



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 2037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

DECEMBER 1976

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DECEMBER MEETING

Wednesday, December 15, 1976, 8 PM, Pioneer Schoolhouse, Third and Eagle, Anchorage, Alaska. The program will feature BILL QUIRK with slides of the MCA ascent of Byron Peak, and GIL TODD with slides of his autumn trip to Katmai National Monument.

SKIING SCHEDULE

December 11 OIL WEVL ROAD SKI TOUR. Meet at Fred Meyer at 10 AM. Call 279-2901
Saturday for details.

December 18 TRADITIONAL ANNUAL MCA MID-WINTER FIATTOP SLEEP-IN. Celebrate the
Saturday - solstice on the summit! Test your new gear under actual hardship
December 19 conditions! Meet at Fred Meyer parking lot at 1:30 PM on Saturday
Sunday the 18th will full winter overnight gear and a log for the campfire.
Ice axe necessary, crampons desirable. No kids or neophyte winter
campers, please! Call TOM MEAGHAM, 277-2129, for information.

January skiing schedule to be announced.

MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING

Mountaineering Club of Alaska, November 17, Pioneer Schoolhouse, Third and Eagle.

The meeting was called to order by President TOM MEAGHAM. Preceding the business meeting TOM presented a slide show of the first ski tour in the Kichatna River Valley. The Treasurer's report showed: cash on hand, \$47.93; checking account, \$277.83; savings account, \$428.37; for a total of \$754.13. There was a correction to the minutes of the October meeting. At the end of the second paragraph, the words "National Park Service" should have been "Chugach State Park." It was also suggested that, as an addition, the October minutes should include the fact that there was a record 250 people present at the October meeting.

DONA AGOSTI announced that, as there wasn't much snow, only one person skied on the Prospect Heights ski-tour while the others walked. She also announced that there will be a Hatcher Pass ski tour on November 20, and that the cabin is reserved for the Thanksgiving ski tour to Upper Russian Lake.

There was a discussion of the National Forest plan to change regulations concerning snowmobile use on the Resurrection Trail. A motion was made and passed 17-10 to adopt "Alternative A" as the Club's position. "Alternative A" states that snowmobile use will be closed at all times north of Devil's Pass while it will be open South of Devil's Pass.

MINUTES OF GENERAL MEETING continued.

After the break for refreshments the movie "Death of a Legend" was presented. This movie concerned the present life of the wolves in Canada and the Arctic. The meeting was adjourned.

DAVID NEWCOMBE, Secretary

BOOK REVIEW
by Tom Meacham

CLIMBING IN NORTH AMERICA, by Chris Jones

If ever there was a new book on climbing which deserves to be in every lucky climber's Christmas stocking, this is the one! Chris Jones has written what seems to be the first complete history of mountain climbing in the United States and Canada, filling a gap in climbing lore which was filled long ago in Europe's climbing history. How many can name the members of Mt. Logan's first ascent team? The expeditions in Asia undertaken by the Duke of Abruzzi after his first ascent of St. Elias? Or his remarkable quote upon returning from that ascent? The history of the Vulgarian climbing club? The saga of the rescue of a sky-diver from Devil's Tower, Wyoming, by the nation's best climbers? Fred Beckey's vintage year of 1954 in Alaska?

It's all here, and a lot more, both of local interest and spanning the centers of climbing interest across the continent. Plus many fine black-and-white photos, some spectacular but most showing hot shot climbers in disarming poses--Brad Washburn in a Model A labelled "Official Car," with Bob Reeve, John Salathe extolling the virtues of vegetables, Norman Clyde, "the pack that walks like a man," a nude overhang-climber (a Vulgarian member, naturally!), the type of interesting and memorable photos that are never published--but end up in climbers' forgotten photo files.

Jones' book is nicely balanced between emphasis on important expeditionary climbing and mountaineering, of primary interest to Alaskans, and coverage of rock climbing in recognized centers such as Yosemite, the Tetons, and the Shawangunks. Somehow he has collected a remarkable assemblage of memorable incidents, anecdotes, and inside stories of the strengths, rivalries, and weaknesses of the prominent personalities of the various eras and styles. The only regret is that, for every story collected and recorded for posterity, surely five more have been forgotten, or remain untold in the memories of mountaineers long since departed.

At \$14.95, the book isn't cheap, but it's an investment that won't be regretted.

1977 MOUNTAINEERING FELLOWSHIP AND RESEARCH GRANTS FROM THE ACC

The ACC Mountaineering Fellowship Committee is accepting applications for grants from young climbers, generally under age 26, participating in expeditionary mountaineering ventures. Grants will be awarded to individuals depending upon excellence of the proposed project, evidence of mountaineering experience, and need for funds. The grants are made available through the Boyd E. Everett Jr. Memorial Fund and from contributions received for this purpose. Michael Yokell is chairman of the committee.

Research grants will be available from the Roger L. Putnam Research Fund and the Arthur K. Gilkey Memorial Research Fund. The purpose of the Putnam and Gilkey funds is to make grants to those engaged in research into the alpine environment.

FELLOWSHIP AND RESEARCH GRANTS continued.

The funds may also be used to assist in publication or other dissemination of the results of such research. Dr. Walter A. Wood is chairman of the Research Committee, which administers the two funds.

Application forms for Mountaineering Fellowship and Research Grants are available from the American Alpine Club, 113 East 90th Street, New York, New York 10028. Requests should specify which type of form is wanted. Applications must be received before March 1, 1977. Awards will be announced in May.

FOILED ON FORAKER
by Brian Okonek

"There's a guy here by the name of Rodger Robinson that needs a partner for some climbs. I told him you might be available. Are you interested?" It was Matt Donahoe asking the question on the telephone from the Fairview in Talkeetna.

"Man, I'm always interested." I had met Robinson once before at Johnston's place and was aware that he'd just done the French Ridge on Huntington. "Put him on."

"Hello, this is Rodger. I'm leaving to go up Denali tomorrow (June 7) for three weeks and after that trip I'd like to make quick attempts on Foraker and Hunter, then walk out to Petersville. Would you like to go?" It all sounded exciting and peachy easy and I couldn't help but agree to meet him on the Kahiltna in three weeks.

I found myself in Talkeetna the 26th of June with a car stuffed full of climbing gear and food and arranged to ride in to the southeast fork with Jim Sharp in the morning. Rodger and Bill Coyle, a third member, gave me a hardy welcome as soon as I stepped from the plane. I hadn't bought enough food to feed three people, but it hardly mattered, because those guys had brought down enough food scrounged on Denali to feed an army. Late in the afternoon we were set and took off down the southeast fork and across the two mile wide Kahiltna Glacier in the mush and smelting heat of a bright sun. It didn't take me long to get the same seared look as the others.

We bivied at 6900' at the foot of the southeast ridge of Mt. Crosson waiting for the snow to freeze before starting up. The 28th of June found us climbing by 3:30 AM, but unfortunately the snow didn't set up like we had hoped and we constantly broke through to our knees which was cause for lots of sweat and agony. Our packs seemed terribly heavy packed with everything we needed to make a two week push to the summit and back and were quite awkward on some moves.

We rested a bit under the tent fly at 8300' waiting for the view to improve, the rain to stop, and my arm to get fixed up after I messed it up in a fall; then we continued on. The going improved immediately as we stepped onto ice. There were a few steep ice sections to surmount, but nothing all that serious, and we didn't even bother to belay. We called it a day at 4:30 PM at 9900'; chopped out a tent platform in the ice of a small notch, then relaxed upon warm boulders and enjoyed the magnificent setting that surrounded us--such spectacular peaks as Denali, Hunter, and Foraker dominating the horizons. We gathered around the stove and enjoyed a supper of freshly scrounged food found on the way up the lower slopes of Crosson and watched the tiny dot-like figures that moved along the Kahiltna toward Denali.

We navigated up through the clouds the next day following an occasional old track, wand, or fixed rope till we popped out of the murky mist at 12400'. The slopes were littered with crevasses and we all found our share of the hidden slots. A

FOILED ON FORAKER continued.

weather report from Anne Smith of Chugiak on channel 11 of Rodger's CB didn't sound at all encouraging. She told us we could expect clouds, wind, and snow; and sure enough in a couple of hours that's what we got. Her weather reports rang true the whole climb whether we liked them or not. At 6:30 PM in a driving snow storm we traversed over the broad 12800' summit of Mt. Crosson. After a blind descent of 100 feet we were finally forced to camp. The storm was short-lived and by 3:00 the next morning we were photographing a most spectacular sunrise. Everything was bathed in beautiful pinks and oranges that contrasted strikingly with the dark blue-purple of the shadows.

Our third day out we found that short cuts never pay. We had decided to cut across the slopes of Peak 12472' to the north ridge of Foraker rather than go over the summit of this peak. The snow felt good and the angle of the side hill wasn't too bad, so we took off. Rodger was in the lead and as we got further out onto the slope and over a bigger and bigger drop his strides became more and more uneasy. Three times Rodger turned quickly toward us and asked if we had heard a "thud." We hadn't heard a thing and began to think Rodger had gone off his rocker. Then suddenly there was a tremendous booming sound as the entire face we were on settled. As quick and as light-footed as we could we did an about face and flat out ran our tracks back to the ridge crest. It had been just a shave too close for getting our launch, and the adrenalin pumping through our bodies took us up and over the summit of Peak 12472' with ease. The snow turned to deep powder with a wind crust as we neared the long comparatively flat ridge to Foraker. It constantly settled on us with a thud, but thank goodness the angle of the ridge here wasn't steep enough to avalanche. We camped for a third time at 11200' in a spot well-protected from a west wind.

July 1st found us pinned in camp under the pounding of an east wind. We were still there the 3rd and my journal entry went like this: "We awoke in a most miserable state. By all appearance the tent had shrunk in dimensions. I lay bent, unable to stretch out for my feet and head were crammed into the sides. The nylon of the tent sagged considerably, unaffected by the wind that still howled over the ridge, due to the weight of rime on it and the guide lines. Inside the nylon was heavy with frost which hung just inches from our faces. Of course it would fall in wet sheets to saturate sleeping bags and compel us to keep our faces hidden rather than put up with the wet nuisance. The frost came off in due time by itself and by our brushing but it had been falling all night while we slept and we were all thoroughly soaked. The tent was a real hole those first few moments of wakefulness. . ." And on the 4th: "Buried to the cook vent on one side and the pole is bent like a hoop. It looked like a bad case and had us all scared. I hussled out and started digging like a mad man but could barely keep ahead of the drifting snow. Rodger came to help but was so weak from the lack of food that he thought he'd faint (we had been on 1/3 rations) and he got very cold. So I grabbed a food bag and we headed in with little progress done in the way of digging out. Sat in the shambles of the interior of the tent, shrunk from the pressure of snow and wind, and very wet; . . . crammed around the stove. The first cup of hot was heaven. . . Rodger went out to continue excavating and I crawled in my wet bag to warm cold feet. When Rodger came back I went out to resume digging, and when I came in Bill went to resume digging. And so it went through the day."

Anyone who has been in a storm is going to wonder why we weren't in a cave or igloo. The cave we tried and got buried under more than six feet of snow turning a simple exit into the outside air into a real epic. The igloo routine would have been perfect, but once the storm had started. . . Well, it was too nasty to peek outside let alone try to build something out there.

The storm was short, only five days, but our food supply was also short and we were both mentally and physically drained when it was over. But we couldn't give up the climb that easy, so on the 6th we took off for the foot of Foraker, hoping

FOILED ON FORAKER continued.

to come across a hidden cache of food that perhaps was left by the Japanese. Our push was short-lived when after only 200 yards we triggered a tremendous avalanche off the ridge. We decided we didn't want to mess with avalanche conditions all the way to the summit, so turned around and headed back to camp, picked up our gear, and pushed on toward base camp.

It was a beautiful, but at the same time a nerve-wracking several days as we descended to the Kahiltna. Off to the west we could see the low lands, a land of green valleys and golden lakes. Sun beams filtered by puffy thunderheads cast their soft light upon this inviting scene. Closer to our habitat was the striking immensity of the surrounding peaks. A lifetime full of trips and dreams filled our horizons. But at our feet was our immediate reality--avalanche-prone snow. Most of the way was safe enough, but it doesn't take too many moments of hold-your-breath tiptoeing to put one on edge. We were a relieved trio when we stepped out of the newly fallen snow back to old ice on the lower slopes of Crosson. And the last unroped bounding steps down scree were savored by all of us.

FOR SALE

Climbing gear: goldline rope, rigid crampons, assorted nuts, stoppers, screws, new pair of R-d rock shoes, wands, two short ice axes, alpine hammer, and etc. Call 349-1935 after 6:00 PM.
Robin Bowen