

SCREE

OCT

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ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

Wednesday, October 19, 1977, 8 PM, Pioneer Schoolhouse, Third and Eagle, Anchorage, Alaska. A mini slide show will be presented. The main program, to be presented by DONA AGOSTI and crew, will be a review of the 1977 MCA Arctic Wildlife Range trek.

MCA GENERAL ELECTION

The October meeting constitutes the MCA's annual general election meeting. The slate of candidates is not yet complete, and nominations for all offices will be taken from the floor. Offices to be filled for 1977-78 are:

President
Vice-President
Secretary
Treasurer

Two Board positions (1977-1979)

Present Board members, with one more year to serve, are BILL QUIRK and TERRY REES. Please attend the October meeting and vote your friends into positions of responsibility and respect!

Along with the change of administrations, the MCA's new officers will need new volunteer help to staff several committees, including Conservation, Huts and Cabins, Geographic Names, and SCREE publication. These committees will only be as active as the people who put time into them. One very vital Club function will require a volunteer by November--that of SCREE editor and typist. The present editor will be "retiring" after the current issue.

HIKING SCHEDULE

The Hiking Schedule is open for the month of November. If you feel like going someplace on any particular weekend, call Hiking Chairman DONA AGOSTI to see what is planned. Her number is 279-2901.

DENALI NAME CHANGE HEARING

The U.S. Board of Geographic Names has announced that it will hold a meeting in Anchorage on November 10, 1977, regarding the pending proposal to change the official name of Mt. McKinley to "Denali." This issue has received much written response to the Board, a response which was running, at last report, about 55% to 60% in favor of the name change. The Club has expressed its support of the name change in the past, and it is expected that the MCA will testify at the November 10 meeting.

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SMALL NAME CHANGE HEARING continued.

Nevertheless, it is important that individuals who feel interested in this proposal also plan to testify at the meeting, or to submit written testimony.

If you plan to give oral testimony, you must write a note to the Committee at least five days in advance of the meeting to reserve time. The address is:

Domestic Geographic Names Committee
U.S. Board of Geographic Names
National Center, Stop 523
Reston, Virginia 22092

The meeting will be held at the Municipal Assembly chambers, 3500 East Tule Road, from 9:30 AM to 5:00 PM on November 10. Written statements may be filed with the Committee before, during, or after the meeting. To the extent that time permits, oral statements may be accepted from people who have not pre-registered.

NCA MEMORIAL FUND

A memorial fund to purchase personal gear for the Alaska Rescue Group and/or books for the NCA Library in memory of LINDA HESTING, JEFF MOELER, and DON PAHKE was announced in last month's SCITE by SUE WERN and CHRIS AREND. Response to this proposal has been disappointingly small to date. If you wish to make a monetary contribution in this effort, please contact CHRIS AREND (277-2723, work; 694-9835, home) soon. If you wish to donate a book to the library, you may do so directly (TOM BRACHAN, 277-2129) or through CHRIS. Everyone whose lives were touched by these fine people should make a small gesture in their memory--today.

***** TRIP REPORTS *****

THE HUNTER--DAW0000May 9-16, 1977

by Brian Okonek

JIM HALE was there, BRUCE HICKOK was there, and oh, I was there, too. We had met in Talkeetna after a casual talk at AMH and a letter of final plans for an attempt on Mt. Hunter. We hoped we had everything needed to do the west ridge (the push-over route). The first ascent and especially the second ascent of this route had been done in fine style with the climbers sporting VB boots and showing incredible drive and strong nerves. We felt, however, that with our advanced technology in climbing gear that we could easily keep up to the standards of these earlier climbs if the conditions were at all favorable. Looking at accounts of these climbs, we figured five moving days would easily get us up and back; so we packed eight days worth of rations (three for storm days mind you) and took off alpine style for the summit.

Our packs were heavy, but that's usual, and we just tried not to think about it. Conditions were in our favor--we weren't up to our armpits in snow! In fact, there was a great crust under several inches of new fluff so we were able to make great time to the gendarme at 9,000'. The drop to 8,700' on the other side looked a bit eerie in the clouds. We lowered our packs down the first 70', then did some down climbing, and finally a 300' rappel on a piece of fixed rope that we left hanging for our return journey. The climb over point 9,500' followed a delicate line between cornices and avalanche slopes. Paranoid of falling through cornices, we stayed well below the fracture line, forcing routes across steep traverses of high exposure--in fact, in many places we were too low and wasted precious time. Finally, after twelve and a half hours of effort, we reached the 9,300' saddle just below the rock step where we set up Camp I. Clouds drifted in and out, but the air was calm.

We had hoped the rock band would only take a half of a day to climb--it shouldn't take any longer because it's only 800' high. Right away we knew we had underestimated the time as we groped along, digging in the snow in search of hand holds and cracks to perfect off. Our pace quickly slowed to a creep. Just below the Beckey Chimney I was forced to leave my heavily loaded pack hanging from a pin as I found climbing with it all but impossible. I reached the knife edge directly below the chimney easily without that load on my shoulders, then belayed HALE up. With the help of BRUCE below we were able to heave my pack up over some jagged slabs. Great for the rope! Seconds before BRUCE reached us the cornice that JIM and the packs were perched on silently fell into oblivion. Luckily JIM was quick, the packs were tied in, and our hearts were strong--everything was still with us; everything was fine. In a murky mist of lightly falling snow I tunneled my way up Beckey's Chimney using my axe to clear away the hoard of snow that blocked its 70'. Beckey's manila fixed rope from 1954 still hung in the back of the chimney along with several other newer ones. All the packs were hauled up this pitch as they didn't fit into the chimney. Mixed rock and snow climbing continued to where we placed our second camp at 9,800' on a steep ice slope. It wasn't until after midnight that our dragging bodies finally hit the sack.

Day three began with a few buzzes from JIM SHARP taking pictures and an oatmeal breakfast that I just couldn't swallow. Thinking the climbing was generally over, we left our rock gear hanging on the granite at camp, but I hadn't even completed the second pitch of the day when I peeked over an ice bulge, saw more exposed rocky ridge ahead, and hollered for JIM to grab the rack. An hour or so later found me gripped on a 300' ice face at 10,000'. I stood there on shakily placed front points supported by tired calves, clearing the loose snow away with an iced up axe, held by a wet mitt at the end of a rubber arm cut off from all flow of blood by the weight of a pack on worn out straps, wondering if the next move would ease up. I'd move up my overhanging newly formed trench to find that it hadn't eased and would begin the whole process again. Soon I'd decide I was too far above my last screw for my own

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THE HUNTER continued.

good and go through the pains of placing another one. Once it was in I felt greatly relieved and would wipe the sweat from my face and move on with new courage. I wondered what the others thought of my snails pace, but I couldn't force it any faster. Finally the gripper pitch was completed and we were all safely above it wondering how in the heck we were going to get safely below it again; but we put that out of minds for the meantime and moved on up. The route never ceased to amaze us; if it wasn't one little obstacle it was the next that seemed to stalemate us for a moment. JIM led the next six pitches to a small saddle along fluted cornices of ice and airy snow. At 10,300' we were forced to stop early to camp due to heavy balling of crampons in the afternoon sun. We considered a summit push from here since the weather was so good, but soon wrote it off as fool hardy and went to bed in anticipation of the fourth day of climbing.

We beat the sun to the snow on the ridge. With firm snow under foot and easy going along huge cornices we were able to cover a lot of ground in a few short hours. By the time we were getting bored with slogging across the flats at 10,600' we hit more of what we had come for--climbing. JIM led off between the void of a crevasse on one side and the void of thin air on the other tightrope walking on a thin edge of ice. Soon an overhanging shcrund forced him to traverse out onto the steep, exposed ice of the ridge's southern face. BRUCE and I waited patiently on the ridge in the warmth of the sun cheering each of his moves on. The rays finally overcame me and I fell asleep sitting on my pack. I awoke with a start trying to focus my foggy mind on where I was and knowing there was some reason I shouldn't slither off my pack--a good one since I was supposed to be belaying! I guess the long days we had put in were beginning to catch up with me. More exposed traverses where we wondered whether it was the long fall down the icy face or a plunge through a cornice that we were protecting against. We climbed over point 10,820' and down to 10,700' where we decided to set up high camp. Our short distances between camps were disgusting, but we hoped to make up for them by pushing on to the summit from here. We spent a relaxing afternoon preparing for a midnight start to the summit.

We were on our way before Foraker caught the first rays of the day. Our heroic summit push was to be short-lived for we turkeyed out. Seven pitches along curled cornices of ice, air snow, and space brought us to the missing link; a pitch of traversing/down-climbing of steep ice under a cornice that we first had to go over. It looked somewhat like a bombay shot through my sleep-encrusted eyes. I searched for an alternate route, but one's choices are limited on a thin ridge. We had a long haul in front of us in deteriorating weather and couldn't afford the time delay this section might give us; so our tired, cold bodies quickly agreed with the decision of our burned out minds to retreat. At the time it was easy to justify turning back, but now that there's a picture window between me and the mountain instead of dull crampon points, I wonder what we just didn't rap off and get on with the bloody climb. But then again, if I rattle my memory, I can remember how the weather did turn bad and stayed bad in Alaskan tradition, how we got down with only one day of food the way it was and would have surely spent a few hungry days on the upper slopes of Hunter storm bound, and at how the descent was exciting enough in calm weather without trying to rappel when one can't even throw the rope to the bottom of the pitch, I can still justify the retreat. As it turned out, the flight back to Talkeetna was the most exciting and tense part of the Hunter's chapter, but that's another story. And so I chalk up another attempt.

REVELATIONS RECONNAISSANCE

July 1-11, 1977

by Tom Meacham

The Revelation Mountains have been a source of vicarious intrigue for me for several years--ever since reading DAVE ROBERTS' account in the 1968 AAJ of his epic 52-day storm-bound expedition to the then unnamed range. Though it was the first (and apparently only) mountaineering visit to the Revelations prior to ours, it produced few first ascents. Ours produced even less.

BILL BRICKLEY, GIL TODD, DAVE KAMPFER and I decided that the most aesthetic expedition would be to marry climbing and kayaking, knocking off the highest peak in the Revelations (Mt. Hesperus, 9828') prior to paddling out to civilization. Hesperus, incidentally, until recently had two names: Hesperus on the Series E and other large-scale USGS maps, but "North Buttress" on the 1:250000 and 1:63500 maps. VIN HOEMAN noted the error in 1968, but the corrected maps didn't appear until 1977.

We chartered by wheel-equipped Beaver from Anchorage, piloted by ALDEN WILLIAMS, a reliable pilot with Alaska Travel Air. After circling interminably (it seemed) looking for a suitable gravel bar on the upper Big River, we finally put down about a day's march from the base of the peak. But our flight in told us what we wanted to know: the northwest ridge of Hesperus was quite ambitious, the other approaches more so. Not having the benefit of photos of the peak, we were unprepared for the extreme relief--nearly 8000 feet from the glacier to the summit, gained in less than two miles! Close scrutiny by binoculars revealed no obvious "easy" route, no likely intermediate campsites.

We spent three days fording streams, photographing rainbows and waterfalls, and wondering what the view was like from the summit. Meanwhile, it rained on us every afternoon and snowed above 7000 feet on the mountain. Not an auspicious condition for a serious attempt at the peak.

Since Hesperus appeared inaccessible for us due to weather and terrain problems, the kayak trip out became the goal of the expedition. In this it proved to be, ~~be~~ disastrous, and somewhat anticlimactic. The first day and a half were exciting, dodging rocks and gravel bars with careful abandon, until a large boulder (one of the last on the entire river, we later learned) caught my double Klepper amidships and literally folded it in half, breaking spars, ribs, and keel, and pitching BILL and me chest-deep into the river. I immediately thought of Longfellow's poem, "The Wreck of the Hesperus," and my shattered craft received an instant christening. No gear was lost, but BILL's camera was irreparably damaged with water in the lens and glacial grit in the mechanism.

After six hours' expert carpentry by BILL and GIL with willow branches and my Swiss Army knife with saw blade (don't leave home without it!), the kayak took to the water warped, but rigid and seaworthy. The remainder of the trip downriver to civilization was uneventful and slow--lots of flat water and horseshoe bends, but with geese, moose, hawks, and sunsets to relieve the tedium--but nothing relieved the mosquitoes while we were ashore for camp or rest stops! At times they were as bad as I've ever seen in Alaska. Though the weather thwarted us, we learned later that we were fortunate in one respect--the 380,000 acre Bear Creek fire, starting a few miles away and a few weeks later, blackened the sky for 49 days, burning even to the edge of the Big River and jumping the Kuskokwim. Had it occurred earlier, the threat of danger and the reduced visibility would have dampened the aesthetic wilderness experience which we had--not to mention the increased air traffic, none of which intruded upon us during our entire trip.

All in all, an unsuccessful reconnaissance of a beautiful and remote corner of Alaska--a place worth visiting again.
