



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 2037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

December 1983

Volume 26, Issue f12

DECEMBER MEETING

The meeting will be held Wednesday, December 21st at 7:30 p.m. in Room 114 of the City Gym building, 607 W 6th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska. After the business meeting Tim Neale will present a film program including films on climbing and suicide skiing. (Film program subject to timely arrival of films.) If films cannot be shown, a slide show will be presented.

PLEASE NOTE NEW MEETING PLACE FOR DECEMBER.

MINUTES FOR MCA NOVEMBER GENERAL MEETING

The November MCA meeting was held on November 16, 1983, at Central Junior High School, 15th and C Streets, Anchorage, Alaska. The meeting was called to order by President Mark Skok at 7:40 p.m. The minutes of the October general meeting were approved as published in the SCREE.

Treasurer Bernie Helms reported:

\$ 133.74	- Petty Cash
606.74	- Checking Account
<u>3,532.22</u>	- Money Market Rate Plus Account
\$4,272.70	- TOTAL

All dues expire 12/31/83. Single memberships are \$7.50 and Family, \$10.00. Pre-addressed envelopes are available for payment by mail, and the 1984 Membership Card may be picked up at the following meeting. BERNIE HAS REQUESTED THAT PEOPLE RENEW MEMBERSHIPS THROUGH THE MAIL, ALSO, IN ORDER TO EASE THE "MOB SITUATION" AT BREAK.

I. COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Hiking: Dona Agosti, 248-0089
Nothing to report.

B. Library: Mike Frank, 243-7642

Dave Pahlke reported that the books are ready to move to AMH. The library needs a small desk - a donation would be greatly appreciated. The Library Committee will formulate a policy for borrowing books.

C. Conservation Committee: Tim Neale, 274-4952

Tim reported on the current moose hunt in the Hillside area. A formal position was not taken by the club, but members who have opinions regarding the Alaska Department of Fish and Game policies should attend a Public Hearing concerning Fish and Game Regulations in March 1984.

II. OLD BUSINESS

None

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. Mark discussed the minutes of the Executive Board Meeting which was held November 9, 1983. The main topic was winter activities. At this time MCA has few formal winter functions. The officers and board members wanted to know what winter activities are of interest to the club members. Ski trips and climbing classes were suggested at the general meeting.

B. Membership Services Committee - Reggie Buchanan, 333-7649; Eileen Cavanaugh, 337-1394; and Willy Hersman, 278-9829.

A new committee was formed (1) to assist new members by answering questions and provide information about club activities, and (2) to help disseminate information about informal or short-notice hikes or climbs. Members planning a hike or looking for hiking companions may use the committee as a liason.

C. Announcements

1. Gravity Sports Film Festival - A new Anchorage Fur Rendezvous Event. February 15, 16, and 17, Wed., Thur., and Fri., at 7:30 p.m. at Central Junior High School. Featuring the best climbing (No World for Men with Nicholas Jaeger, Kongur and Everest the Hard Way with Chris Bonnington, and Anarctica Survey with Mike Hoover), paddling, and outdoor adventure movies available, including Leo Dickinson's Filming the Impossible, and Tom Tatums' Mauí Windsurfing, Double High, Hang Gliding, and the Camel International Speed Skiing Championships. Admission \$4.00 in advance, \$5.00 at the door. HELP SUPPORT FUR RONDY '84.
2. December general meeting date and place not available at this time. It will be published in the December SCREE.
3. Judy Pendleton spoke about the Alaska Environmental Assembly Conference of Habitat which will be held December 3 and 4 at the Lucy Cuddy Center, ACC Campus. Registration will be \$5.00 per person. For more information contact Alaska Environmental Assembly, 1069 W. 6th Avenue, Anchorage, Alaska 99503.

4. Thank you, Paul Denkwalter, owner of Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking for your talk about winter hiking/climbing gear.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Eileen Cavanaugh

OUTDOORS UPDATE

Continued interest has been expressed in winter outings, and I hope trips continue to be organized, either informally among members or as sanctioned club trips.

Tim Neale has been leading a regular series of climbs on Saturdays, and a group skied into the Mint Glacier hut over the Thanksgiving weekend.

Someting I neglected to mention at the November meeting is the annual Flat-top Mountain Winter Solstice trip. It's held the Saturday night closest to the actual solstice (about December 21). Because the weekend following the December meeting is Christmas, I'll go up Saturday, December 17. If you're interested in coming along, give me a call at 274-3934 (evenings). Or, head up from the Glen Alps parking lot any time Saturday.

If you're planning a trip and are looking for partners, or want to know of others' plans, call Eileen Cavanaugh, 337-1394; Reggie Buchanan, 333-7649; or Willy Hersman, 338-51321.

Happy climbing!

Mark Skok

SULTANA RIDGE OF SULTANA (MT. FORAKER) - SECOND WINTER ASCENT

Dave Johnston

The solid month of cloudless weather ended 2 March, the day we anxiously entered the range only to face a storm and an inordinate amount of poor weather throughout the trip!

Once again the magic white Super Cub transformed us from creatures of the woods into self-sufficient explorers of the mountain world. We loaded our sleds with all we would need for 21 days, feeling a bit less self-sufficient when we discovered that we were missing a sleeping bag (Roger's) and gallon of gas. Nevertheless, we headed out, skiing up the Kahiltna to the foot of the SE ridge of Mt. Crosson to the base camp at 6800'. To everyone's delight (especially Roger's), we discovered Brian's Holubar and my Snow Lion sleeping bags zipped together. After a strange sulphur-flavored glop (Sally packed the matches in the supper bag and I missed them in the dark) we found that the three of us just fit into two bags.

3 March: 6800' Base Camp; low, -14F; 1/2 " snow overnight; overcast, wind - 25-30mph; ascend 3000'; descend 3000'; 8 hours climbing

Today is Day One of the expedition, Roger declares, yesterday being day zero in more ways than one. We start off with the first of two relays up Crosson's 6000' flank, the first leg of our 8-1/2 mile route to the summit of Sultana (Tanana Indian name from the Minchumina area for Mt. Foraker, meaning Denanli's "wife"). Pete Robinson and George Menard, who established this route in 1974 for a guided attempt to the foot of Sultana, undoubtedly would have succeeded barring the very ponderous clientel. Since that time there have been 8 attempts to complete the route by such characters as Charlie Porter (solo) and Brian Okonek (twice) and his cronies.

The route rises over Mt. Crosson, drops 1050', rises again to 12,472', drops to 1250', then undulates 3-1/2 miles between 11,150' and 11,850' to the base of Sultana proper. From here the 35-40 degree NE ridge leads 5750' to the 17,400' summit. Every part of our route has been climbed, although not consecutively. Views of Denali, Hunter, and the spruce and cottonwood at the terminuses of the Foraker and Straightaway Glaciers are superb. The route is technically easy, but exposed to variable weather conditions.

4 March: 6800' Base Camp; low, -7F; light snow 9000'-11,000'; overcast; wind - S 5-15mph; ascend - 4150'; descend - 0'; 7 hours of climbing

Wild cheers in the wilderness! Brian's dad flies out of the murk and drops Roger's sleeping bag at the cache, missing it by only 42 feet! We find the ridge much icier than on our last attempt in April '77 and enjoy using four lovely fixed ropes someone has left behind. Brian's journal says, "Dancing on ice wit V.B.s, snow crampons, an axe that won't stick, no hammer, and 60-lb packs demands concentration". At 4150' above base darkness snares us, and in we burrow. Past experience has taught us to relinquish the tent, opting instead for three shovels: a tiny WWI entrenching tool for carving and a medium and large scoop shovel for mucking-out. By midnight we're fed and abed in our new hotel.

5 March: 11,000' Camp I; SE Ridge of Mt. Crosson; low +2F; whiteout; spindrift wind - S 20 mph; ascend 0'; descend 0'; 0 hours of climbing

Although Brian Okonek and I have been batting around this range since 1973 and 1963, respectively, Roger Cowles could, perhaps, use a bit of introduction. It was only last month that Brian snagged him from his race bike, persuading him to try this mountain nonsense. The introductory gimmick was a ski trip with ladies and campfires on which they sneaked in the first winter ascent of Mt. Dickey. After that, Roger thought Sultana would be fun. So here we lie, cave-bound, weaned of ladies, campfires, and the good weather as I manufacture a cave door from Brian's bag cover to stem the spindrift's friendly visit.

6 March: Camp I; low -5F; whiteout in the morning; clear in the afternoon; ascend 1100'; descend 1100'; 3 hours of climbing

Crunch down to the 9900' gendarme to retrieve our cache. Tonight on our Camp I balcony, Talkeetna's FAA spotlight winks at us, but beyond Mt. Hunter is almost phosphorescent in the half-moon glow.

7 March: Camp I; low -7F; 14,000' overcast early in the morning; whiteout from 0700 until dark; ascend 0'; descend 0'; 0 hours of climbing

At 0700 - dressed, stuffed with tsampa, packed, and nowhere to go...like the inside of a ping pong ball outside. But tonight the weather clears, revealing Denali through a gossamer veil, a spacey multi-hued double ring around the moon.

8 March: Camp I; low -10F; clear night; whiteout by 0630; ascend 0'; descend 0'; 0 hours of climbing

Storm day. I cut the hood from the bottom of my bag and sew it on top where I like it: a million tiny stitches keep me busy 'til noon when Brian tears Winds of War in half. Floating along in book fantasies, war wrenched Poland for Brain and me, vampires for Roger, we consider the name "Bookworm Ridge" for this route.

9 March: Camp I; low -12F; clear early in the morning; whiteout rest of the day; ascend 0'; descend 0'; 0 hours of climbing

My bag hood is a great success. A warmer and much more comfortable sleep. Dawn watch 0515-0645. The cotton batting draped over the S Buttress swells and ebbs. The thin "steam" forms on top of Crosson, and slowly, almost imperceptibly, the grey wall oozes up the valley. I jog, do deep knee bends, step jump, jog... Reddish gold sunrise due east over 12,380's sharp thrust, backlighting snow sizzling off the S Buttress. Back to books and cave chatter as Crosson's steamy crest boils down to us.

10 March: Camp I; low -7F; whiteout; ascend 0'; descend 0'; 0 hours of climbing

Write five pages to my mother-in-law. Getting desperate.

11 March: Camp I; low -7F; high overcast early in the morning; lenticulars form and dissipate; some clearing in the evening; clouds from 5pm on into the evening; ascend 4422'; descend 4072'; 10 hours of climbing

Liberation! Up at 0430, dump a load on the 12,800' summit of Crosson at 0800, then run for our cave as the clouds close in behind us. The clouds relent and we head up again. We retrieve the cache atop Crosson and descend with monster loads to the saddle, proceeding with lighter loads for the climb over Pt. 12,472', then down its south ridge to dig in at 11,250' just below a short, spectacular ice pitch.

12 March: 11,250' Camp II on S ridge of Pt 12,472'; low -8F; whiteout; wind NE 5-15 mph; clear around noon; wind - S 10-25 mph; black towards SE; 15,000' overcast at 2100; ascend 1944'; descend 1944'; 3-1/2 hours of climbing

Roger and I build two right angle turns in our entryway to avert the storm. Then, in accordance with our instructions not to deliver before Camp II, we give to Brian a letter from his lass. It reads, "For that which you love most in him may

be clearer in his absence. As a mountain to the climber is clearer from the plain." It clears at noon and we hop back over 12,472' and retrieve our cache in a breezy but beautiful afternoon of polarized peaks and sunset alchemy, which forms distant river overflows to gold and Foraker Glacier's bare ice into a light show of pastel oranges, pinks, and (says Brian) even greens.

13 March Camp II; low -10F; whiteout; wind - NE 10-20 mph; ascend 0'; descend 0'; 0 hours of climbing

Bookwork storm day.

14 March Camp II; low -15F; super fine!; winds - N 0-5 mph; summer valley clouds below; high thin cirrus in evening; ascend 2350'; descend 1400'; 6 hours of climbing

From Brian's journal: "Big blubby hunks of seracs hanging with rime, cornices gracefully arching over voids, deep blue crevasses, crunchy snow, thickish wind drift of microscopic snow flakes, flutings, knife edges, and even some granite midway along the ridge all topped off by far-off views of mountains and lowlands." I'd like to add the crystalline fresh diamonds dancing in the air, the cheerful, undulating rosy finches, and the ubiquitous raven enjoying our ridge with us. By 1230 we're walling off a crevasse compartment at 12,300' on Sultana's NE ridge. Dall sheep steaks tonight, to bed early, high hopes for tomorrow.

Ides of March: 12,300' Camp III, Sultana's NE Ridge; low -27F; solid cloud layer to S, rises from 13-16,000'; subsides to 13,000'; wind 5-30 mph; ascend 5100'; descend 5100'; 9 hours of climbing

Brian reports the solid cloud layer to the south has nearly devoured Mt. Hunter and is lapping at our ridge. We departed at 0801 with Brian setting a fine pace, wading as far as our 35 wands will go. Perfect crampon snow. Scrunch, scrunch. On and on and on. I get that mechanical feeling. I'm just a slope jumar, climbing monotonously upward, forever.

Mt. Crosson, Pt. 12472', then Mt. Hunter sink into the sea of cloud.

As we emerge from shadow into sunlight at 16,900' the wind drops. We hike slowly along over delicate wee cauliflowers of rime...untra-alpine rime, I think, like alpine plants, must be diminutive to survive.

The three hours of care and concentration it takes to crampon the 5100' back to our cave seem interminable. Denali, standing proud above the cloud, and Hunter, looking like a monster rising from the murk, shedding mists from her complicated ramparts, are a show all the way down as the sun lowers. Mighty thankful, we are, not to have to dig a cave tonight!

16 March: Camp III; low -32F; super fine until clouds from the S at sunset winds - N 5-10 mph in the morning; winds - 0-5 mph for the rest of the day; ascend 1400'; descend 2350'; 5:45 hours of climbing

Happily, we are spending the best two days of our trip on "Sultana Ridge" between Camps II and III. As we reach Camp II a humming speck grows into a magic white

Super Cub checking our progress. It takes Brain's dad some time to find us three bag-waving, scoop-shovel-flashing mites on 8-1/2 miles and 10,000 vertical feet of ridge, but he does and vultures lazily down to buzz us. On the second pass, we see a big box hanging out the open door. "Now...now!", we're silently hoping. Then "Oh, no!", as the package is released almost over our heads, and our dreams of oranges, lettuce, ice cream, and little notes from home miss our 175' wide ridge, sail out of sight, and waaay down to crash somewhere on Foraker Glacier. Hardship! We have to content ourselves with an evening of smoked red salmon, Monterey Jack cheese, hot Jello, and pudding.

17 March: Camp II; low -32F; choppy-topped 9000' layer rises to get us; winds NE 15-20 mph; ascend 0'; descend 0'; 0 hours of climbing

Another storm day to halt our homeward progress. Bookworms, again.

18 March: Camp II; low -20F; clear, but dark cloud wall to E and S; clouds come and go; winds to 45 mph; ascend 2170'; descend 6600'; 10 hours of climbing

Up at 0430, away at 0710, hoping to beat the cloud wall to Camp I. It's like climbing an escalator as we stomp up Pt 12,472'. The cloud cap is forming on Crosson, so we've got to move if we don't want to dig another hole. Contrary to political wind, the higher we go, the weaker the wind blows. Crosson's summit feels hospitable after the saddle. We bop down to the sunny (if a bit spin-drifty) veranda of Camp I by 1045 for a lunch of cheesecake and hot drinks. The weather improves! Fat and lazy, we waddle away down the fixed ropes at 1300, cache our ridiculous packs and scurry back up to scavenge flukes and fixed ropes. Some of the most enjoyable hours of the trip; warm, sunny, windless, packless, perched in buckets, chopping buckets in which to downclimb. We score some 800' of 7/16", maybe 200' of 1/4", and three flukes! Beneath our decorated Christmas tree packs, once more, we scrunch, screech, and stumble down into the night, finding our Kahiltna cache by headlamp at 1900. Once again our dreams of goodies fly away. The ravens have cleaned us out. Remnants of wrappings is all that remains of our precious 3 loaves of homemade bread, 4 packages of Philadelphia cream cheese, 2 boxes of graham crackers...Ah....though the dents indicate they tried valiantly, the muthers failed to rob us of our 2 tins of Nabobs! Up goes the tent, out come the spoons, and down goes the raspberry jam, spread thickly on our...tongues.

19 March: Base Camp; low -4F; 1/2" of snow overnight; drifting clouds and partial whiteout; clearing at 1630; winds - N 0-5 mph; ascend 400'; descend 200'; 2-1/2 hours of climbing

Beginners again. Roger puts his skis on the wrong feet, Brian and Roger have packed away their harnesses and prussiks, and I lose most of my red sled load way back on perfectly flat ground. But we persevere and accomplish the four miles to the SE Fork Kahiltna International and set up camp by a glacier birch. We entertain ourselves by stamping out runway messages such as Brian's KAH. INT. and Roger's SUCES (bike racer, you know...) Come on, Brian's dad! Only he doesn't...

20 March: Sub-Base Camp, airport; low -11F; 1/2" of snow in the early morning; clearing in the afternoon; slately overcast from 5 PM on; ascend 0'; descend 0'; 0 hours of climbing

Snow hisses on the tent like Chulitna silt on our kayaks. A day of gluttony, fake airplane noises, singing and discussing. Brian finishes excavating his 9' glacier birch and announces there has been a 7' snow accumulation since last summer.

21 March: Airport Camp; low -4F; whiteout; winds - NW to 25 mph; snow all night; snow and wind (0-5 mph) during the day; 12" of snow; ascend 0'; descend 0'; 0 hours of climbing

First day of spring and here we lie, like three caterpillars in an orange flower, snow still hissing down the corolla. Machine gun onslaughts of wind interrupt our conversations of other places 'til mid-morning.

22 March: Airport Camp; low +4F; 5" of snow overnight; light snow all day; stagnant, steamy cloud floats about; ascend 0'; descend 0'; 0 hours of climbing

Our noses, dry, whistle like spring birdsongs at times. Polarguard-bootie-pack the runway again and talk of being down to our last glop and three or four meals of fuel. The last supper is a big one; can't finish.

23 March: Airport Camp; low 0F; clearing to 12-13,000' overcast; winds - NE 0-10 mph; ascend 0'; descend 0'; 0 hours of climbing

Slowly, reluctantly, it clears... Bags out to dry. I've written letters to everyone I know and the trip account as well...Nothing left but to try Roger's Interview with the Vampire...VROOOM! Plane! But it's a twin, way high...Sun-bathe, then mid-afternoon, another VROOOM and this time it's Brian's dad!! We're ready! The flight back to our woods world, threading through cloud quilts and bashful peaks, then sliding off the Peters Hills and under the gloom at tree-top level, is my best ever.

Trip Statistics

Ridge length - approximately 8-1/2 miles
Elevation gain en route to summit - 14072'
Elevation loss en route to summit - 3672'
Base - Camp I: ASC 4100', DSC 0'
Camp I - Camp II: ASC 2522', DSC 2272'
Camp II - Camp III: ASC 2350', DSC 1400'
Camp III - Top: ASC 5100', DSC 0'
Days on trip: 22
Hours of climbing: 65:45
Average hours/day climbing: 3
% of trip spent climbing: 12.96
Elevation gained: 26,236'
Elevation lost: 25,916'
Full days climbing: 7 (Average 8)
Partial days climbing: 4 (Average 2.5)
Days no climbing: 11
Personnel: Johnston, Cowels, Okonek

THIRD ANNUAL PORTAGE PASS TRIP

On Super Bowl Sunday, in late January, we'll make the trip over Portage Pass once again. It's an easy ski across Portage Lake; we'll skirt along the left of Portage Glacier and make the 700 foot ascent to the pass, then a moderate descent into Whittier in time for the game. A short train ride will take us back to the Portage-Whittier Shuttle stop early Sunday evening. Definite times and meeting place in next SCREE, or call Will Hersman, 338-5132

Willy Hersman

LIBRARY

The library has been moved to AMH. Books and magazines are available for perusal during business hours. Since many of the volumes are quite rare, no books may be checked out until the library committee decides on some general policy.

A wooden desk has been found, but there is no chair. Anyone one wishing to donate one should drop it off at AMH. There is still lots of work required to catalogue the books and to go through Vin Hoeman's files. It was decided to leave the file materials at Mike Frank's house temporarily.

Thanks to Paul Farmer, Dan O'Haire and Eric Kaehler for moving the books.