

# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

JANUARY 2023

Volume 66, Number 1



“Landscapes have the power to teach, if you query them carefully.

And remote landscapes teach the rarest, quietest lessons.”

- David Quammen,  
*Monster of God*

**General Meeting**  
**Wednesday, February 1, 2023,**  
**from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.**  
**at the B.P. Energy Center.**

***Dream Season:***

***Two Grade VI Alaska First***  
***Ascents in Two Months***

**by Clint Helander**

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**Stuck Mountain, Central Chugach Mountains**  
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**Outpost and Turnkey Peaks, Talkeetna Mountains**  
**Dealing with Age, Injuries, Requires Special Set of Skills**  
**Peak of the Month: Akutan Peak (4251 feet), Aleutian Range**



*"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."*

## Cover Photo

Elliott Gaddy at the ice crux of *We Fear Change* (W14 M4).  
See p. 6 for his trip report.  
Photo by Dana Drummond.

## GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday, February 1, 2023, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. at the [B.P. Energy Center](#) 1014 Energy Ct, Anchorage, AK 99508.

*Dream Season: Two Grade VI Alaska First Ascents in Two Months*

Clint Helander will be presenting a 'one-and-only' local slideshow of his 2022 ascents of Golgotha (along with Andres Marin) and Mt. Hunter (along with August Franzen).

As always, the meeting is free to attend for members and the general public. There will be an opportunity to participate in a fundraiser for both the MCA huts and the American Alpine Club Snowbird Hut. Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking, The Hoarding Marmot and others have donated items for a silent auction.

Those who can't attend in person are welcome to tune in at

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



## MCA on Strava

*Text by Peter Taylor*

I get joy and inspiration from seeing what mountain-crazed friends (including some of you) are up to on the Strava GPS tracking sports app. So I went and set-up the Mountaineering Club of Alaska on Strava. Thanks to a shout out on the MCA's Facebook page, we already have a good number of club members who have joined. If you are a Strava user, come and join us! This link will take you straight there:

<https://www.strava.com/clubs/mtnclubak>

Strava users have probably noticed that there are many clubs on Strava. If you have not taken a close look at the feature, you may not be aware of how cool this can be. It allows you to see what other members have been up to on Strava, without personally following them all. The Club activity is tucked away on its own page, so it does not change what you see on your regular activity feed page. It's a fun way to see what other alpinists have been up to and get some inspiration for your own adventures. I am already finding that it motivates me to make a little more effort to get out the door, knowing that other club members are ahead of me in their hours or distance this week.

Open to all Strava users, no paid subscription required. Crampons, skis, hiking boots, running shoes, bikes, skates, snowshoes, all modes welcome. Let's see what you all are getting up to out there. Looking forward to sharing the stoke!

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



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



The MCA has a lot to be grateful for, and most of it comes directly from our membership. To start off 2023, we'd like to cheer for a bunch of folks...

### A Mountain of Thanks to Donors:

This year the Mountaineering Club of Alaska elected to participate in our very first ever Giving Tuesday. Our goal was to raise \$1500 to help us create a robust foundation for our programming efforts. Thanks to the generosity of 22 individuals, we raised \$1750. Thanks to the following contributors for their support:

Jeff Barnes, Volha Belash, Briana Brendle, Alex Brown  
Scott Carbaugh, Trevor Clayton, Gregory Higgins  
Mauricio H.C., C. L., Frank L., Everett Miller, Justin M.  
Erik P., Keri R., Steven R., Kristen S., Lesley S., Neil W., Evan Ye  
... and several anonymous donors

Their generosity will help us gain ground in the following areas:

- Subsidize travel expenses for traveling speakers
- Create video recordings of key presentations when possible
- Offset costs of workshop venues

### And to Volunteers:

Greg Bragiel - for organizing decades of summer and winter mountaineering schools and other training opportunities, in addition to helping to keep the huts in good order.

Dawn Munroe - for 7 years of laying out this newsletter each month

Katherine Cooper - for 4 years of board service as Treasurer

Abbey Collins - for 1 year of editing *the Scree*

Yelena Prusakova - for organizing the Giving Tuesday fundraiser, an upcoming event featuring Arlene Blum at the Bear Tooth, and a series of fantastic general meeting speakers as Vice President

### Article Submission:

Text and photography submissions for *the Scree* can be sent as attachments to [mcascree@gmail.com](mailto:mcascree@gmail.com). Articles should be submitted by the 11th of each month to appear in the next issue of *the Scree*. Do not submit material in the body of the email. Do not submit photos embedded in the text file. Send the photo files separately. Send high resolution file photos separately, including captions for each photo. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. If you have a blog, website, video, or photo links, send us the link. Cover photo selections are based on portraits of human endeavor in the outdoors. Please submit at least one vertically-oriented photo for consideration for the cover. Please don't forget to submit photo captions.

## JANUARY PRESENTATION

*The Scree* is currently running behind the corresponding monthly meeting, but the January General Meeting was held on January 11th.

The proposed 2023 budget was unanimously passed by the members present. It can be seen in last month's *Scree*.

Thanks to Brian Miskill for presenting slides from a 1975 Mt. Foraker expedition with an attempted ascent of the French Ridge, followed by the successful First Winter Ascent of Mt. Foraker via the Southeast Ridge.

And thanks as well to Dylan Weldin for presenting 'The Eiger Doesn't Give a \$#!^', a report of a medical rescue and recovery following an icefall in the Swiss Alps.

### Call for Volunteers

Everything the MCA provides is built by a team of volunteers. We're currently seeking new folks for these roles:

**Vice President:** responsible for organizing speakers at each general monthly meeting, and other events. If you have a wide circle of cool friends, or want a great excuse to email anyone who has a cool story to share, this could be for you.

**Scree Editor:** responsible for producing this newsletter each month. Lots of room to get creative and to contact members of the outdoor community who you admire. Ability to proof-read, and access to publishing software such as Microsoft Publisher or Scribus, is preferred.

**Webmaster:** responsible for administering website content and member accounts via Squarespace and Memberspace.

**Trips and Training:** We welcome volunteers who can lead trips or training opportunities from several hours to several days. Whatever skillset you have, if you are interested in sharing it, someone would love to learn.

If you volunteer, your very own trip could appear in this next section...

### Trips

**Eklutna Traverse April 10-17, 2023** (corrected dates)

Glacier travel. Must have appropriate experience with glacier travel and attended Avy 1 training. 8 participants maximum.

Trip leader Greg Bragiel, [unknownhiker@alaska.net](mailto:unknownhiker@alaska.net)

## Stuck Mountain (3862 feet) Overnight Backpack, Central Chugach Mountains

May 28, 2022

Text and Images by Jeremy Robida



*In memoriam: Brian Teale, 1955—2022*

Sometimes the small missions are the tough ones.

My buddy Steve Hocking and I left town knowing that a good friend had taken a fall at work, but we didn't know the extent of his injuries, just that he had been medi-vacced out of Valdez. Considering there wasn't much we could do at the time anyways, we decided to leave town for the quick overnight backpack we had planned.

At approximately Mile 88 on the Richardson Highway, north out of Valdez, there's a roadside peak called Willow Mountain [Ed. Note: 61.7722, -145.2019]. There's a small parking lot alongside, with telescopes for tourists to gaze through, which looks over Willow Lake and towards the Wrangell Mountains. There's a locally-known day hike that goes up Willow Mountain, which is also a common ATV ride for the area, as it's a wide old service road that's a very good trail. This trail leads up to a handful of cell phone communication towers up top that are visible from the road. It's a neat hike, big views, and something that's worth the time. But after studying the topo map after being on top of Willow a few times before, I realized that the tallest peak in that block of mountains was something called Stuck Mountain at 3862 feet to the northwest, which was nearby and seemed close enough to grab.

Our goal was to run up Willow on this known ATV trail, and do what we hoped was going to be mild bushwacking over to Stuck Peak. We anticipated losing about 800 feet of elevation in the process, moving about two miles towards

Stuck, and gaining this elevation back (and then some) as we moved back into the alpine again.

We parked in the small pull-off where the telescopes are at, jumped onto the Alyeska pipeline on the far side of the highway, and moved south towards Valdez, perhaps a mile or so. From there, we found the fairly obvious ATV trail that leads uphill. After an uphill grind for some two miles, and 1500 feet later we were on top of Willow. I've also biked down the pipeline to the start of the ATV trail and stashed my bike in the woods, which maybe saves you a little bit of effort, and makes for a fun exit as you coast back down to the Richardson Highway. Be mindful of Ahtna Corporation land easements and realize there is some private property in this vicinity as well; stick to the pipeline and ATV trail essentially.

It was rather hot under the almost constant sun of late May when we left the road. And once on top of Willow we took a little stretch break, grabbed a drink of water, and assessed the situation to head over to Stuck. We knew we'd have some patches of snow to contend with, though the brush factor was likely in our favor, and this seemed like a good time of year to make the attempt. We stepped off the alpine and away from the hum of communication towers, and began the descent into the brush and our move towards this other block of small peaks.



As luck would have it, a 'mile something' into what really was mild bushwacking by Alaskan standards, and beginning our climb back up into alpine, we bumped into an old defunct ATV trail. We guessed that it would lead us to Stuck Peak's alpine and gladly started to follow it uphill. From there it was easy, just dodging an occasional down tree and a little bit of brush that had grown up. This trail was basically impassable via ATV but was just fine for foot traffic yet. It saved us quite a bit of frustration, though the brush was far less thick than anticipated and our between-peaks travel was smooth enough.

Once we made it to alpine on this other block of short peaks, we again had some very mild 'shwacking to get to the actual peak. We passed by a nice alpine lake that would have been suitable for camping nearby, still frozen, but kept moving the short distance towards Stuck Peak, ultimately setting up camp on a bench, within a half mile of the summit.

It was early evening when made the short jaunt up to the rounded peak, topping out at 3862 feet. No dramatic ridge lines to navigate or burly exposed rock that was crumbling and untrustworthy. Just a broad rounded bald knob of a peak, not all that tall, with fab views of the Wrangell Mountains to the east, the Chugach Mountains behind us to the south, the Alaska Range to the north, and Klutina Lake.

It was windy. It was much colder than expected for late May. And there was golden light on everything in sight.

We dropped off the summit and back to camp, and sat there slightly more protected from the wind, just enjoying the views and each other's company, both still processing the news from earlier in the day.

The following morning while my buddy was sleeping in, I pulled up Facebook and started scrolling; 4G service up top. Over coffee, sunlight, and stillness, I started to learn, and process how serious this injury was, and that our mutual friend, mentor, and fellow adventurer, was likely not coming back.

My buddy Steve finally stirred and got out of bed. We chatted and began processing together. We sipped more coffee in the sunshine. Silently looking at the views and listening to the world around us. Knowing that the world had changed.

Wanting to bag the other nearby summit with the Alyeska-related communication equipment on top, we packed up camp, backtracked, and made the short detour to this other small peak. We found a big caribou shed along the way, rather old, but still in good shape. We had never seen or considered caribou in this country, but obviously this big bull had been here and likely others too. And no doubt other humans before us as well.

We listened to the diesel generators sing for a while next to the Alyeska-related communication gear. The Wrangells were out in the distance, all white and still buried in snow. With no place really left to explore in this block of isolated peaks, it was exit time. We decided to go down

the defunct ATV trail we discovered, thinking it had to go out to the road, even if it didn't pop out exactly where we had parked. And that was the case.

We popped out a mile from the vehicle further to the north, but it was well worth it to use this good-enough-for-foot-traffic trail as an exit, versus reverse and repeat the original route in.

We sat on the tailgate, sipping on the cold beer I had stashed in the truck for our return, feeling more emotionally exhausted than physically exhausted.

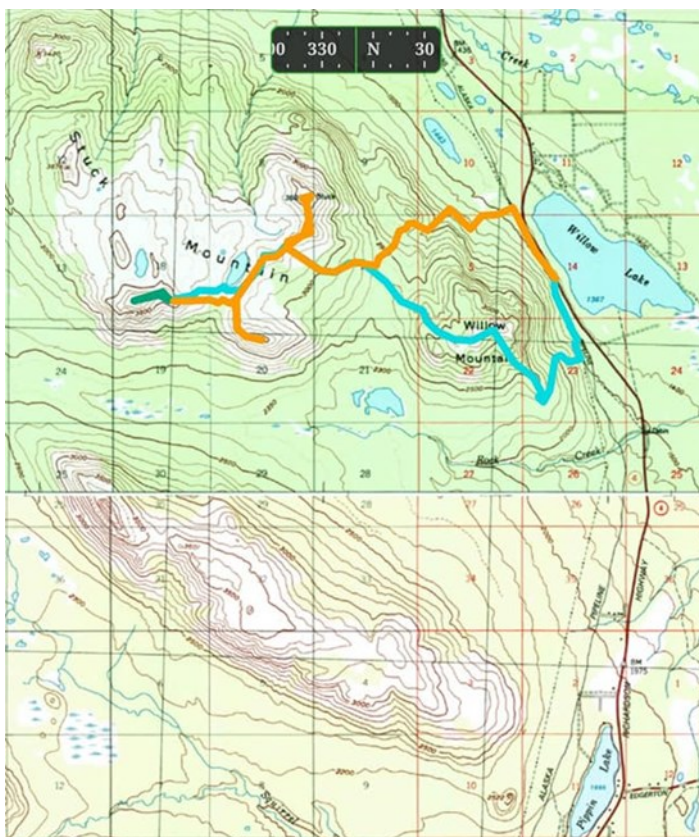
Sometimes the small missions are the tough ones.

Our buddy Brian ultimately passed away on June 8th, 2022.

<https://www.climbing.com/people/brian-teale-valdez-climber-dies-construction-fall/>

Thanks for those times we shared in the mountains buddy. Much appreciated.

Trip video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=miUqXggaNkE>



*The blue track was our Day One entrance track where we grabbed Willow Mountain's summit and then bushwacked to Stuck. We exited via the yellow line on Day Two after grabbing the two other small summits in that vicinity. Stuck Mountain is the tallest at approximately 3862 feet, shown with the short green line.*

## ***We Fear Change (WI4 M4), South Yuyanq' Ch'ex, Western Chugach Mountains***

FA October 30, 2022 Elliot Gaddy and Dana Drummond



The route of *We Fear Change*,

After a fruitless mid-October Nabesna climbing trip I took a stroll up toward Rabbit Lake to see what was happening in the mountains around town. As I sat in the snow looking through binos at South Yuyanq' Ch'ex I was surprised to see some ice I had never noticed before. Maybe all this autumn rain was good for something! I started hatching a plan.

Two days later, despite the ominous forecast, Eric Wickenheiser and I walked into Rabbit Lake under gathering clouds. The trail was dry at first, and we made good time until under Ptarmigan Pass, where we began to deal with increasing wind and snow and eyes staring back at us in the beams of our headlamps. The local moose population was enjoying the windbreaks in the alder as much as we were, and displayed little interest in ceding the trail to us. We ate snacks until they moved on.

When we got to the bottom of the face, the spindrift was already starting to pour out of the line. Walking six miles back to the base of the route probably affects decision-making. We tied

in and started to go up. The terrain on the lower buttress is steep enough that nothing big was building up other than the main gullies, so we felt comfortable exploring the face for a bit on the traverse to the main line. After two pitches we made it over to the main gully, but it was continuously puking snow at this point and the decision to go down was obvious. As we rappelled, we had the interesting effect of getting hit by spindrift coming down from above, and then having it recirculated back on us by ferocious updrafts. The visibility was quite bad. One double rope rap brought us to the ground, and we coiled the ropes and retreated.

An unfortunate vehicular incident gave Eric a mangled truck and some questions about how his body felt from the accident, and during his brief period of convalescence I ended up finding another partner to capitalize on the brief window of time I had to climb the route.

*[Ed. Note: In 2022 the U.S. Board of Geographic Names voted to change the official names of North and South Suicide Peaks, in the Western Chugach Mountains near Anchorage, to North and South Yuyanq' Ch'ex.]*



I first met Dana Drummond as I was swinging gently at the end of a rope halfway up Cathedral Ledge in New Hampshire. Dana, then a mulleted mountain guide, had seen my unsuccessful thrutchings at my attempted route and subsequent airtime from his belay perch, and offered his congratulations. "Nice whip!" We subsequently became friends and independently both ended up in Alaska. We have shared many interesting adventures together. It's hard to imagine a more competent and unflappable partner.

When Dana and I came back five days after my first attempt, our fortunes regarding the weather were good. Calm air and clear skies made the walk in seem easier, but there had been little snow accumulation from the last storm and we still stumbled around below the mountain in the thinly covered talus as we approached. There was enough snow built up at the bottom to make the initial choke in the gully seem reasonable without a rope, and we gained our first 100' quickly before digging out an anchor. A short, scrappy slab pitch gained the traverse ledge system height and a decent spot for a belay.

We traversed left on moderate terrain toward what looked to be the first bit of climbable ice, back to the spot that had been puking snow on the last attempt, where Eric and I had left a rappel anchor and bailed. This time there were no pocket slabs laying in wait on the traverse.

It felt so great to be back again, with mild conditions and no spindrift, swinging tools into snow, ice, turf, and rock. Getting established onto the thin ice proved to be a little challenging. I checked a couple different ways trying to figure out how to get into the groove where the climbable ice was. Dana finally pointed me in the right direction. There were a few committing moves to get onto the ice and then the cracks and gear came again higher up.

Dana climbed a thinly iced slab on the next lead, which deposited us below the pillar I had seen on my recon hike that had tempted me out for this line in the first place. Finally swinging into the ice and getting good sticks felt pretty nice. Despite the somewhat brittle and delaminated nature of it, I felt comfortable with the four short screws I was able to place for protection. At the top I found a place to string together a few decent pins for a belay and brought Dana up.

Now we were on the northern end of the west face, from here the angle eased for a bit. The ropes were stashed in the packs, and we took turns breaking trail up the gully through steep and deep snow. After about 500 feet of elevation gain the gully narrowed to a meter or two wide, and a buttress rose up on our right. The line started to swing back out onto the north-facing part of the mountain, and we began to encounter enough steep terrain to have the conversation about where to go and when to put the rope back on. A narrow gully to our right near the top of the main line presented an interesting option, but we decided to continue up to where the snow ended in the main

gully at a small rock overhang.

After tying back in, Dana was able to find a way to place the lone hex on our rack on his loose and marginally protected lead. Are we crusty climbers? Who places hexes any more? It fit perfect though. Our New Hampshire climbing brethren would be proud.

The clouds were starting to build, but despite the grey skies and wind the conditions were pretty good for alpine climbing. I grabbed a little gear from Dana for the last moderate pitch of loose mixed terrain to the ridge, and then found a nice belay stance overlooking the north face to bring Dana up to. We moved together for a bit on the 3rd class ridgeline with the rope on to get away from falling danger, then unroped, unharassed, and walked up to the summit.

It was a little cold, the wind was blowing a bit. We snapped a couple photos and headed down toward Hauser's Gully, linking up the patches of snow that were deep enough to walk down with crampons on. The pass was as wind scoured as usual, and the descent down to Rabbit Lake went smoothly. As usual with these Chugach objectives, the rest of the adventure involved trudging out to the car, once again in the gathering darkness.

*We Fear Change* is a fun moderate alpine route in the Front Range that is definitely worth doing if the ice comes in. It is likely that the first two traversing pitches could be eliminated with a long direct pitch if someone caught it at the right time when the ice came all the way down. It is great to find these lines so close to Anchorage, and trips like these always get me more excited to keep exploring the mountains and seeing what's over the next ridge line. Hopefully it is more climbs like this.

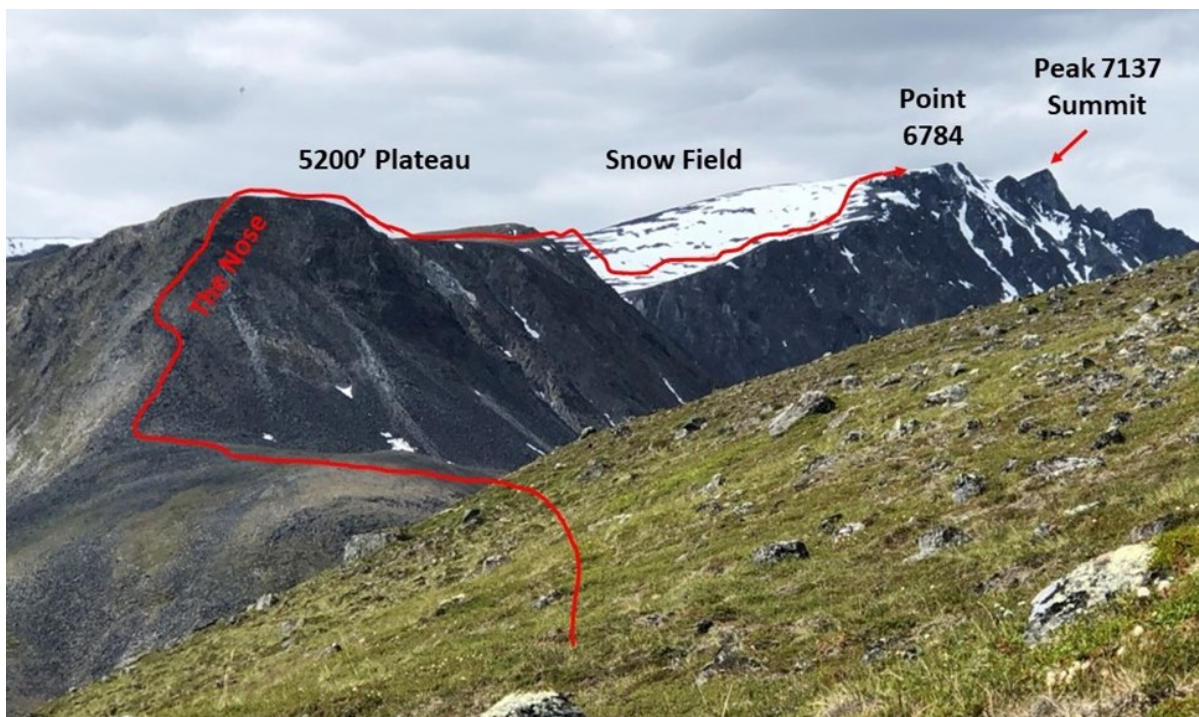
*We Fear Change (WI4 M4) 1,700' FA October 30, 2022 Elliot Gaddy and Dana Drummond.*



*Elliot Gaddy, exploring the Front Range of Anchorage*

## Peak 7137, Terrace Lakes, Talkeetna Mountains

Text and photos by Joe Chmielowski



*A view of our route: camp is behind this viewpoint and Lake 4155 to the left. Loose rock on 'The Nose' and plateau as well as soft snow made conditions slow.*

Summer 2020 was the summer of COVID. On the one hand, as you remember, it was bad with travel shutdowns, closed restaurants and folks going stir-crazy in their homes. On the other hand, without one million tourists in Alaska, locals could travel almost anywhere in-state on a small charter plane. This was the case with my family when we canceled our trip to visit the grandparents in California and opted to stay home in Alaska.

We watched the weather closely and the best sunny window was on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020, in Homer. So we drove down, got on a float plane the same day (no tourists, or reservations needed, thanks to COVID) and flew to Taylor Bay, which is on the Pacific Ocean side of the Kenai Peninsula. We then did an amazing 4-day hike across the Kenai Peninsula and saw exactly zero people. The hike was on the somewhat primitive Tutka Bay Backdoor Trail which folks from Seldovia carved up through the brush. Above treeline, just navigate as you like. There are several stream/river crossings. We arrived in Tutka Bay, called a water taxi and ate a huge plate of seafood for dinner in Homer and drove to Anchorage that night.

The weather window then moved north of Talkeetna so we unpacked in Anchorage and re-packed our gear. We went from 35L backpacks to our glamping set-up which included a bug tent, Coleman cookstove, fishing rods, two person inflatable kayak and a cooler with T-bone steaks. Once again, thanks to COVID, there were no tourists in Talkeetna (absolutely amazing)

and we got same-day floatplane flights on Talkeetna Air to Terrace Lakes. This series of lakes are situated about 70 miles one-way east-northeast of Talkeetna, just on the north side of the Talkeetna Range. We landed at the lakes in the late morning on July 3, 2020.

Logistics for this trip were a bit tricky, as floatplanes are very heavy, the floats cause drag on the water and the lakes are at a high altitude of 3790' elevation. With my family of 4 skinny people (myself, wife Jessie, 13 year old twin boys Henry & Nathan) the air service required a one plane drop-off, but two planes for a "high altitude" pick-up and take-off. Even if we had cut our gear weight back to 35L backpacks, it didn't matter. The altitude and wind at the lake can be tricky, so keep this in mind if you plan a trip here. I have had friends get stuck at Terrace Lakes for several days due to wind.

All that said, we set up camp along the southwestern shore of Lake 3790, which is very flat, low and swampy. There are few suitable camping areas. We caught a couple nice rainbow trout and hit the sack. On the morning of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, we woke up and hit the trail about 8:30 a.m. We followed the lake shore and worked our way just south of Lake 4155. The walking was easiest by following well-worn caribou trails and very treacherous leaving these trails because ankle-breaking holes were camouflaged in the tundra.



We had no bushwhacking at all as we made our way up the steep “nose” of a large plateau whose elevation was about 5200’. We broke for lunch at an algae-ridden pond and utilized iodine tablets to refill our water.

On our flight in, the pilot mentioned that it was an unusually heavy snow year and that there was a lot of deep remnant snow still in the mountains. A quick visual inspection confirmed that indeed, there was a lot of snow on our route and I took this as good news because July snow around Anchorage is consolidated and a rocket to the top. Not so here in the Talkeetnas. At 6000’ we began post-holing up to our crotches in very deep, very wet snow. We were saturated despite donning hardshell rain pants. Not to fear though, because our vast Chugach experience indicated that we should merely move to the ridgeline (about 3 feet from the cliff to our right) and walk on the nice dry rock. Bad news here in this portion of the Talkeetnas, as all the rocks were unconsolidated and shifted with each and every footstep. Thus, the rock was bad and the snow was bad so we went back and forth between the lesser of two evils.

We ascended the false summit (Point 6784) at 2:30pm which my family thought was the true summit. They were extremely disappointed when I told them it was “false” and my wife and kids nearly mutinied then and there. The going was slow, but we could now see the true summit so we pushed on and reached the top at 3:15 p.m. on July 4<sup>th</sup>. We did not see any cairns, summit registers or evidence of other hikers/climbers.



*Standing about 200 feet below the Point 6784 false summit (above Jessie’s head in center of photo). The true 7137-foot summit is above Nathan’s head in right of photo.*

We snapped some photos but could not linger, because large black thunderclouds were gathering in the distance and nearby. Note – during our entire stay at Terrace Lakes, big thunderclouds, showers and lightning happened every afternoon from 3:00 to 9:00 p.m. So keep this in mind for future hikes and climbs in this area.

We absolutely did *not* want to backtrack on the shifting rocks and post-holing snow patches, so we descended a very steep, south facing, snow-filled gully exactly between the summit and the false summit. As we got onto the snow, it was also isothermic and now it began raining hard and hailing on us. The snow was extremely wet so I started a controlled glissade to test the safety of the route. It worked, but small wet sluffs formed in and around me as I cleared the way for my family. Jessie came next and finally the boys slid down and thought it was absolutely fun. We dropped from 6800’ at the gully’s top entrance to 5100’ where we were deposited at the highest of the Terrace Lakes.

Of course, the rain and hail stopped once we were out the difficult terrain and we enjoyed a sunny leisurely walk for miles as we checked out each and every lake for future fishing holes. It was a great way to tour the upper valleys and see some new lakes and geological features. I always wondered why they are named “Terrace Lakes” but once you view them from high to low elevations, it becomes obvious. Each lake is carved into a stratigraphic layer of rock like a bench, then drains to a lower lake via a small clear creek or waterfall. There are nine large lakes and numerous smaller ones. We saw zero sign of bears, but did see several beaver lodges and dams on the lower lakes (they utilize low scrub birch and dwarf willows – it must be a meager existence).

We arrived at camp about 8:00 p.m. Although the trip stats were only 11 miles and 3700’ vertical gain, it took us all day due to the difficult snow and rock conditions. I think in a typical summer it would be quicker and more straightforward – but I definitely recommend the big loop to enjoy the upper lakes. I was very happy with the hike, as this was Jessie and the boys’ first 7000’ peak. We enjoyed the next few days hiking, fishing, eating our T-bone steaks and waiting an extra day for our plane pick-up. When we go back again, we want to do a large 18-mile loop that follows the valley ridgelines and includes five 6000’ peaks and points.



*Henry (blue) and Nathan (red) on summit of Peak 7137.*



## Outpost (5750 feet) and Turnkey (5538 feet) Peaks, Talkeetna Mountains

Text and images by Martin Ksok

To begin, a bit of history from the 1969 American Alpine Journal, written by Vin Hoeman which also covers first ascent of Goodhope towers which I reported on in the November 2022 Scree:

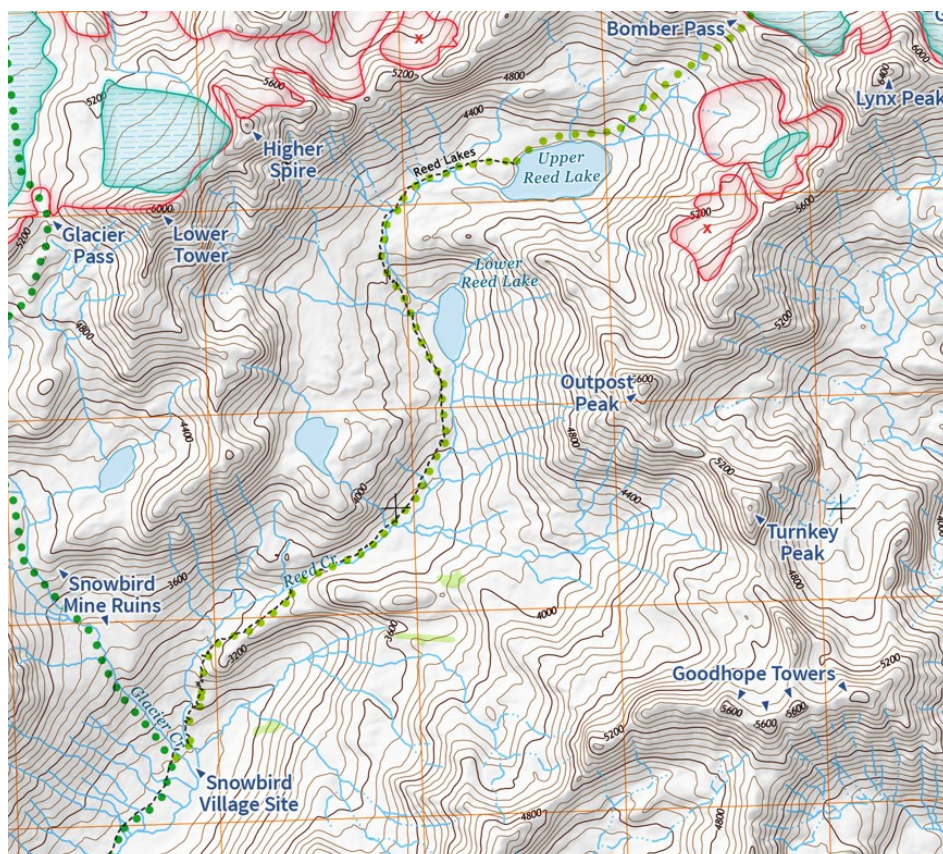
*"On July 20, Don N. Anderson and Don W. Anderson climbed "Outpost" (5750 feet), two miles northeast of Snowbird Mine; the next day, accompanied by Mary Wilson, they climbed the three highest "Goodhope Towers" (5750 feet) and the Andersons alone went on to climb "Turnkey" (5538 feet) from the south. Grace and I made the second ascent of Turnkey by a new route with John Hudson on September 8 when we traversed it from northwest to southwest."*

Both of these peaks are easily accessible from Reed Lakes Trail which is bikeable to Snowbird Village. It is busy on nice weekends so one must be vigilant on the downhill and try to avoid hitting the hikers. An unnamed creek drains the cirque formed by the Outpost-Goodhope ridge and is the turnoff point from the main route and the start of easy, off-trail hiking. I climbed Outpost with Greg Encelewski via the south slopes. It was an easy outing without technical difficulties.

I made it up Turnkey alone during another trip. I originally headed for the col between the two peaks, but the closer I got, the more difficult the chockstone blocking the terminus of the access couloir looked. There seemed to be a way for a bypass on slick snow and scree, but time was limited so instead of exploring I aimed for a farther, southern break in the ridge, which proved mellow. Turning left I ascended the peak's southern ridge and without difficulties gained the summit.

Pleasant weather allowed for extended study of surrounding features, trying to orient myself among those peaks I've stood upon and those I still wanted to gain. The topography of the area makes it tricky as there are numerous towers, blocks, gendarmes, etc., connected by a network of ridgelines in a very compact setting, often difficult to align with a map when observed in nature.

I noticed a significant point on the ridgeline leading to Goodhope Towers. Initially I mistook it for one of the towers, but once back at creek level it was obvious that it was a sizable feature, maybe a couple of hundred feet of relief. From the north it seemed to be a steep scramble, less so from the south and not clearly represented on the map. After doing some research I found it most obvious on CalTopo maps and to some extent new USGS maps, not the old hundred-foot contour ones though. It surely warrants a thorough investigation in my opinion. Although the trails in the area can be very busy on a summer weekend, the peaks, ridgelines, glaciers and cirques seem to be hardly pursued by the outdoorsy types, which surprises me since the access is so easy, treeline so low, distances so close and features so striking and visually appealing. For those who do venture, though, the rewards of solitude in a spectacular setting present themselves for the taking.



Excerpt of Paxson Woelber's Bomber Traverse map, showing Outpost and Turnkey Peaks to the southeast of Reed Lakes. <https://winterbear.com/>



## Dealing with Age, Injuries, Requires Special Set of Skills

Text and Photos by Frank Baker

The mountaineering prowess showcased by MCA members in these pages month after month is truly impressive. These remarkable journeys to the heights are not only valuable teaching tools. They elevate our spirits. But another kind of skill is vital for those who wish to extend their life in the mountains: The ability to cope with the infirmities of advancing years; and to aggressively respond to injuries, which we know are inevitable.

For anyone who has put thousands of miles and thousands of vertical feet on the body's chronometer for decades, I'm tempted to ask, "how are the knees?" I'm certainly no doctor, but anatomically, two parts of the human body do not seem well built for the rigors of mountaineering on a long-term basis: knees, and the lower back.

The two most commonly reported knee injuries are in the anterior cruciate ligament, or ACL; one of the strong bands of tissue that help connect your thigh bone (femur) to your shinbone (tibia). The other is wear and tear on the meniscus, a small, C-shaped piece of tough, rubbery cartilage that acts as a shock absorber between the shinbone and the thighbone.

Lower back issues are definitely more complicated. But for those who have packed heavy loads in the backcountry over long periods of time, degradation of the spinal discs is common, and as we know, very painful.

By the time I was in my early 50s in the late 1990s, I had already logged roughly 150 vertical miles in the mountains, striving for what I would come to call "low earth orbit." This was nothing comparable to the summit meters of MCA veterans like Jim Saylor, Wendy Sanem, Wayne Todd and Richard Baranow. But by then I'd already spent at least 25 years crawling around in the Chugach Mountains. All this activity was in addition to performing extremely heavy work (furniture moving) and helping

friends pack out moose and sheep kills.

So, at age 53, on a hike through Bombardment Pass (Ram Valley) to Peters Creek Valley and finally to Eklutna Lake, it showed up in the left knee. The doctor said my meniscus was worn out and doubted I'd ever climb mountains again. My goal was to prove him wrong. It took a while, but eventually I did.

**TAKING ACTION:** I'd wager some MCA old timers already know the drill: arthroscopic procedures to remove tears and smooth the meniscus; hyaluronic acid injections to provide joint lubrication; cortisone shots for anti-inflammatory treatment; ice-- I did them all -- allowing me to continue some hiking and climbing and postponing the inevitable for at least 15 years-- until in 2016 at age 72, I received a total knee replacement, or TKR.

If that wasn't enough, throughout most of this time I was frequently plagued by a bulging disc in the lower lumbar area, L-4 and L-5. More injections, anti-inflammatories and physical therapy helped keep this in check.

After my first knee replacement, I wasn't aware that older guys take considerably longer to rehabilitate. By seven months post-surgery, I was really disgusted with my condition. But by nine months, I could feel the knee coming back and started getting back into moderate hiking and climbing -- 5,000 footers in the Chugach--often sending photos of myself to the doctor who said I'd never climb again.

But soon the right knee showed signs of deterioration, and the doc affirmed it was again the meniscus.

More treatments to delay the inevitable until 2021, when I received my second artificial knee. That rehab also took more time than I expected. But by the second one, I had learned something important: Patience.

My excruciatingly long recoveries were not only caused by age. They were my lack of patience, going out and overdoing it before the knees were ready. A physical therapist helped me coin a new strategy, called "gradualism." And it worked. Baby steps first, then slowly build up. And I know, for those who love the outdoors as I do, there is nothing harder than sitting on the couch on a nice day!

*Frank Baker atop Harp Mountain (5001 feet) above South Fork Valley (Eagle River) on October 28, 2022.*



**THE PAYOFF:** So now, finally, at age 77, I'm starting to get back into it. Probably no 7,000 footers like Bold Peak – eight summits were enough on that one. But I'm enjoying the smaller peaks and ridges and more lengthy trails, without pain and the use of pain pills.

So here are a few things gleaned after decades of overcoming bodily issues that could have kept me sidelined. For young folks, treat those knees with respect. Like the treads of tires, they have mileage limitations. If you can go with a lighter pack, do it. Hiking sticks aren't just for old guys. They'll take a lot of weight off the joints.

For older folks, find good doctors. If you do have to get a TKR, select a doctor whose patients seldom, if ever, get an infection. And don't forget that post-surgery, the rehab is extremely critical to long-term recovery. Find a top-notch physical therapist. I had one that was tougher than a drill sergeant, and it paid off.

For the lower back: I was fortunate to not require surgery. A physical therapist taught me some extremely effective core strengthening exercises (isometric) that have kept my back functioning well for years. I learned that was my problem all along: Even with lots of hiking and climbing, I wasn't keeping more core sufficiently strong to keep that lower disc stabilized.

Finally, and here's the most important piece of advice I can offer: Don't give up. Hips, shoulders, knees, back – I know folks who have waged war with them all, and come back strongly. Medical technology these days is amazing. Of course, good insurance helps a lot.

And the part about aging? Ask MCA senior Tom Choate. His jokes will surprise you as much as his determination. But... most notable: He's still out there.

*MCA member Frank E. Baker is a lifetime Alaskan since 1946.*



*Above: On west ridge above South Fork Valley overlooking Eagle and Symphony Lakes, Sept. 10, 2022 (Photo by Carl Portman)*

*Below: Frank Baker above Eklutna Lake, October 2022.*





## Peak of the Month: Akutan Peak (4251 feet), Aleutian Mountains

Text by Steve Gruhn

**Mountain Range:** Akutan Island

**Borough:** Aleutians East Borough

**Drainage:** Bering Sea

**Latitude/Longitude:**

54° 8' 2" North, 165° 59' 0" West

**Elevation:** 4251 feet

**Adjacent Peaks:** Peak 3910 in the Bering Sea drainage, Flat Top Peak (3495 feet), Peak 2634 in the Hot Springs Creek drainage, Peak 2355 in the Broad Bight and Cascade Bight drainages, Lava Peak (2020 feet), and Peak 2513 in the Cascade Bight and Flat Bight drainages

**Distinctness:** 1001 feet from Peak 3910

**Prominence:** 4251 feet (highest point on Akutan Island)

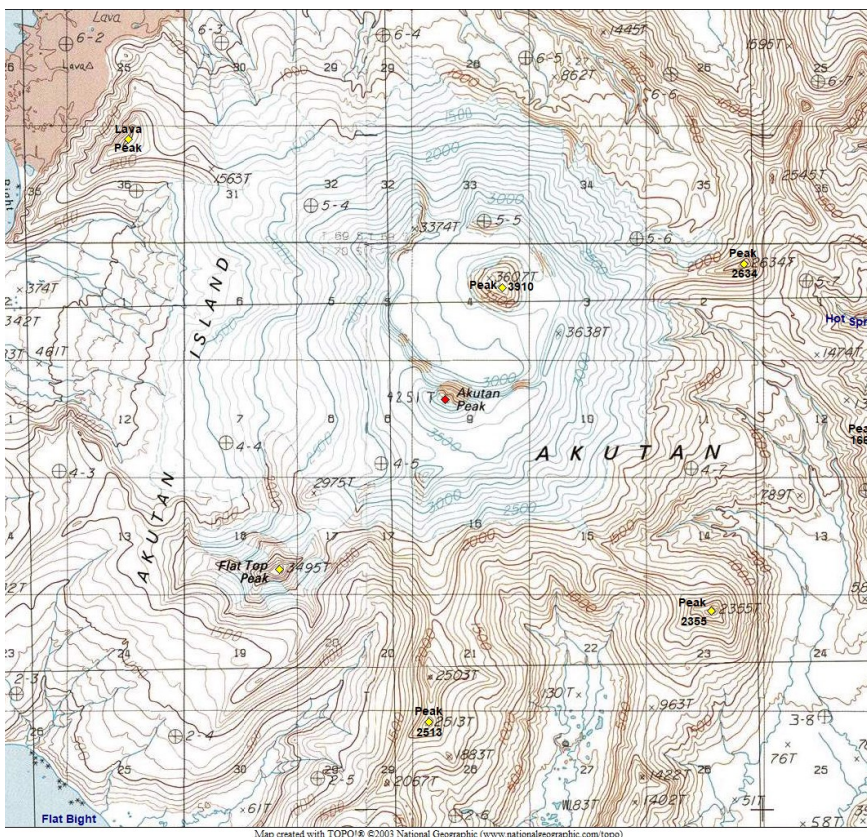
**USGS Maps:** 1:63,360: Unimak (A-6),

1:25:000: Unimak A-6 NW

**First Recorded Ascent:** Mid-July 1933 by George Getty, Bernard Rosecrans Hubbard, Ed Levin, and George Peterson

**Route of First Recorded Ascent:** East Ridge

**Access Point:** Whaling station on the south side of Akutan Harbor



Located in the eastern Aleutian Islands, Akutan Island is the largest of the Krenitzin Islands, a subgroup of the Fox Islands. Akutan Peak, the highest point on Akutan Island, is an active stratovolcano with a caldera and has had 33 recorded eruptions since March 1848, making it the most active volcano in Alaska. The most recent eruption was in December 1992.

Under orders from Russian Empress Catherine II (more commonly known as Catherine the Great) to explore the Aleutian Islands and to augment information obtained during Vitus Bering's 1741 expedition to North America, Pyotr Kuzmich Krenitzin (sometimes spelled Krenitsyn) and Mikhail Dmitrievich Levashef (sometimes spelled Levasheff, Levashev, or Levashov) set sail from the mouth of the Kamchatka River on July 23, 1768, headed toward North America. Krenitzin commanded the galliot *Saint Catherine* and Levashef captained the hooker *Saint Paul*. On August 23, 1768, the ships passed by an island that they recorded as Akutan, possibly in reference to the Aleut word *hakuta*, which is reported to mean "I made a mistake." The expedition wintered at Port Levashef on Unalaska Island, and on August 24, 1769, returned to the mouth of the

Kamchatka River, where it spent the following winter. Shortly before the planned departure for Saint Petersburg, Krenitzin drowned while canoeing on the Kamchatka River on July 4, 1770. Levashef then assumed command of the expedition and set sail for Saint Petersburg, arriving on October 22, 1771.

On October 18, 1867, the U.S. purchased Russian America, including the Aleutian Islands, from Russia, and changed its name to Alaska. The U.S. subsequently set about surveying its new possession. In 1873 the U.S. Coast Survey cited the name Akutan Peak and is presumed to have named it after Akutan Island.

In November 1892, Frederick Joaquim Barbosa Cordeiro attempted to climb Akutan Peak, but after he had ascended more than halfway, a dense fog rolled in, making forward navigation impossible. To descend he retraced his steps in the snow.

On July 17, 1931, Ruy Herbert Finch and John Gardner departed Akutan to ascend to the volcano's crater. They reached the crater on July 24. The team documented a glacial lake in the

southwest portion of the crater and measured a water temperature of 119° Fahrenheit at one end of it while icebergs floated in the opposite end. The team also made a second, fog-shortened ascent to the crater. However, they did not ascend Akutan Peak at the south end of the crater on either excursion.

In mid-July 1933 George Getty, Bernard Rosecrans Hubbard, Ed Levin, and George Peterson caught a ride aboard the *Polar Bear* from False Pass to the mothballed whaling station on the south side of Akutan Harbor. After hiking westward across the island, they placed a camp east of the crater where they were tent-bound for several days as a result of windstorms and heavy rain. Hubbard later described Akutan as one of the windiest of the wind-swept Aleutian Islands. After the winds abated and the skies calmed, they departed for the crater. At the rim they roped up and descended the glacier to the floor of the caldera. They climbed Peak 3910, the intracaldera cone, where Levin scalded his gloved hand when he touched a rock. They descended Peak 3910 to the glacial lake to the south. Getty and Levin went swimming, diving off the ice into the warm water. After their swim, the entire party ascended the crater rim and climbed the east ridge of Akutan Peak, marveling in the rare clear-weather views from atop Akutan Island's highest point. They then returned to the inactive whaling station, where they were picked up by the *Polar Bear* and delivered to False Pass.

From July 14 to August 11, 1993, an expedition of the Nagano Prefecture Alpine Association of Japan led by Ichiro Yoshizawa made ascents of Akutan Peak and several other summits in the Aleutian Islands, including Makushin Volcano (5905 feet), Shishaldin Volcano (9414 feet), the Isanotski Peaks (8106 feet), Mount Vsevidof (6840 feet), Mount Recheshnoi (6510 feet),

Korovin Volcano (5030 feet), and Mount Kliuchef (4760 feet).

Information for this column came from William Coxe's 1780 [Account of the Russian Discoveries between Asia and America](#); from Cordeiro's trip report titled "The Volcanoes of Alaska," which was published on pages 130 through 135 of the July 1910 *Appalachia*; from Thomas Augustus Jaggar Jr.'s article titled "Aleutian Exploration 1931," which appeared on pages 1 and 2 of the September 24, 1931, issue of *The Volcano Letter*; from Hubbard's 1935 [Cradle of the Storms](#); from Donald J. Orth's 1967 [Dictionary of Alaska Place Names](#) (U.S. Geological Survey Professional Paper 567); from the Alaska Division of Geological and Geophysical Surveys' March 1988 "A Geological, Geochemical, and Geophysical Survey of the Geothermal Resources at Hot Springs Bay Valley, Akutan Island, Alaska," which was edited by Roman J. Motyka and Christopher J. Nye; from an unattributed report titled "Aleutian Islands," which appeared on page 132 of the 1994 *American Alpine Journal* and referenced the February 1994 *Iwa To Yuki*; from Christopher F. Waythomas's, John A. Power's, Donald H. Richter's and Robert G. McGimsey's 1998 "Preliminary Volcano-Hazard Assessment for Akutan Volcano, East-Central Aleutian Islands, Alaska" (U.S. Geological Survey Open-File Report 98-360); and from the Alaska Volcano Observatory's webpage on Akutan Peak

<https://www.avo.alaska.edu/volcanoes/volcinfo.php?volcname=Akutan>).



*Akutan Volcano, June 11, 2018. Photo courtesy of Vlad Karpayev, Alaska Volcano Observatory.*



## Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

November 30, 2022, 6:30-8:00 p.m. at American Lung Assoc. of Alaska (500 W. Int'l Airport Rd.)

### Roll Call

Gerrit Verbeek (President) – Present  
Yelena Prusakova (Vice President) – Present  
Donell Irwin (Secretary) – Present  
Katherine Cooper (Treasurer) – Present  
Tom McIntyre (Director) – Absent  
Andrew Holman (Director) – Present  
Matt Nedom (Director) – Present  
Heather Johnson (Director) – Present  
Andy Kubic (Director) – Present  
Peter Taylor (Director) – Present

### Updates

- Giving Tuesday was a success. Exceeded our goal of \$1500.00 \$1750.00 in total was raised. Thank you everyone for your support. Top 3 contributors will receive a ticket to the Arlene Blum fundraiser at Bear Tooth.
- Giving Tuesday will help subsidize travel expenses for traveling speakers, create video recordings of key presentations when possible, and help offset costs of workshop venues.
- Scree needs volunteers, preferably looking for 1 person to edit and publish.
- Our Scree editing team (Abbey Collins and Dawn Munroe) is about to turn over
- Katherine has requested creating a habit of more oversight for financial accounts.
- Greg Bragiell would like to turn over Huts chairmanship
- The Christmas Party is scheduled for Friday, December 16th in Pizza Man's banquet room (Eagle River) from 7 to 11:30 p.m.
- Joe Stock's crevasse course scheduled for early December. Yelena and Andy are coordinating.
- Possible MCA Crevasse Rescue course in January or February
- No general meeting in December due to the Christmas party

### Board Discussion

- Discussed possibilities of what to do about Scree and printed copies.
- Discussion to consider hiring a part time paid position to act as a manager or executive director to the MCA.
- Discussion on what is considered MCA's biggest demand of the club, which is trips and instruction.
- Katherine went over the budget for 2023 and will propose/review at the January general meeting.

### Board Votes

- Voted to give a free ticket to the Arlene Blum fundraiser to the top 3 contributors of Giving Tuesday.
- Voted to approve expenses for Arlene Blum Bear Tooth fundraiser.

### Action Items

- Add subscription options to the website in the new year.
- Andrew will look into reducing cost on postage for *the Scree*.
- Try to find 1 person to edit and publish *the Scree*.
- Downsize list of people receiving paper copy of *the Scree*.
- Heather will look into updating the handbook.

### Time and location of next meeting

- General Meeting - Wednesday November 2, 2022. 'Mt. St. Elias' (Ketner/Maus/Procknow) and 'The 30,000 Kilometer Mountain' (Sturm). In-person meeting at the BP Energy Center, but will also be broadcast over Zoom.
- Next Board Meeting on October 26, 2022, venue T.B.A.

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Gerrit Verbeek	<a href="mailto:president@mtclubak.org">president@mtclubak.org</a>	Director 1 (term expires in 2023)	Heather Johnson	<a href="mailto:board@mtclubak.org">board@mtclubak.org</a>
Vice-President	<i>Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:vicepresident@mtclubak.org">vicepresident@mtclubak.org</a>	Director 2 (term expires in 2023)	Andy Kubic	<a href="mailto:board@mtclubak.org">board@mtclubak.org</a>
Secretary	Donell Irwin	<a href="mailto:secretary@mtclubak.org">secretary@mtclubak.org</a>	Director 3 (term expires in 2023)	<i>Vacant</i>	<a href="mailto:board@mtclubak.org">board@mtclubak.org</a>
Treasurer	Peter Taylor	<a href="mailto:treasurer@mtclubak.org">treasurer@mtclubak.org</a>	Director 4 (term expires in 2024)	Andrew Holman	<a href="mailto:board@mtclubak.org">board@mtclubak.org</a>
			Director 5 (term expires in 2024)	Matt Nedom	<a href="mailto:board@mtclubak.org">board@mtclubak.org</a>
			Director 6 (term expires in 2024)	Tom McIntyre	<a href="mailto:board@mtclubak.org">board@mtclubak.org</a>

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@mtclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtclubak.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](mailto: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@mtclubak.org](mailto:vicepresident@mtclubak.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@mtclubak.org](mailto:membership@mtclubak.org)

Hiking and Climbing Committee: *Vacant*—[training@mtclubak.org](mailto:training@mtclubak.org)

Huts: Greg Bragiel—350-5146 or [huts@mtclubak.org](mailto:huts@mtclubak.org)

Calendar: Lexi Trainer

Librarian: Gwen Higgins—[library@mtclubak.org](mailto:library@mtclubak.org)

*Scree* Editor: *Vacant* — [MCAScree@gmail.com](mailto:MCAScree@gmail.com)

Web: [www.mtclubak.org](http://www.mtclubak.org)

Find MCAK listserv at <https://groups.io/g/MCAK>.

*Frank Baker on Pepper Peak Ridge on eastern side of Eklutna Lake in Sept. 2022 (Photo by Frank E. Baker)*

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