

MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

EDITOR  
John H. Johnston  
SRA, Box 1730-C  
Spennard, Alaska  
Phone: 54016

SCREE

SECRETARY  
Mrs. Helga Bading  
c/o Jonas Bros.  
700 Fifth Ave.  
Anchorage, Alaska  
Phone: 77822

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MEETING, JULY 6, 1959

The next monthly meeting will be held July 6th at 7.30 p.m. at "the Rocks". A room was reserved at Willow Park, but many MCA members seem to prefer meeting outdoors. Let's have your opinion and do come to "the Rocks" July 6th. Bring tennis shoes and "bug juice". Members wanting to eat a picnic supper prior to the meeting should bring food and come at 6.30 p.m.

CLIMBING SCHEDULE

ATTENTION: Want to climb on the July 4th weekend?

Wayne Rhoades is back in town and raring to go up a mountain. He will lead a glacier climb on Byron on the fourth of July weekend. Crampons and ice axes are a necessity and only those who have some experience on a glacier should go.  
Phone Wayne at 69914.

The Glacier School was postponed from June 13th/14th and will meet when ice conditions make it possible. Probably sometime in July. This is for beginners! But they must be equipped with ice axes and crampons which are available at Gary King's.

Climbs will be as follows:-

June 27th/28th Girdwood Area. Bring ice axe, crampons. Good ridge hiking, too. Leader: Paul Crews, bus.ph. 38625, home ph. 44731

July 4th Byron Glacier. Leader: Wayne Rhoades, ph. 69914

July 11/12th Work Party. Bring axe, saw, elbow grease, yourself and plenty of food. Leader: everybody. Contact Helga, ph. 77822.

July 19th GOAT MOUNTAIN. Leader: Gregg Erickson, ph. 42234.

July 26th Pioneer Peak. Leader: Andy Brauchli, ph. 76074.

Knik Trail: This trip will be postponed until after Lake George breakup.

FIRST ASCENT OF MOUNT ILLIAMNA (10,016 ft.) by Helga Bading

Well, our suntans came off in the wash. But the memory of a wonderful and exciting trip remains. We were four: Paul Crews, Erik Barnes, Gregg Erickson and little ole me. On June 1st our pilot dumped us on a sandspit at Chinitna Bay, 100 miles south of Anchorage. It rained and we were many miles from our goal, Mount Iliamna, shrouded in clouds. We repacked our gear (it seemed like tons) and went to make the acquaintance of Gregg Brown, a fisherman, who took us across the Bay in his boat. He said

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he'd never seen a mountain climber. About 10:30 a.m. we started off across the swamp, wearing our "wading clothes"; tennis shoes and jeans. Climbing boots on top of the packs added to the weight. We crossed swamps, sloughs, lakes. It seemed alright for a man of Erik's height. But when you're only 5 ft. short .... well, after I fell into that lake up to my shoulders it didn't really matter. We finally came to the river --- wonderful walking on the sandy beach, except it always seemed to be on the wrong side of the river. On our side were the alders. You ever crawled through alders with a heavy pack? Sure, but with snowshoes on top its murder! After a good supper of Knorr Soup we went on. We were in swamp up to our knees. Above and beside us alder and devilclub. Around us mosquitoes. No end in sight. We didn't speak much, just went on in desperation, our shoulders aching. At 9 p.m. we stumbled onto the gravel bar of Umbrella Glacier Creek. We dropped dead in our tracks.

Tuesday morning. Moans and groans! My legs were like jello. No view of Iliamna, just clouds. Again we hit the alders, but in the afternoon we had it made. From then on it was only going up the moraine in the usual manner "two steps up and three backwards". At 6 we made camp. Beside soup and rice we had hot jello. Have you ever tried it? Its good.

Wednesday morning:- rain. We packed camp. Again cheerful announcements from all sides. "I'll take a tent, or the pitons, or the ropes." Two hours later:- "Who wants an extra tent?" Silence. We climbed on. About noon we reached the ideal campspot, a rocky ridge sticking out between two glaciers, 3700 ft. we estimated. From here we were going to make the "assault". All we could do was eat and sleep and wait. Erik and Paul cooked supper in the tent. We studied our photographs and knew we could make it. At 6.40 p.m. Wednesday we started out, still in the rain. Daylight was no problem ... it was keeping dry that bothered us. We took all the spare clothes, some food, climbing gear and trailmarkers.

Paul and I climbed on one rope and so did Erik and Gregg. We took turns kicking steps. It was not difficult but for the "holes" which we periodically fell into. Some crevasses had to be skirted but we did neglect to fall into those. It started to snow and blow. We were pretty hungry, but who wants to stop and eat when its cold? So we just kept going. By midnight we were in dense cloud and couldn't see more than 50 feet. Gregg kept marking our trail with the willowsticks. I remember seeing the dim outline of a ridge to my right and the rest was just nothingness. Finally, directly above, I saw the "cornice" we knew was just below the summit. The wind seemed to have reached gale force and snow was blowing and it made it even harder to see anything. I shouted to Paul to give me a belay and "felt" my way around the steep snow bank. Then the mountain flattened out. We were on top. I remember distinctly thinking "lets get the heck out of here", but there stood the others, just as cold as I was, studying the photo in the dim light. "That's it", Paul said, "Let's go." We needed no other invitation. Erik stuck the last two trailmarkers into the snow on the summit. Blessed be the trailmarkers that showed us the way back. In my state of malnutrition I had visions of getting onto the wrong glacier.

At 5 a.m. we got to the tents. They were covered with wet snow. Everything inside was damp. But in the sleeping bag the whole world had a different outlook.

About 11 I opened my eyes. Lo and behold a ray of sunshine! I dashed into my pants and out the tentdoor. The clouds were breaking up. An hour later sunshine poured over the camp. The whole world was brilliant. For the first time since we started out we saw the mountain, our mountain, and the peak we had just climbed. All round us tremendous avalanches were coming off. Some we loosened by shouting and we watched them tumble down to the glacier below. We built a large cairn at the campsite and left our register can with the story of Iliamna's first ascent in it.

In the warm evening light we packed up camp once again and by night we were camped by the river below the moraine. I like campfires. They have something reassuring about them. Primusses are so impersonal.

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Friday morning. We decided "never to bushwhack again". Instead we crossed the glacier stream by means of rope. This is a sport for tall people only. When the icy water gets above your waist it ceases to be fun. At this point, too, our trip ceased to be a climbing expedition. Instead, we built the "Iliamna Queen" and floated down the river. There is no room here to praise the seamanship of Paul, Erik and Gregg (all I did was hang on for dear life) but perhaps there'll be an account of the river cruise in a later issue of Scree.

Sunday, when we flew out, was the only smooth and sunny day. We flew over the top of our mountain. The markers had blown away, but we could see every small landmark of our route: the crevasses we crossed, the "cornice" and the flat, snow-covered top. One hour's flight took us back to Anchorage .... thanks to the airplane and some good planning the whole trip had taken us only  $6\frac{1}{2}$  days.

#### MORE ABOUT ILIAMNA

The Anchorage Daily Times really gave excellent coverage to this climb. On Monday, June 8th, the Times ran a frontpage article with big headlines: "4 Area Climbers First to Reach Iliamna Peak." This was reprinted in Tuesday's paper on an inside page and later in the week a spread of pictures was also published.

#### MARY'S MOUNTAIN

On Sunday, June 7th, Joe Pichler took five members of the MCA up Mary's Mountain which is the lowest of the Pioneer Peaks. This is a long and steep climb but there is no bushwhacking. Although the day was clear there were clouds surrunding the top which served as a screen of the peak for the less certain members of the party and which slowed the climb a bit since it was difficult to find the route. Once on top, the clouds lifted and there was a wonderful view of the Matanuska Valley and Pioneer Peak.

The group - Betty Clement, Lois Willard, Gwynneth Wilson, Chuck Warren, Joe Hill and Joe Pichler - left a red MCA register can on the summit, complete with a history of the various successful climbs up Mary's Mountain.

This was a good climb and with Joe Pichler as leader to encourage and to guide it, is recommended for hikers who aren't sure of how much rock climbing they want to do but would like to get up into the mountains.

#### MOUNTAIN BEHIND O'MALLEY ROAD

(June 14?)

An impromptu group organized itself to climb the "mountain behind O'Malley road" on the 14th. Joe Hill, Larry Johann and Dr. Rod Wilson had a fine clear day although the view from the summit was made hazy by the smoke from the Kenai forest fire. Joe Hill felt this was not as arduous a climb as Mary's Mt ... and the group found several snow fields to glissade down which helped the descent. The group informally named several natural features. For the exact meaning of the meadow named "Larry's Locker", check with Larry Johann.

#### PATCHES

Sometime during the next month the members will be contacted via telephone to see how many patches each individual wishes to order. The patch, chosen by the Club which uses Mt. McKinley as the motif, will sell for \$1.50.

#### CLIMBING PRACTISE

Now that the Climbing School is out, it has been decided to continue practising on "the Rocks" on Thursday evenings, meeting between 7 and 7:30 p.m. There are a number of experienced climbers interested in continuing and some novitates as well. Interested beginners are urged to come down (mile 23 of the Seward Highway). It is not

too late to get instruction in climbing techniques.

#### McKINLEY

According to the Anchorage Daily Times of June 10th, four young men will attempt to climb McKinley this summer. The leader will be John Breitenbach who climbed the mountain a year ago, and he will be accompanied by Peter Sinclair, Bill Buckingham and Harry Corbot.

#### MOUNTAIN WORLD

The Loussac Library has a copy of the MOUNTAIN WORLD 1958/59. (796.52). This is a fascinating book, well printed and illustrated. The pictures especially rate comment because there are so many excellent ones with routes superimposed on them. There is an article about Mount Logan which is of local interest.

In a report about Mont Blanc, the author remarks that winter climbing has been attempted since 1832 but that with new techniques and the successful assaults of so many ridges and faces, winter climbing will become more common. Incidentally, the first winter ascent of Mont Blanc was made in January 1876 by an Englishwoman who was greeted on her return by fanfares!

There is a long, detailed account of the various attempts on the Eiger north face which certainly makes clear the part good judgment has to play in mountaineering. Finally, though it is hard to choose with so many good articles, a description of an attempted climb in the Karakorum Range of the Himalayans on Chogolisa in which one man went through a snow cornice, and the editor adds a taut footnote that in the classic view the protection of rope on corniced ridges in bad visibility would probably have prevented this.

If you like mountains, this is the book for you.

#### CLIMBERS FROM OUT OF TOWN

Larry Nielsen of North Wilbraham, Mass. gave old Johnnie a call last Sunday (14 June) evening. He'd hit town Saturday night and was leaving for Valdez Monday morning. He came out to my cabin for a snack and we spent the time talking climbing and viewing slides of Marcus Baker. Larry is heading an expedition for research and exploration on the Valdez glaciers. Our Charles Warren is climbing with this party.

#### EXPLORER GLACIER

Paul Crews, Charles Warren, Gregg Erickson and J.H.J. spent May 30/31 taking Explorer Scouts on their annual glacier trip. Paul and Charles led the experienced group up another glacier and over the ridge onto Explorer Glacier where they met the first timers led by Gregg and Johnnie. There are several promising candidates among these young men.

That's all for now. See you at "the Rocks" on July 6th.