

SCREE

MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA
VOL. 8, NO. 12
October, 1966

OCTOBER 17 MEETING: At 8:00 PM, Willow Park Community Center, 9th & Fairbanks. This is the ANNUAL MEETING and there will be an election of officers. Dues for 1966-67 will be collected at this time, if you have not already paid. Dues can be mailed to the Treasurer, M.C.A. Box 2037, Anchorage; make checks payable to MCA. Non-members will continue to receive Scree through December 1966 and at that time they will be dropped from the mailing list. Dues is \$7.50 family membership, \$5.00 single, \$2.50 junior, and \$2.50 out-of-town (over 50 miles from Anchorage).

The program will be a slide show on climbing in the Anchorage and Seattle area and will be presented by several club members

TRIPS

OCT 29 - 30: AMU Ek'utna Glacier trip. Ron Linder will take MCA members, but must have Glacial experience

What a Mountaineering Club without

a
n
y
hikes
o
r

climbs?

PLEASE: If members have extra copies of Scree that they would like to donate to the club please give them to Helen Wolfe or Marge Maageo. We are trying to get 3 sets of Scree

PIONEER PEAK ONE | TWO | OR THREE DAYS? Aug 12, 13 & 14

Hans Van der Laan

On Friday evening at 7:00 PM Bud Bergman, David Meyers, Chet Hackney, and Hans Van der Laan started up the creek on the north side of Pioneer Peak. After several hours of hiking up beside, across, and in the stream an excellent camping spot was found on the west side of the bowl. The only drawback to the spot was its lack of water, and so it was decided to have breakfast the next morning about a half mile further up toward the col, at the base of a snow patch. We were just ready to have our breakfast when we were joined by Grace Jansen and Barney Seiler. They had decided that very early Saturday morning was a better time to leave than Friday night. They saved the work of carrying camp up to 2600 feet. A scramble up loose rocks and a snow patch brought us to the col, and an easy walk up just below the ridge brought us to the start of the rocks leading to the "counter point". Loose rocks were being dislodged somewhere above us. A sheep? A goat? No, it was Steffen Maageo on his way down from the top. He had come up the afternoon before, gone up a creek on the N.E. side and camped close to the col. An early start allowed him to reach the peak and be on his way down, while we were still going up.

A rope was found helpful, although not an absolute necessity, in reaching the "counter point". A fixed rope was set to aid in descending into, and later ascending from, the notch separating the true summit from the counter point. Lunch was enjoyed on the summit with the aid of the sun and the warm windless air. Part of our descent was observed by a nearby goat. A short way below the col, when Chet was crossing a small snow patch, he lost control, and upon stopping himself on the rocks below, suffered a sprained ankle. He had a long, slow, painful trip back to where we still had camp set up. Since it was getting late, he decided to spend the night there instead of trying to go down in the dark. Dave and Barney stayed to give him some assistance the next day, while Bud, Grace, and Hans made it down to the road shortly after dark. It was not until Sunday afternoon that Chet, Dave, and Barney arrived at the bottom, as it is not easy to come down a steep gully with only one foot operating properly.

THE SAINT ELIAS RANGE

Vin Hoeman

The St. Elias Range was the first of Alaska's great mountain systems to be approached by men from whom we have written history. Its western peaks were seen by Vitus Bering's crew 15 August, 1741, on the Old Style Calendar (26 August by our Georgian Calendar). They named Cape St. Elias, the southwestern end of Kayak Island near which they landed on 20 August (St. Elias Day), and the name was later applied also to the principal mountain they had seen and mistaken for a volcano, Mt. St. Elias. The name was apparently first extended to the range as a whole by Wm. H. Dall in 1874 when he called these mountains the "St. Elias Alps", but the range is continuous with the Fairweather Range to the southeast and the Chugach and Wrangell Ranges to the west and northwest and has never been properly defined. The heart of the St. Elias Range, however, lies in the southwestern corner of Yukon Territory, Canada, where there are 14 named peaks (and at least two more namable) over 14,000' and more area above 17,000' than all the rest of North America put together.

Climbers became interested in Mt. St. Elias very early when it was thought to be the highest point on the continent. Its ascent was attempted in 1886, 1888, 1890, and 1891 before the Duke of Abruzzi's party made the first ascent in 1897. Three other ascents and at least five attempts have been made on it since. The monarch of the range, Mt. Logan, at 19,850' is less than 400' short of McKinley's South Peak which is the only thing higher for nearly 5,000 miles. Logan has been climbed ten times since 1925, but has never been traversed directly.

The only M.C.A. members with St. Elias Range experience more intimate than long looks before last summer were Bill Davis (1957 and 1959 in the Mt. Wood area) and Shiro Nishimae (3rd ascent of Mt. St. Elias in 1964), but this year we tripled the score. First Art Davidson was with Beckey on the first ascent of Mt. Seattle, 10,058', and later on King Peak and Mt. Logan with Boyd Everett's party. Then Don Stockard, Dave Johnston, and I took part in the Icefield Ranges Research Project work out of Lake Kluane. This work was centered at Divide Camp at 8,400' between the heads of the Hubbard and Kaskawulsh Glaciers. On July 14 Dave and Don with Alex Bittenbinder and three fellows from Cal. Tech. almost made the 2nd ascent of Mt. Queen Mary, 13,250', but turned around on the northern subsummit in a whiteout.

On 5 August Alex, Miller Myers, Dave Shaw, and I were delivered back to Divide Camp by IRRP pilot Phil Upton whose motto is to deliver anything, anywhere, anytime, for no reason whatsoever, and with his helicopter aircraft, he goes a long way toward proving it. We finished up our work at Divide and were joined there on the 7th by Dennis Draper. The next afternoon the five of us left for the high peaks, hoping to make 3rd ascents of Mts. Walsh (14,780') and Steele (16,644'), and a second ascent of Mt. Lucania (17,147'), but the St. Elias range is big and the maps are small scale. We went down around a corner below 7,500' on the Hubbard Glacier and over a divide onto the Walsh Glacier. We'd heard that the Steele Glacier on the other side of the mountains was rampaging, but hadn't known that the Walsh was also pretty active. Finally we got through its icefalls and over a high divide to the upper Donjek Glacier where we found the airdrop Phil had delivered us at 10,000. We made a camp there and Miller stayed in it while the other four of us made an assault camp at about 12,000 in the western glacier basin of Mt. Walsh. The next morning, 13 August, we carried our packs on up to the crest of the central western ridge of Walsh and followed this ridge all the way to the summit. At one place where it was very narrow as well as steep we had to perform a layback on a protruding crust of snow! Amazingly enough, we found a crampon buckle and a prune-pit that must have been left by the 2nd ascent party of Alford, Denton, and Zysset four years ago. The first ascent of Mt. Walsh was by Bakewell, Bates, Jackman, and Wood on 17 August, 1941, (see "Above the Whirlwind" in the 1942 American Alpine Journal). We left a rappel picket and a wand as relics of our climb and rejoined Miller at basecamp that evening, descending all the way down the central western ridge this time.

Now storms pinned us down for two days. On the 16th we started toward Steele and the intervening "Four Glacier Dome" (unclimbed), but were turned back by the weather about 11,500, so we decided to give up and walk on out the Donjek Glacier nearly a hundred miles to the Alcan. We broke camp that very afternoon. During the storm small birds had visited us at this camp as lost migrants, fearlessly lighting on our heads and hopping into our tents - Northern Waterthrush, White-crowned Sparrow, and a young Bank Swallow. An immature Jaeger was seen near camp.

No sign of man down and alongside the Donjek Glacier but several skulls of Dall Sheep rams that seem to have been killed in avalanches. On the 19th our problem was crossing the Donjek River at the glacier snout. Alex waded it first with chunks of glacier ice swirling by in the crotch-deep muddy water; the rest of us somehow made it too. On the far side we found a trail that'd been blazed by prospectors or trappers over 20 years ago and semi-maintained since by sheep and moose; we followed it for two days north. There are chipmunks in this valley, perhaps their northwesternmost extension.

On the 21st we cut across the range of hills separating us from the AlCan and hit the Nicke Creek Mining Road on its crest, following the last few miles of this out to Mile 1111 AlCan. There are lots of fine climbs yet to be done in the St. Elias.
* * * *

CAMP ROBBER - POLAR BEAR

Vin Hoeman

Clarence Serfoss and I had just seen our buddies off for the Kichatna Cathedral Spires. We couldn't go, and our complexions were a shade of green. Nothing short of first ascents would keep us from getting ulcers at the thought of them, so Judy Serfoss drove us up to Milk Creek above Girdwood (the new Glacier Creek bridge is in) and dropped us off. We hauled our packs up to the Crow's Nest and listened to a bit of rain on the roof of the dilapidated shelter that night. Morning of 4 September brought clearing weather as we crossed Crow Pass and sidehilled around by the foot of Clear Glacier, then west we groaned up a long scree gully to the 5250' pass just south of our objective, Camprobber Peak, 5855'. We doffed our packs on the pass near a set of wolverine tracks in the snow, followed a stringer of hanging moraine to a snow face and were soon the first climbers ever atop Camprobber, which was named after the local appellation of the Alaska Gray Jay three years ago on the first ascent of nearby "Rook Mtn.". As we built a cairn and left a register, we looked around and were amazed to discover the peak across the head of Clear Glacier from us was higher, probably 5950', sharp, and apparently unclimbed. The maps show it as being flattopped, but it is now obvious they just left off the top three contour lines. An appropriate name for it would be "Crow Peak" since it's the highest thing bordering Crow Glacier (not to mention the whole Western Chugach South of Ship Creek and west of Girdwood Valley!). But we wanted to go the other way, so returned to our packs and hauled them up over the top of Peak 5750' which has a cairn that seems to be about 5 years old on top of it. We descended over the glacier that gives Moraine Pass its moraine and on down Camp Creek to its main western tributary. Up this toward the Organ Mountain cluster where we hoped to do both Organ and Polar Bear, but our effort to gain the ridge between the two was stymied by oh so rotten rock. We chose Polar Bear as the best prize and camped that night at Lake 4078.

The SE Ridge of Polar Bear Mountain looked easiest, but we gambled on being able to go down the other side and took our Kelties with us the morning of 5 September. The ridge was easy at first with some vegetation and choice of routes, but at about 6000' it became steep and narrow. We roped up and alternated leads the rest of the way, thankful that the rock was stable enough so that we weren't scared to death all the time. The 6614' summit is small and unvisited by anyone, even sheep or goats. We left a Tang jar register in a cairn we built. I cautiously led one full 150' rope length down the N. Ridge which was covered with fresh snow; then Clarence led 50' straight down the NW Face and set up a 75' rappel from a rock nubbin that just barely reached the tip of the nose of the bearskin glacier. This was steep, but the snow was excellent and we went straight down. In fact our whole traverse of the mountain was nearly as direct as a ruler laid across it on the map, yet we don't think any other routes will be done on it soon.

It's a long way out Eagle River; the brush was bad, and four times we had to rappel from cliffs overhung with alders. We stayed on the side we were on (a mistake), but got a ride after dark the last ten miles in a survey crew powerwagon to the highway where we called Judy. Clarence lost a camera somewhere.
* * * *

GIRDWOOD SKYLINE TRAVERSE

Sept 9-10

Dale Hagen

Taking advantage of two days good weather, I made a traverse from Winner Creek across the northeast skyline seen from Girdwood to Goat Mountain and down its south ridge. I didn't climb any of the higher peaks. I had originally planned on taking three days, but was pursued by the threat of bad weather. To make speed I stayed on the glaciers on the flanks of the higher mountains crossing to the far side through a snow col midway along the ridge. I built cairns on several lesser peaks up to 5300'. I think the best routedown Goat Mountain's south ridge makes a hard right half way down, crossing Glacier Gulch and coming out above the fallen bridge. The turn is easily identified because it occurs just before the only rise in the ridge. Crevasses are a distinct hazard on the traverse. I would like to do some ski-mountaineering in this area this winter. Who is interested?
* * * *

Rod Wilson and others interested in the North Fork of Campbell Creek may like to know that I was charged by a grizzly there in July, but scared it off by ringing my bell and clobbering it with a couple hefty rocks. This bear had Toklat coloring.
Dale Hagen

* * * *

EDITORS: Helen Wolfe, Marge Maagoe; Scree is published monthly by the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Box 2037, Anchorage, Alaska 99501