



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 2037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

December 1977

Volume XX, No.12

DECEMBER MEETING

Wednesday, December 21, 8P.M., Pioneer School House, Third & Eagle, Anchorage. A slide show will be presented by Mike Warburton on a climbing trip he made to the Caucasus Mountains, which are located in the southeastern European U.S.S.R., between the Black Sea and the Caspian. Due to the show's length part will be shown before the business meeting in place of the usual mini-slide show.

\*\*\*\*\*

SKIING & CLIMBING SCHEDULE

FLATTOP, Saturday, December 17. This is the twelfth annual Mid-Winter's Night climb and sleep-in. Be sure to bring a log or some kindling for a toasty little fire!

\*\*\*\*\*

MINUTES OF NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING, MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

Wednesday, November 16, 1977, Pioneer School House, Anchorage

The meeting was called to order at 8:07 PM by President DENKEWALTER. EARL REDMAN presented a mini-slide show of the ascent of Sundum Peak (6,666 ft.) in Southeast Alaska and a tongue-in-cheek rock-climbing expedition near Tanacross.

Business Meeting: Previous meeting's minutes were approved. Treasurer's report: Checking, \$724.80; Savings, \$448.53; Cash on hand, \$37.20 for a total of \$1,210.53. The President reminded members that annual dues must be paid by January 1, 1978. RICHARD THALEK, member of the MCA's Board of Directors, is also now Chairman (Custodian) of the MCA's four huts. He photo-copied two maps showing locations of these huts and distributed copies to interested climbers and hikers. Vice-President VALERIE LARUE requested slides useful for the Ice-Climbing class. President Denkwalter requested more climb descriptions for SCREE since these are useful for future climbs. Trip coordinators and leaders are still needed, especially a winter ski tour coordinator! A membership list will be updated soon with phone numbers.

Under NEW BUSINESS it was announced that membership cards would be available soon. These are (1) useful for visiting other outdoor clubs and their huts, (2) required for borrowing or renting MCA equipment, and (3) required to attend special lectures.

After the INTERMISSION for refreshments, Chris Arend showed some excellent slides of a tour in Peru with visits to Lima, Guzco, and ancient Inca settlements, with some hiking at high altitudes and views of much higher mountains.

Meeting adjourned at 9:50.

E. ALLEN ROBINSON, Secretary

\*\*\*\*\*

ICE CLIMBING NOTE: The waterfalls at Portage Lake and Sklutva Dam and river (i.e. Ripple & Boone's Farm) are in good climbing shape as of this date.

TRIP REPORTSCHAMONIX REFLECTIONS

by John R Dillman

I don't suppose much ever changes at the Bar National. Maurice and his children were behind the bar dispensing drinks to the motley gathering of pile-lined clad English speaking climbers. Several brave Scottish lads were attempting to hustle Monique and Elizabeth, two French girls from the Tourist Office. Nowhere. Perhaps I could show these sods how to handle this. Maurice protested as I emptied several of the vases of their now wilted flowers. I staggered over to the table, pulled up a chair and handed the flowers to Monique, while whispering in her lovely perfumed ear, "Monique I think I love you.". The Scotts were silent, Monique was silent. Then in her most sarcastic voice: "Qui, e v e r y o n e loves Monique?". Feeling that the romance was ended, I took back the flowers, pulled on the Gore-Tex, paid Maurice, and began the long soggy walk thru the deserted streets, past the English Church, the Bureau des Guides, up the hill to the apartment. Susan was less receptive to my advances than Monique had been, the flowers were nothing but stems, so I found my sleeping bag and spent the night on the couch.

It didn't matter. No early 2 AM alpine starts to suffer through. It had been raining for two weeks. Since my arrival in mid-August I had become a regular in the Bar National, Snells Sport Shop, the supermarket and the Weather Forecasting Office. And the train station, where I made four scheduled visits each day since I didn't know exactly when Susan was to arrive. On one of these visits I got lucky and spotted her lovely tanned face in the crowd pouring through the doors. Our many months apart were over and our embrace brought knowing smiles from the onlookers.

Several soggy days on the Glacier des Bossons with occasional glimpses of the towering granite and snow above the valley only increased our enthusiasm. It had to stop raining someday, and then....

Short hikes through the forests on the Drevent insured that we wouldn't be completely out of condition, IF it did clear. Many hours wandering around the village, and untold stops at the pastry shops. Strained necks following the hang-gliders soaring down from the Drevent above the apartment. The streets remained crowded despite the weather. Everyone in France takes their vacations in August, regardless.

Some friends stop by the apartment to tell us that the forecast is good for the following day. Few routes will be in condition, what with new unsettled snow. Only ridges or traverses should be attempted. Consulting our guide book, we settle on the Aiguille Du Midi-Aiguille Du Plan Traverse. Accessible from the telepherique, it would be an easy day and a fine introduction to the range. Rebuffat describes it as "a traverse on the frontier between two worlds: that of the valley to the left, where you see the awakening life and hustle of a new day, and that of the high mountains on the right, peaceful, unchanging, eternal.". Right, Gaston. Six AM at the station amongst the crowd, we wonder. The tele wisks us to the summit, we follow the other 60 passengers along the dark tunnel, over the foot bridge, through another tunnel. My God! Hundreds of climbers arranging equipment and roping up and we're still inside. We jostle our way along, climbing over ropes and sacks. Before us the dazzling snow ridge awaits. Susan leads through the crowd of tourists at the entrance. The Chilcoat Trail in '98 didn't have as many stampedeers on it as our intended route had climbers that day. Ahead of us were over 100 people, several feet apart, descending the steep ridge and more continued to follow behind us like unending cars on a freight train. Susan is hysterical, I'm discusted. The snow is deep. Hours go by. The queing at difficult pitches results in introductions and possible

(continued)

## CHAMONIX continued

new friendships. We manage to pass slow ropes, only to be passed by fast ones. Two French climbers are attempting to downclimb a steep rock section. We wait. Angry shouts from a German group somewhere down the line. I finally decide to abseil over the French, borrow a rope from two English lads and the four of us bury the poor Frenchman in snow and pound them with rockfall as we abseil 150 feet to a small ledge below. C'est la vie. At the Col Supérieur Du Plan we give it up. Its past noon and the snow is oatmeal. We wade down glacier to the Requin Hut and wander off down the Mer de Glace to catch the train from Montenvers back to Chamonix. Susan's new Face Nord double boot will certainly require some more breaking in. Probably by someone else. Its getting late. I give her the bivouac bag in case she doesn't make the train, and run off down the glacier. She arrived as the last train was leaving.

The comfortable apartment was a haven during the following week of uninterrupted rain. I struggled with Hitchner's dinosaurs in CENTENNIAL while trying to remain sane as Susan learned to play the recorder.

Some alpine season! One unfinished traverse and a short route up the Aiguille de L'Index. September arrives, the town becomes ghostly. We check the weather forecast twice daily, returning with long faces (covered by assorted remainders of hastily eaten pastries). We resort to taking turns shopping at the markets, since our relationship has become sorely strained while attempting this seemingly simple task together.

The weather changed. The sun on the new sun was blinding, and the big routes were out of the question. But there were many other possibilities. We worked up a short program, and caught the bus to Le Tour at the end of the valley. Several lifts and a short hike brought us to Albert Premier Hut in time for supper. Typically, the hut is noisy and crowded. No sleep and a 3 AM start. We plan a traverse of the Aiguille Du Tour. Enthusiasm dims as we break trail through several feet of new snow with heavy packs and flickering headlamps. The route won't go with all the snow. We attempt the south face instead, a mixed affair. After six pitches of horrendous snow, ice and loose granite blocks, we abseil off. Depressed, we pack and return to the valley.

Several days later we were back at the Albert Premier Hut. The snow conditions were excellent and Susan led a steep snow and ice gully up Du Tour and we enjoyed the sunrise across the entire Mont Blanc Range.

The ordinary route on Mont Blanc Du Tacul was a long snow plod where we were accompanied by a detachment of French Mountain Troops. The views of The Brenva Face were magnificent.

The Tour Ronde North Face is only 350 meters from the bergschrund to the summit, but is overall 55 degrees. Probably the new snow made it less serious.

Pete Sennhauser arrived when we only had one week left. Knowing we were probably over our heads, we followed Pete up several fine routes. The best was a variation of the North Face/Forbes Arete of the Aiguille Du Chardonnet. The variation resulted from my insistence from the start of the route was this way, not that. In the dim beams of our lamps we were lost, but the resulting route offered everything an alpine climber could wish for.

Several days later we followed Pete up the Couzy Route on the Aiguille De L'N. Pete led it brilliantly (of course) and Susan and I were hard pressed at times. I'll never forget, that after a 45 minute lead of the 4th pitch, Pete bellowed down: "You're gonna love the next one." The exposure was too much. A sweeping diedre led to an overhanging wall. How did he get over that? Relax, look around, the holds are there. Sure enough. We downclimb and abseil back to the packs. Its almost dark and we have missed the last tele back to Chamonix. After a long walk through dark forests we got home at midnight.

(continued)

CHAMONIX continued

We had run out of time. Susan and I had a rendezvous in Katmandu in two weeks. We also had been invited to Wales and planned to fly out to India from London. Pete wanted to climb the Matterhorn over the weekend so we caught the train into Switzerland the next day. Many familiar towns and mountains were passed as the train climbed out of the Valle de Chamonix. Although our season had been short and not extremely successful, it hopefully prepared us for a future visit and give us a new awareness of the mountains and ourselves.

\*\*\*\*\*

### SUMDUM CONQUEST

by El Mojohombre

Sumdum Peak lurks in Southeast Alaska. On this great mountain is an amazingly complicated system of glaciers (two), ridges (three) and peaks (one) rising to giddy heights of six thousand six hundred sixty feet. It belongs to the strength and glory of human nature that when men are confronted with the unknown, the perilous, the impossible, daring spirits are straightaway challenged to embark upon an enterprise of life and death in order that secrets may be dragged forth and the apparently impossible achieved. (What unadulterated nausea! Ed.)

As soon therefore, that it was known that far to the southeast a knightly and defiant peak, cut off from civilization by oceans of clouds and entrenched among a thousand barriers of rain, lay waiting the coming of man, (no woman being along) the mountaineers of lower upper Spenard began to turn their eyes to Sumdum Peak and dream their dream of conquest.

The team consisted of two. I was the leader. Many great peaks had succumbed to my dogged assault. I was fresh from an attack on the great summit of Mt. Foraker. Fate had decried our failure on that peak, however, when I tripped on my shoelaces and fell off the mountain.

The other fellow was a fierce climber from the great state of Texas. Few rock faces could withstand his determined attack. A finer companion could not have been found - the fact that he had never worn crampons or used an ice ax was inconsequential.

Base camp was set on the desolate shores of a small lake at 3100 feet. Sumdum Peak lay out of sight over a ridge but its presence could be felt.

September 4th began with grim faces as we prepared for the climb. Your face too, would be grim if you got up that early.

The approach to the glacier took ten minutes. Crampons were donned and axes grasped - the assault began. The glacier steepened as we climbed past fresh yeti tracks and rose to the base of a couloir. We climbed unroped and the other fellow became uneasy, with reason since the slope had reached almost 30 degrees.

After much toil the ridge crest was gained and we roped up. A vast tangle of carnivorous crevasses lay ahead but we plunged onward toward the peak. We were nearly stopped by a bergschrund but the other fellow made a daring leap over the two foot wide abyss and we continued on. Again, a half mile further, a gaping trench brought us to a halt and we were forced into a hundred foot detour.

We came to a wide plateau beyond which glowered Sumdum Peak. The plateau appeared flat and innocent but we were not deceived. Billions of unseen crevasses awaited the unwary so we belayed across, protecting our route with pickets and flukes.

(continued - unfortunately!)

SUNDUM continued

The summit finally stood above us. The other fellow put up a brilliant route through the intricate web of crevasses finding a path around all three of them. Then the final summit pitches. Success was within our grasp - but the other fellow fell into a concealed crevasse! I considered cutting the rope and saving myself for a future assault but instead I found myself pitted in the deadly struggle to save the other fellow. I suggested he remove his leg from the hole and possibly we could continue. He sat there in the snow, considered my suggestion doubtfully but gave it a try. To his joy he found himself free and again we set off briskly toward the final summit spire.

The last pitch was rock but we swarmed up using only 47 pins and 43 bolts on its 17 feet. So we arrived at the summit, the subdued conquerers of Sundum Peak. We had beaten the mountain and proved once again the indomitable spirit of man (there being no women along).

(We have been informed that El Rejohombre has been deported to Uruguay where he will face charges of impersonating a climber. Ed.)

\*\*\*\*\*

SOUTH FORK OF EAGLE RIVER IN WINTER

Sat, Dec. 4th 1965

John Wolfe

The day was clear and cold and began very poorly when our old four-wheel-drive truck wouldn't start in the inky blackness of early morning. The day was saved by the timely arrival of Leo Hannan who kindly offered the use of his car as far as it would get us. Plans were made to go up into the South Fork of Eagle River on choice of skis, snowshoes, or foot by way of the new extension of Hiland Drive.

Because of our late start, we missed connections with Gayle Nienhueser, but Helen, Leo, and I picked up Dave DeVoe on the way out giving usa total of four in the party - two with snowshoes and two with cross-country skis.

On the way up Hiland drive, we sidetracked briefly to have morning coffee with Cliff and Lavon Ells at their scenic homestead and enjoy the view of pink sunrise striking distant McKinley.

Leo was easily able to drive into the top of the new grade just before the road drops down to cross the South Fork on the new "Throgs Neck Bridge"- a considerable improvement over the sagging, cracked, and rotting South Fork bridge on the older, lower road. The roadway beyond our parking spot was tracked by prior cars so Helen and I walked on foot while Leo and Dave used their skis. The road joins the old road climbing up higher into the South Fork valley until we reached the Moon's homestead where we took refuge in a grove of spruce, built up a warming fire, and had some lunch. We had left the Ell's at about 10 AM and had lunch from about noon to 1:30 when we quit because we had used up the squaw wood we had collected. We were pleased to meet Ken Moon and his son, Barney, who were out also for the short day.

We headed back to the car after this and reached it just about three o'clock dusk and returned to town without incident. The trip is a nice one in any season; we could have done more with a longer day, but this new access into the South Fork of Eagle River means we can enjoy this area even in the short winter days since the driving time to and from town is so greatly reduced from what it is on the older, lower road. There were splendid views of McKinley back out the mouth of the valley all the way along and the little valley itself is a very pretty one. The access road is high enough so that the ridges on both sides are invitingly close and not at all difficult to reach. I'd say this was an area to be strongly recommended for some trips possibly later in the winter after the days are somewhat longer, and definitely in the coming summer months.

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

A CLIMB IN THE ALASKA RANGE

by Brian Okonek

THE THRONE - Pk. 7390' via south face. The Throne is perhaps the most striking mountain in Little Switzerland in that it is one huge hunk of clean granite that resembles something one might find in the Bugaboos. In 1976 Roger and I finally got enough of our meager nerve to leave our comfortable base camp and give The Throne a try via the south ridge. The first two pitches led up what we called the Garden Ledges which sounds terribly gungy, but is actually a series of clean, solid cliffs cut by jam cracks and faces of quartz crystals each separated by an absolutely beautiful ledge of heather, mosses, and a variety of colorful sweet smelling flowers. We found a two pitch broken crack/chimney system that cut up an otherwise void vertical cliff to a laid back boulder patch and snow field. Roger did a nice series of moves getting past a waterfall and staying dry at the same time - I wasn't quite as graceful. The upper eight pitches followed a wandering line directly to a large triangular visor up an unplanned route. Each move gave access to a previously unseen hold and thus we advanced never sure where the next belay would be. At one point I thought I'd push the boat out a little too far as I slithered in a wet mossy unprotected 5.7 crack trying desperately to execute dainty mantle onto a sloping sandy ledge. The 12th pitch found us looking down the south face from the summit block. It was easily our finest climb of the summer after a long list of attempts and ascents.

\*\*\*\*\*

As of this writing, membership cards are being made up and printed by a local printing shop. Members will most likely be able to pick them up at the December meeting. DON'T FORGET to bring your checkbooks and wallets to the meeting to bring your membership up to date!

Also, Dick Thaler, Huts Chairman, is working on getting a flight up to Whiteout Hut. He is in touch with an Alyeska group with whom he hopes to repair both Eagle and Whiteout Huts. More on this at the meeting.

\*\*\*\*\*

SCREE

-7-

DECEMBER 1977

The following questionnaire, submitted by Dave Klinger - a Board Member, is for all MCAers. Please fill it out!! You may return it to the post office box or at the meeting.

MCA QUESTIONNAIRE

NAME

ADDRESS

WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO OFFER THE MCA?

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE FROM THE CLUB?

WHAT SPECIAL HIKING OR CLIMBING OR SKIING SKILLS DO YOU HAVE?

WHAT OTHER HOBBIES DO YOU HAVE? YOUR FAVORITE?

IN WHAT SPORTS DO YOU TAKE PART?

WOULD YOU COORDINATE CLIMBS OR HIKES FOR THE CLUB? (IF NOT, WHY?)

COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATIONS.....