

SCREE

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THE NEXT MCA MEETING will be a happy gathering at the "rocks". Bring a picnic supper and a stick of firewood (or campstove if you want hot tea) and do bring your rope and climbing boots for informal climbing. The Willow Park is still not available ... we will meet out there even if it's a bit windy or rainy.

CLIMBING SCHOOL -- this has been postponed until August. Dates will be announced later.

ALASKA RANGE ACTIVITIES: Mt. Huntington succumbed to the 3-week long onslaught of a party of 8 Frenchmen led by Lionel Terray. The other "hot" target, Moose's Tooth, is reported to have been conquered by a party of 4 Germans and 3 Americans, the latter being led by Fred Beckey. At the same time, a party of 9 from Tacoma reached the 18,000 ft. level of Mt. McKinley.

More climbers are yet to come for Denali. A party of 18 from the Seattle mountaineers are working their way up the Hularow route. On June 27, six from southern Cal will begin their trek up the West Buttress. Two Japanese parties will shortly arrive, one to climb St. Elias, the others to climb in the Wrangell Range, and a party from 'Back East' will do some climbing in the Brooks Range.

John Zousman is coming back for a month of climbing in the Chugachns. He will be accompanied by a couple from the East and a police dog (why?) and invites interested members of the MCA to join him on his climbs in the Eklutna area and later on he wants to tackle Mt. Marcus Baker. Write him to Gen. Del., Anchorage, if you are interested.

CLIMBING SCHEDULE: Gregg Erickson will lead a trip to the peak at the head of Eagle Lake on June 20/21. This is moderately exposed rock climbing and anybody with experience and good equipment should contact Gregg. However, the party is limited to available jeep transportation.

FIRST ASCENT OF MT. TORBERT, 11,413' - May 14 - 17 by Jon Gardey

The last flight over the area prior to this climb was made on May 12 in Lowell Thomas' 180. After a close look at the proposed route, a landing was made at 5000' at the head of the Triumvirate Glacier and a runway marked out for the following day. But the next day (Wednesday) was one of storm in Anchorage and the Alaska Range, so departure was postponed until Thursday. Thursday dawned in a threatening manner, and, although improvement was forecast, Gardey said a landing would be unlikely due to high winds. He was wrong. Lowell Thomas, George Wichman and Lowell Thomas departed about noon with complete equipment for a "look". The Range appeared relatively free of clouds, but turbulence prevented a landing at the flagge spot and the 180 was brought down about a mile below. Then Lowell took off to get Paul C. Lewis and Rod Wilson and upon returning found the air had calmed, so landed at the original spot. The party regrouped here, the Cessna 180 was tied down, skis clamped on, packs hoisted up .. and the climb was on.

Two hours later and maybe 500 feet higher, packs were plunked in the snow for the first camp. The time was about 7 p.m. During the night skies cleared further and many faggles of geese honked overhead, trying different routes over the passes. The honking of geese continued throughout the 4 days of the climb, and the birds frequently crossed passes over 9000 ft. high.

The next day's major problem was to circumnavigate two sections of the ice fall between 500 and 8000 on the upper Triumvirate. Photos showed the best route on the right side and rapid progress was made on skis through the first section which emanated on a plateau about 6500 ft. The second portion presented more of a problem as the party was forced up the side of the glacier and a combination of skis and crampons was used around seracs and over crevasses before a smooth snowfield was reached. From this point, an easy ski climb was made over hard sastrugi, but under a broiling sun to a point just under the pass and a camp was put under the brow of a crevasse at 8500'. It had been a 12 hour day, and 3000 ft. had been nibbled from Torbert. Skies cleared

completely during the night and a light breeze from the pass kept the temperature about 14 above.

Saturday dawned absolutely clear. Up at 4 a.m. - on skis by 6:30 a.m. ... and the summit was 3000 feet above. A light breeze died away shortly and the remainder of the day proved to be clear, calm and warm--- ideal climbing conditions. Good progress was made across a broad plateau between 8500 and 9500 as once again hard sastrugi made for easy uphill skiing. As the gradient increased, the skis slipped on the hard snow and were finally caked at 10,000'. On crampons we reached a bergschrund which, after one false start, was crossed on a snow bridge. The route around a few more crevasses led to the summit plateau which turned out to be almost two miles long. Hard wind packed snow made for good progress, interrupted now and then by breathing stops due to altitude. A final bump on the southeast corner of the plateau fortunately was the highest on the mountain and was reached at 1 p.m. The view extended from McKinley to Homer on the east and many many peaks poked through the undercast to the west.

The descent to the steep slope was broken once by Rod's unscheduled descent into a crevasse, but he was extricated from his minus 15 foot perch within an hour. A belayed descent to the skis was made and - after a brief side trip to retrieve a can of sardines that dropped from a passing airplane - the skis were clamped on and the afternoon schuss began. The snow was perfect, the weather warm, the scenery spectacular and a wonderful run was had by all.

Skiing over the sastrugi with heavy packs the next morning resulted in numerous falls at first but the return down the flagged route through the ice fall was made in good time. The major complaint was the broiling sun which fried everyone to an even turn. The airplane was reached about noon and two flights back to Anchorage were completed by 5 p.m.

Personnel: Paul Crews, Sr., Lowell Thomas, Jr., Rod Wilson, George Wickman, Jon Gardey.

PERIL PEAK, 7040'

May 23-24

by Jim Fraser

On May 23, Gregg Erickson, Kelga Bading, Hans VanderLaan and myself were deposited on the upper part of the right fork of the Eklutna Glacier by George Kitchen's supercub.

The sky was sparkling clean, the air calm and the landscape under a foot of brand new snow. As a West Coast climber I was unaccustomed to Alaskan mountaineering logistics and technique. This was a far cry from the usual Cascade pack-in on a trail far below the snowline, or a Sierra trip on a dusty trail with signs of horses on it. Alaskans might have some interesting opinions to voice in the great debate of the 'lower 48' over what activities are allowable in the wilderness.

We had our pick of half a dozen peaks and we chose "Peril" as it appeared closest and had never been climbed. As we set up camp, all agreed that 3 hours should put us on the top ... after all, it was only 2500 ft. vertical rise. After ascending the sloping snowfield south of the peak, we caked our skis and started up the main couloir on the S.E. ridge. Short patches of rock, coated with ice in parts, alternated with snow fingers and progress was slow. A bottleneck halfway up was passed via ledge on the right. This gave access to a rib system ascending steeply toward a prominent large step in the ridge. It was vertical and very exposed, so had to be attacked directly. Gregg kicked steps straight up the very steep snow slope on its nose, then traversed around to mount a rock pitch at its top for a fine 100 ft. lead.

While regrouping on the shelf above we discovered our short 3 hr. climb had already taken 5 hours .. and still 500 ft. to go. We immediately suspected the presence of Jungle, the famous route finder from the well-known "Rum Doodle" expedition, but none of us seemed any more qualified for the designation than any other. With suspicious glances we pressed onward.

Traverse and ascent of a steep 350 ft. snowfield finally put us on the summit ridge. We carefully belayed up the bi-corniced ridge for several rope lengths before reaching the roomy summit about 3 p.m. Descent was made via the same route with a rappel over the 'step'. This certainly had been a fine high quality climb.

During the afternoon the weather had gradually deteriorated and shortly after a fine meal of Pong stew, washed down with Chugach punch (a beverage consisting of any and all ingredients) the storm descended. When we woke after a short nap of 12 hours, visibility was still almost zero, so we packed to leave. The snow was ample for skiing down to the lower ice fall, but very strong winds and blowing snow made route finding a rather tedious job. After 7 p.m. we arrived at the Army Camp where we had left a car ... all had damp exteriors, but dry and high spirits.

ARG SEARCH PRACTISE

June 7

by Helga Bading

Fourteen eager rescuers assembled on the Basher Road and were told by a distressed couple that their Uncle Charlie had been temporarily misplaced in the dense woods between said road and Campbell Creek Canyon. Upon learning that Charlie was well over 50 and suffered from high blood pressure, no time was wasted to discuss the problems of this search for at least one hour.

Eventually the group split into two teams and pre-arranged a series of whistle-signals as well as a meeting point. The teams hurriedly dove into the forest enriched by devils club and alder ... one team to search the creek bank upstream, the other along the powerline and then downstream. After a 45 minute stumble through densely mosquitoed brush under a hot sun, two sharp whistles could be heard. Some thought at first it was the distant call of a bird, but the teamleaders ordered full crawl ahead to see what was up. The whistles continued to guide the sweating searchers to a look-out knoll on the high bank where the outside man of team No. 2 had discovered Charlie lying in the grass. The first man on the scene duly splinted Charlie's right leg and shoulder, only to learn that he had merely suffered a fatal heart attack while photographing the scenery from this point.

While feeding their empty stomachs as well as hungry mosquitoes, the two groups discussed the search and its mistakes. Rather than carry the stokes through the woods (the packboard for it also got lost in the quake) Charlie was distributed into various packs.

The rest of the day was spent with a climb down into a gorgeous gorge the rock being so rotten that a fixed rope a la Terray had to be installed... and an afternoon stroll to "Near Peak" from Basher. The scheduled picnic ended a pleasant day.