

# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

November 2012

Volume 55 Number 11



### Monthly Meeting:

Wednesday, November 21,  
at 6:30 p.m.

Program: Ross Noffsinger  
will show a video of his  
ascent of Baleful Peak.

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Bounty Peak

Two Men and a Mountain

Knik River (Hunter Creek)  
to Twentymile Ski Traverse

Hiking and Biking With a  
Song In Your Heart

Horn Spire Piercing the Sky

Peak of the Month: Peak 7550

*"Come forth into the light of things.  
Let Nature be your teacher."*

*--William Wordsworth*



# The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

[www.mtnclubak.org](http://www.mtnclubak.org)

*"To maintain, promote and perpetuate the association of persons who are interested in promoting, sponsoring, improving, stimulating and contributing to the exercise of skill and safety in the Art and Science of Mountaineering"*

Join us for our club meetings the third Wednesday of the month at the BP Energy Center, 900 East Benson Boulevard, Anchorage, Alaska  
[www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC\\_map\\_06-04-03.pdf](http://www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC_map_06-04-03.pdf)

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**Cover Photo:** Kathy Still on the summit of Bounty Peak with the high Chugach behind her. Photo by Ben Still.

## November Program

**November 21 (6:30 p.m.):** MCA member Ross Noffsinger will show a video of their ascent of Baleful Peak. For a sample, see <http://youtu.be/MQRs8CJol5c>. Please see the October 2012 Scree for Charlie Sink's detailed write-up on their ascent.

## Article Submission

Text and photography submissions for the Scree can be sent as attachments to [mcascree@gmail.com](mailto:mcascree@gmail.com). Articles should be submitted by the 21<sup>st</sup> of November to appear in the December Scree. Do not submit material in the body of the email. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. If you have a blog, website, video or photo links, send us the link. Cover photo selections are based on portraits of human endeavor in the outdoors. Please submit captions with photos.

## Results of Club Elections in October

Thank you to the past and current board members for their dedication and the many hours they volunteered to keep the club functioning. Congratulations to the new board members and officers:

President	Jayme Mack
Vice-President	Galen Flint
Secretary	Kelley Williams
Treasurer	Seth Weingarten
Past President	Tim Silvers
Member	Greg Encelewski
Member	Charlie Sink
Member	Andy Mamrol
Member	Liz Bennett

## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

**Winter Solstice Flattop Mountain Sleepout:** December 21, 2012. No leader.

Don't forget to check the Meetup site and the Facebook page for last minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

## On-line? – click me



For best viewing of the Scree on a monitor using Adobe Reader, click on 'View' and 'Full Screen.'



Ice climbs viewed during the Knik River to Twentymile ski traverse trip. Photo by Wayne L. Todd.



**Kathy Still (left) and Dave Hart with Troublesome and Hunters Peaks (right) Brittle Peak (center) and Bashful and Baleful Peaks (left). Photos by Ben Still.**

# Bounty Peak

**By Kathy Still**

"It may rain heavily tonight between 8 and 10, but tomorrow will be bluebird." This was Ben's confident statement regarding the weather as we luxuriated in warm freeze-dried meals and the stunning view from our camp at just over 4,000 feet high in an alpine valley overlooking the East Fork of the Eklutna River. Ben Still, Dave Hart, and I had biked around Eklutna Lake, hiked the East Fork Trail, climbed up from the knoll to an old sheep trail that we followed into a gorgeous high valley southwest of Baleful Peak, crossed two streams, and climbed up the other side, finding a nice flat spot with a small lake at which to camp. Ben and Dave had scouted this campsite out a couple of weeks prior, when they had attempted Bounty Peak, but had gotten stormed off the ridge near Booty Peak. I had never been this far back in the

East Fork before, and was happy to have them show me the route. Clouds had been looming over us all day and were darkening to the south, where it looked like it was raining, as we relaxed, ate, and prepared for our climb of Bounty Peak the next day. I was hopeful for blue skies tomorrow, but not as confident as Ben. Dave was hopeful also, but had brought a fat book to read just in case.

When we awoke to dense fog for our predawn start the next morning, I felt really lucky to be with Ben and Dave! We made our way to ridge and along it in heavy fog with Dave's GPS points and both of their memories of the route. The ground was saturated with water that had frozen overnight, but luckily it wasn't too scrambly or exposed. It was so sweet to break on through to the other side of the clouds and find the sun! We continued along the ridge to the top of Booty, now looking down at the clouds. Shortly after Booty, we had to downclimb a steep, loose gully to the east of the ridge and traverse below the ridge proper for a while before regaining it. Then it was just up and down and over to Bounty Peak, which had a bit of routefinding along the last section to the summit. We were able to stay on the ridge proper most of the way, but did traverse along below the ridge a bit on the south side near the summit. .

The views from the summit were spectacular! But we weren't done yet. Next we followed our route back down and up and along the ridge past Booty and to a point below Point 6690 where we had cached our glacier gear. We roped up and wove through crevasses as we crossed the Troublesome Glacier to Hat Trick Mountain. This was well worth the effort for the views of Lake George, Mount Goode, Mount Gannett, and Mount Gilbert. Then on the way back across the glacier we climbed the south side of Peak 6440 and descended the west-facing scree slopes to the glacier and back up to our ridge, and down to camp, where we enjoyed the last rays of sun for the day.



**Dave Hart approaching the summit of Bounty Peak with the Whiteout Glacier below.**



Upon packing early the next morning, Dave confirmed his GPS was no longer with us. It is probably still in the place where we originally gained the ridge from our camp. High clouds had moved back in overnight we were eager to make it out before the slopes got soaked, so no one went back for it. We mostly managed to stay just ahead of the weather, watching the dark clouds moving in from the west until they finally enveloped The Mitre and

showered on us intermittently. As we made our way out, I felt lucky to have been able to climb a new peak during this short August weather window. Thanks, Ben and Dave!



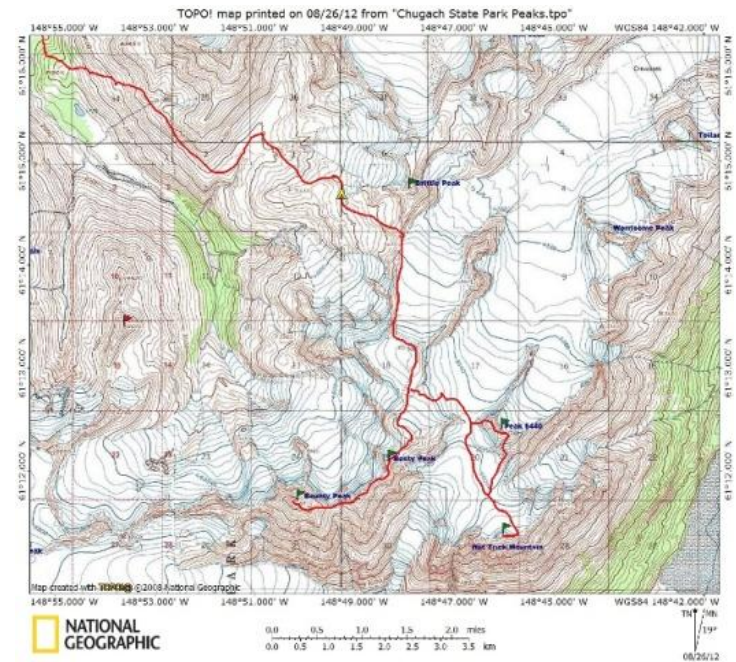
**Ben Still on top of Point 6550 with Bounty Peak behind.**



**Kathy Still approaching the summit of Peak 6440.**



**Kathy Still (left) and Dave Hart ascending the south face of Peak 6440.**





**Marcin Ksok stands near the base of the Icefall.  
Photo by Greg Encelewski.**

## Two Men and a Mountain

**By Marcin Ksok**

How long does it take to get to Mt. Logan? Well, if you are coming from the Lower 48, it takes six days of lonely driving to get to Glennallen, and by that time you are so worn out you consider cancelling the trip and looking for a warm bed and a shower. Luckily for me, Greg Encelewski showed up and lifted my spirits, and the two of us continued to McCarthy. McCarthy at the beginning of May is literally closed. We walked the silent town in search of help in getting our gear to the airport. For those who do not know, the road ends at a foot bridge not crossable by a

car, yet the airport is still at least a mile away. Not bad to walk in sneakers or hiking boots, but we were set up for glacier travel. Lugging our gear in mountaineering boots did not seem inviting, especially since we had to make more than one trip. Of course the first haul could be done in sneakers, but still, we were not excited for the prospects. Luck came our way in a form of a nice local who showed up on a four wheeler. He also had a key to the private car bridge, we loaded up his beat up van and in 15 minutes were setting up the tent on a runway. Just at that moment I remembered a huge block

of cheese left in the car, a walk in the clunky boots was inevitable and it was after nightfall by the time I returned to the tent.

Jay Claus landed his plane at 8:00 a.m. sharp. Here we go, and goodbye to civilization, or so we thought. The weather delayed us at Paul Claus' lodge from April 30<sup>th</sup> to May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Paul did make a daring attempt at some point trying to fly Greg in a Super Cub but they got turned around. In the meantime we were vacationing, sitting around, eating well out of Donna Claus' kitchen and sharing stories. Finally on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, we landed on the Quintino Sella Glacier and made the long slog to base camp proper, about 7 miles away in straight line and 800 feet higher (Due to restrictions Paul is unable to fly into Canada; therefore, he lands on the Alaskan side of the border. Crossing into another country while climbing the peak adds a dimension of excitement, and one can cross the border many times or straddle it while on skis). Our sore shoulders, backs, and legs foreshadowed what was in store for the next couple of weeks – heavy

loads being pulled up the hill by our strength and force of will.

Greg and I have shared many trips together and have been in many snowy and cold places, but never did I feel so far away from civilization and so alone. We two were the only ones on this mountain, the first party so far this climbing season, and it was one of the largest, if not the largest, massif in the world. We were surrounded by snow and glaciers – glaciers with many holes, too many for my comfort, as we were to find out, especially for a lonely two person team. On the other hand, we were blessed by our sole ownership of this great peak, it was all ours to take in and enjoy, we had no trail to follow, no wands, no yellow snow, we got to play by our own rules, make our own progress, blaze our own path.

### **May 4**

Moved up through multiple crevasses to 10,000 feet as the fog descended the King Trench and enveloped us. As visibility dropped to zero, my willingness to risk a fall into one of the holes plummeted, so we stopped.

### **May 5**

We made good progress up the now crevasse free trench to 11,300 feet. Partial sun filled us with hope, yet strong gusts picked up as the tent was being set up. It was just a primer for the next few days. The wind stole a tent bag with one pole in it; luckily they both were retrieved and soon after the gusts died. It was time to do some more work that day, so we carried a load up to 12,250 feet where the cold wind stopped us in our tracks. Unfortunately, it decided to follow us down to the camp and forced a vestibule cooking session.

### **May 6**

Tent-bound, we had to cook inside for the first time, but it will not be the last. The spindrift prevented us from getting outside.



### May 7

It was windy all night, yet at 8:00 a.m. it stopped; therefore, we were able to move again, always staying ahead of the fog, which was creeping up from lower elevations. Significant progress today as we made it to the Col Camp at 13,500 feet and picked up the cache on our way. The strategy was to single carry as much as possible; although hard work, it saved time and we will soon realize that travel time will be sparse on this trip. The only reason we carried to 12,250 feet was the extra daylight and weather we had that day; in turn we lessened the burden during the move to Col Camp. The views in the trench were spectacular; everything was so large there, and the ever impressive King Peak loomed over us, seracs hanging from its flanks. That would be a great objective in itself, a bit different from the slog we were now on. Ahead was the icefall. No easy way presented itself; it would sure be a puzzle. We kept on eyeing it through the fog; twice we had to negotiate it since it was too steep to attempt a single carry, especially that on our first run we would have to find a way. It is said to be the crux of the route; therefore, we were a bit nervous.

### May 8

We were stuck in the tent. Snow, fog, and wind; it seemed like the every-other-day schedule was to be the norm. Reading, talking about food, and we were still in good spirits.

### May 9

Cleared up at 10:00 a.m., so we headed up to decipher the icefall. The initial slope turned out steeper than it looked, but we left the sleds behind to be pulled on the second trip. Therefore, it was not too difficult. On the first attempt my foot went through a hole, on the second we were stopped by a huge crevasse spanning the slope, the same on the third try. Going straight up or right was not going to work; left was the last option (just as Paul told us). We snuck through a hidden gap between a fin and an overhanging wall, gained a small slope on loose

snow, made it through a large trench cut in the middle by a gaper (thankfully it was spanned by good bridges), gained another slope, and voila, open slopes above us. We were both ecstatic; the puzzle was now solved and wanded. We pushed the daylight and cashed at 15,000 feet or so. Back at the tent a great sense of accomplishment was in the air; now the way was marked, allowing us to move in mediocre conditions.



**Crossing the border with King Peak in the background. Photo by Greg Encelewski.**

### May 10 – May 15

Five days of hell. The weather was upon us, not the worst winds I ever experienced but strong enough to keep us inside. Imprisoned, we had to stay in our small cell, cook inside, and wait things out. It was not fun, to say the least. The days and nights blended together, without any physical activity I was not able to sleep well, noise from the tent fabric did not help. Sometimes I would be up until daylight, yet was never tired because even during the day we were half asleep. After reading through all the material, I desperately got

into the New Testament for the first time, too bad the Gospels are all the same. Sometimes I would just lie there in lethargy, my brain between reality and sleep, and then I would sit up for hours, doing nothing, just being. It was Buddhism at its finest, just being in the moment, one long moment. Every morning the vestibule would be filled with spindrift. Greg got up first, so he would dig his way out to the outside world, a world full of wind and snow. We were forced to cook inside, heating up the tent causing the frozen walls to drip, wetting our stuff, sleeping bags were losing their loft, and luckily it was not too cold for us up there, not until the weather cleared later on. At one time Greg spotted two tents below. Not until later did we realize that he was just hallucinating. Not to worry though, I kept hearing music most of the time, just going nuts up there in the storm. On few occasions we had to de-ice the cave and clean off the condensation and the space between body and fly of the tent because the weight of the frozen snow would compress our living space beyond comfort. Unfortunately this process would get a lot of things wet.

### May 15

Finally, the afternoon blessed us with clear skies. Not to waste a window, up we went at 4:00 p.m. Heavy sleds made for a miserable pull up the headwall, all of their weight resting on our shoulders. Calves screaming, we progressed up the slope, grabbed the buried goodies, and camped at 15,400 feet as the sun descended behind a ridge of Queen Peak. The warmth of the rays withdrew with the orange disc and all of a sudden it got chilly, quite chilly. We rushed to get the tent up and cook dinner, which was devoured in full down armor.

### May 16

We slept in after the previous night's effort. Not to worry, though; the weather held. We wandered through more crevasses and pushed on to 17,000 feet. We could now see Iona Col – our way to the summit plateau. The altitude was kicking in; both of us had headaches. Altitude



In the trench. Photo by Greg Encelewski.

breathing at night was keeping me up, adding to the discomfort.

#### May 18

The previous day's weather kept us in. We called it an acclimatization break, but now we were heading up again. It was marginal at best; socked in, low visibility with some wind. The col was quite bad, windy and very socked in. We navigated by GPS to get down to the plateau and then to the 17,600-foot camp. Socked in most of the time, but at least we were now at high camp, cold, but ready for a summit bid and in high spirits.

#### May 19

Another weather day.

#### May 20

Night and morning windy and whiteout. Before 11:00 a.m. things slightly improved so we gave it a try. Unfortunately as we were rounding the west peak on the traverse, winds hit us hard, causing a whiteout, stopping progress, and chilling our digits. Little did we know that this was to be our high point at 18,100 feet.

#### May 21

Another attempt; wind at 18,000 feet.

#### May 22

Made it ½ mile; had to turn around. Running low on fuel now. Made a decision to either try for the summit or descend tomorrow. We were uncertain of the conditions on the return, who knew how long it would take us to get back to the landing strip in this weather, who knew if there were anyone else on this mountain in case we needed to borrow fuel? We had a winged visitor today, poor bird, all the way up here. Judging from a few frozen remains of his brothers we came across, I doubt he will make it long. Not giving up yet, a decision was reached to try a night ascent. It might have been cold, but it was our last

option. As we were rounding the west peak an evil dark cloud came into view, it was surrounding the main summit and it detracted us from continuing. Maybe if it were daytime, but we were already traveling on a thin margin.

#### May 23

Retreated in a whiteout, navigating by a GPS to reach Iona Col. The other side held a great surprise – another team plodding up the hill, a Polish group headed by the famous 8000-meter-peak climber Piotr Pustelnik. After a brief chat in my native tongue, we parted ways. For the rest of the trip we followed a well-worn path, often being greeted by the many groups now occupying our mountain. We were served tea and chocolate – oh, chocolate – a luxury too heavy for us to carry. The multitude of wands and ski trails allowed for a quick and pleasant ski down to base camp proper. It took so many days to make it up and now we descended in one. At around 11,000 feet we skied into a group of down-jacketed climbers. We were only wearing long sleeve shirts. “Aren't you cold?” they asked. For us it was balmy now

compared with the higher lands. “It is supposed to be -30 degrees tonight, how cold was it for you up there?” We did not carry a thermometer, but it was a lot colder when we first arrived, who knew how cold it was if we felt comfortable at -30 degrees nowadays.

#### May 24

At 9,000 feet Hans Kammerlander and his partner ran into us and together we continued to Paul's landing spot. The way back felt a lot longer. Snow being warm now gave me a lot of trouble, sticking to skins and skis. At this time in the trip one could not wait to get back to the lowlands. The miles got longer, slopes steeper. At least we now had company and Hans' stories of Himalayan climbing, not to mention milk chocolate. I have to remember to bring lots of chocolate for base camp next time; simple pleasures make so much difference now. In the afternoon Luc Mehl and his team showed up. Their human-powered trip from Yakutat and an attempt at the East Ridge resulting in an avalanche inspired us. We have experienced nothing in comparison; will have to try harder next time.



Sea of peaks visible from high camp. Photo by Marcin Ksok.

## May 25

Flew out in questionable conditions, Paul's skillful piloting brought us back to the lodge for a hot sauna and green grass. Seeing vegetation again was quite a treat. Spring arrived, contrasting the white expanse we experienced for the last three weeks. Barely off the mountain and the thought of not summiting was already chewing at me. Now that we were in civilization again, the discomforts of the last few weeks felt less important and the call of the high places was tugging. Short memories for suffering and infinite capacities for boredom are the trademarks of mountaineers; Greg and I have them mastered.



Greg Encelewski in the lead. Photo by Marcin Ksok.



Peter Hinds and Cory Hinds backdropped by the Knik Glacier. Photo by Wayne L. Todd.

# Knik River (Hunter Creek) to Twentymile Ski Traverse

## Edited Journal Excerpts by Wayne L. Todd

Trip Participants: Richard Baranow, Tim Griffin, Cory Hinds, Elena Hinds, Peter Hinds, Wayne Todd, and Carrie Wang; and Kaupo, Innoko, and Nene the dogs. Many thanks to Wendy Loya and Rick Weber for support and assistance, with Denali the dog.

### Day 1: March 10<sup>th</sup>

We start from the Hunter Creek Bridge parking area. A group of fat-tire bikers pass us, but Peter is loaned Denali the dog, and he soon re-passes the bikers. Gradually the Knik Glacier dominates the view.

### Day 2: March 11<sup>th</sup>

Graced with endless eye-treats we enter The Gorge. Nearby, sunlight reflects the teal-colored, snow-scoop-hatted, animal-shaped pressure ridges. Beyond, iceberg boulders are blanketed with snow. In the distance, sheer brilliant blue gendarmes stand guard before the face of the Knik Glacier. Some gendarmes wear white vertical stripes while others adorn themselves with a light cloak of snow. To our

immediate right, fat ice climbs sun themselves as we make our way deeper into this fantastical world. Adding to the magic are floating, glittering ice crystals, illuminated by the sunlight.

Our magical daze is disturbed where the pressure ridge abuts the mountainside and we must find another route. Open water surrounds the pressure ridges, but we find a solid way to cross, and bid adieu to Wendy, Rick, and Denali.

Climbing a moraine ridge, we find we must descend and like kids, we release sleds and skis to race and outdistance each other's gear, then boot down to re-equip. We continue upriver into Upper Lake George, no longer a lake, but a leftover maze of glacial river channels.

### Day 3: March 12<sup>th</sup>

The day dawns clear and cold (guesstimates are around -15°F). We are slow to get going until the sun warms souls, boots, and later, hanging sleeping bags. Bringing my 10°F bag was a stupid move!

The trailbreakers and entourage continue up the broad, mountain-bordered valley under endless sunshine. During the night, pee-outing participants are rewarded by northern lights.





**Carrie Wang crosses the pressure ridge. Photo by Wayne L. Todd.**

#### **Day 4: March 13<sup>th</sup>**

Morning begins with a discussion about the potential coming storm. Group consensus is to move forward. The sky, though grey and cloudy, harbors no wind. Light snow falls as we travel up the frozen river. Where the river takes a right-hand bend, Carrie leads above an open-water section and then makes a hard left into a narrowing and steepening ravine.

On the unnamed glacier in diminishing conditions, I navigate using the GPS, compass, and relative sun direction (about 20° right of our heading). After an hour Tim takes the lead as I am getting “buggy” from the low visibility. We ski off the glacier half an hour later, relieved.

We de-skin and ski down chutes, slopes, and gullies to an open plateau in waning light. Half a mile from a frozen snow-covered lake and ideal camp spot, we make camp in the near dark (people are fatigued and decline to go farther). The breeze picks up and the snowfall becomes heavy.

The forecast is for two days of heavy snow accompanied at first by high winds. I'm very glad to be off the glacier and beyond avalanche terrain traps. (Richard's satellite phone can be quite useful.)

#### **Day 5: March 14<sup>th</sup>**

Last night was warm, a nice change, but it was also quite windy with heavy snowfall. With tent flapping and tent avalanches (initially assumed to be real avalanches), I sleep sporadically.

We take a forced rest day in the storm, cleaning off and around the tents (the snow isn't quite as wet as feared) and socializing in Tim's tent. The only other chore is digging pooper number three, as the other two filled in with snow.

I wake at 12:30 a.m., from either jet noise (we're in a flight path) or snow sliding off the tent, and remain on high alert until morning with concern about the safety of our camp and our safe exodus. Every sound, of which there are dozens, causes an increased heart rate and noise identification: jet or avalanche.

#### **Day 6: March 15<sup>th</sup>**

Early morning I hear ptarmigan, a good sign. A peek outside reveals the return of good weather! I give an early rooster wake-up call and weather report. A survey of our surroundings reveals a reasonable, safe camp location after all.

We stop for a break before dropping into the Twentymile River Valley. This upper valley is studded with clusters of hemlocks. From here we see the high glaciated peaks upvalley.

Plans made for a detailed, orderly descent are followed for only a couple of short steep sections (which slough and slab). Then a free-for-all ski ensues through tall trees in steep, deep snow (which aids for sled-speed control). We each make our way down the ridge in our own fashion; Tim frees Innoko and puts his entire sled on his back (which adds a punch to his crashes); sled-less and with a light pack, Peter skis very well and leads some of the way; Cory's sled flips numerous times, fully twisting his PVC poles, which he expertly remedies by executing a turn in the other direction; Elena assists Cory when needed; Carrie cautiously short-hauls her sled; Richard also frees his dogs and skis the

periphery of the mayhem using the inverted sled technique; and I use the inverted, brakes engaged, short-haul and tree wrap technique with my sled, barely managing my skinny skis. Everyone takes numerous falls in the deep forgiving powder, but we make our way safely down, having fun in the process. Tall trees and filtered sunlight add to the splendor. Sans sled and heavy pack it would be world-class skiing. On the flats in the many feet of unconsolidated snow, we try numerous sled-pulling arrangements. It is a given that the trailbreaker be sled-less. The most useful arrangement is for the second skier to also be sled-less and make the trail one ski wider for easier sled pulling (and keeping the sleds upright).

River crossings in the upper valley are a non-issue, as the river is mostly buried under ten feet of snow. Carrie suddenly drops out of sight when a snow overhang collapses. She is fine, just a bit flustered. Deep moose trenches meander through the snow (why did the moose cross the valley?). Later, Tim suddenly drops into a snow slot up to his shoulders while short-cutting back to the main trail. His “I could use some help here” prompts Richard and I to pull out our cameras for pictures (there is no emergency) before Richard hauls him out.

We correct course toward the south as sinewy, small fog patches form and the temperature drops. By 7 p.m. we're quite tired, and so find a clearing surrounded by large cottonwoods and a



**A river crossing. Photo by Tim Griffin.**



**Cory Hinds in the trees. Photo by Tim Griffin.**

few spruce trees. After firm ski stomping, boot walking is still knee-to-thigh deep, which adds toil to camp establishment and food procurement. Cory rallies a bonfire, drawing in all the male members. At the bonfire's peak a three-foot rooster-tail flame roars for the sky. The fire revelry continues, and snow melting in the branches above drops down on the worshipers. Crowned by stars and planets sparkling in full, our circle of sound is broken by two great horned (?) owls parleying in the surrounding trees. It's another cold night and I again go to bed appreciating my pee bottle and hot water bottle.

### **Day 7: March 16<sup>th</sup>**

The morning begins with the typical dressing comedy, rummaging around in my sleeping bag "where is the other sleeve?," while trying not to make contact with the frosted inner tent. I employ both the hold-it-over-the-lit-stove technique and insert-the-small-hot-water-bottle technique to thaw my ski boots, and as always, have slept with my foot beds.

We enter a forest of live and dead trees glistening with hoarfrost in the morning sunlight. "Skiing into a Christmas card," someone says. Warmth, sunshine, frost forest, and towering white mountains bordered by dark forest and brilliant blue sky, almost induce a sensory overload. The frost warms and falls to the ground, ringing vegetation in glittering whiteness.

Our first water obstacle of the day is surmounted after Carrie and Cory stomp a snow path above gently flowing water across a log and up over an overhanging bank. The second, and last, water obstacle is overcome with the use of Wiggy's waders, which work wonderfully. Peter lucks out and gets a piggy-back ride across.

Innoko easily pulls an ill member, more than compensating for a pace difference.

Plastered snow protrudes on the north side of trees from top to bottom in witness to the storm of two days prior. Balls of snow punctuate the nearby flatness in odd patterns from the intense down-valley wind that blasted the plastered snow off trees (some balls quite a distance from trees). The trees cast longer and longer shadows pointing out our way as the day progresses.

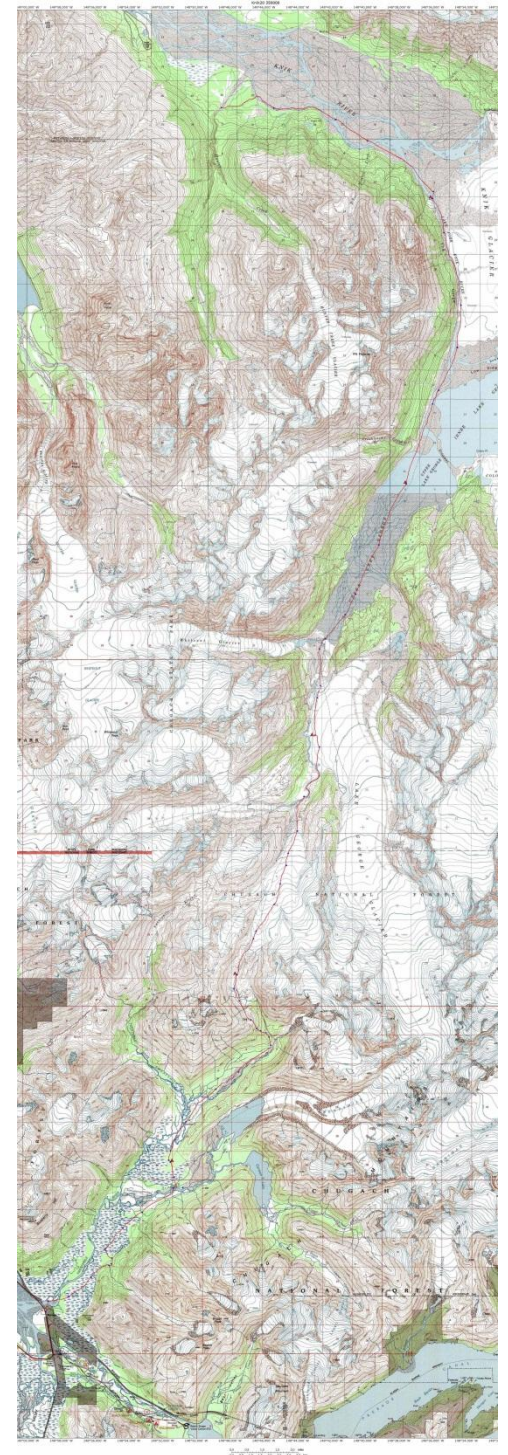
Infrequent non-moose (weasel, fox, etc.) tracks wind along our trail. A cluster of dwarf-sized, mushroom-shaped snowcapped mounds, coupled with the sunlit mountain backdrop creates a dramatic scene.

Three miles from the road, we intersect a fresh ski track. Investigation yields arrows pointing down the track. We follow and find notes such as "1/2 mile to snowmachine trail" and other indicating doodles. Tim recognizes the markings as Wendy's. Once on the firm, wide machine trail our speed doubles.

Portage Valley peaks and Turnagain Arm peaks come into view as we exit the Twentymile River Valley. A couple of eagles and a hawk are seen, and surprisingly, no machines are heard or seen. We pack up and head to Chair 5 for salad, burgers, and pizza, to which Cory graciously treats us all.

What a day, what a week, what a...

Dedicated to Tim Griffin and Carrie Wang, the group trail-breakers. And thanks to Paul Andrews for the pre-trip flight.







## Hiking and Biking With a Song in Your Heart

By Frank Baker

People are debating issues such as the economy, energy and health care, but someone has to talk about stuff like this: I'm talking about how when you're hiking or bike riding, the same song keeps repeating over and over again in your head and you can't get rid of it.

It becomes monotonous, almost maddening. You try to introduce a new song, but it's not long before you realize you're back to the original one.

For those readers who dwell on a higher intellectual plane as you engage in outdoor activities — people who mull over differential equations or ponder the complexities of the Birkhoff-Grothendieck theorem on vector bundles — this article is not for you. This is for we down-to-earth mortals who use music to keep us company during hikes and other activities.

For one thing, it helps a lot to not to start out with a rotten song or one you don't know very well. It's best to have something catchy and energizing

rattling around in your brain, perhaps Creedence Clearwater Revival. Enya makes me sad and my brain can't emulate all of the weird synthesizer sounds. I also like Vangelis, but my cerebrum can't play all those instruments simultaneously.

Secondly, you've probably realized that changing your song isn't that easy. I'm certainly not a neurologist, but I believe that after a certain song has been playing over and over in your head for a considerable time, the neural pathways are set up and the electro-chemical dance that you started wants to keep repeating. Tires follow ruts in the road.

The only way to change the song, I've found, is to actually stop, introduce the new song — and it's got to be a stronger, better song than the one you're replacing — and run it over and over before you resume your activity. I think Beethoven's 5th Symphony ("da-da-da-da") would definitely overpower MacArthur Park ("Someone left the cake out in the rain"). But that's just me.

One friend told me about a foolproof method of ridding oneself of an entrenched song: "Hum to yourself the guitar lead for The Byrds' Eight Miles High," he said. "Works like a charm."

Roger McGuinn's 12-string guitar solo, inspired by Ravi Shanker and John Coltrane, is so complex it acts to scramble and reset the circuits,

he claimed. If only I could remember the guitar lead from Eight Miles High.

Sometimes your brain will fasten itself to a really horrible song. Perhaps it's the subconscious mind punishing us for some ill deed in the past. Anyway, such an experience intensifies the urge to bring in a new song.

Once you've finally found a new song and are ebulliently making your way down the trail, it's very possible you'll catch yourself reverting back to the old one. Don't be disheartened. To preserve the new song, you've got to take corrective action immediately.

In computer terms, you've just ripped a new music track from your memory file and you now have to burn it into your cranial music disc, or library. It sounds painful, but it isn't. It just takes repetition and a little concentration.

I'm from a fairly musical family, so I'm no stranger to music playing in my head. I often think of composers and orchestra conductors who probably hear music all the time. That would drive me batty, I think. One has to have some peace once in a while.

But on solo hikes and trips, it's nice to have some accompaniment in the form of music. I must confess, I'm not very skilled at changing a song once it starts playing in my head. I'd be curious to hear from folks on whether they've mastered this feat.

Walkers might actually prefer carrying an iPod, which puts hundreds of songs at their

fingertips. The only advantage of imaginary music over iPod music, I guess, is that the former doesn't require ear phones that block out ambient sounds of the Great Outdoors.

In Texas, that might be wild pigs charging through the brush to protect their piglets. For those of us in Alaska, it might be bears crashing through the woods who might also be in a bad mood about hearing the same song over and over again.



Horn Spire from the north. Ben's group climbed the right skyline from the bottom of the obvious vertical headwall. Photo by Ben Still.

## Horn Spire Piercing the Sky

By Ben Still

Mike Miller and I first spotted this needle-like spire from atop a small peak at the north end of the Juneau road system in the summer of 1997. When we crested the ridge onto the summit, Horn Spire dominated the view and seemed to pierce the sky rising into a perfect spire. I had read about this peak in the *American Alpine Journal* about a few local Juneau guys who made the first ascent back in 1973. (Ed. note: *Dick Benedict, Gerry Buckley, Craig Lingle, and Bruce Tickell made the first recorded ascent of Horn Spire on June 30, 1973; see pages 31 through 33 of the 1974 AAJ.*) Mike and I always wanted to climb this awesome granite spire, but difficult access and an abundance of peaks closer to the road system kept us at bay.

Finally the day arrived when we decided it was time and Mike Miller, Steve Cashen, and I left the north end of the Juneau road system up Davies Creek valley on May 31, 2010, to climb Horn Spire. After hours of bushwhacking through thick devils club, alders, salmonberry, and stinging nettles we found ourselves at the head of the Davies Creek valley looking up at the towering cliffs, cascading waterfalls and the ominous icefall, which we luckily could steer clear around to the north.

We made our way up to the left of the icefall, heading up steep snow, and traversing around alder patches and cliffs until we were perched high above the valley floor and even with the towering seracs of the icefall at 3500 feet. There we made camp, exhausted from the day's work. The sunny weather quickly deteriorated as strong gusts of wind blew clouds of yellow spruce pollen through the air. Rain began falling shortly.

We woke up to the pitter-patter of rain on the tent. The 4850-foot high pass we were planning on skiing over was in the clouds, so we lingered for a little while, hoping for improvement, but got none. We skied upglacier and into the white clouds to the pass. As we began the ski down, the weather improved and the Thiel Glacier opened up before

us. We were able to easily ski downglacier, with the exception of a short section of downclimbing and jumping over a large 'schrund. The weather continued to improve as we skied downglacier and the outline of Horn Spire appeared shrouded in a thin layer of mist.

The next morning we got our drop of climbing and rafting gear and let the helicopter take our skis back out. We moved camp up to 4800 feet at the last flat area before the climbing began. Showers moved back in during the afternoon and Horn Spire disappeared into the mist.

We woke up at 5 a.m. and found reasonable weather, so we decided to at least go have a good look at the route. We unnervingly traversed under a small serac wall and climbed up 700 feet of steep snow to the base of the headwall. The first ascent party spent eight hours on this pitch, aiding up 200 feet of vertical cracks. We got the rack out and donned the rock shoes. I found the climbing difficult and sustained, but the protection very secure. Along the way I spotted an old plastic nut jammed into a crack, and farther up, a rusty piton. Two hundred feet later I was on a small mossy ledge with some decaying webbing slung around a flake. I fixed the line and Steve and Mike quickly juggled up to the belay ledge. Another 40 feet of steep, wet lichen-covered rock awaited us. The hour was late and we decided to retreat back to camp, thinking the hardest pitch of climbing was done and we would return with some overnight gear.

After a sunny rest day, the evening weather deteriorated and heavy sleet and winds prevailed. We were not very hopeful for climbing the next morning with wet slushy snow on a big rock climb. Light flurries greeted us in the morning, but we were ready to climb so we made quick work of the terrain and were back at our previous high point in just a couple of hours. Steve took the next lead and aid climbed up the 40 feet of wet lichen-covered rock to a small two-foot-wide ledge with 10 feet of vertical snow above it. He walked the ledge to a weakness in the snow and



belayed Mike and me up to him. I led up the rotten snow to another rock step, a small wet overhang with more rotten snow above it. I made the overhang with a point of aid, but I couldn't seem to get a purchase in the snow. Wet lichen-covered slab transitioning into steep snow with my feet partially under an overhang is not my forte. I struggled here for an hour, mining out snow, only making my position more desperate. I seemed to have met my match, wet snow was falling from the sky and I stepped down to my last piece and got lowered back to the belay. After a brief discussion we decided the snow conditions were not very safe and abandoned our climb of Horn Spire.

As we began rappelling back down the route we heard a small rumble and the small icefall we have been running under daily shed a mass of what looked like snow, but when we got there we found it was two-foot-diameter ice blocks. We ran under this icefall for the last time and made it back to camp. We broke camp and dropped back down to the Thiel Glacier for the night.

We woke up to sun. For some reason we had picked the wet days to climb. We donned our heavy packs and hiked down to the terminus of the Thiel Glacier about a mile and a half from the Gilkey Glacier. The Battle Glacier had retreated so far upvalley that it couldn't even be seen. A large lake was up against the Gilkey Glacier and moraine and sandy expanses were all that was left. Lots of arctic terns were nesting on tops of the moraines and bear tracks were abundant there. We set up camp next to a small kettle pond and took in the awesome views of the surrounding peaks. Horn Spire still dominated the sky to our south.

Another day of sun greeted us and we made quick work of the terrain, making it to the terminus of the Gilkey Glacier. As blue ice cliffs greeted us, we realized getting into the lake might be a problem. We found a way to sneak

around on the south side up against the large cliffs that lined the lake. We nervously inflated our packrafts as this was the first time for all of us. We cruised across the first half of the lake until we met the maze of enormous icebergs. Luckily we chose the right passage and ended up at the start of the Gilkey River where large Class III rapids awaited. We scouted these first rapids and decided to walk around them. We had been told the rest of the river was Class II+, getting easier farther downriver.

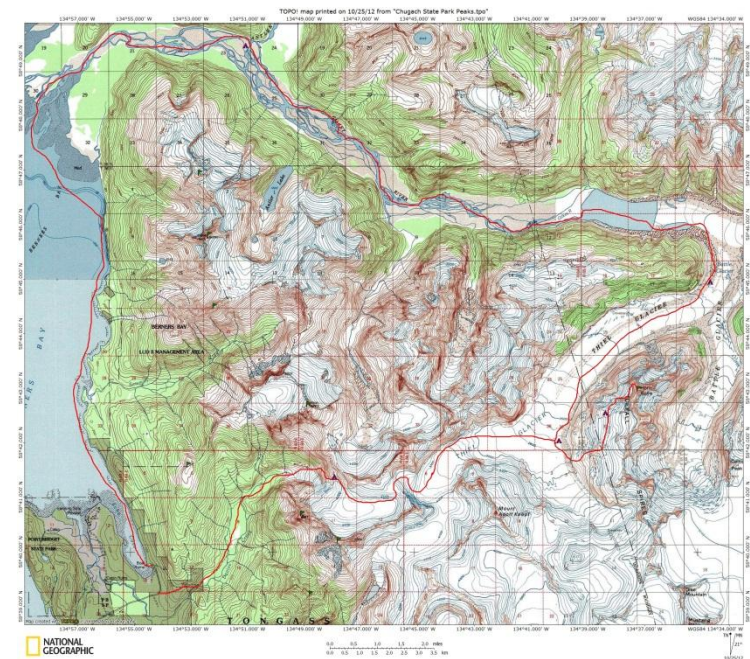
We were definitely in over our heads with the river, but somehow we made it through all the rapids unscathed and made camp near the confluence with the Antler River. The next morning we rafted out the slower-moving Antler River and paddled along the shore of Berners Bay back into Echo Cove, where we had started our trip nine days earlier. Although we didn't make the summit, we covered many miles of awesome terrain. Later in the summer Mike, Will Wacker, and I flew into Horn Spire and climbed the route without any snow in sunny conditions, finding the route to be hard 5.9 when dry.



**Mike Miller and Ben Still paddling through the giant icebergs on Gilkey Lake. Photo by Steve Cashen.**



**The Horn Spire route follows the left-trending snow gully and then the left skyline to the summit. Photo by Ben Still.**





# Peak of the Month: Peak 7550

By Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Alaska Range  
Borough: Denali Borough  
Drainage: Chedotlothna Glacier  
Latitude/Longitude: 62° 51' 21" North, 151° 53' 4" West  
Elevation: 7550 (+50) feet  
Prominence: 500 feet from Peak 9350 in the Chedotlothna Glacier and Yentna Glacier drainages  
Adjacent Peak: Peak 9350  
Distinctness: 500 feet from Peak 9350  
USGS Map: Talkeetna (D-4)  
First Recorded Ascent: May 23, 1962, by Siegfried Gebel, Hellmut Raithel, and Anton Reiter  
Route of First Recorded Ascent: Presumably the west ridge  
Access Point: 4600-foot level of the Chedotlothna Glacier

On May 14, 1962, Don Sheldon flew Hellmut Raithel from Talkeetna to the 4600-foot level of the Chedotlothna Glacier in his Piper Super Cub. But unbeknownst to Raithel, Sheldon had lightened the load by removing his food. A windstorm prevented Sheldon from returning until the following evening. The next evening during a lull in the storm, Sheldon deposited Toni Reiter with Raithel's food several kilometers below Raithel in the lee of a peak. Reiter made his way up to Raithel and two days later during a break in the weather the rest of the party – Sigi Gebel, Peter Hennig, Klaus Ekkerlein, Bob Goodwin, and John Dillman – joined them. The objective of the party was to make the first ascent of Mount Russell. To that end, Ekkerlein, Goodwin, and Hennig established Camp I at about 7000 feet. Dillman,

Gebel, Raithel, and Reiter remained at Base Camp while the wind howled for four days around the tents of Camp I.

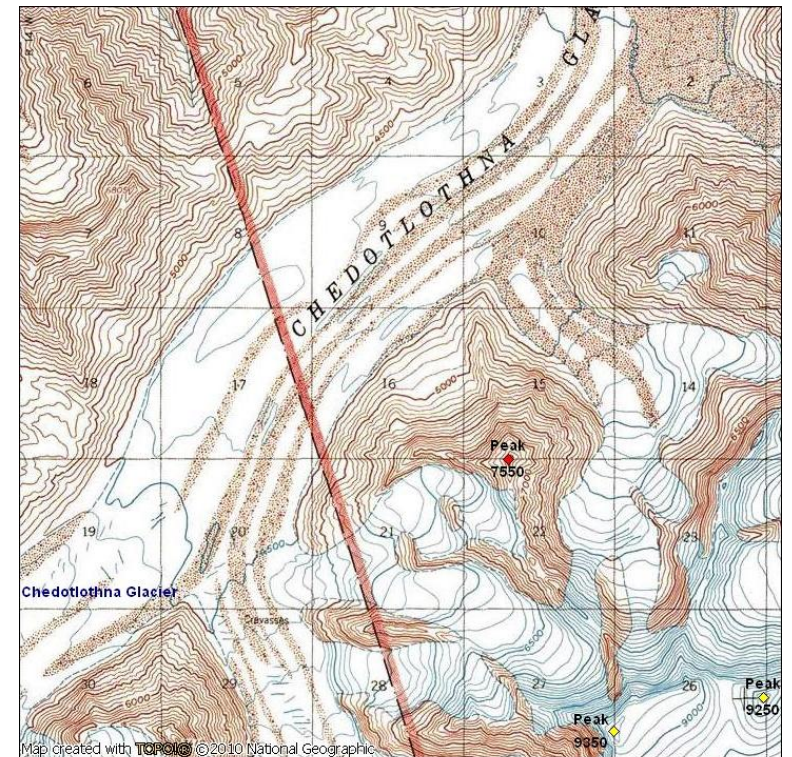
Impatient with the unfavorable weather at Camp I and enjoying calm weather at Base Camp, Gebel, Raithel, and Reiter set out on May 23 for Peak 7550 northeast of their Base Camp. Presumably, they ascended the west ridge, encountering more difficulties than they had expected due to enormous cornices. From the summit they watched their companions at Camp I leave to establish Camp II at 8900 feet at Bavarian Col, about a half mile southwest of Mount Russell's summit.

After returning to Base Camp, Gebel, Raithel, and Reiter joined Dillman, who was sick, in waiting for favorable weather for two days as high winds and snow ravaged the mountain. Early on the morning of May 26, Raithel and Reiter moved to Camp I to await better weather, which arrived quickly; Gebel and Dillman returned to Base Camp. Raithel and Reiter carried a load up to Camp II and reconnoitered the route above the col to a steep ice ramp that gave access to the ridge. Ekkerlein, Goodwin, and Hennig climbed from Camp II into the clouds as snow began to fall. Concerned for their companions' safety, Raithel and Reiter returned to Base Camp on May 27 to get Dillman and Gebel in case they were needed for help. Ekkerlein, Goodwin, and Hennig reached Mount Russell's summit on May 28, and returned to Camp II on May 29. The entire party was reunited in Base Camp and Sheldon returned on June 1 to fly Goodwin back to Talkeetna. After several days of cloudy weather, Sheldon returned on June 6 to ferry the remaining members of the party to the Kahiltna Glacier for some

additional climbing.

Dillman returned to the Chedotlothna Glacier in May 1981 with George Ferry and David Pahlke for another unsuccessful attempt on Mount Russell. As a consolation prize, the three made the second recorded ascent of Peak 7550.

The information for this article came from Raithel's article entitled "The First Ascent of Mount Russell," which appeared on pages 390 through 395 of the 1963 *American Alpine Journal*, from Goodwin's article entitled "Ordeal on Mount Russell," which appeared on pages 12, 13, and 54 of the August 1964 *Alaska Sportsman*, and from my correspondence with John Dillman and David Pahlke.



NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC

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0.0 0.5 1.0 1.5 2.0 2.5 3.0 3.5 km

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10/09/12



## MCA Board Meeting Minutes October 3, 2012

Members Present: Tim Silvers (President), Randy Plant (Treasurer), Greg Encelewski, Brian Aho, Vicky Lytle, John Recktenwald, Jim Sellers

1. November 21 meeting (day before Thanksgiving) – need presenter. Possible presenters were discussed and a couple of individuals will be contacted. Idea of inviting members to bring 10 to 15 photos also agreed as an option.

2. Directors & Officers Insurance – Jim Sellers will submit a new application with a new broker and carrier.

3. Benefits sharing with other mountaineering clubs – The MCA may want to send the president or a representative to attend a March 2013 meeting in Golden, Colorado.

4. Awards drawing – Discussed adding more volunteers to the drawings than the three categories of Scree contributors, instructors, and trip leaders.

5. October Elections – Vicky's, Jim's, and Brian's terms are expiring and they're not running. John announced he will be resigning one year into his two-year term because the board is not interested at this time in pursuing the goals he stated with his election, which included planning for a new hut, making the Scree available for free, and outreach to the community (Samoan kids). Tim is not running for reelection as president. Possible nominations for president and board seats were discussed. Individuals will be asked to consider running.

6. Other topics – Indexing Scree for search engines. Tim will ask Steve Gruhn about the feasibility.

7. Library and gear policies – both out of date. Vicky will draft a library policy. Higher value books should be addressed and continue to be indicated with a sticker/stamp. MCA Librarian to accept book donations. Tim will draft a gear policy.

8. Winter Wildlands Alliance call – Vicky participated in recent conference call. Alliance offers advocacy, film festival rights, and school science field trips. APU has and is doing this film festival in Anchorage. MCA could do a film festival as a fundraiser as long as it's not in Anchorage (WWA limits film showing to one city).

9. Randy presented the preliminary 2012 budget vs. actual results. While revenue is currently below budget, expenses are also below budget to the extent

we may have a positive margin this year when we budgeted for a negative margin.

9. REI Open House – Saturday, October 27, 2012. Agreed MCA should have a table like we did last year. Volunteers will be sought at the October general meeting.

---Greg Encelewski, board member

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## MCA General Meeting Minutes October 17, 2012

Equipment: Thanks to those who helped inventory ropes.

Calendar: Members voted on photos during the meeting.

Huts: Need point people for each hut. Vicky Lytle and Travis Taylor have volunteered for the Mint and Scandinavian Peaks Huts, respectively. Check website for huts needs inventory.

Training: Thanks to all who helped with the Ice Climbing Festival.

Geographic Names: There's a notice in the *Alaska Dispatch* of a proposal to rename Powerline Pass to a Native name, with no specific name offered. Contact *Alaska Dispatch* or the Chugach State Park Citizen Advisory Board if you want to comment.

Awards: Tim Silvers awarded Jayme Mack and Vicky Lytle President's Awards for all their service to the MCA. He also awarded Vicky Lytle and Galen Flint MCA volunteer shirts. For award drawings, the plan is to add another volunteer category to the three categories of Scree contributors, instructors, and trip leaders to include others such as Scree editor, hut maintenance workers, etc.

Elections: The following officers and directors were elected: Jayme Mack, President; Galen Flint, Vice President; Seth Weingarten, Treasurer; Kelley Williams, Secretary; Andy Mamrol, Director (2 year); Liz Bennett (2 year); Charlie Sink (1 Year). Travis Taylor was nominated for a director position, but not elected.

Slide Show Presentation: Cutting corners and covering ground: fast-and-light self-supported traverses of Denali and Mount Logan by Luc Mehl.



**Mike Miller rappelling the headwall during the successful ascent of Horn Spire. See the trip report on pages 12 and 13.**

# Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Jayme Mack	382-0212	Board member	Greg Encelewski	360-0274
Vice-President	Galen Flint	650-207-0810	Board member	Charlie Sink	258-8770
Secretary	Kelley Williams	310-2003	Board member	Andy Mamrol	717-6893
Treasurer	Seth Weingarten	360-9128	Board member	Liz Bennett	952-9661
Past President	Tim Silvers	250-3374			

Annual membership dues: Single \$15, Family \$20

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address at right. If you want a membership card, please fill out a club waiver 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 Membership Committee at [membership@mtnclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtnclubak.org).

The 'Scree' is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles, notes and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be emailed to [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com). Articles should be submitted by the 21<sup>st</sup> of November to appear in the December Scree.

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be in electronic format and pre-paid. Ads can be emailed to [vicepresident@mtnclubak.org](mailto:vicepresident@mtnclubak.org).

Missing your MCA membership card? Stop by the monthly meeting to pick one up or send a self-addressed stamped envelope and we'll mail it to you.

Mailing list/database entry: Seth Weingarten – [membership@mtnclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtnclubak.org)

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vicky Lytle - [hcc@mtnclubak.org](mailto:hcc@mtnclubak.org)

Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008

Calendar: Stuart Grenier - 337-5127

Scree Editor: [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com) Steve Gruhn (344-1219) assisted by Amy Murphy (338-3979)

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