

“Each year, the Great Pumpkin rises out of the pumpkin patch that he thinks is the most sincere. ...

I don't see how a pumpkin patch can be more sincere than this one. You can look around and there's not a sign of hypocrisy. Nothing but sincerity as far as the eye can see.”

– Linus Van Pelt

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

November 2020

Volume 63, Number 11



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NOVEMBER MEETING: Wednesday, November 4 at 6:00. Virtual.

Presenter T.B.A. Details on how to attend the general meeting will be circulated on the MCA's Facebook page and the website calendar as soon as possible.

"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."

This issue brought to you by: Editor—Gerrit Verbeek assisted by Dawn Munroe

NOVEMBER MEETING

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Presenter T.B.A. Details on how to attend the general meeting will be circulated on the MCA's Facebook page and the website calendar as soon as possible.

Thanks to Volunteers

The MCA would like to send a huge THANK YOU to Charlotte Foley, Sally Balchin and Stan Olsen. Charlotte's work as the librarian and Stan and Sally's long service on hut planning, construction, and maintenance has benefitted all of our members. In appreciation the Club will present them with insulated thermoses with the MCA logo and their names.



Geographic Names

At the September 10th meeting of the Domestic Names Committee of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, the DNC voted to not approve the proposed name Jade Lake for a lake in the Tuxedni River drainage of the Chigmit Mountains. In February 2019 the MCA's Geographic Names Committee endorsed the proposed name for the lake. At the same meeting, the DNC voted to approve the name Every Lake for a lake northeast of Nikiski. Details are available at [https://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/f?p=GEONAMES_WEB:MINUTES:":](https://geonames.usgs.gov/apex/f?p=GEONAMES_WEB:MINUTES:) (click on 828th Meeting).

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Cover Photo

Abbey Collins mantles up some choss near the summit of Bright Peak.

Photo by Andrew Holman

Trips

Oct 10: Bird Creek trail cleanup.

Marcin Ksok organized a trail clearing party for the non-motorized portion of Bird Creek Trail. Along with Marcin, Jason Copp, Greg Encelewski, Kneely Taylor, Peter Taylor and Gerrit Verbeek gathered at the Bird Creek Trailhead at the end of Konikson Road (Mi 101 Seward Hwy) and spent a fun day taking revenge on the downed trees, alders and devils club which get the better of us the remaining 364 days of the year. The initial 3.1 miles of the trail is motorized, followed by a 2.2 mile non-motorized section running from a vehicle barrier to a stream ford near Bird Creek Pass. The trail facilitates summer and winter access to the North Fork of Ship Creek and peaks such as Esbay Peak, Birds Eye Peak, Peak 4515, and East and West Kinglet Peaks. Special thanks to Jason Copp for providing ATVs.



Dec 19: Winter Solstice sleepout (no leader).

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Articles should be submitted by the 11th of each month to appear in the next issue of *the Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. Do not submit photos embedded in the text file. Send the photo files separately. Send high resolution file photos separately, including captions for each photo. 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 at least one vertically-oriented photo for consideration for the cover. Please don't forget to submit photo captions.

For the MCA Membership Application and Liability Waiver, visit <http://www.mtnclubak.org/index.cfm?useaction=members.form>.

Check Facebook for last-minute trips and activities. Or, schedule one that you want to organize.

Online? Click me!



Announcements

Upcoming Elections

The January 6th General Meeting will include votes on new officers and proposed by-law amendments, in addition to the 2021 budget. Officer elections typically take place during the October general meeting but were postponed this year due to general disorder from the COVID pandemic and low attendance at the recent general meetings held online.

Descriptions of the officer and director roles are printed on the next page. If you would like more information, feel free to contact a current Board member. The proposed budget and by-law amendments will be published in the December edition of *the Scree* and again in the January edition before the general meeting.

High turnout is critical

Attendance of the virtual meetings has been much lower than the in-person meetings prior to the COVID pandemic. In order for a vote to reflect the interests of club membership, the Board would like to see at least 40 members attend the January meeting. Please plan to attend the meeting, scheduled for January 6th, 2021. The meeting will be held online using the Zoom video conferencing service, and a hyperlink will be distributed soon in *the Scree*, the Club calendar, and social media.

Beyond the Club, you are of course also encouraged to participate in the upcoming Presidential, Congressional and local elections!

Notice - Chugach State Park Citizen Advisory Board

The Chugach State Park Citizen Advisory Board is seeking applications to fill upcoming vacancies on the 15-member board. The role of the advisory board is to advise the Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation on matters involving Chugach State Park, to promote protection of the park's natural and cultural resources, and to facilitate communication between the public and the park managers. The board meets the second Monday of each month except July and August. Each member is expected to serve on two committees.

Board members serve three-year terms which are staggered so that seats open each year. Applicants will be considered for the term beginning in January 2021. The application deadline is October 31. An application form may be obtained at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/misc/chugachstateprkappv7.pdf>.

Board members represent a broad spectrum of public interests and the nomination process is designed to ensure that no single viewpoint dominates the board. In addition, the board's bylaws call upon each member to represent all-encompassing public interests that are consistent with park purposes rather than advocate for a specific group.

Board meetings are usually held the second Monday of the month starting at 6 p.m. Committee meetings are scheduled by the committee chairs and vary in frequency depending on project needs and deadlines.

Current committees include: Access, Budget, Chugach Park Fund, Statewide Trails Initiative, Nominating, Outreach, Trails, Planning, Seward Highway Design and Wildlife.

CONTACT: Kurt Hensel, 907-345-5014, kurt.hensel@alaska.gov

MCA Board Roles

President:

- (a) To preside at all regular and executive meetings.
- (b) To coordinate the efforts of the officers and committees.

Vice-President:

- (a) To assume the duties of the President in the absence of the President, or at the request of the President.
- (b) All other-duties as assigned by the Executive Committee.
- (c) Provide programs and entertainment at club meetings and other club social activities.

Secretary:

- (a) To record the minutes of all regular and executive meetings.
- (b) To maintain complete business and historical records of the organization.
- (c) To initiate and answer correspondence as directed by the President.
- (d) All other duties as assigned by the Executive Committee.
- (e) To Arrange for a meeting place for all regular meetings and the annual meeting.

Treasurer:

- (a) To receive and disburse all club dues, fees, and other monies.
- (b) To maintain complete financial records of the organization.
- (c) All other duties as assigned by the Executive Committee.

Directors:

- (a) To act as an advisor to the Executive Committee concerning matters of policy.
- (b) All other duties as assigned by the Executive Committee.

The Avalanche Danger Scale

Snow is on the ground again, and the season for skiing, ice climbing and winter mountaineering is nearly here again. Avalanches are one of the deadliest risks during this season and the MCA is no stranger to tragedy, having lost some experienced and beloved members including Vin Hoeman, Grace Hoeman, Hans van der Laan, and Mark Rainery.

Some local resources for avalanche forecast include the following:

Professional Forecasts:

Hatcher Pass Avalanche Center - <https://hpavalanche.org/>

Chugach National Forest Avalanche Information Center - <https://www.cnfaic.org/forecast/turnagain/>






Observations, Weather Resources, and Supplementary Information:

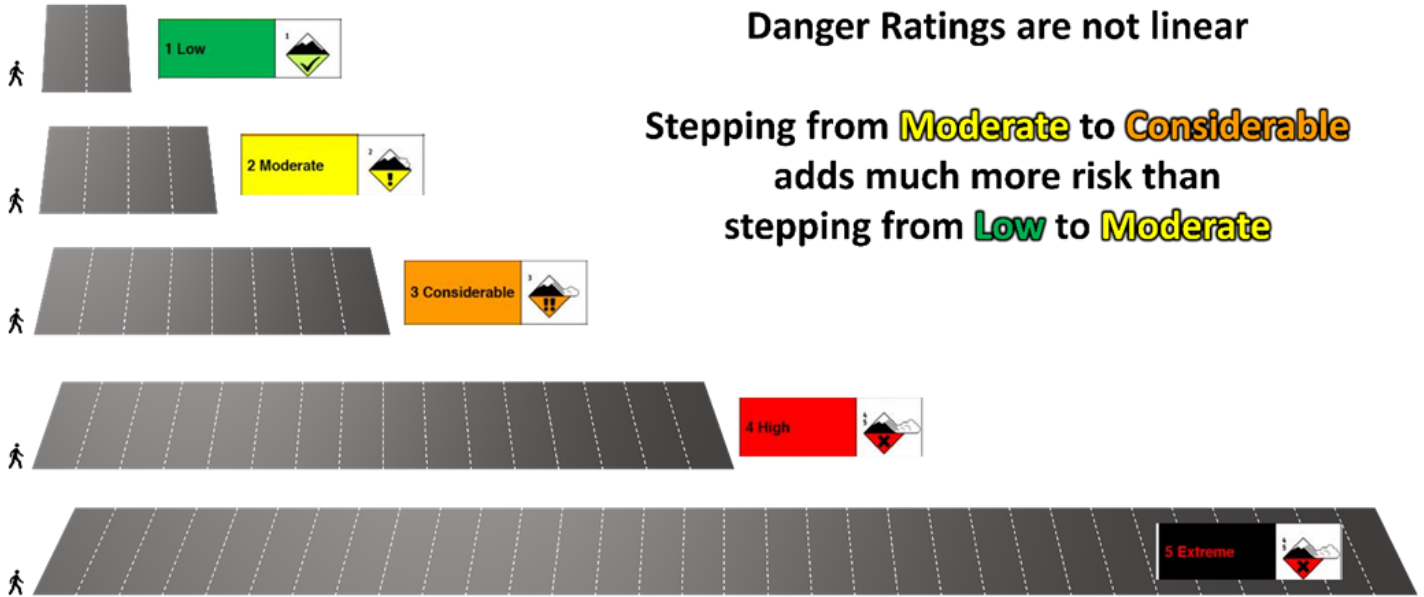
Anchorage Avalanche Center- <https://anchorageavalanchecenter.org/>

Snowio (Crowdsourced condition reports) - <http://www.snowio.com>

Windy (weather app with nice backcountry features) – <https://www.windy.com/>

As many may know, local avalanche forecasters use the North American Public Avalanche Danger Scale. However, fewer are aware that the danger scale is not linear, it is **exponential**. Bruce Tremper presents a good comparison in his book, Staying Alive in Avalanche Terrain, which he attributes to Colorado forecaster Dale Atkins. The increase in risk doubles with each increase in risk rating. Imagine having to cross a 2, 4, 8, 16 or 32-lane highway.

| North American Public Avalanche Danger Scale <i>Avalanche danger is determined by the likelihood, size and distribution of avalanches.</i> | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| Danger Level | | Travel Advice | Likelihood of Avalanches | Avalanche Size & Distribution |
| 5 Extreme |  | Avoid all avalanche terrain. | Natural and human-triggered avalanches certain. | Large to very large avalanches in many areas. |
| 4 High |  | Very dangerous avalanche conditions. Travel in avalanche terrain <u>not</u> recommended. | Natural avalanches likely; human-triggered avalanches very likely. | Large avalanches in many areas; or very large avalanches in specific areas. |
| 3 Considerable |  | Dangerous avalanche conditions. Careful snowpack evaluation, cautious routefinding and conservative decision-making essential. | Natural avalanches possible; human-triggered avalanches likely. | Small avalanches in many areas; or large avalanches in specific areas; or very large avalanches in isolated areas. |
| 2 Moderate |  | Heightened avalanche conditions on specific terrain features. Evaluate snow and terrain carefully; identify features of concern. | Natural avalanches unlikely; human-triggered avalanches possible. | Small avalanches in specific areas; or large avalanches in isolated areas. |
| 1 Low |  | Generally safe avalanche conditions. Watch for unstable snow on isolated terrain features. | Natural and human-triggered avalanches unlikely. | Small avalanches in isolated areas or extreme terrain. |
| <i>Safe backcountry travel requires training and experience. You Control Your Own Risk by choosing where, when and how you travel.</i> | | | | |



Product Notice – Pieps DSP Pro/Sport Switch Defect

Be aware: recent reports have suggested that Pieps DSP Sport and DSP Pro beacons have a faulty lock-out on the switch, which can allow the device to unintentionally switch from transmission mode into search mode, or to turn off. Pieps has recently invited concerned customers to trade in their devices, but stopped short of issuing a recall notice. Please be aware of this potential defect if you own one.



We're out there in the mountains with you.

WE KNOW THAT CONFIDENCE IN YOUR EQUIPMENT IS KEY.

If you have concerns about your DSP Pro/Sport, please contact us.

We will offer you an upgrade to the latest generation of our avalanche transceivers.

Contact us at: dsp@pieps.com

Devil's Mistress (6750 feet), Western Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Sophie Tidler

August 22, 2020, with Jen Aschoff and Kate Fitzgerald



61.190, -149.046



Blue Eyed Lake and Devil's Mistress

The trip began around 6:30 a.m. at the Eagle River Nature Center. There I met Kate Fitzgerald for the first time along with Jen Aschoff, who played with me and others in the Baleful Cirque a month prior, where we climbed Booty Peak and Brittle Peak. When we started hiking in, I quickly assessed that these ladies are awesome and, holy crapola, I'm about to go on an all-female climb of Devil's Mistress... is this real life? Fast forward to the pass that connects Twin Falls Creek to Blue Eyed Lake. I'm a little sweatier now, Devil's Mistress is in sight, and I have that same thought wash over me: "Is this real life?"

Rewind back to the parking lot where I found out that Kate was an ER Nurse that is currently, begrudgingly, working nights and had basically pulled an all-nighter because her sleep schedule is all sorts of screwy. Okay, back to the lake and mountain. We decide that Kate and Jen will break off and go for Emerald Peak and I will climb Vertigo Peak, then we would sleep by the lake and go for the Mistress in the morning. Kate was up for Emerald, a less technical climb, given her hazy state, and I was all for the enticingly close base of Vertigo (also, I had climbed Emerald a couple months prior and had little desire to add on that mileage).

Fast forward. I'm on the top of Vertigo and still thinking, "Is this real life?". Further... I'm by the lake and Jen and Kate pop into view, "Awesome, time for beer." Further... it's past midnight, I roll over in a bivy sack and see the starry night sky for the first time since spring, brought to tears, and spend hours stargazing and asking all those questions (you know the ones...). Back to sleep.





Jen rigging up a rappel.



Shortcut that did NOT go...



Jen on the summit of Devil's Mistress

Now it's morning and time for Devil's Mistress. Jen was a champ and packed her rope and trad gear. We packed our essentials (e.g. helmets and harnesses) and took off to the southeast to link up with a ramp that connects nicely to the south face. We weaved our way up to the ridge along scree gullies and rock ridges. Once on the main ridge we stuck primarily to the north side of it.

Near the summit there were some fairly vertical traverses but I was feeling comfortable so I continued until I got back on the ridge, walked 20 feet or so, thought, "hmm... maybe we won't need a rope after all," then instantly came to a halt at a big ole block that required Class 5 climbing, with a sheer drop on both sides. In front of the block was a solid rock that was previously used as an anchor and had two slings wrapped around it. I was a bit ahead of Jen and Kate, who were using the rope to navigate the ridge behind. So I walked around the block, did a little attempt, and thought, "nope, nope, nope."

After Jen and Kate came to the anchor I smiled as Jen started explaining the double belay system, alpine rock climbing methodology. All the while, I was thinking, "wow, I'm useless." Jen led the crux while Kate belayed her from the anchor, then tied into an anchor above and set up a double belay for Kate and me to climb simultaneously. I need to relearn and practice this trick. It was slick. We stayed tied into the anchor to approach the summit because it was still fairly exposed. On the summit, I had the honor of signing "three wicked women" into the Devil's Mistress summit register. I believe this was the first all women's summit... so that's pretty freaking cool.

We belayed down that big block to the lower anchor and decided to belay off the lower anchor as well. That wasn't completely necessary but, as previously stated, it was fairly vertical traversing. So, we dropped as far as we could using rope, traversed back to the ridge and went down the maze of gullies and scree face that we ascended. I had the smart idea to try to drop directly into the lake basin along the west of the base. That didn't go, so we went back down the eastern ramp. I will say that all was not lost on that side venture because I found a beer can to pack out. Trash is treasure

in the mountains (it's a game we all need to play).

Postscript

So, that's the approach, peaks, and start of the exit of this awesome trip with these inspiring women that I am happy to call friends. Speaking of which, I'm going to keep milking this... Jen Aschoff, you are the most dedicated mountaineer I know. Also, your geo-geekiness and unguarded good charm are such gifts to be around in the mountains. Thank you so much for being you. And Kate, judgment is still out on whether I like you... hahaha I'm totally kidding. You're so awesome, we went to Pichler's Perch and climbed Ovis and attempted White Lice a few weekends ago. Stoked to meet you on this trip and thanks for rocking out with me.

Okay there's my Scree diary entry of Devil's Mistress and two mistresses that I hold close to my heart. Sorry I'm a Cancer and can't help but gush out sentiment.



Jen on the summit of Devil's Mistress

To the Mentasta Mountains

For sunshine and mountains, go east wandering man

Text and photos by Frank E. Baker



62.713, -143.988
(start of Nabesna
Road)



Wrangell Mountains giant Mount Drum (12,010 feet), is prominent on the southern skyline from the Glenn Highway. It was first climbed in 1954 by Austrian mountaineers Heinrich Harrer, Keith Hart, and George Schaller.

Some people will go to great lengths to find sunshine. After weeks of southcentral rain and gloom, I piled into my car on October 1st and set out on a 240-mile road journey east-northeast to the small community of Slana, southwest of Tok off the Glenn Highway, where the 42-mile Nabesna Road begins. At the time it was one of the few areas of the state promising “partly cloudy” weather.

Aside from finding sunshine, my goal was to climb a small peak in the Mentasta Mountains that lie immediately north of the Nabesna Road. A considerable distance south of the road are the Wrangell Mountains that include giants Mt. Drum and Mt. Sanford. The Mentastas form the northern boundary of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park & Preserve.

The park and preserve were established in 1980 by the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). With large areas closed to hunting, several commercial guides in the Nabesna Road area were immediately put out of business. Among them was Sara deHart, who today owns and operates the Hart-D Ranch, a comfortable lodge at Slana where I stayed for two nights.

Back in the day Sara and her husband Don (now deceased) had horses and guided sheep hunters into the Wrangell and Mentasta Mountains. “With hunting prohibited beginning in 1980, we had to completely revamp our business and begin catering to tourists,”

she said. “And until the coronavirus earlier this year, I was doing quite well.”

My two-day plan also included driving the length of the Nabesna Road, hike (and possibly bike) a few short trails. I didn’t realize how rough the road had become since my last visit some 30 years ago. With washouts and large, loose rocks on its surface, for many miles I had to creep along at 5-10 mph to keep from tearing my car apart and rattling my mountain bike off its rack. At a couple of spots I had to drive through about 10 inches of running water.

Extremely slow moving along the road, coupled with a short hike up a rocky creek bed (Skookum Volcano Trail) ate up most of my time on the first day. But on the return I managed to recon a trail at Mile 19 of the road, at Caribou Creek. I soon learned there was a great 3.5-mile trail that was suitable for biking. I returned the next morning, eager to make the most of another beautiful sunny day.

INTO THE HILLS: The Caribou Creek Trail is like a small four-wheeler road, and for about two miles I was able to ride my bike. At that point a lot of tree roots made the trail quite rough, so I stashed the bike and began hiking. Had I pushed my bike only 1/10th of a mile farther, I would have discovered I could have ridden the length of the trail that ends at a public use cabin.



A public-use cabin sits at the end of the 3.5-mile Caribou Creek Trail, which is more like a small road that is accessible by mountain bike.

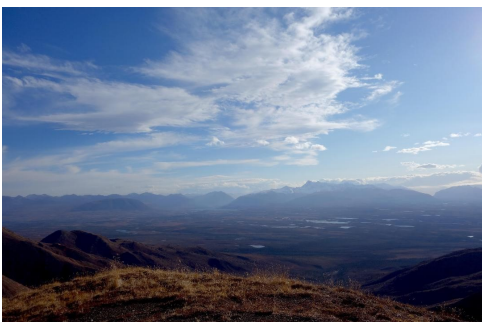
had my sights set on Peak 6240, farther back, which MCA's mountain-ace Steve Gruhn says has never been mentioned in the Scree. But with a torn meniscus (a long-term injury) nagging my right knee, I wasn't sure how far I could go and still get back to the bike before dark.

A TURTLE'S PACE: Back in the day it seemed like an optimum ascent rate for me was about 1,000 feet per hour. But at age 75 with a gimpy knee, it felt as if I were creeping uphill slower than Norman Vaughan on his 1994 climb of Mt. Vaughan in Antarctica with Vern Tejas. But the slope was forgivingly gradual and mostly rock-free. With winds gusting to about 40 miles per hour, I staggered to Point 5,620 about 4 p.m. I looked longingly up at Peak 6240, just 600 feet higher. But with darkness coming at roughly 7:30 p.m., I needed to get going downhill.



Winds whipping up to 40 miles per hour at the summit only allow a quick self-timed photo.

A few minutes after summiting, a raven swooped by, gracefully riding the winds to some unknown destination. It was the only living thing I'd seen that day, save for a few squirrels and song birds down in the woods. After a snack, I begrudgingly headed downhill.



The view of myriad lakes within Wrangell-St. Elias National Park opens up as I ascend to Point 5620.

About 1:30 p.m. I had a quick lunch at the cabin, signed the register and hiked north on a primitive trail. After crossing the shallow stream, I bushwhacked briefly to attain the sloping ridge leading to Point 5620. I

there were plenty of sheep droppings on the mountain's slopes and moose droppings lower down on the trail. Completing a fairly rapid descent, I stopped at the cabin to note in the register that I'd made Point 5620. I then moved hastily down the trail. Once at my bike, I quickly whisked back to the road and was at my car by 7 p.m.

In retrospect, reaching Point 5620 certainly wasn't anything epic. But it provided another mountain range, the Mentasta Mountains, to my modest Alaska climbing resume that includes summits in the Chugach, Kenai, Alaska, Talkeetna and Aleutian Island mountains. And I'm compelled to mention once more--the late autumn sunshine was very nice.

For general interest, one of the highest points in the Mentastas is Noyes Mountain, with an elevation of 8,147 feet. It was named in 1966 by U. S. Bureau of Public Roads for General John R. Noyes (1902-1956), former Commanding General of the Alaska National Guard and head of the Alaska Road Commission. The Commission was established in 1905 to construct and maintain roads, bridges, and trails throughout Alaska.

There are two references to Noyes Mountain in the Scree archives: The October 1972 edition has a trip report by John Michaud on his and Jim Carter's successful summit bid. They thought the peak had been unclimbed, but found evidence (a pole and rock cairn) indicating someone had been there. The second reference is in the September 2007 edition – an interesting account of Wayne Todd and Carrie Wangs successful summit.

The Nabesna Road was originally built in 1933 by the Alaska Road Commission to supply the Nabesna Mine and to get its ore to Port Valdez. The mine operated from 1931-1939 and again for a short time during World War II. At the end of the Nabesna Road today there is an air-taxi/hunting guide service run by the Ellis family, as well as Devils' Mountain Lodge.

MCA member Frank E. Baker is a freelance writer who lives in Eagle River.

I was surprised not to see any big wildlife on this trip, but

there were plenty of sheep droppings on the mountain's slopes and moose droppings lower down on the trail. Completing a fairly rapid descent, I stopped at the cabin to note in the register that I'd made Point 5620. I then moved hastily down the trail. Once at my bike, I quickly whisked back to the road and was at my car by 7 p.m.

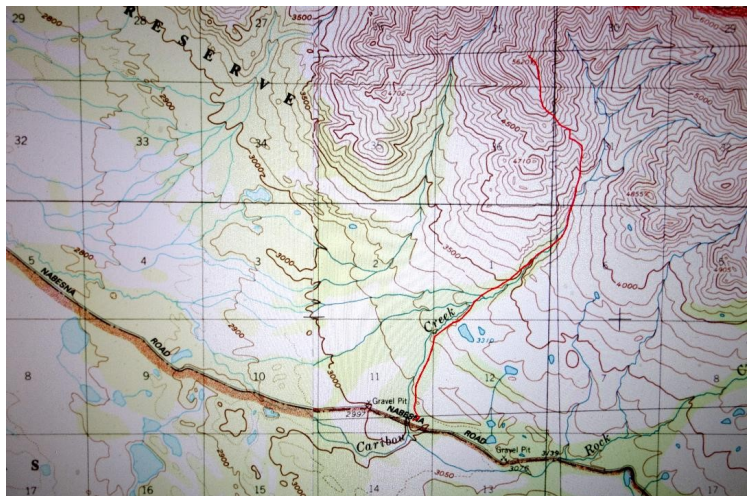
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Eklutna High Traverse

Text and photos by Andrew Holman

September 26, 2020, with Abbey Collins



61.424, -148.942



Eklutna Lake

- Pepper Peak (5423')
- Salt Peak (5455')
- Peak 5285
- Yudikench Peak (5732')
- Bleak Peak (5430')
- Bright Peak (5745')

This ridge is a massive day for most folks, and even a long day for a solid trail runner. I think the title is a bit boisterous though, given that the vanilla “Eklutna Traverse” is a much more technical undertaking. What I’m describing is linking the peaks on the ridge south of Pepper Peak into the summits of Bleak and Bright. A name Abbey proposed, that I support, is the “The Eklutna Seven Summits”. I’ll leave it up to you, but you could easily add one of these to make it 7 (North-to-South): Shaker Peak, Peak 5420, Peak 5420, Point 5420, or Point 5281

We went north to south, starting with Pepper and ending with Bright. Most trip reports we saw go the opposite direction and I largely think that is the right call. Although, psychologically, you’re going to begin your day walking down the boring, flat Eklutna Lakeside Trail, then do a lot of gain before you hit your first

peak. The advantage is that everything from there on out is pretty straightforward and, as you lose light, you will either be on a cruiser ridge or an actual trail. Going the way we did, you’ll have to do some route-finding and alder-thrashing to cut back into the Bold Ridge Overlook Trail. It’s not that bad, but after 20+ miles...you just want to zombie out on a trail-trail.

We started out the day with healthful pre-sunrise sandwiches at McDonald’s, Eagle River. We were surprised by the burst of energy we got off of these (neither of us had had Mickey D’s in years, maybe that’s why? Or maybe it’s that my big camera is in the shop and I only had my point-and-shoot?), and made good time (for us) up the Twin Peaks Trail. We were at the first bench in about 40 minutes. We then took a chance on the shortcut trail that leaves from the bench and goes straight uphill to Pepper. Why doesn’t anyone ever talk about this trail? It’s fast, efficient, and fantastic!

About 2 hours and 35 minutes, we were on the summit of Pepper. We did an easy ridge walk over to Shaker but decided to not go for the true summit to shave some time.

At 3 hours and 47 minutes in, we hit Salt. We started talking about our bail options and how we felt about them. There were now rolling whiteouts and occasional snow flurries. Most of us wished we had shuttled a car at the Pioneer trailhead [*Ed. Note: officially*

the Pioneer Ridge Austin Helmers Trail], a small part of us trusted the only slightly-below-average forecast. We decided to push on.

At 6 hours and 37 minutes in we were on the summit of Yudikench, and Pioneer Ridge was looking cozy...but wasn't really an option at this point. We had a brief sunbreak, then the snow hit again.

We followed the surprisingly gentle ridge down Yudikench and over toward Bleak. I say surprisingly, because it looks gnarly on the topo maps, especially with CalTopo's slope-shading.

At 8 hours and 55 minutes in, we hit the large, flat, uneventful summit of Bleak. I looked over at Bright. On one hand, there was a loose gendarme-encrusted ridge that would require multiple au cheval's...put probably rotten 4th/5th Class climbing. On the other hand, we could lose 1,000 feet of gain, only to then slog up 1,200+ feet of scree (this, again, is where doing it from the opposite direction is smarter). Maybe Bleak gets its name for the feeling you get when you evaluate the last summit of the trip.

We went with Option 2 and had a fun scree glissade down into the valley. We took a break and I drank an adult beverage at the base of a long, steep scree field. To be fair, it looked way less intimidating than it did from Bleak.

Abbey led the way and, when we were about halfway up the face, transitioned over onto a chossy rib to our right. It was blocky and mostly 3rd Class, but of very poor quality (shocker). Still, it was much better than backsliding on the scree. There were a few short sections where a helmet would've been nice, if for nothing else than peace of mind.

After what seemed like far too long, we were on the summit! We had topped out almost directly on it.

Now to scout our way down. We loosely based our plan off of a



descent line we saw Dan Glatz use from Bleak. We needed to get off the summit and into the valley, then we'd ride the valley to about 3,300 feet where we could cross over the ridge north of Bold Ridge, with minimal gain.

We moved towards Bold Peak (views of this peak were mysterious and threatening from this aspect), south on the ridge. We saw a few gullies that looked really sketchy looking down into them from above. One of them turned out to be not that bad, and held a pretty moderate scree descent into the valley. (it's hard to describe,

but we saw three gullies and took the middle one)

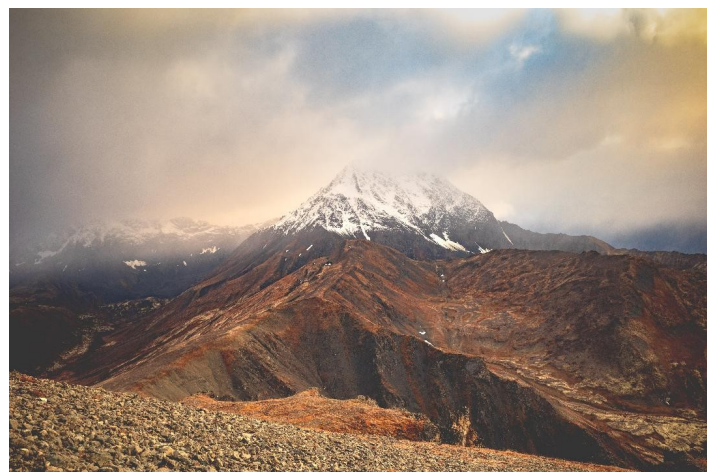
Now, in the valley, we descended easy spongy tundra. Eventually we happened upon Caleb Martin, who had been stalking a brown bear (maybe the same one Brendan Lee had encountered earlier in the day?) He gave us some advice on avoiding the alders and we continued down the valley on the skier's left of the creek, aiming for ~3,300 feet elevation. As soon as we hit that, we corkscrewed around the ridge and then started descending into the valley in front of (north of) Bold Ridge, which is about when we put our headlamps on (notice how the timestamps stopped? I didn't want the distraction). The terrain wasn't great, but it wasn't quite a bushwhack either.

Eventually we crossed a final creek and were on the Bold Ridge Overlook Trail. We shared a NEIPA, then started scampering down the trail in the rain.

We were so happy to meet up with the boring Eklutna Lakeside Trail, not so much for the long walk in the rain ahead of us.

We got to the car before midnight, the whole deal took us about 16.5 hours.

<https://www.instagram.com/aholphoto/>



1216m, Western Chugach Mountains

Text and photos by Wayne Todd

August 31, 2020, with Carrie Wang



61.191, -149.556



(Left to Right) Temptation, Tikishla, Knoya, Kanchee, and Snow Hawk Peaks.

This story could be titled ‘use it or lose it’ regarding trails, or ‘use other trails to avoid the crowds,’ or ‘racing the storm.’ With a dismal forecast for early afternoon and wanting a slightly new view-cape, we park at the Ship Creek Bridge for an ‘early’ start of 8:45 a.m. As is protocol, we’d already signed into the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) iSportsman site which is easy and quite inexpensive (even less than an MCA membership).

We’re bound for Snow Hawk Valley Trail. ‘Over the river’ literally and up the road, going straight on the lesser traveled road we are soon at the fence for the dam. Oops, a tad far. Being semi-familiar with the trail we backtrack about 20 yards and looking southwest (left) find the alder brushed path (an old road bed). Wow, it’s quite overgrown with no brush clearing in a few years. A hundred yards farther and now looking carefully eastward we find the small trail marker three feet above the ground, also almost overgrown with brush.

The trail is then fairly easy to follow, albeit rather muddy in places, until a mile and half in where the high grass obscures the obvious, and a few fallen trees have dispersed trail users to numerous lesser paths. With a little diligence the main path is found again. And on the topic of grass, despite it being a fairly sunny morning, I’m already soaked from the waist down from ‘dude grass’ (some would say dewed).

A few miles in we’re ‘hike drying’ while enjoying alpine valley landscapes. At the main north drainage from Cottonwood Pass we veer left down a lesser animal trail to cross Snowhawk Creek. Boots off for the crossing, though my wet wringable socks are in-

different. After an alpine break we arc north easily missing the brush patches but intersect the hemlock stands. Above that the krummholz patches are prevalent, one of my favorite alpine plants. White apparitions float in the sky to the north above a low cloud band. The predicted high winds, as chilly blasts, occur more frequently as we ascend. I’m also wondering, “*when are we going to inevitably get rained on?*”

This bump is slightly higher than it looks but a few hours after starting, we’re on top getting seriously wind blasted. The views are adequate of the near Chugach with a refreshing new view of Temptation Peak. We rationalize that a hike up Cottonwood Pass to the new military road will be easier and more pleasant in the rain, and loops are always better anyway.

I’m disappointed to see flagging and tracks from Snowhawk Valley to the pass. Meaning the road is not stopping at the pass between Kanchee and Snowhawk Peaks*. The road does make for easier traveling but is a bit longer than our ingress route. Once low enough to be out of the persistent east wind, temperatures are quasi-warm.

We take the first right and are pleased this heads semi-directly back to Ship Creek Bridge but note it’s a little farther than expected. I thought we’d see numerous bear, moose and other wildlife but we only see one moose cross the road. Where the road climbs appreciably we backtrack and take the next road running north though it veers northwest, essentially paralleling our initial exit attempt. We finally intersect Oil Well Road and reduce our distance, noting another road enters from the right (probably the

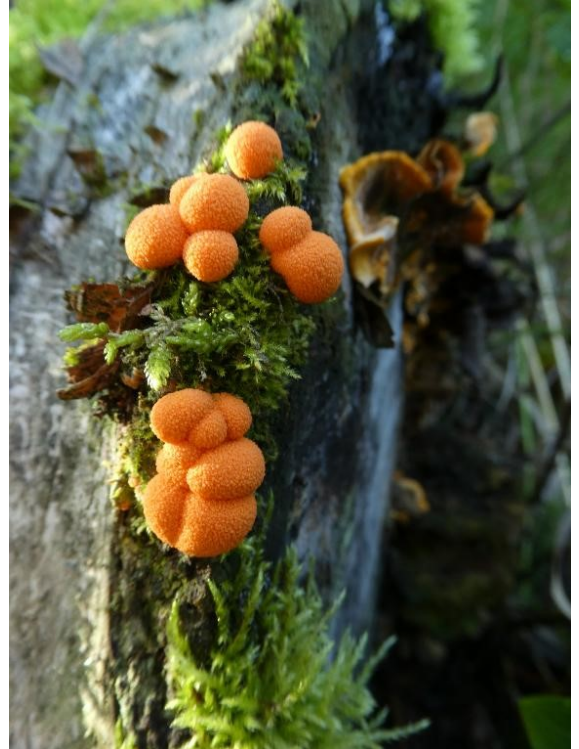
ascending road we about-faced on). We barely glimpse a jogger somewhere along the way. Ready for sitting or at least to be off hard road we make the car before 5 p.m., wrapping up an eight hour loop. A half hour later the rain begins.

I would recommend this trail for peak access, possible loops or just an out and back hike especially if you want to avoid the crowds and parking hassles (as noted, we barely saw one other person).

18 miles (12 on egress which literally doubles the ingress miles), 4,100 feet of gain.

*I've since learned the road is planned for continuation into Snow Hawk Valley where a training village will be established.

[Ed. Note: upon inquiry, the JBER Public Relations Office stated that "Range Control [does] erect small structures that replicate a village to assist units that are conducting live-fire training and field training exercises [in Snowhawk Valley]. However, there are no projects in the works to build a permanent urban combat facility in those training areas." Climbers recreating on Base property are reminded to register, check for closures, and sign themselves in and out via the iSportsman system at <https://jber.isportsman.net/>]



Orange fungi



The floating white apparition

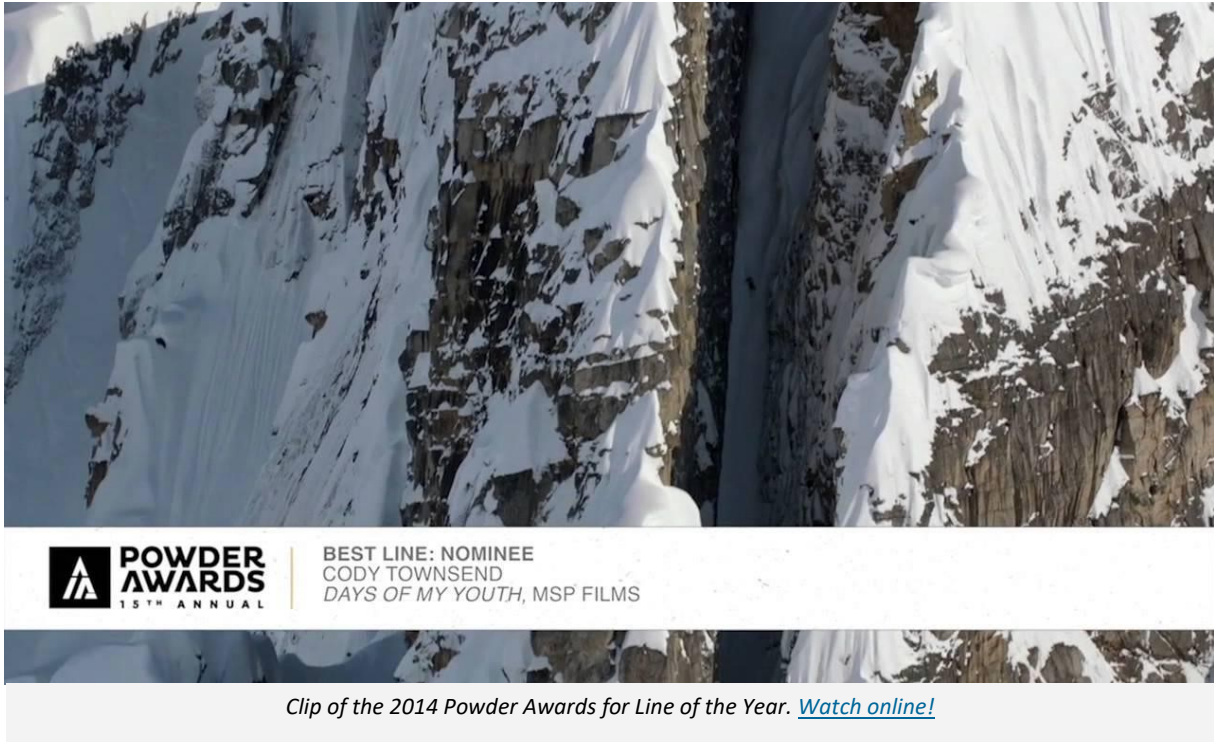


Carrie hiking from the old cabin site

An Interview with Cody Townsend

Text by Cody Townsend, Transcribed by Gerrit Verbeek

Edited and condensed for clarity. Part 2 of 2



On May 31st, 2020, Cody Townsend got on the phone with the MCA to discuss his project: becoming the first person to ski all fifty classic ski lines in *50 Classic Ski Descents of North America* (Davenport, Newhard, Burrows, 2010). The catch: Cody will ski each mountain with a human-powered ascent, a significant departure after a career in free-skiing with helicopters and chairlifts. Follow along with Cody's progress at www.skithefifty.com, or follow his video series at <https://www.youtube.com/user/hucknorris83>.

What does Alaska mean to you?

(In addition to the Alaskan peaks on *The Fifty*, Cody's ties to Alaska include marriage to Elyse Saugstad, originally from Anchorage/Girdwood, a Tordrillo Mountains training course which was an early taste of Skimo, and a career milestone winning Powder Magazine's 2014 Line of the Year award for skiing a line in the Tordrillos named the Crack, as shown in the film *Days of My Youth*.)

"Alaska is Mecca. For a skier, it's where we want to be. All forms of it too, whether human powered or heli, whether at altitude in the Alaska Range. You can find everything and there's still some secrets that have never been skied out there that I'm holding tight to my chest!

Alaska is the last great wild land. Every time I'm up there, whether it's summer, spring, fall or winter it feels like you can be on your own, in the middle of nowhere, completely have to be self-reliant and skilled in all forms of survival and moving through wild places within an hour outside of a city limit.

The mountains and the snow is obviously special, but I think also the culture. I have a lot of close friends beyond marrying into an Alaskan family, and there's this culture that everyone goes out and does cool stuff. Your average 9-5 worker is out fishing on the weekends, hunting, flying into a backcountry cabin in their bush plane. You just see this culture of getting wild, getting out there, it's just so prevailing. I go up there in the summer and fish and love that. I love obviously the mountains and the skiing is unparalleled but it's where we want to be as skiers.

Back in the day we used to joke around, but it was also kind of serious, when we'd have our Alaska heli trip at the end of the season. The whole beginning from December to March, all you're doing is preparing for Alaska. Mentally and physically preparing to go to your two-week trip in Alaska so it is the mecca, and it's cool, I feel like it's become a second home for me as well with family there and with Elyse from there. Pretty cool!"

In your January ... how to train?

In your January 2019 interview for freeskier.com you mentioned you were mainly training for skiing by skiing, but starting by late 2019 you've been talking about exercise regimens a la Steve House's Training for the Uphill Athlete. Can you talk a little about what you've learned, and what you've learned about how to train?

"So in 2019 it was out of necessity that I couldn't really train that much and I was just trying to get the project off the ground. So I spent so much time on funding and getting everything on the back end that I almost didn't have time to train. And I thought 'well, it'll be fine, the season's gonna start off with a lot of shorter, smaller lines and I'll ski my way into shape.' And that worked to a point, and it worked because I skied myself into shape.

But when it came April and we were hitting big line after big line: huge day, then get home, one rest day, get in the car, drive twelve hours, one prep day and then go again, one rest day and then go again. I realized I was slowly losing my fitness during this run because I wasn't recovering properly, nor was I training. Instead of just training, you're going so hard that you're actually starting to lose your fitness - I started to learn this reading Steve House's book.

I realized that I can't hit that wall again. I can't be in the middle of May and last year I couldn't get out of bed for three days straight, to the point that I almost went to the hospital. I've never felt like this in my life. So I definitely intended in the summer to go in with a specific training regimen and so starting late summer is when I really started following Steve's book. If this guy knows how to climb mountains, he knows how to train for them. And I've had friends have success with him, like Adrian Ballinger, and I will say it worked absolute wonders for me. I came into this season stronger than I've ever been. Right out the gate I felt like I was crushing and recovering quicker. We were coming into March before the pandemic shut everything down and I felt ready to go still, whereas last year I was starting to wane in the middle of March a little bit. So I've realized even three and a half months of very specific training for the season, and as soon as summer really hits I'm going to be training really hard with really intense focus on it.

For us, Steve's book is pretty much on point. He nailed it because it's a very specific level of fitness. We're not long-distance runners. You do have to carry weight, so you have to be physically actually strong but then you also have to have endurance out of that strength. So it's a very specific function of your fitness. I'll probably dive in a little heavier. Besides being able to be successful, it feels a lot better when you're twelve hours in

and thinking 'I can still go!' instead of 'Oh god, get this over with!'

What's your game plan for those remaining Alaskan lines (University Peak, The Sphinx, and Mt. St. Elias)? What still needs to fall into place?

What's your game plan... fall into place?

"One of the things I was saying with Alaska, is it takes time. You could go up there for a month and sit around and the weather never works, or get up there and get stuck in a storm for two weeks and conditions never work out.

When it comes to this project, I initially set out this goal to try to do it as fast as I can. So [the original plan was] to try to crank out as many as possible, and then at the end of the year tack on one expedition to Alaska. But then I started to realize that wasn't necessarily the best game plan.

When it comes to something like University Peak, the southwest face is like 7-8000 vertical feet straight up, 45-55° the entire time. You want to be coming into that in peak physical shape. In bootpacking shape too, at that, not just in ski touring shape. You want to be able and ready to climb for 13 hours straight, frontpointing your way up that thing.

And I started to realize leading up to a trip like University by skiing the Grand Teton and a bunch of other lines beforehand and just flying up there and trying it honestly wasn't the safest course of action to approach that line. I feel like Mt. St. Elias is something, that you just kinda gotta go. It's a traditional, expedition-style trip where you're just moving camps up and down the mountain the entire time. So fitness isn't necessarily a thing, mainly you're hoping weather and conditions work out. For something like University, I've realized you need to be in peak physical form to be able to do that. So I've actually sort of kicked University down the road and realized that's probably going to be one of the last ones I do. I want to be coming into University with a month of training under my belt, as opposed to a month of driving around in my car and hitting a line that's maybe physically demanding, but takes more ski touring than it does frontpointing.

It is always shifting, the way I approach this. I do think early on in this project I had to know what I was physically and skill-wise prepared to take on and proficient at before I go for University. So I did say it's a little later down the road for a multitude of reasons. I think it'd be better if I were years into this project and my skills have quadrupled before I tackle something as challenging as University and St. Elias. I think skillwise I'm prepared for those, for sure, but now you have to look at the individual details and figure out how to do them safely and securely."

On Incorporating Locals and Skills Learned Along the Way.

“One of the original goals on the media side of the project was to involve locals, whether local legends and underground heroes, or real huge legends like Jimmy Chin. I knew on the media side of it, it can’t be just me trying to carry this entertainment. I thought it would be really fun to involve locals.

So when we get to Pemberton (B.C.), we go with Jon Johnston who I skied with fifteen years prior but in the meantime he’s been opening up all these crazy lines in the Pemberton area. And so getting to go out with those guys is, #1, involving the locals and, #2, I didn’t really think about it but it’s been very beneficial: all of a sudden you’re getting a lot of inside beta and knowledge and research, rolled up into one. And when it comes to me entering into this project, like I said I was a little green to a lot of this. So going up the Grand with Jimmy was great in terms of beta, he’s gone up it twenty times and knows it like the back of his hands, but it was also a little bit of skill building. I’ve ice climbed before and I know how to, but do I know how to do it in that sort of way? Through this process I’ve been able to learn just absolutely tons.

And it’s been really cool because there are things that Jimmy have said that have stuck with me. And I’m realizing that I learned a lesson from him, that he had learned from Conrad Anker, which Conrad had learned from Mugs Stump. Those are generational lessons which you just go out a day with these guys and you absorb. I really, really admire those people and really take to heart and listen to them.

Jeremy Jones has been a mentor for years and I’ve gotten to travel with him all over and do a lot of lines. To be able to do something like Meteorite together, which was on his ticklist... I feel like he’s been leading the charge as a freerider who has moved to a human-powered element in snowboard mountaineering. And it was the first time I felt like him and I were partners, on this, and he wasn’t a mentor leading me up this thing. It was a really cool moment for me personally, looking up to him for a decade plus and listening to every little detail he said and studying what he does, and being able to tick off something that was on his dream-list alongside me, that’s really cool.”

And feeling a bit like an equal, huh? Cool.

“I still don’t think I’ll ever be an equal! Holy hell...”

On Local Alaskan Partners and Shout-Outs.

“I hope I’ve named most of them in the videos themselves. I wouldn’t say there are any individuals outside of what’s named [in the video series] which I could directly source. But overall, the Alaskan ski community is insane and I can look back to times of guys I learned from.

When I was heli-skiing, I was guided by Brad Cosgrove, who lives in Hope. He’s such an amazing guide – a river guide and a heli guide. There’s lessons I learned from him when I was just heli-skiing and there’s all these people in the past, Alaskan legends that I’ve learned from, and even so many more unnamed people. I have this thing: never claim a first ascent in Canada or Alaska, because you can literally be in the bar sitting there being like Such-and-Such Peak, and a guy in Carhartts and a flannel next to you with a dirty face from working construction all day will say ‘No way dude, Josh and I skied that ten years ago!’ There’s so many underground badassess...

When it comes to Pontoon, there’s some records of people climbing and skiing it but I think there’s a lot more people that have climbed and skied it than are even in the record books. There are so many of these underground badassess who just go and do it and never say a word about it. I’ve noticed with Alaskan and Canadian mountain culture, John Q. Public is more badass than most of the best skiers at your local mountain. The Alaskan community as a whole has been paving a way without much knowledge for a really long time.”

Is there any... of the videos?

Is there any memorable stuff that did not make it into the final cuts of the videos?

“I think it would be more in the history and my career arc. Just being in Alaska for the first time. The one thing I always hear, that you see it in ski movies and in people, is that they kind of become numb to the fact that they’re in Alaska and skiing big lines and climbing big lines and all that stuff. And I will never forget the very first trip I came to Alaska. I spent 11 grand for a 2-week heli trip and that entire year I made \$22000, so I spent about half my annual income on a two-week trip. And I remember showing up there thinking I’m a good skier and can handle it, then just being absolutely petrified.

I’ll never forget the very first time we were in Valdez and I flew by Meteorite and they’re pointing it out that people ski that. And I was just like “No f’in way will I ever ski that, that’s so gnarly!” Just scared out of my mind. “This is a different sport up here.” It was pretty much that moment that I realized even though I approached it with utter terror and fear, that I’ve got something to learn and this is the place. I’ve had 11 years on heli trips and various trips up to Alaska, and I would say it’s the best ski lines I’ve ever, the most lessons I’ve learned.”

On the Concept of ‘Style’ in Adventure Sports.

“My thoughts on style are shaped a lot by climbing, and as I started to get into ski mountaineering and human power I thought I might as well learn how to rock climb, and I live in a

good place for it: Tahoe.

So I started reading a lot of books and magazines - the Alpinist, American Alpine Club, all sorts of things - and diving into the history of climbing. And one thing I noticed was a massive divergence between the attitude of climbing and the attitude of skiing. As I mentioned before in the very first part of this interview, the attitude I saw in surfing versus the attitude I saw in skiing [Ed. Note: see the previous issue of the *Scree* for the first half of the interview]. I saw skiing being welcoming, fun, absolutely enjoyable in all sorts of ways, and it was led by heroes like Shane McConkey, and was just this inclusive atmosphere where it was this exclusive atmosphere in surfing.

And I started to see in climbing a real, real serious nature to it. I noticed very strict rules, I saw things like "This doesn't count because you looped your pinky finger into a bolt" and suddenly everything you did doesn't count.' And to me it was like "But wait, why are you climbing?" We're not climbing for glory - well maybe some people are - but ultimately you climb because of what you do with skiing, because it's fun and there's some sort of personal enjoyment to it.

I saw a lot of bickering, just weird terminology and rules and it felt like a very exclusive sport. I don't want [skiing] to become that way. I don't want it to only count if you put your skis on on the pavement on the highway and went skiing from there. If you have to snowmobile in 3 miles because it makes the day more fun, easier, safer, or even more approachable for some people, then so be it.

I look at style as a Hierarchy of Cool. Sure, is it more cool to do as those two guys who did last year who rode their bikes from Salt Lake City to go climb Denali than it is to fly in and drop off at base camp and then climb and ski Denali? Yeah, but I would never say to someone who climbed and skied Denali and are hyped on it, that they flew in so it doesn't count. So then where do you draw the line?

I've seen people, generally kind of older ski mountaineers more from the mountaineering perspective, kind of harp on me that we flew into the base of Pontoon or took a snowmobile three miles. Well where do you draw the line? Do you have to start naked at the ocean and walk your way in for it to count? No! It doesn't 'count.' You do it for your own individual enjoyment or pleasure.

And sure, there are ways that are more cool. Ultimately I look at it that the less impact you can have environmentally is a cooler way to do things, but I'm not going to tell you that it doesn't #*\$@ing count and that I'm way more badass than you. I didn't like that culture that I saw in climbing and I don't want

that to come to skiing. So I'm very anti-rules."

On the Balance of Access, Development, and Wilderness Preservation.

"If everything was human-powered, the ski community would be very, very small. If we didn't have ski resorts, there would be very few skiers in the world. So there has to be some sort of development on mountains. Where else are you going to learn to ski? Where else are you going to take a 3 year-old?"

The less impact you can have, the better. But I'm not going to disregard [motors and development], because it does have value of getting people into the backcountry. What's the benefit of having more skiers? Ultimately, the reason why I think there should be more skiers and why we should introduce people to skiing is that in my personal experience, communities that are centered around the outdoors are just seemingly happier communities. People are more friendly, they focus their life on enjoyment instead of the rat race of economics and capitalism. They focus on things like protecting the environment and the wilds. And the more people that you have experiencing and cherishing the wilds, the more warriors you have to fight for those places and environmental solutions. The less people we have doing it, the less we value it."

On the Responsibilities of Pro Athletes.

"As a professional skier, I will say sometimes I have struggled with some of the commercial aspects of it. At its most basic core, you're supposed to sell more product. But it isn't quite that because often, if we have to justify the amount of money that people pay us and the trips we go on and the funding of it, and they're like "Cool, how many pairs of skis have you sold?" "Uh... two?" We would never have jobs!

So it's actually more about inspiration. The North Face doesn't send climbers all around the world to climb big lines because we need to sell some more puffy jackets! They do this because this is part of who we are and this actually inspires people to hike in their backyard... and then, maybe, they'll want a North Face product. But ultimately they're not tied to direct sales. So quite often our job gets mistaken as having to sell product, but it's actually more to inspire people to get outdoors.

And that goes back to the original thought, The reason why it's good to inspire people to get outdoors is because everything good in my life—where I live, my wife, my family, my community, the things I cherish, the things I fight for, the things I donate money to—are centered around giving back to the mountains and giving back to skiing because it's made my life so happy.

I see the counter-arguments, one hundred percent. "We don't need more people out there, I want it for myself, it's getting

more crowded and I have to go further.” That is maybe unfortunate for your personal experience, but for the collective good of the world and environment and wild places it’s better to have more of us than for you not have to ski a line with some tracks in it. That’s kind of how I try to justify it, at all.”

On Climate Change.

“Definitely a complex question: very global, macro-economic solution level. It’s something I think about, and something a lot of professional skiers and snowboarders have to grapple with. And we probably know better than anyone, we are absolute hypocrites. But, here’s something that’s interesting about with this global pandemic, and this notion that we need to personally cut is inherently wrong...

Over the last couple of months has been the greatest decline of carbon output in the industrialized era. We’re watching skies clear up and carbon emissions just drastically drop, because the world came to a halt. Because we were not allowed to go outside, travel, or do pretty much anything. And see how long that lasted. See how long people were able to drastically cut their own personal lives to the point where the climate actually is starting to turn around. In America, it was about a month. And what we’re seeing now, with the rioting and burning and looting that’s going on, is obviously triggered a lot by ingrained racism in America and that horrendous video of George Floyd. But a lot of it has to do, in my opinion, that there’s 40 million people unemployed. People are sick of the power structures and the economic structure and are struggling to get by.

Ultimately people are pissed off. People have been locked inside for months on end, don’t have jobs, don’t have an economic future, and can’t get by. We’re looking at a great global climate solution by cutting people’s ability to do any sort of fossil fuel burning, and the output is chaos and absolute degradation of our entire global economy. We are not going to convince 7 billion people around this world to cut their own personal carbon output voluntarily to solve our way out of this crisis. So that notion that you need to stop traveling, you need to stop eating meat, you need to drive a Tesla, you need to put solar panels on your house, before you can even say a word about climate change. You need to not be a hypocrite, you essentially need to do nothing in your life, be in quarantine locked in your home, and then you can talk about it is inherently hypocritical and wrong because that’s not a solution. We are not going to cut our way out of it.

The only solution that I foresee, that scientists foresee, that experts foresee is technological solutions, governmental investment on a massive-scale switch to renewable energy. To switch to fuels that move our cars and power the world that aren’t

fossil fuel-based. So that’s going to come not through us cutting, but from demanding change at the top, demanding corporations to change, and demanding technological solutions. That comes from what is happening: protests, elections, purchase habits, supporting companies that are doing the right thing.

Small little [shifts] like ‘I can cut 30% of my carbon emissions if I am a vegan’ is a great thing and should be celebrated, but are you going to convince 7 billion around the world to be vegan? No. Are you going to convince 7 billion people to stop driving cars, or in more developing economies to not do what’s best for their families by working in a job that doesn’t have industrial carbon outputs? We need to solve this a different sort of way.

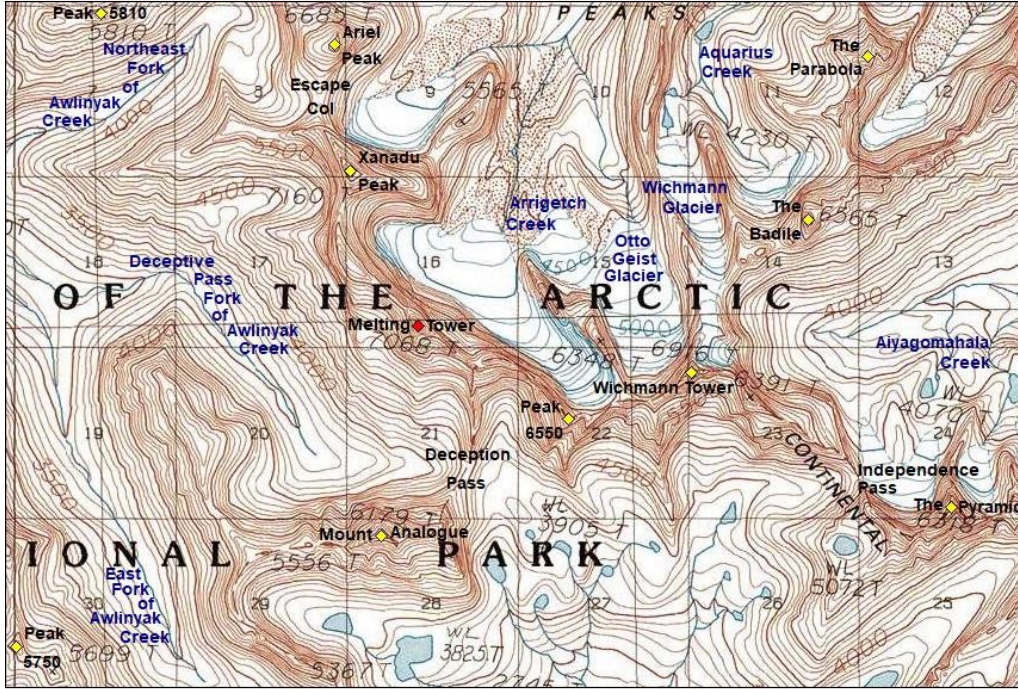
So to me, yes, we travel and have a lot of carbon output but cutting our carbon output is not the way we’re going to solve this. I saw this one stat where they took the average pro skier’s carbon output per year. And yeah, at times it’s almost double the average American because we fly around and travel so much. But it takes 320,000 professional skiers to equal the closing of one coal-powered plant for a year. Pretty small potatoes...

I think personally I will be called a hypocrite every day of the week and I’m fine with it, because I don’t think that’s a solution. And I think of evidence pointing to the fact that that notion of personal cutting has been developed, paid for and fomented by PR companies that work for API, the American Petroleum Institute. You can go to Exxon’s website and calculate your carbon output... they’re putting the onus on the individual to solve this, they’re not putting the onus on themselves. Yet Exxon is responsible for one tenth of the global pollution and emissions. So, well, it’s actually ‘you.’ And it’s actually the governments that are continuing to prop up a failing oil industry due to lack of taxation, and investments into it.

That’s how I try to justify it and people can agree with me, people can disagree with me, but that’s my belief and the belief of a lot of intelligent scientists that I read and a lot of research that I’ve done into it, climate journalists that talk about the same time. That’s ma’ stance and I’m stickin’ to it!”

Peak of the Month: Melting Tower (7068 feet), Endicott Mountains

Text by Steve Gruhn



Map created with TOPO!® ©2003 National Geographic (www.nationalgeographic.com/topo)

Mountain Range: Brooks Range; Endicott Mountains; Arrigetch Peaks

Borough: Unorganized Borough

Adjacent Pass: Deception Pass

Latitude/Longitude: 67° 24' 2" North, 154° 13' 46" West

Elevation: 7068 feet

Adjacent Peaks: Xanadu Peak (7160 feet), Peak 6550 in the Arrigetch Creek and Kobuk River drainages, and Mount Analogue (6179 feet)

Distinctness: 758 feet from Xanadu Peak

Prominence: 758 feet from Xanadu Peak

USGS Maps: 1:63,360: Survey Pass (B-3); 1:25,000: Survey Pass B-3 NE

First Recorded Ascent: June 20, 1974, by Jonathan Krakauer and Mark Rademacher

Route of First Recorded Ascent: Southwest face

Access Point: Takahula Lake



Northeast aspect of Melting Tower in 2010. Note the significant deglaciation that had occurred in the 48 years since 1962 (see following page).

Photo by Roman Dial

Melting Tower is the third highest summit in the Arrigetch Peaks. Although the peak was long known to the indigenous Nunamiut, the earliest known record of the peak came in the form of Philip Sidney Smith's 1911 photograph of its northeast aspect. According to David S. Roberts, its name was given by members of a 1964 expedition to the Arrigetch Peaks, which comprised Brownell Bergen, Jeanne Bergen, A.H. "Buck" Cass, Louise Cass, Charles "Chuck" Loucks, Michael H. Westmacott, Sally Westmacott, and Robley Williams, Jr.

In June 1974, Helen Apthorp, Bill Bullard, Holly Crary, Jonathan Krakauer, Mark Rademacher, Ben Reed, and Jeff White set out from Takahula Lake and, over the course of three days, hiked up Aiyagomahala Creek, crossed Independence Pass, and established a base camp in the Kobuk River drainage west-southwest of the pass and south of 6916-foot Wichmann Tower.

On June 20 Krakauer and Rademacher climbed the southwest face of Melting Tower to make the first ascent of the peak. After finding a chimney that led through the overhanging summit wall to the west ridge, Krakauer rated the route at F4, approximately 5.4 in the Yosemite Decimal System.

Eight days later Bullard and Krakauer made the first ascent of Xanadu Peak. On June 30 and July 1, Apthorp and White subsequently made the first ascent of Lemming Peak (6050 feet).

On July 4 Apthorp and White climbed Melting Tower via a route to the left (north) of the first-ascent route. Their route, later dubbed the “Southwest Face Direct,” joined the first-ascent route for the last two pitches and, according to Clint Cummins, was rated at about 5.7.

While Apthorp and White were making the second ascent of Melting Tower, Bullard and Krakauer celebrated Independence Day by making the first ascent of Arthur Emmons Peak (6556 feet). Three days later Apthorp and White completed the expedition’s climbing by making the second ascent of The Badile (6565 feet).

In August 1990, Nancy Pfeiffer and Paul Turecki were flown to Walker Lake. The pair then made the third ascent of Melting Tower, ascending the southeast face to the first-ascent route, which they followed to the summit. The duo then hiked to Circle Lake, where they were picked up.

In April 2011, Tommy Caldwell, Hayden Kennedy, and Corey Rich were flown to a location along Awllynyak Creek. From their drop-off point, the party skied upstream 20 miles and established a base camp. The team then bivouacked two hours below the west face of the northwest ridge of Melting Tower. The following morning the team began a 15-pitch route that they later dubbed “Deep in the Alaskan Bush.” Their route ascended the west face to a 6800-foot point on the northwest ridge and they rated it at 5.11+ X, M2. The team descended by following the arête to the base of the west face of Xanadu Peak and then made three rappels into the drainage of the Deceptive Pass Fork of Awllynyak Creek.

The information for this column came from Thomas D. Hamilton’s article titled “Comparative Glacier Photographs from Northern Alaska,” which appeared on pages 479 through 487 of Issue 40 of the *Journal of Glaciology* (1965); from Jeanne Bergen’s article titled “The Granite Towers of the Arrigetch, Brooks Range,” which appeared on pages 315 through 319 of the 1965 *American Alpine Journal*; from Michael Westmacott’s article titled “Arrigetch,” which appeared on pages 109 through 116 of the 1967 *Alpine Journal*; from Roberts’ article titled “August in the Arrigetch,” which appeared on pages 68 through 74 of the 1970 *AAJ*; from Krakauer’s article titled “New Arrigetch Climbs,” which appeared on pages 37 through 42 of the 1975 *AAJ*; from Cummins’ “Arrigetch Rock

Climbs” webpage (<https://web.archive.org/web/20190530013905/http://web.stanford.edu/%7Eclint/arrig/index.htm>); from Pfeiffer’s and Jim Lawler’s October 6, 2003, report titled “History and Route Descriptions of Rock Climbs in the Arrigetch Peaks, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, Alaska;” from Rich’s 2012 video titled “Deep North” (available at <https://vimeo.com/363751420>); from Kennedy’s report titled “Deep in the Alaskan Bush,” which appeared on pages 112 and 113 of the 2012 *AAJ*; and from my correspondence with Roman Dial and Zebediah Enberg.

I don’t know of a fourth ascent to the summit of Melting Tower.



Northeast aspect of Melting Tower on July 16, 1911. Photo by Philip Smith



Northeast aspect of Melting Tower on August 14, 1962. Note the similar position of the glacier as compared to 1911. Photo by Tom Hamilton



Billy Braasch climbs out of the Deceptive Pass Fork of Awllynyak Creek with the west-northwest aspect of Melting Tower (far right) and west-southwest aspect of Xanadu Peak (center) in the background. Photo by Zeb Engberg

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

September 30, 2020, at 6:00-7:20 p.m., conducted online via Zoom

Roll Call

Mike Meyers (President) - Present
Gerrit Verbeek (Vice-President) - Present
Curtis Townsend (Secretary) - Present
Katherine Cooper (Treasurer) - Present
Tom Meacham (Director) - Present
Jonathan Rupp Strong (Director) - Absent
Lila Hobbs (Director) - Absent
Andy Kubic (Director) - Present
Heather Johnson (Director) - Present
Nathan Pooler (Director) - Present

Scribe: Curtis Townsend

Committee Reports

President (Mike Myers)

- REI owes calendar money, Curtis to follow up.
- Board positions/By-Laws discussion/Budget/- voting in January via zoom.

Vice President (Gerrit Verbeek)

- The next issue of Scree will include notes that the new terms are to be 2 years.
- Announce in Scree that we will vote for new MCA board January 2021 via Zoom.

Secretary (Curtis Townsend)

- BP energy center has been reserved thru September 2021 but is closed until January.
- Zoom pro account has been purchased.

Treasurer (Katherine Cooper)

- Katherine working on 2021 budget.
- Create MCA volunteer thank you fund for 2021.

Liability Committee (Tom Meacham)

- Nothing to report.

Awards Committee (Tom Meacham, Charlie Sink, Max Neale)

- Nothing to report.

Trips Committee

- Mary Vavrik is leading a trip to Mt. Eklutna. Nathan has sent her the COVID waiver that gets signed before trips (as well as MCA waiver)

Training Committee

- Nothing to report.

Huts Committee (Jonathan Rupp Strong, Greg Bragiel, Cory Hinds, Vicky Lytle)

- Greg recruited and volunteers did a winterization job on the broken windows. Planning is moving forward for next season to install new windows and construct a foyer addition. Jonathan will be preparing a grant application for additional funding from Matsu Trails for that project.

Mentorship (Lila Hobbs, Katherine Cooper)

- Nothing to report.

Communications Committee (Lila Hobbs)

- Who will provide list of volunteers to recognize in Scree? Would this be a monthly volunteer spotlight? Stan Olsen and Sally Balchin deserve some kind words.

Calendar Committee (Vicky Ho, Lila Hobbs, Heather Johnson, Mike Meyers)

- Vicky is very close to sending the Calendars to Print.

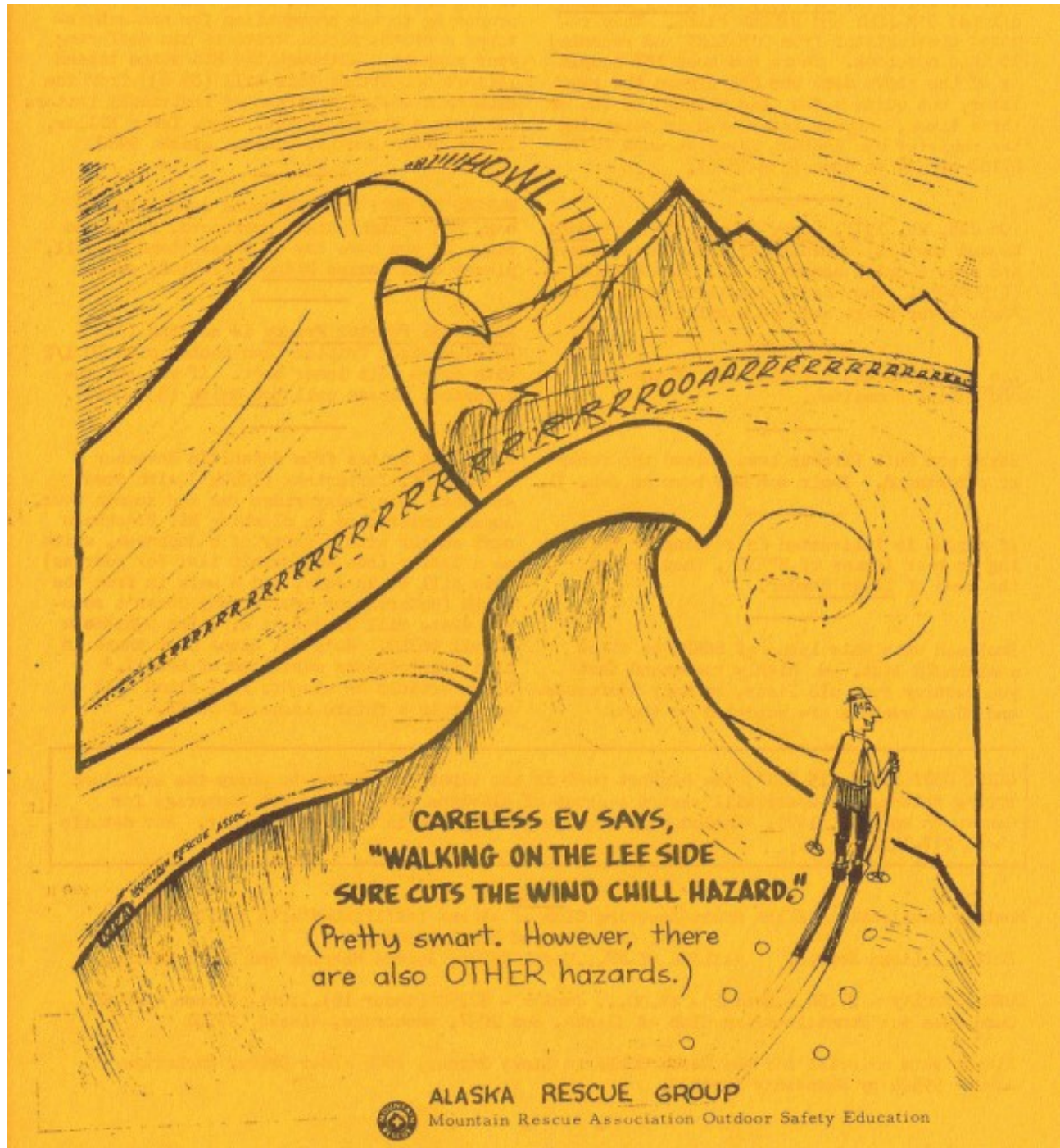
Date and Location of next Meeting

- General meeting Oct 7 via Zoom.
- Next Board Meeting on October 28, 2020 from 6:00-8:00 pm via Zoom.

The Return of Careless Ev(eryman)

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska was founded in 1958 "to encourage mountain climbing interest, to instruct on climbing, encourage exploration and form mountain rescue teams." (*the Scree* December 1958, quoting American Alpine News)

In 1971 the MCA-affiliated Alaska Rescue Group published a series of cartoons featuring Careless Ev, drawn by Dick Pargeter. Nearly fifty years later, human nature and natural hazards are still the same. So here are a few again, as they were printed on the Club's signature goldenrod paper. Enjoy, and stay safe!



Reprinted from the Scree, February 1971

THE ALASKA RESCUE GROUP PRESENTS---

EDUCATION
OR
REGULATION
WE STILL HAVE A CHOICE



"CARELESS EV."

SHORT FOR CARELESS EVERYBODY

CARTOON - IDENTITY
WITH

HUMOROUS - REMEMBERED
MEANINGFUL INFORMATION



MOUNTAIN RESCUE ASSOCIATION
SAFETY EDUCATION COMMITTEE
P.O. BOX 696 - TACOMA, WA.

GENE FEAR - CHAIRMAN

DICK PARGETER - ARTIST

EV LASHER - PRINTER-EDITOR

Reprinted from the Scree, January 1971

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President Mike Meyers president@mtnclubak.org
Vice-President Gerrit Verbeek 903-513-4286
Secretary Curtis Townsend 355-9820
Treasurer Katherine Cooper 209-253-8489

Director 1 (term expires in 2020) Jonathan Rupp Strong 202-6484
Director 2 (term expires in 2020) Lila Hobbs 229-3754
Director 3 (term expires in 2021) Tom Meacham 346-1077
Director 4 (term expires in 2021) Heather Johnson hjohnson@mdausa.org
Director 5 (term expires in 2021) Andy Kubic andy.kubic@gmail.com
Director 6 (term expires in 2021) Nathan Pooler Nathan.lee.pooler@gmail.com

Annual membership dues: Single \$20, Family \$30

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address below. 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.

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. Material should be submitted by the 11th of the month to appear in the next month's *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.

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: Katherine Cooper — 209-253-8489 — membership@mtnclubak.org

Hiking and Climbing Committee: Vacant—training@mtnclubak.org

Mentorship: Katherine Cooper and Lila Hobbs—mentorship@mtnclubak.org

Huts: Greg Bragiel—350-5146 or huts@mtnclubak.org

Calendar: Vicky Ho—512-470-8640 or hovcky@gmail.com

Librarian: Gwen Higgins—library@mtnclubak.org

Scree Editor: Gerrit Verbeek — MCAScree@gmail.com assisted by Dawn Munroe (350-5121 or dawn.talbott@yahoo.com)

Web: www.mtnclubak.org

Find MCAK listserv at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/MCAK/info>.

Kate Fitzgerald having fun on Devil's Mistress.

Photo by Sophie Tidler

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