

## SCREE

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Mountaineering Club of Alaska  
 Box 2037  
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ESTING, TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27

The MCA meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 27th at 7:30 p.m. at Willow Park Recreation Hall. Hans Metz will show slides of the Hans Metz Ski School's Ski trip up and down Mt. McKinley last May. It is of passing interest to note that the Hans Metz party arrived on the summit at 7 p.m. on May 17th which was exactly two years to the day and within 15 minutes of the time that the Paul Crews' party reached the top in 1960.

The fourth Tuesday in December is Christmas! MCA will meet instead on Thursday, December 20th. This should be a real Christmas treat since the planned program is Hans Fisher's film, "Vagabonds of the Mountain".

## NEW OFFICERS:

At the annual meeting in October the following officers were elected:

|                      |                  |
|----------------------|------------------|
| President:           | Ed Fisher        |
| Vice-President:      | John Dillman     |
| Secretary-Treasurer: | Harriet Kiester  |
| Member of the Board: | Tony Backstahler |

## FROM THE PRESIDENT:

To the Members of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska:

This issue of Scree starts off the year for your newly elected officers. They are all of hope that this year will be the biggest and best that the Club has ever seen. To this it is of utmost importance that each and every member gets his or her five bucks worth. In a club of this type, there is only one way that this can be done and that is to PARTICIPATE. It is up to your officers and directors to see that there is something to do.

Our plans for this year include top rate speakers and films at our general meetings, selected to be entertaining to the entire Club membership. A Director of Schools whose duties include the coordination and programs of ski touring, snow, rock and glacier schools has been established. The Director will also be responsible for the scheduling of workshops at which specialized facets of climbing, camping and hiking will be discussed and practiced. We are very fortunate that Johnnie Johnston has agreed to accept this job.

The trail marking to Lake George has high priority as a project for this year. The trail affords the Club the opportunity to participate in a very worthwhile project with the chance of obtaining lasting publicity. Jim Messick has volunteered his very capable abilities to this project.

Our standing committees for the year are the program committee chaired by our very enthusiastic Scott Hamilton. The climbing committee will be headed by Dave DeVoe who is the chairman of the Climbing Section which assures us a close and friendly association and also the maximum number of climbs of all classes for the membership. The hiking committee is led by Marg Prescott who did such a fine job as Secretary-Treasurer of the Club last year. Marg and her crew promise plenty of interesting hikes for those who are inclined toward hiking than peak-bagging.

Our aims for the year are threefold: to provide the membership with interesting programs and activities; to encourage new members and provide them with an integrated training program and to help the Mountaineering Club of Alaska grow in stature in the public's eyes.

Ed Fisher

## CLIMBING:

The following possible climbs are suggested with plans to be made by the climbing committee for those which the membership at the November meeting find most attractive:

- (1) North Fork of Campbell Creek to Elliott Peak - 2 days, could be either a ski tour or summer outing.
- (2) MCA Shelter Cabin to Summit Mt. or Raven Peak via Raven Glacier
- (3) Bald Mountain
- (4) Pioneer Peak
- (5) East Twin or West Twin or Goat Rock
- (6) O'Halley Peak
- (7) Suicide #3 or #4
- (8) Montana Peak which would be 2 or even 3 days

Bob Ross will lead a Ski Tour from Independence Mine up the Willow Road sometime between December 21st and January 11th. The details of this will be established at the meeting.

by Hans Metz

## MCKINLEY ON SKIS

I have had quite a bit of climbing experience in the Alps besides three times attending two-week Guide Schools (climbing school). Before I came to Alaska in 1958, I always hoped to climb Mt. McKinley. Before attempting it, I made several climbs here in Alaska to get experience in getting contact with American climbers (Marcus Baker; first ascent of the north ridge of Bald Mt.; first ascent of Castle Mt.; south face of Byron Peak and others). I was impressed with the companionship spirit of American climbers. I could always depend on them.

It is not easy to climb a big mountain here because of the matter of time. Not everybody can take off four weeks from work and climb a mountain. Finally my instructors and I decided to try this spring (1962). But we wanted to do something that hadn't been done before. We decided to make a climb on skis and to walk in from civilization. Head Gear Co. provided short skis (6ft.) and since we couldn't risk the climb with regular ski boots we had to figure out how to use Korean boots. We decided to use the Army cross-country binding.

I was hoping personally to take Dr. George Wichman along but it wasn't possible.

After preparing all the equipment and food supply, the main crew (Manfred Schober, Willi Schmidt, Sepp Weber, Helmut Tschaffert) left Anchorage by train on April 24th to go to Talkeetna. They stayed overnight in Don Sheldon's hanger and started walking April 25th on skis from Talkeetna. They crossed the Susitna River on a small ice bridge and went along the old post road to the roadhouse 26 miles north of Talkeetna. After crossing Peter's Creek, they went past Peter's Hill, along Dutch Hills to the base of Kahiltna Glacier. They skied along the moraine on the northeast side of Kahiltna Glacier up to 10,000 ft. where a base camp was established. It took one week to get from Talkeetna to the base camp.

May 1st, I left Anchorage for Talkeetna, and the next day Don Sheldon flew me in to the 6,000 ft. level to meet the rest of the climbing crew. May 3rd we climbed up to 800 ft. level where we expected an air drop. During the day the temperature was about 85 and dropped down to 10 below at night. Because of high wind Don Sheldon couldn't fly too far and had difficulty placing the air drop. The air drop was scattered over a fairly large area.

May 4th we left food, snowshoes, and extra clothes in the Air Drop Camp and started up to 9800 ft. to establish a new camp. In three hours we were up. It took us fifty minutes to ski down. In the same day we carried the rest of our equipment up to the Kahiltna Pass Camp.

May 5th Mt. McKinley was hidden by clouds, but we moved food and supplies up to 12,400 below Windy Corner. The snow conditions were excellent, and we had much fun skiing down in 20 minutes. In the afternoon we took the rest of the camp up to 12,400 where we stayed. Clouds came up. Until this time, the weather had been excellent. That night the wind came down from the mountain, and we built a snow wall. During the night the wind died and it was very cold, a temperature of about 20 below.

The next day the weather was cloudy and snowy, but we decided to move the camp above Windy Corner (13,200). On the way, a strong wind came up, and we had difficulty getting around the icy spots on Windy Corner on skis. This was the first day we couldn't make two trips because of the bad conditions. It was very foggy and we couldn't see. We built a snow wall completely around our tents to protect them from the wind. The barometer was falling slowly and steadily. Next day was snowing but by noon the visibility improved a little bit. We skied down to our food cache at 12,400. We were surprised that birds had gotten into our food. They took mostly cheese and meat and had spread it in quite an area. We gathered noodles and things together to save them. In the meantime it started snowing again and only the use of the trail markers placed the day before gave us the right direction.

During the night a very strong wind awakened us. About 3 O'clock the snow drift was heavy coming down the mountain that in a short time it came over the snow wall, and we could see the snow rising fast up the sides of the tents. We had to make a fast decision. I suggested building, as quickly as possible, a snow cave. In one-half hour all the tents were covered completely with drift snow. One man stayed in a tent a bit too long and had to be dug out of his tent. It took at least four hours to build the snow cave. We kept one tent free from snow and took turns working. Later on in the afternoon the wind died down and we had much work to dig out our tents, food supply and equipment all of which were completely covered with snow. We moved everything into the snow cave. However, we lost some of our food supply and our snow saw.

May 9th the barometer was still way down. It was 10 below zero, and McKinley and the West Buttress were in clouds. At 10 a.m. it looked as if the weather would improve, and we made a decision to move our food and supplies up to the West Buttress. At 11 a.m. in increasing cloudiness partly sunshine, we climbed on skis up to the bergschrund. From there we used crampons and for the first time we climbed on rope. Above the bergschrund at the West Buttress we were surprised to find a fixed hemp rope in very good condition partly covered with ice. About 16,400 we cached our food and supplies. We had a very strong wind and it was foggy on top of the ridge. On the way down the weather completely cleared in. I added about 400 ft. of fixed rope to replace the rope covered with ice. Conditions were good for skiing down to the camp but we had almost no visibility. We

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had to stay in the snow cave until May 13th.

The weather was not ideal but we decided to move the whole camp to the West Buttress. This time nobody roped up climbing up the ice wall on the West Buttress, and we carried the skis up to our camp at 16,400. Surprisingly, also, that this time, again, birds had gotten into some of our food. We prepared for the final ascent but the barometer was still falling and there was no sign of good weather.

May 17th the barometer rose rapidly, and by 3 a.m. we were preparing to go. However, the food we had prepared the day before was inedible so we had to spend time preparing more. The temperature was 15 below. We departed for the summit at 6 a.m. and at 7:30 a.m. reached 17,230, the highest point of the West Buttress. Mt. McKinley was in clouds again and only for a very short time could we see Denali Pass. We skied over and tried to climb up on skis, but occasionally the snow was very hard and we found it easier to climb on crampons. We carried the skis on our packboards. While we climbed up to Denali Pass a strong wind arose and we were completely in fog with no visibility. At noon, we reached the Pass and stopped for lunch. We were hoping the weather would change but it didn't. Sepp had traveled with his partially broken skis, but he was afraid to use his skis for climbing. Since Manfred and I didn't want him to go alone on crampons, we left our skis at 18,300. Willi and Helmut decided on their own to go from the West Buttress along the ridge towards the summit carrying their skis. At 19,300 ft. level below the Archdeacon's Tower the party reunited. At this time we were above the clouds. All five of us reached the Summit - Helmut and Willi on skis - at 7 p.m.

It was about minus 25 but not much wind. We remained on the summit for  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour just below the bamboo pole where the Japanese tent left in 1960 still remained. I had an American and an Alaskan flag with the Mountaineering Club patch and a German wimple.

Wind pressed snow - not the best condition for skiing - made it difficult to ski down from the summit. But they made it without incident. While we walked behind on crampons. Because on the map it looked shorter, we went around the Archdeacon's Tower on the other side from the one ordinarily used, but it was steep and there was a partial snowfall on the north side. Because of overcast and fog which made the visibility poor, I decided to walk not ski down the Denali Pass while Helmut and Willi skied down to 16,400 arriving two hours ahead of those on crampons.

As I left the rock ridge and stepped onto the glacier, I slipped on a loose rock, plunged past the camp, and fell 450 below where I was finally stopped by powdery snow. I was stunned. However, I was able to climb with my equipment back up to where I could reach the end of a 30 meter rope.

During the night there were wind gusts of 60 mph. My tent was almost blown away and in securing it the tips of my fingers were frostbitten. Helmut also had frostbitten fingers acquired on the ascent to the summit. Shortly after noon on May 18th, the wind died down, and we left the high camp and reached our still usable snow cave by 6 p.m. Snow conditions were very good for skiing on the lower part of the West Buttress. After digging out the entrance to our snow cave, we spent a comfortable night.

Next day we left camp under cloudy conditions with a moderate wind but good snow down to Windy Corner. Below the snow was completely windblown. We found the camp from the 1960 Rescue Group and several C-rations at about 12,500. We left the rations intact. Below a little rock ridge at 12,000 ft., we reached powder snow and had excellent skiing down to almost 9,500 where we had a very heavy fog and 2 ft. of new, heavy snow. It was necessary to break trail down to our Air Drop Camp where we had left food, snowshoes and some equipment. Here we made camp.

May 20th we moved down to our base camp on skis in extremely heavy deep snow. It took us more time to go down than to come up because of the snow conditions.

May 21st we left all equipment except bare necessities at base camp for Don Sheldon to pick up by plane. Since no change of weather was foreseeable, we decided to start walking out the same day. We left base camp in heavy fog at 9 a.m. It was difficult to find the best way out. About 4 miles beyond the bend of Kahiltna Glacier, we stopped at 1 p.m. and rested for about 2  $\frac{1}{2}$  hours because there was wet snowing. We moved on until the next day when we came to an area with wood and water where we made a campfire for cooking and warmth since I was the only one carrying a sleeping bag. At 2:30 we continued skiing and crossed Hidden, Granite and Dutch Creeks making camp at 7:30 p.m. The next day we had to fight thick brush which was difficult with skis. But finally on May 25th, I reached Talkeetna. The rest reached Talkeetna a day later because they stayed for one day at the roadhouse.

According to Bradford Washburn, The Hans Metz Ski School Climbing Party was the first to climb "the West Buttress route up and back all the way from civilization on foot." And Washburn writes: "I am certain the two members of your party who skied to the top were the first two people ever to reach the summit on skis."