

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

November 2021

Volume 64, Number 11



"Be consistent in your dedication to showing your gratitude to others. Gratitude is a fuel, a medicine, and spiritual and emotional nourishment."

– Steve Maraboli

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Mary's Mountain, Western Chugach Mountains

**NOVEMBER MEETING Wednesday
November 3, at 6:30 p.m. via
Zoom.**

**Andrew Holman will present
peakbagging and photography in
the Western Chugach.**

"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

Cover Photo

"The hike downhill back to the bicycles" after the Bold Ridge Overlook Trail cleanup.

Photo by Matt Nedom

NOVEMBER MEETING — Wednesday November 3, at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

Join us for the MCA General Meeting, Andrew Holman will present peakbagging and photography in the Western Chugach.

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83674706360?pwd=VUY4VElyVEpqc2xmN29BbG1OKzR3dz09>

Meeting ID: 836 7470 6360

Passcode: 033973

One tap mobile

+13462487799,,83674706360#,,,,*033973# US (Houston)

+16699009128,,83674706360#,,,,*033973# US (San Jose)

Article Submission: Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to mcascre@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.

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Training

January 12, 2022 – Waterfall Ice Climbing (Experienced Beginner/Intermediate) at Eklutna Canyon. The trip leaders are Pat Schmalix (schmalix@hotmail.com or text 907-942-3445 between 9 a.m.- 6 p.m.) and Kristen Sommers. The goal of this course is to improve "newer" climbers' technique and knowledge. This will not be a class for first time ice climbers. Participants will have to have attended the Ice Fest at or above the Advanced Beginner level, or prove comparable experience. The course will be top-rope only and cover footwork, tool placement, and anchors. All participants **MUST** know how to top rope belay, supply all required gear, and have properly fitted crampons with clothing required to stay out all day.

This course is limited to 8 students, please no late cancellations.

MCA Election Results

At the General Meeting on October 6th, the positions of President, Treasurer, and 3 Directors were open for 2-year terms. The membership elected Gerrit Verbeek (President), re-elected Katherine Cooper (Treasurer), elected Peter Taylor (Director), and re-elected Heather Johnson and Andy Kubic (Directors). Mike Meyers will continue to have a seat on the Board as Past President, and we all thank Tom Meacham for his years of service on the Board and decision to take a well-deserved break.

Your new 2022 Board is:

Position	Term End	Name
President	2023	Gerrit Verbeek
Vice President	2022	Nathan Pooler
Secretary	2022	Curtis Townsend
Treasurer	2023	Katherine Cooper
Director	2022	Luke Konarzewski
Director	2022	Brendan Lee
Director	2022	Josh Pickle
Director	2023	Heather Johnson
Director	2023	Andy Kubic
Director	2023	Peter Taylor

If you'd like to lead a trip, teach some skills, make a presentation, or champion a cause please get in touch! Requests are welcome too. We're excited about the next year.

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

Online? Click me!



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

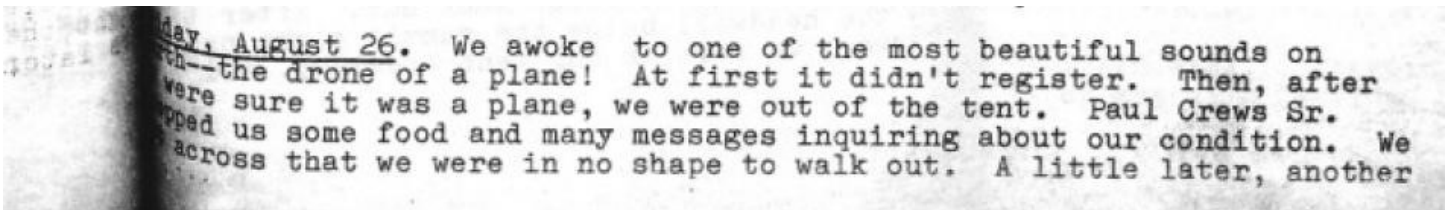


Introduction

A Bit of Old Before the New

Zero submissions last month before the 20th! Hopefully that means everyone was out enjoying themselves with too little time to write. Board members Brendan Lee and Tom Meacham have been working hard to scan old issues of *the Scree* in better condition than our current scans, with the plan to convert them to digital text so they can be searched, text can be copied, etc.

So for this month, please enjoy a selection of articles reprinted from the 1960s. In the next few months you can look forward to an updated website, better copies of *the Scree* being uploaded, and some great trips and training. Just remember to write up your experiences and submit them to MCAScree@gmail.com! We'd love to hear what you're up to.



An example of a current .pdf of the Scree (December 1966), scanned from bound copies of the Scree.

Friday, August 26. We awoke to one of the most beautiful sounds on earth--the drone of a plane! At first it didn't register. Then, after we were sure it was a plane, we were out of the tent. Paul Crews Sr. dropped us some food and many messages inquiring about our condition. We got across that we were in no shape to walk out. A little later, another

The same section, scanned from Tom Meacham's collection. Thanks, Brendan and Tom!

Climb of Mt. Gerdine (12600 feet), Alaska Range

Text by Rod Wilson

[Ed. Note: Reprinted from the May 1963 Scree]



61.578, -152.443

On May 4, 1963 Paul Crews, leader, Paul Crews, Jr., Lowell Thomas, Jr., George Wichman, and Rod Wilson returned to Mt. Gerdine (Scree, April 1963) and reached the summit on May 5.

With good flying and climbing weather, with lots of light, and with the route well plotted from the previous attempt and from subsequent aerial reconnaissance, no major difficulties were encountered. Even the airstrip at 5600' on the unnamed glacier east of the peak had been tramped out and marked with bright red flags by Gwynn Wilson, David Crews, and Lowell two days before.

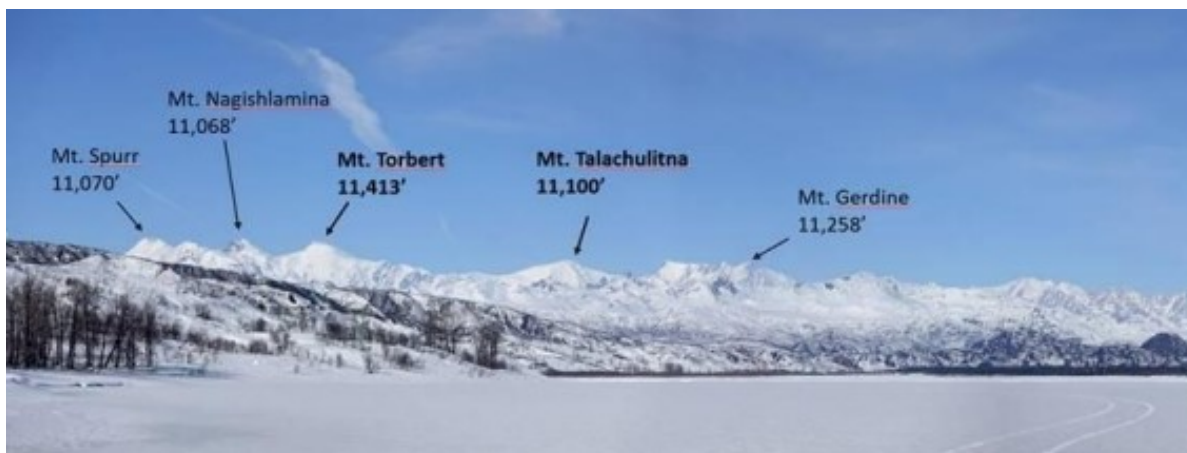
While Dr. Robert Whaley generously ferried two climbers to nearby Skwentna, Lowell flew two of us in early on May 4. By 1030 the plane had been anchored and we were all skiing up our obliterated but well-remembered route through the ice fall under the menacing but quiet rock and ice face to the south of the fall. Crevasses and ice blocks had changed only slightly in seven week's time. By 1600 we were camped at 8000', a bit above our over-estimated "8000," high camp in March.

Asleep by 2000 and up and away by 0600 (it never did get dark), we proceeded rapidly on skis with light packs to about 10,500' to the top of the steep snow slope to the east of the peak which gives the only easy access we could see to the upper reaches of the mountain. Here we left the skis and all but one emergency pack and strapped on crampons. Instead of

heading straight up for the ice cliffs which blocked our last attempt, we traversed through deep snow to the north and easily crossed the lower remnant of the ice cliffs onto a steep, variably surfaced (ice and snow) slope. It went easily, though we were puffing because we had left our beds at sea-level only 30 hours earlier.

Soon we found ourselves in the saddle (visible from Anchorage) between the higher north peak and the slightly lower, wider, south summit (misidentified, incidentally in the last try). We peeked over huge cornices into the abyss several thousand feet below the sheer west face of Gerdine. Then turning north, we chopped steps up along this corniced summit ridge (to make Lowell's movies look good!). The last 75 yards was a promenade to the final snow. We were there at 1230. The peak fell away vertically to the west and in frightening convexities in all directions other than in the way we had come. As the weather was lowering temporarily, we didn't tarry long, but retreated to the saddle and then up to the south summit briefly before retracing our tracks to the skis.

From there it was a ball for the experts on skis. Paul, Jr. and Lowell were back in camp in less than two hours from the top. The more conservative or less expert ones returned in three. On May 6 we broke camp at 0530, were back to the plane by 0730, and were all home by noon.



Panorama from Beluga Lake.
Photo by Lee Helzer

Mount Spurr (11070 feet) - Another "First" for MCA, September 2 – 6, 1960

Text by Helga Byhre

[Ed. Note: Reprinted from the September 1960 Scree]



61.300,-152.251

Standing at the edge of Cook Inlet two years ago I got my first glimpse of Mount Spurr. I was thunderstruck. "It's a Phantom", I thought and wished very much to have a chance to climb it. Since then I have gotten to know the Phantom as a landmark of our city. On winter evenings it stands pitchblack against a fiery western sky. Who can be a climber at heart and not wish to make friends with it? On Labor Day weekend six of us did. We are now looking back on a memorable experience not only because of its unforgettable highlights, but also its many frustrations: waterless camps and gloomy retreats, hairy hairpin ridges and hair-raising traverses, and miles of most miserable moraine.

Friday at 4:30 p.m. under a cloudy sky Bob Bailey, Chuck Metzger and I arrived by floatplane, piloted by Art Antonsen, two miles east of Chakachamna Lake. We were eager to reach the 2800 ft. plateau above us. I had been promised there was no bush, but promptly we got hung up in alderbrush, so thoroughly that the second planeload flying over us (Erik Barnes, Gregg Erickson and Burt Puchtler) vainly searched for a sign of their companions.

Once out of the devilsclub we climbed up a creekbed, though at spots the clay and scree were so hard we had to chop steps! As darkness fell, despite lack of water, we made camp. Our three partners reached camp long after dark, guided by Bob's shouts and flash-light signals. But they had carried no water. One of the two Indefatigables, Gregg, went back (about 1 hour round trip) to fill the canteens. But he was plenty scared in the steep creekbed, for we had seen many a beartrack on our way up.

Saturday morning: No rain, but lots of clouds. Burt, with his camera, sneaked up an a large black bear and presently we saw both of them sprinting across the berrypatch... in different directions.

Looking towards our mountain we had two choices. One ridge was steep, but close. The other gradual but - oh - so far away. We chose the steep one. Soon the battle with the "Most Miserable Moraine" began. It's not really a moraine, rather glacier ice covered with scree with lots of narrow ridges and deep canyons. After many Ups and Downs (mostly Downs, sliding backwards) we reached the ridge and painfully wound our way upwards, stepping into Burt's huge footprints in the scree. But the

higher we went the steeper and more rotten became our route. Soon a rope was necessary and it occurred to us that what we were climbing wasn't even rock. It was lava, at its worst. And what if we couldn't make it, laden as we were with heavy packs. It was not too late to turn. Quickly we made a "One-Eighty", headed down and towards the RIGHT ridge.

Only a mile of 'Most Miserable' lay between us and the goal. Two and a half hours and many steps later we reached its edge. By a small lake we flopped to the ground, pooped. It was 5 p.m. Supper (soup) and hot tea revived the fighting spirits. One last effort of the day brought us 300 ft. higher to the top of the ridge which we reached in total dark-ness. Camp was waterless and very windy, but we had a good headstart for the long slog ahead.

Water from the canteens provided the scanty breakfast. By 7 we had saddled up and climbed upwards under clouds and strong winds. At 11 o'clock, six thirsty climbers reached snow-line (about 5000 ft.) and settled for a tea-making session. Thoroughly chilled but well fed we again climbed up, only to find that the ridge now petered out into a series of gendarmes. We decided to traverse around the west side. But there was nothing solid underfoot and a thousand feet of plain air below. The ledge was narrow and dropped off sharply, making the traverse hazardous and slow. It took more than an hour to reach solid glacier and safety.

Once on solid snow we roped up, and with crampons on our feet gained altitude rapidly. At 5 p.m. (10 hours on the road) we felt our strength ebbing. We found the ideal campspot for the two Logans at 7500'. While camp was erected and soup put on, the Indefatigables climbed 300' higher to the ridge above camp. It grew cold in a hurry, only 8 degrees now. Clouds vanished and there - pink in the evening sun - rose the peak above use, immensely beautiful and inviting. Gregg and Burt returned with the news we would have to descend at least 500 ft. to reach the summit plateau. It was steep, but it would "go" they said.

A full moon rose above Cook Inlet. Its shine was reflected in the water, and the lights of Anchorage glittered below, so very very far below. We were "on top", quite literally.

At 2:30 a.m., the alarm went off. (It WAS my idea, but we had all agreed). What with having to melt snow for breakfast and

thawing out ourselves it was 5 o'clock before we were roped and cramponed and ready to go. Just as we reached the ridge above camp a warm pink glow slowly descended down the peaks of Spurr and Redoubt to the south. And then the first sun rays struck, and we felt warm and happy and confident. The peak would be ours.

To descend down to the plateau was no easy matter. Bob went ahead, anchored by Erik, and by sheer good fortune (climbers call it experience) found the only possible route, an avalanche chute. At the bottom it was all ice, but we managed to crampon down it facing the slope.

Breaking trail across the high plateau was hard work. Progress appeared painfully slow at that altitude. Beside us to the north we admired an awe-inspiring peak which we promptly christened "Spurr Rowel". It looked forbidding. I decided we'd better leave this one for Paul to climb and turn our thought toward the real Spurr. At 10:30 we reached the foot of the actual summit ridge. Erik belayed both Bob and myself over an icy pitch, then stood up to leave. When we turned we saw him up to his armpits in the crevasse he had been sitting on.

The top of Mount Spurr has interesting crystal formations, apparently caused by sulphur steam escaping from various vents. The largest of these incessantly sends forth lemon-yellow steam and a murderous smell. Bordered by 100 ft. walls of ice crystals we wound our way up to the summit. It was 12 noon, sunny and slightly windy. All tiredness disappeared. But there was little time to linger and enjoy the glorious view and

feeling of achievement, for we had only 26 more hours before our appointment with Art and the plane. After 20 minutes of rest and photography we left for the downward journey.

A floatplane came circling overhead, wiggling its wings. None of us knew the plane and we wondered. Meanwhile, clouds had risen from the valley, enveloping our campsite and shrouding the steep wall of the ridge. Religiously we followed our tracks in 100 ft. visibility. At least, we had no chance to get scared of the ascent that lay ahead. It went better than expected. Only 45 minutes of step chopping and panting brought us to the top, and by 3:30 we were back in camp.



*Helga on Spurr, 1960.
Provided by Helga Byhre*



*Climbing to Spurr Ridge.
Photo by Wayne Todd*

First Ascent of Granite Peak (6729 feet), Talkeetna Mountains

Text by Vin Hoeman

[Ed. Note: Reprinted from the September 1962 Scree]



61.797, -148.886

From the south or east the Talkeetna Range is a mountain mass from which one peak only is outstanding. This is Granite Peak and it shows up because it is at the edge of the range and towers above its neighboring 5000 footers. Forbidding looking rock escarpments on all sides and three miles of brush between its foot and the nearest road have kept it from being challenged by mountaineers until this summer.

At the first meeting of the Technical Section of MCA on Friday, August 17th, it was suggested that we climb something that weekend, but others were busy and so it was only Scott Hamilton and myself who headed for Granite Peak late the next afternoon. Red salmon were being caught by a mob of fisherman at Knik River Bridge and we stopped to watch. Not till 4:30 in the afternoon did we leave the car in the coal-mining townlet of Eska at 1250' elevation and start out.

A maze of bulldozer trails and strip-mining explorations led us upward beyond where the roads ended to the ridge south of Knob Creek, and we followed this till we were able to cross the creek near its head and move directly toward our 'beacon in the sky'. But one obstacle we hadn't figured on slowed us considerably. Blueberries, big juicy globes of fruit among the blue-green foliage, stopped us! After the way Scott Dawns Hamilton, Jr. went after those berries blue, let him never taunt me again about fireweed sprouts or other products of the wild! It was only because the berries seemed to get bigger and better as we went along that we ever advanced beyond the first patches, but eventually we battled our way through alders and tall grass to reach an alpine ridge 3216' high directly south of Granite Peak. On the other side of this at 7:30 in the evening we made camp in a depression with a small fire of dwarfwillow and a tent fashioned out of my 12x12 plastic tarp. We were lucky to have this as it began to rain as soon as we got it up and the rain continued all night.

About 5:00 Sunday morning, small birds chasing around in the rain wakened us and provided an interesting show for the next two hours. Pipits, white-crowned and Savannah sparrows, and one yellow warbler practically came under our pavilion at times. A golden eagle hunting ground squirrels lit atop the ridge within view. Finally the rain stopped, and we left our sacks to start up the mountain about 7:30. Another short ridge led us to the mountain proper where a long slope part grass, part talus brought us to the rocks. We saw rosy finches and a wheatear, as well as the birds we'd seen in camp, and conies squeaked from the rocks. The rock was mostly granitic and the gendarmes formidable, but we wound our way around these latter and were able to save time by not having to rope up. The biggest danger, particularly when we crossed for a while to the NW side of the ridge which is a glacial cirque, was from the very large chunks of loose rock. However, by eleven o'clock we'd found our way up the long ridge and stood upon the virgin summit. Here we built a 3 ½' tall cairn in which we placed a register in a plastic cottage cheese container. Clouds blocked a view that would have been stupendous. We decided to try another route down and did so dropping directly down the SE face over a series of scree shutes and short rockclimbs over cliffs we couldn't go around, then a long sidehill walk after we left the rocks. Thus our traverse of Granite was complete.

At camp by two o'clock we folded it up and were soon on our way down with it on our backs. However, blueberries and a brushier shortcut made it a 3 ½ hour trip to the car. A very satisfactory mountain we thought.



*Granite Peak, 6,729 feet, in the Talkeetna Mountains, from Granite Creek.
Photo by Frank E. Baker*

Byron Glacier Area, Kenai Mountains

Text by Gregg Erickson

[Ed. Note: Reprinted from the April 1963 Scree]



60.742, -148.856

Our one day climb in the Byron area March 23rd was blessed with excellent weather from the start. Those readers who were lucky enough to be outside that day will remember it as one of blinding sun and moderate temperature. At least that is the way my companions: John Walkup, Mike Hopkins, my brother Tryg, and I saw it as we started from Anchorage at 7:00 a.m. The master plan, formulated the night before over glasses of Scotch, called for a 5:30 a.m. departure. Saturday morning I was ready (believe it or not) at the appointed hour but John slept through his alarm. Notwithstanding, the good weather and the extra hour and a half of sleep put us in excellent spirits as we started down the Highway toward Byron.

Arriving at our jump off point, the end of the Portage Glacier road, we debated the various possible routes. Not being equipped with snowshoes or skis we started directly toward the right, or west, ridge where hopefully the snow would be wind packed. For the first two hours we battled moderately detestable alder and increasingly deep snow, gaining less than a thousand feet. In our struggle with the brush we'd worked our way slightly to the left (SE). As we broke out of the thicket we could look down at the snout of Byron, looking sleepy in its blanket of snow.

Judging from the depth of the snow we had encountered everyone was glad we hadn't chosen the normal route. But new problems confronted us; ahead was a huge pile of avalanche debris. What lay above? More of the same? While thinking the problem over we drank from the grape juice jug, munched on sandwiches, and listened to Mike grouse about the disutility of knickers for winter mountaineering. His complaint was at least partially justified for he surely presented a sorry sight as he stood there with socks bunched over boot tops and a liberal

amount of saturated longjohns showing between ankle and knee. A dry pair of socks, however, considerably improved his disposition.

The avalanche fan, however, remained foreboding. A short traverse to the right, toward the ridge, seemed to put us on solid footing, so solid that we found it necessary to crampon up. After about twenty minutes of steeper and steeper slopes and ice chutes, prudence got the better part of valor: We broke out the ropes. Precipitous ice can sometimes make for hair raising horror, or it can endow an otherwise merely pleasant climb with a bit of true adventure. It is hard to say what makes the difference between the two conditions. The enchantment of the risk? The expanding view? Or merely sunshine so bright that it assumed a liquidity on which our confidence seemed to float higher and high-er? What ever it was it was there for us. As we neared the crest of the ridge, the Chugach seemed to burst toward the sky in a cataclysm of light. Needless to say we ate our lunch at the top enjoying the view.

To say much more would be anticlimactic. The long slide down ends all too soon a perfect day. And as we drive toward the city I remember the words that impressed me so in an English classroom long ago forgotten:

*I live not in myself, but I become
Portion of that around me: and to me
High mountains are a feeling, but the hum
Of human cities torture.*

Byron knew what he was talking about.



Photo taken from: <https://www.alaskasnewsresource.com>

Byron Peak (4750 feet), Kenai Mountains

April 15, 1967

Text by William E. Hauser

[Ed. Note: Reprinted from the May 1967 Scree]



60.728, -148.861

Byron is a beautiful, glaciated peak above Portage Lake and the Placer River Valley. We left Anchorage at 5:00 AM: members of the party were Bob Spurr, Nick Parker, Chuck McLaughlin, and I. At Portage Lodge it was clear and cool. After leaving the cars at 6:30, we skied to Byron Glacier and followed the windslab-covered moraine on the right. We roped up in pairs with prussiks and slings and left our skis just below the first icefall to the left. The rope teams were McLaughlin and I on one, and Spurr and Parker on the other. Working slowly through deep powder and rotating leads, we negotiated the first icefall into a large flat area. Here we climbed to the base of the north ridge. The sun was hot but the higher we climbed the more ferocious the north winds became. The ridge became quite steep in some places, and I led two short pitches on steep, hard snow around rock slabs. After gaining the col, we experienced more winds and sections of deep snow. Arriving on the summit we all welcomed the rest and fantastic view with our backs in the wind.

The 4500-foot vertical climb was completed at 2:30 PM. Without warning, a dynamite-like explosion shattered our tranquil perch. The wind, sun, and snow blurred our senses until it was obvious that only two of us remained on the summit and two were being hurled toward Skookum Glacier which is at the base of Byron's 4000-foot west face. My rope to McLaughlin promised to pull me into the void. I grabbed it with my bare hands and managed to heel into the snow. An ice axe was rope-wrapped four times, jammed into the hard snow, and held with the feet. Here I had 12 inches of rope left and held McLaughlin on belay. Spurr luckily grabbed an ice axe until he skillfully transformed his stance into a sitting hip belay. Two packs were gone. Two ice axes were gone. Two of our friends were dangling below the cornice overhang. All we could do was hold our friends and hone for the best. This is too much responsibility for any man, and the anxiety was overwhelming. An hour and a half passed by. I had 120 feet of rope out. Spurr had 100 feet

out. We couldn't communicate because of the wind. All of a sudden we could hear Parker. A surge of hope began to replace our despair. An ice axe popped up over the brink; next came Parker. We heard McLaughlin. He had no ice axe and was stopped about six feet from the top. With Parker holding Spurr on belay, Spurr tied a bilgeri loop into the rope, crawled to the edge in order to distribute his weight and lowered the ice axe. Soon we were all united and somewhat stunned, not able to understand why we were so lucky. With Nick Parker doing admirably without an axe, we belayed down safely and arrived at the lodge about 8:00 PM, just as the sun set.

Analysis: We were ten feet from the edge of the cornice. These cornices are quite thick but the action of the spring sun and weight of the cornice itself causes these formations to be unpredictable. The line of fracture divided our party into perfect roles. It seems easy to think of a positioning that would have sent two of us on one rope over the 4000-foot west face.

Parker prussiked up 80 feet with two prussiks. He went up ten feet and over five feet to retrieve an ice axe which stuck like an arrow into the hard cornice. The rope cut deeply into the overhanging face. Parker jammed the ice axe under the rope and moved up the prussik knots. He was able to get over the last three feet by stepping up into a third rung in his prussik sling. Without the ice axe, Parker would have been unable to negotiate the overhang.

McLaughlin prussiked up 90 feet. He was unable to get up the overhang and the cut-in rope. He had three slings and two rungs in his prussiks. McLaughlin took some good photos of Parker and the 4000-foot view.

The climbing code should be changed to include "rope up with prussik slings on all glaciers and ridges".

This drama displays the genuine indifference of the natural forces and the Promethean qualities of man against the odds.

A Climb Above Mary's Mountain (4850 feet), Western Chugach Mountains, June 11-12 1966

Text by Gwyn Wilson

[Ed. Note: Reprinted from the July 1966 Scree]



61.475, -149.062

Mary's Mountain (4,895) was a favorite target of Joe Pichler. The register on top must read like an all-time membership list of MCA because so many people have made the climb with Joe. From the Palmer Highway the Mountain looks difficult and it is because the route is devious and the way steep.

On the Wednesday afternoon prior to the scheduled climb, Rod and I explored the possibilities as far as the knoll above timber line. The ascent begins at an abandoned house across the road from the Knik Tavern. Behind this building is an old jeep road which leads up to the Eklutna powerline. Shortly after this point is reached it is necessary to branch off into the trees and devil's club for a steep 3/4 mile hike. This is the hardest part of the trip. Rod and I went too far to the west on our way up and felt that we were too far east on our descent.

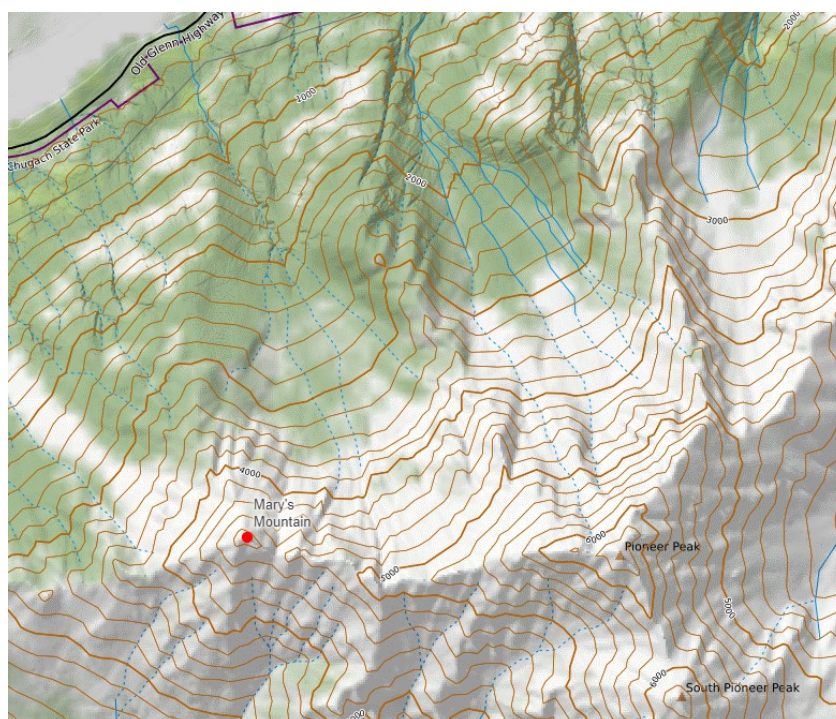
The group met on Saturday, June 11th at noon, Rod, Grace Jansen, Ursula Meienberg and I picked up Tony Bockstahler at Eagle River. We were able to choose a direct way up through the devil's club, alder, willow, etc. We were accompanied by swarms of mosquitoes.

Camp was made on the knoll which from the road looks as if it has some wisps of hair on top - the last remnants of the timber

line. It was raining when we arrived and continued to do so steadily throughout the night. I have a distinct memory of Grace bailing out our tent in the wee hours of the morning. Sleeping in lakesize puddles did not seem to fret Ursula at all.

Having maneuvered on thoroughly wet boots, we were recovered after breakfast and so was the day. We traversed behind the ridge to the east and moved steadily along above Goat Creek valley. There is a long grassy slope which we ascended and then turned east to continue along the ever evasive ridge which yielded numerous summit like points but no Mary's Mountain. When it became apparent that we were actually climbing the quite formidable west ridge of Pioneer Peak, we retreated having reached an altitude of approximately 5300 ft.

Resorting to a map and talking with others who made the climb, it was clear that we should have gone left at the top of the first grassy slope and from this rocky shute gained access to the summit of Mary's Mountain, which in reality is just the end of the ridge we had been on. Though it is a relatively long and a Very steep climb, we would recommend it being made in one day as Joe did with the original MCA group in June 1959. The long day would more than offset carrying water and camping gear up the brushy, "vertical" 3/4 mile.



Peak of the Month: Fortress Ridge (5240 feet), Talkeetna Mountains

Text by Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Talkeetna Mountains; Fortress Ridge

Borough: Matanuska-Susitna Borough

Drainage: Fortress Creek

Latitude/Longitude: 61° 50' 26" North, 147° 42' 6" West

Elevation: 5240 ± 40 feet

Adjacent Peak: Peak 5110 in the Dan Creek and Fortress Creek drainages

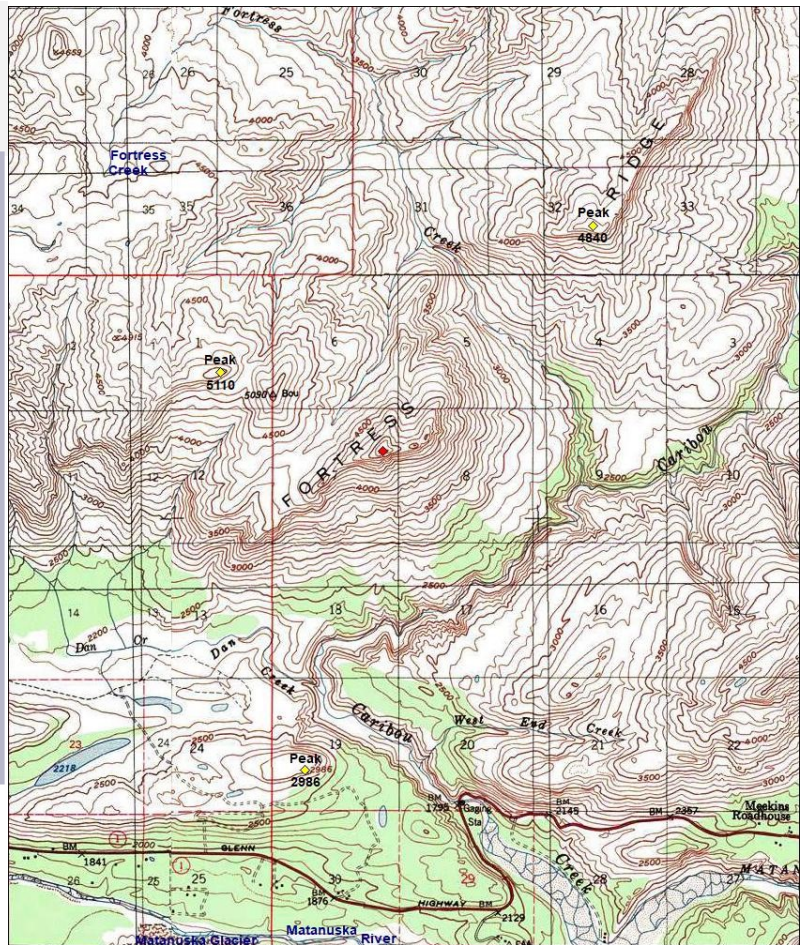
Distinctness: 1020 feet from Peak 5110

Prominence: 1020 feet from either Hicks Peak (5240 feet) or The Fortress (5540 feet)

USGS Maps: 1:63,360: Anchorage (D-2), 1:25,000: Anchorage D-2 SW

First Recorded Ascent: Unknown, but before 1998

Access Point: Eagle's View Road



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



South aspect of Fortress Ridge as viewed from near Peak 2886.

Photo by Dave Hart

To the Ahtna the steep, turreted summit in the Talkeetna Mountains northwest of the lower stretches of Caribou Creek was known as *Hnilges*, or “they slide.”

In 1956 the Alaska Geology Branch of the USGS noted that the bold cliff in the Talkeetna Mountains had walls that appeared like a fortress when viewed from the Glenn Highway’s Caribou

Creek Bridge to the southeast, so employees of that branch took to calling the ridge the Fortress Ridge. On November 1 of that year, the USGS submitted a proposal to the U.S. Board on Geographic Names to make the name official. On July 14, 1960, the BGN's Domestic Names Committee formally approved the name.

Ahtna, Inc., requires a land-use permit to access the highest point of Fortress Ridge. Additionally, the southern access points off Eagle’s View Road west of Caribou Creek are replete with private property signs. Once permission to park and access private property is obtained, hikers will have to navigate all-terrain-vehicle trails and seemingly endless scree before attaining the summit and its majestic views of the Matanuska Glacier.

On October 5, 1998, Tom Choate climbed to the highest point of Fortress Ridge using the ATV trails, crossing Dan Creek before hiking through light brush on the peak’s northwest aspect to the talus of the southwest ridge, and hiking from there to the summit, where he built a cairn and left a register. He reported that locals had said that snowmachiners had reached the summit via a 30-mile route to ascend the north aspect.

More recently, Dan Glatz and Theresa Pipek climbed Fortress Ridge via the ATV trails and then attained the southwest ridge on May 23, 2020. On the return Glatz took a five-minute hike from the ATV trail to visit Peak 2986.

On May 15 of this year Joe Chmielowski, Renee Ernster, and Dave Hart followed the ATV trail, hiked to Peak 2986, returned to the trail, crossed Dan Creek about ¾ mile upstream from its confluence with Caribou Creek, continued northeast along the trail, and eventually broke off to head north up the talus and scree slopes to reach the southwest ridge, which they followed for about 600 vertical feet to the summit.

The information for this column came from the USBGN decision cards for Fortress Ridge; from the 2016 edition of James M. Kari's and James A. Fall's Shem Pete's Alaska: The Territory of the Upper Cook Inlet Dena'ina, from Choate's trip report titled "Ruthless, Spooky and Fortress, 1998," which appeared in the April 2000 *Scree*; from my correspondence with Ernster and Hart.



*From left: Dave Hart, Joe Chmielowski, and Renee Ernster on the summit of Fortress Ridge. Photo views north.
Photo by Dave Hart*



*Joe Chmielowski (right) and Renee Ernster ascend the southwest ridge of Fortress Ridge. Photo views northeast.
Photo by Dave Hart*



*Joe Chmielowski (left) and Renee Ernster descending the scree on the south face of Fortress Ridge.
Photo by Dave Hart*



*Joe Chmielowski (left) and Dave Hart ascend the scree on the south aspect of Fortress Ridge.
Photo by Renee Ernster*



*Joe Chmielowski (right) and Renee Ernster descend the south face of Fortress Ridge with the Matanuska Glacier in the distance.
Photo by Dave Hart*

Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

September 29, 2021, at 6:30-8:30 p.m., conducted online via Zoom

Roll Call

Mike Meyers (President) - Present
Nathan Pooler (Vice-President) - Present
Curtis Townsend (Secretary) - Present
Katherine Cooper (Treasurer) - Present
Tom Meacham (Director) - Present
Heather Johnson (Director) - Present
Andy Kubic (Director) - Present
Luke Konarzewski (Director) - Absent
Brenden Lee (Director) - Present
Josh Pickle (Director) - Absent

Scribe: Curtis Townsend

Committee Reports

President (Mike Meyers)

- Tiered membership payments were approved by membership (unanimously) on Sept 1, 2021 via Zoom. They will be incorporated into the new website to soon go live.
- President, Treasurer, 3 Directors up for elections in October.

Vice President (Nathan Pooler)

- November 3rd meeting will be Andrew Holman
- December- what venue for the annual party?

Secretary (Curtis Townsend)

- BP Energy Center is closed through January 2022

Treasurer (Katherine Cooper)

- 2022 Budget/ Draft to *the Scree* by October/November to be voted in January.

Liability Committee (Tom Meacham)

- Nothing to report.

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

- Nothing to report.

the Scree (Gerrit Verbeek, Dawn Munroe)

- Nothing to report.

Trips Committee

- Serenity Falls Icefest normally happens in February, we decided to consider this.

Training Committee

- Nothing to report.

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

- Jonathan Rupp Strong working to submit interim report for the MSTPF Grant.

Mentorship (Lila Hobbs, Katherine Cooper)

- Nothing to report.

Communications Committee (Andy Kubic, Heather Johnson)

- Active memberships can't be transferred directly to the new website, Board is discussing options
- Discuss moving membership to the new website
- Review the description for the Holden Hut to be included on the new website.

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

- Nothing to report.

Date and Location of next Meeting

- General Meeting October 6, 2021 at 6:30pm via Zoom.
- Next Board Meeting on October 27, 2021 from 6:30-8:00 pm.



A common sight but a little different with all of the autumn foliage contrasted against an unseasonably early blanket of snow. 7,022-foot Bold Peak in Chugach State Park.

Photo by Frank E. Baker

Sept. 26, 2021 from the outlet dam.



Snow-clad 17,402-foot Mt. Foraker looms up behind the Tokosha Mountains. Photo taken Sept. 27, 2021 by Frank E. Baker from Curry Ridge

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Mike Meyers	president@mtnclubak.org	Director 1 (term expires in 2021)	Andy Kubic	andy.kubic@gmail.com
Vice-President	Nathan Pooler	vicepresident@mtnclubak.org	Director 2 (term expires in 2021)	Heather Johnson	hjohnson2211@gmail.com
Secretary	Curtis Townsend	secretary@mtnclubak.org	Director 3 (term expires in 2021)	Tom Meacham	tmeacham@gci.net
Treasurer	Katherine Cooper	treasurer@mtnclubak.org	Director 4 (term expires in 2022)	Luke Konarzewski	lukekonarzewski96@gmail.com
			Director 5 (term expires in 2022)	Brendan Lee	brendanlee718@yahoo.com
			Director 6 (term expires in 2022)	Josh Pickle	joshuampickle@gmail.com

Annual membership dues: Basic ("Dirtbag") \$20, Single \$30, Family \$40

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: In transition

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.io/g/MCAK>.

*Abbey Collins taking a post-bushwhack rest on the start of The Watchman's north ridge.
Photo by Andrew Holman*

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