

SCREE

MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 2037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

MAY 1974

VOL. 17, No. 5

MAY MEETING...Wednesday, May 15...Pioneer Schoolhouse...3rd & Lagle... (upstairs)...8:00 P.M. (on time please; no grand entrances)...will have regular schedule of slide shows, meeting, and refreshments, although no information is available on shows.

CLIMBING SCHEDULE

Leaders are needed for the indicated climbs. Contact John Pinamont at 279-7862 to volunteer or let me know of any particular climbs you would lead and we will get them in the schedule. Our last climb of Goat Rock was a success with 8 climbers reaching the top. They were leader Scott Mueller, with John Lucha, Vaughn Hoeffler, Ed Coleman, Bob Shipley, Barry Kirscher, Gil Todd, and John Pinamont. A writeup may appear in a future issue.

JUNE 1 SUICIDE PKS. Meet at Valu Mart at 8:00 AM. Leader needed or will be elected from those showing up.

JUNE 8 PENGUIN PK. Start and finish at the Bird house. Meet at 9:00 AM at Valu Mart. Regroup at Bird house. Leader needed.

JUNE 15 MATANUSKA PK. An exceptionally long day. Early start. Leader needed.

Next climb coming up is EAST TWIN PK. on May 11; ldr. John Pinamont; ph 279-7862; meet Valu Mart at 8:00AM.

HIKING SCHEDULE

MAY 11 GULL ROCK ldr. Ron Lautaret; ph 277-9030; meet 7:00AM at Eberhards or Porcupine Campground, Hope at 9:00 AM. (note change in date)

MAY 19 SKILAK OVERLOOK & KENAI RIVER TRAIL HIKE Meet at Hidden Lake Campground on Skilak Rd. at 9:00 AM; ldrs. John & Joanne Merrick; ph 272-5243. (note date change)

MAY 25-27 HICKS CREEK-CARIBOU CREEK HIKE - BACKPACKING Ldr. Jerry Gottbergt; meet at Valu Mart at 7:00 AM Saturday.

JUNE 8-9 Bench Lake Cabin Ldrs. Bill Stivers, Dona Agosti, and Bill Barnes.

FIRST INTERVIEW WITH CLIFF BLACKBURN 16,523'

JOHN FINE

It all began during the infamous Kuskulana Glacier washout of summer. During one of the several 30-second clear periods we caught a glimpse of a monster white mountain rearing its glacier-clogged head high above us. Paul the Carnicelli is reputed to have remarked, "Let's climb Mt. Blackburn this summer." The impracticable replies were drowned out by the ensuing deluge of rain. However, the seed had been planted in my brain and there being copious quantities of water, it soon germinated. Perceiving this as an opportunity to empirically determine if a frisbee will fly at 16,500 feet above sealevel, I determined to accept Paul's offer. Several days later at the Chitina saloon, I committed myself to the Mt. Blackburn Expedition.

Back in Anchorage, Paul and I collected together several other characters of ill-repute, i.e. mounteers, and with frisbee in pack we headed back to Kuskulana country astride two V's. Across Strellna Creek we jeeped the squarebacked V a mile into the swamp that was the Kuskulana Glacier highway. As I was standing thigh-deep in mud pushing the VW while being amply sprayed by the mud-sling tires, I was struck by the thought that if we waited until winter the swamp would be covered by snow and we could ski-doo to the roads-end with ease. I broached the subject to the others, and they concurred. Leaving behind a few miscellaneous VW parts in the morass and Bill Brickley's snow cave digging cement shovel, we limped back to Anchorage bypassing the Chitina saloon.

Since we had five months to organize, we waited until the last two weeks to accomplish the serious preparation and packing. After much frantic activity we finally declared ourselves ready and launched the winter Blackburn Expedition. Our caravan of cars and snowmachines left Anchorage late in the evening of March 1st and we arrived in Chitina at sunrise. It was 22 degrees below zero as we loaded the sleds with packs and gear, and readied the tow ropes for the skiers. We reached Lugget Creek several hours after dark and all crashed after many hours without sleep. Sixteen of the 35 miles from Chitina were unbroken snow which was slow going and hard work getting the snowgoes unstuck.

The following day, starting at midday, we skied towing sleds for five hours, setting up camp in the middle of the terminal moraine of the Kuskulana glacier. The light snow stopped falling and the mercury plummeted. It was 25 degrees below zero when we prepared breakfast the next morning. After breakfast we began the tedious task of packing up in the cold. We managed nine hours of skiing that day. Our method was for one person to break trail without his pack for a quarter-mile stretch, and then return over the well-packed trail for his pack. This technique allowed us to maintain a broken trail as fast as the loaded people following could travel. It was also a relief to remove the pack every two mile and ski without it.

It was still 25 below zero when we pitched camp that night. The mercury was hovering around the -30 degree mark the next morning. Two of our members, Paul Carnicelli and Larry Tedrick discovered that their equipment was inadequate for such temperature extremes and decided to turn back. The remaining five- Art Ward, Don Pahlke, Gary and Steve Tandy, and myself- continued on. Three days later we gained

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the 8,900 feet pass between the Kuskulana and Kennecott glaciers, where we hoped to receive our airdrops. We excavated a snow cave in the side of a crevasse and constructed an igloo on the pass. From this point upward we were to live exclusively in igloos much to our delight as they were substantially warmer. We were also permanently above the shadow of the Kuskulana valley walls and in the sun on clear days by virtue of our route, the south and east ridge.

The next day, March 10th, we received 26 packages of air mail from Howard Knutsen with Art's dad as bombardier. All arrived intact with the exception of the pickets which buried themselves in the snow never to be found.

We discussed strategy that evening and decided Gary and Steve would move up to 11,000 ft next day while Art, Don, and I relayed up to 11,000 ft. Then the following day Art, Don and I would move up to 11,000 ft. while Gary and Steve would push the route up to 13,800 ft and return to 11,000 ft that day.

Amazingly enough, everything went according to plan and the evening of March 12 found us all at 11,000 ft in two igloos at Camp I. The steep exposed ridge and bergschrund before Camp I had necessitated the placing of 700 feet of fixed line and the route to Camp II required the rest of our 1200 ft supply.

That evening the aurora borealis put on a fantastic light show that was visible from the entrance to the igloo. The temperature continued to remain in the -25 to -30 degree range. On March 13th we all climbed up to 13,800 ft, tiptoeing across a hundred foot knife-edge to reach our site for Camp II. We built a 4.2 man igloo, half on the cornice and half on a serac poised above the Kennecott icefall. The thermometer read -16 in the sun and -27 in the shade.

That night we spent a crowded night sleeping sardine-wise in our igloo. The 14th of March dawned with a rime-ice storm direct from the Gulf of Alaska. We amused ourselves that day by building a two-man addition to our igloo with an interconnecting entrance. Don and Steve cut ice buckets to 14,000 feet, while Art danced a jig on the cornice and I photographed the scatological glacier worms which had suddenly nested near our campsite. Gary occupied himself with more mundane pursuits, like tripping out on the view.

That evening we sacked out with clear skies and anticipated the summit attempt tomorrow. However, I would be climbing without the frisbee because I had left it behind in the rush of last minute packing in town. How unfortunate that I would not be able to observe the aerodynamics of the frisbee at the summit. Now I will have to climb another high mountain.

March 15th began cold and clear. Starting at first light, we climbed towards the summit—a feat that encompassed ten miles one way with five miles above 16,000 feet. When we reached the east peak, the summit was shrouded in a lenticular cloud and the wind was blowing to 30 mph. We wandered through some rime hills and climbed the last stretch to the summit arriving in early afternoon. The summit was a 50 yard square flat area with an ice block containing a small banner of red Japanese silk to mark the middle. The wind chill was computed at -80 degrees and time was short, so we beat a hasty retreat to Camp II, arriving there as the last rays of the sun left. We turned in after a double course of Mountain House dinners.

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The following day we descended to Base Camp at the pass. The next four days were spent at the pass waiting out several snow and wind storms. Art's dad flew a check flight during the one half-day clear spell between storms and dropped us ice cream and cookies.

Three days of drudgery in skiing out in adhesive snow brought us to Nugget Creek on the day of the vernal equinox. We sunned ourselves in the warm spring air. Art's parents met us with snogoes and we skijoured out to Chitina and civilization.

Condensed minutes - MCA general meeting, April 17, 1974

Meeting was called to order by President Bill Barnes Jr. Slides of winter climbs on Powerline Pass Pk. and West Twin Pk., and ski tour of Portage Glacier were shown by Trent Swanson.

Minutes as they appear in April Scree were approved. No treasurer's statement was available since Steve Jones is still on the North Slope. John Pinamont outlined the climbing schedule with Goat Rock scheduled for April 20 and East Twin for May 11.

Dona Agosti, hiking chairman, reported that the Arctic Valley to Crow Pass ski tour and the Wolverine tour were both successful. Dona also asked that drivers who needed passengers for the Whitehorse - Chilkoot Trail trip in July check in with her.

She also asked for volunteer leaders to assist Diane Brelsford and the St. Mary's Creative Institute in their hike out program for junior high students this summer.

John Pinamont reported for Huts and Cabins Committee that Whiteout Cabin and Pichler's Perch were in need of work and resupply. John's group had occasion to spend six days in the cabin on a recent Eklutna Traverse attempt.

Mike Richardson said plans for the climbing wall were progressing. Tom Meacham reported on recent testimony before a Senate-House Committee on Resources concerning the proposed Hatcher Pass Recreation Area bill. Motion to approve the creation of this area as set forth in the Senate Substitute Bill was made by Mike Richardson, seconded by Leo Hannon, and unanimously approved after discussion. Tom Meacham was asked to send a wire stating the club's position to Tom Pink and Bob Hartig (House of Rep.). Individual members were also urged to send Public Opinion Messages supporting the bill.

Members were asked for a show of hands with respect to supporting the Alaska Center for the Environment in the amount of approximately \$60. per year. Approved.

Helen and Gayle Nienhueser showed some beautiful and informative slides of their 1973 hut-hopping trip to Austrian Yugoslavia.

Meeting adjourned.

Dona Agosti, Secretary - MCA

SUBSIDENTIAL MEMBERSHIP LIST - 1974

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