.

We had reached the summit at 4:45 P.M., 15 minutes before our turnaround time of 5:00 P.M. Thus, after our short break atop Byron, we quickly headed back down. With the rope between us, we reversed order and I followed Jim back down to Ted on the platform. He was, needless to say, rather chilled after waiting sedentarily for us for almost an hour. He roped in with us, and we continued on down the ridge. We had to rappel the steeper section below the pinnacle, just before the couloir. The sketchometer was again in use, as the only suitable rock we could find to sling only held the sling off its side, with a small notch as our insurance against a failed anchor. As Jim and I rappelled, Ted had the dubious job of staring at the webbing, to alert us of any slippage. We were careful to rappel without making any big jerks or jumps on the rope, to allow the webbing to hold steady. Not a practice I intend on using regularly.

Atop the couloir we set up another similar anchor and rappelled down into the steep couloir as far as the rope would allow. It got us below a steep, crumbly section of rock and snow, which was our primary concern. The sun had by now dropped below the horizon, and it was growing colder. This brought out our headlamps, and once past the couloir we unroped and began to amble down the ridge towards the col.

It was now almost completely dark, so to save our headlamps we only turned them on for brief periods to scope out the upcoming terrain, then turned them back off; at this point it was 8:00 P.M., and we knew we had a long night ahead of us. The moon slowly rose to the east, and aided in our route-finding and battery conservation practice.

We returned to a section of steeper rock we'd belayed up, and I led our weary team down a gully and began traversing below the steeper rock. Unfortunately, it was shelf rock covered in snow and ice,

and the runout was basically straight down to the glacier 1000 feet below. I had that empty feeling in my stomach, due to slippery footing and my headlamp shining down into a void of black below. After Jim experienced a slip and arrest, we turned back and climbed precariously back to the ridge and set up another rappel. This earned me great kudos from both of them; I attempted to lighten the mood by assuming the blame and jokingly offering that sometimes I couldn't route find my way out of a paper bag. No one laughed, as they took my joke as a statement of fact rather than the failed attempt at humor which it was. I swallowed my pride and rappelled down off of another sketchy anchor.

Having been released from the continually exposed and sketchy upper portion of the ridge, our hearts lightened some during our hike back to the col. By now we were out of food and water, and running simply on a strong desire for a hot shower. It was now after 10:00 P.M., but we opted to fire up the stove to melt some snow, and dug through our cache to pool our food and have a desperate feast for our empty stomachs. After eating, drinking, and resting, we loaded up and began to descend "the colon." The name had by now been amended to "colon hydrotherapy", since water and ice were an essential factor to this gully. This name stuck, along with several other four-letter expletives as we down-climbed this icy trough. Upon reaching the upper ice, we set up another anchor and rappelled down the 50-degree ice. During the day and with more energy, we could have easily down-climbed this section; but exhausted, hungry, and in the dark with failing headlamps, we took our time and used the rope as much as possible.

After this rappel we slowly down-climbed the remainder of the gully, and breathed sighs of relief as we hiked down the upper glacier. We took turns flashing on our headlamps to scope out crevasses, and weaved our way down to the waterfall. Tempers began to snap as we periodically slipped on loose rock and spent much time on our keisters. I was made acutely aware of the fact that several times this day I had already grossly misjudged how much time both the climb, and the down-climb would take. The thought of a ivy was mentioned at one time or another by each of us, but we kept on plugging along. We slowly made our way towards the lower glacier. Ted, chasing thoughts of a warm shower and good food, bolted out to lead us the rest of the way.

Along the way we were treated to grand displays of the Northern Lights, and Ted was excited at seeing them for his first time. The greenish/white curtains of dancing light swayed across the cold sky, with stars behind it. Tired as we all were, we found



contentment in this as we paused to take them in, and turned back to gaze upon the silhouette of Byron behind us. We refilled our water bottles in the stream, and made double time along the good trail to the car. It was 3:30 A.M., making this a 17-hour day and the end of the second longest day of climbing I'd ever experienced. We all dropped our packs at the car and let out insane howls of gratification as we unlaced our steaming plastic boots. We later all agreed it was one of the most enjoyable and varied days of climbing we'd ever had; complete with moonlight rappelling, ice climbing, glacier travel, mixed climbing, rock climbing and some nice camping. Yet it was also one which we have no need to repeat for quite a while!

ADZE



Request for Information

We are writing a book about climbing and flying in the Tordrillo Mountains 1957 - 1997 (Mt. Spurr, Torbert, Gerdine, etc.) We believe we know about almost all climbs there since the 1950s from accounts in Scree, the American Alpine Journal and from notes we have been keeping about the area since the 1960s.

If you think we might not know about your climb or the climb of someone you know, we would greatly appreciate your telling us about it. We want to know about all trips to the Tordrillos, not just the ones that reached the top of something. And accounts in newspapers or other publications.

Also, if you have any absolutely spectacular or unusual photographs or slides, including ones with people, we would like to see them. If used, full credit would be given.

Please call or write:

Rod Wilson
361 Egavik Dr.
Anchorage, AK 99503
563-7010
563-7015 fax

Paul Crews, Sr.
2300 Teleqana Dr.
Anchorage, AK 99517
243-8857

Lowell Thomas, Jr.
10800 Hideaway Lake Dr.
Anchorage, AK 99516
346-3468

For Sale

North Face Expedition 25 tent. NEW! with gear loft and footprint. \$425.00. Contact Wayne @ 522-6354 evenings or 563-3989 work.

MINUTES

OCTOBER MEETING

We had a very full evening with elections, awards, a gear swap and a slide show! We had five new members introduce themselves.

TREASURY REPORT

Kirk Towner reported that to date we have \$7,486.29 in revenue and \$6,403.79 in expenses. See the October Scree for a more detailed account.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Hiking and Climbing

Steve Gruhn gave a brief report of upcoming trips.

Huts

Mark Miraglia reported that a rope needs to go to the Mint Hut, the Scandinavian Hut needs materials, Box Den needs a new door and the Bomber Hut outhouse needs to be flown in.

Parks Advisory

Scott Bailey gave a report on an Eagle River trailhead parking gate.

Training

Aze said thanks to all leaders, helpers, trainers and participants for this last year. We all thank **Aze** for his time and commitment as Chairman of Training for this last year. (The club is now seeking a replacement for this fun, exciting and ever-so-rewarding position).

OLD BUSINESS

Kirk presented awards to the **photo contest** winners present.

NEW BUSINESS

Joe Kurtak requested and was approved to spend \$200.00 on a book order. We all thank **Joe** very much for four years of meritorious service as **Club Librarian**. (The club is also seeking a replacement for this unbelievably mind expanding positions).

Rod Wilson spoke again about a book on the Tordrillo Range.



Mark Gruenwald, the owner of the **Snowbird Hut**, is interested in disposing of the hut. The club is considering the offer.

Elections:

Mark Miraglia, President.
Richard Baranow, Vice-President.
Kirk Towner, Treasurer.
Dawn Groth, Board Member.
Matt Nedom, Board Member.
Dara Lively, Board Member.

(And many thanks to the outgoing officers and board members).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Jonathan Ditto and Charles Lane have taken over the **refreshment duties**.-Thanks guys!

There is a new **management plan** for the Chugach National Forest.

There were **brief announcements** on the Granite Mtn. Chalet Hut, Kincaid Park Paving, and a bulk order on hand and toe warmers. For information on ice climbing at Candyland contact Alaska Railroad Real Estate at 265-2465.

Thank you Richard and Wendy for an excellent slide show, with music even, on the 21 Western Chugach 7,000'ers. We enjoyed the stories, the information and the great pictures. There was a large showing for this event.

Respectfully submitted,
Wayne Todd

Tom's Epitaph

If with every pun I shed,
I were to be punish-ed,
I would see my puniesh head,
Stuck inside a puny shed.



Wanna Climb Ice at Candyland? Listen Up.

Willy Hersman

It is unlawful trespass to walk within 100 feet of the center of the railroad tracks without permission. This is true along the entire rail line, and puts all of the Candyland Ice Climbs in a no-trespass zone. There is good news and bad news concerning this dilemma for ice-climbers.

Good News.

The Alaska Railroad recognizes that climbers want to enjoy the pick-sucking ice which cascades down those easily accessed cliffs adjacent to the railroad. Permission to do so legally is within your grasp. All you need to do is go down to the Alaska Railroad Headquarters and obtain a permit, free of charge, good for the rest of the climbing season. The address is listed below. Just go to the third floor, real estate office and tell the secretary you want a permit for access to that area. Alaska Railroad just wants you to sign a waiver and give you a list of safety rules to follow. Basically, keep off the tracks, except to cross, like anyone with minimal education, who has seen what a locomotive can do, can figure out pretty easily.

Bad News.

You cannot legally climb there without the permit. Each member of your party **MUST** have a permit. Doesn't matter if you have one and left it at home; doesn't matter if you have one and it is in the car up on the highway; doesn't matter if only one dude in your group was lying when he said he has it in his pack. If even one person in your group is asked for his permit and can't cough it up, then **everyone** in the group forfeits their permit for the season. So I'm told.

Candyland is a great place to practice and hone skills with a wide choice of routes, good anchors for descent and south-facing exposure for short, cold days. If this experiment doesn't work out, it's over. Think you can just rap down from the trees, avoid the tracks, and get by without a permit? Think again. The permit is needed within 100 feet of those tracks.

I have asked a Railroad representative to come to the November meeting, armed with permits. It will be a good time to get one, and hear what he has to say. Spread the word.

Alaska Railroad Headquarters
327 Ship Creek Ave.
3rd floor, Real Estate Office
open 8:00 - 5:00 weekdays





Addendum to November 1997 SCREE

Slide Show: Michelle Potkin will show a movie of the 1995 climb of Aconcagua by the Women Survivors of Breast Cancer group.

Hiking & Climbing Schedules

- November 22 Harp Mountain to North Fork of Eagle River.
Richard Baranow/Wendy Sanem Easy hike over
unforgettable terrain - River crossing and car shuttling
required. 694-1500 for information.
- November 28-30 MINT HUT Kirk Towner 344-5424
Bring your own Turkey.....
- December 6 MCA Beacon Training. 12 noon @ Bicentennial Park Mile 1
Campbell Airstrip Road...Call Dawn @ 338-0554 to register
or questions.

Officers

President **Mark Miraglia** **338-0705**
Vice-President **Richard Baranow** **694-1500**
Secretary **Vacant**
Treasurer **Kirk Towner** **344-5424**

Board

Dave Storkel **746-0510**
Tom Choate **333-5309**
Matt Nedom **278-3648**
Dawn Groth **338-0554**
Dara Lively **345-9294**

Annual membership dues: Single \$10.00 Family \$15.00 (one *Scree* per family)

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the treasurer at the MCA address below. If you want a membership card, please sign the club waiver found on the reverse side of this page and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter, or have questions about your membership, contact the club treasurer.

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 3051 Elderberry Dr., Wasilla, Alaska 99654. Articles should be received by the 25th of the month for the following month's issue. Computer diskettes are accepted, or e-mail to mca@alaska.net.

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, 265-6405

MAILING: richard baranow
HIKING & CLIMBING CHAIR: steve gruhn, 344-1219
Web Page: <http://www.alaska.net/~mca>



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