



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 2037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

MARCH 1978

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### MARCH MEETING

Wednesday, March 15, 1978, 8 P.M., Pioneer School House, Third and Eagle, Anchorage. A talk will be given by a Chugach State Park Ranger on hazards and safety precautions in the mountains. A mini-slide show will be presented by John Dillman on an ice climb of Bridalveil Falls. Also some slides will be shown of the Mint Glacier ski tour that will be held on April 1 & 2. to give MCAers an idea of what the tour will be like.

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### MINT GLACIER SKI TOUR

On March 31 an advance party, led by Dick Thaler, will break trail up to the Mint Cabin. This party plans to climb one of the peaks in the area on Saturday April 1. Most MCAers will ski in from the Little Su Roadhouse on Saturday morning to the cabin and then return Sunday. It is approximately 8 miles in, and people should bring tents, since there probably won't be enough room in the cabin for everyone. Most MCAers will leave from the Fred Meyers parking lot at 6:30 AM Saturday morning (thats what AM means!). Bring any questions you have to the meeting.

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### CABINS

At the most recent board meeting it was decided by a 3 to 2 (two abstentions) vote to move ahead with fixing up our cabins without delay. The Club had been waiting for an Alyeska based ski guide outfit to get permission from the park to lead trips in the Chugach. The Club was going to fly in with this guide group and save expenses. However, due to the problems this group has run into, the board decided to have the Club continue on its own. Dick Thaler, Club Cabin Chairman, will arrange for the repairs to be made.

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### MOUNT SANFORD CLIMB

Dick Thaler has also agreed to lead a Club climb to Mount Sanford. This trip is planned for the end of May. Club members interested should contact Dick at the meeting. You should not consider going unless you are experienced! A series of practice climbs will be held to get members acquainted with each other, check out equipment, weed out incompetent members, etc. Thaler will be in charge.

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### BLANKETS FOR SNOWBIRD

Many Club members have used the ARMSTRONG cabin at Snowbird mine. It is a welcome refuge on a chilly winter day or a rainy summer one. On the whole, the cabin has been well treated by its visitors. The owners, the ARMSTRONGS, have always been generous - letting anyone use it. However, some wool blankets were taken from the

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## BLANKETS cont.

cabin. Because the ARMSTRONGS have been so thoughtful it would be nice to replace these blankets. Anyone who might have a few extra wool blankets could donate them to the cabin by dropping them off at a meeting. It would certainly be a nice gesture to the ARMSTRONGS!

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OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR MARCH & APRIL

MARCH 12 NORDIC SKI CLUB is sponsoring a 22-mile Arctic Valley to Indian ski tour. Meet 6:30 at the parking lot kitty corner from the Anchorage Westward. They want to be on the trail by 7:30 AM. Nordic says it is a tour for experienced skiers with lots of stamina.

MARCH 18-19 NORDIC SKI CLUB - Crescent Lake. This is an overnight trip. They will ski in about 9 miles to the Forest Service Cabin on Crescent Lake from Mile 33 on the Seward Highway. There is a very steep climb of about 800 feet in the first half-mile, then about 2 miles of fairly level skiing near Carter Lake to the east end of Crescent Lake and about 6 miles along the end of the lake. Bring tents because the first six signed up will get the cabin. Meeting place to be arranged. Call Brian Davies, 276-7294.

MARCH 25 NORDIC SKI CLUB - Nancy Lake Ski Trails. The Nordic news letter says the State Park people have laid out about 7 miles of trails at Nancy Lake. These go thru some really pretty country and are about the same level of difficulty as the Old Kincaid trails (lakeside). In addition there is plenty of good touring terrain. They plan to make this a bus tour costing \$5/person, \$3/children under 12. Meet at 8:30 in the parking lot across from the Westward.

For those of you who can get away during the week, a group skis every Tuesday, sometime in the Chugach above Anchorage, occasionally in Hatcher Pass or Buffalo Mine area. Call Dona Agosti for info, 279-2901.

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WRANGELL TRIP

News about the Wrangell trip in July: Floyd Miller in Northway has quoted prices for t air charter. The trip to Horsfield will be \$145 per trip (or \$29.00 per person) and the return trip from Chisana to Northway will be \$132 per trip (or \$26.40 per person).

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MCA 20th ANNIVERSARY

An overnight hike and celebration will take place (tentatively) on July 8th and 9th not far out of town - perhaps the North Fork of Campbell Creek- on that weekend. Everyone, past or present member, should make it a point to be there! More details in future SCREES. (Make that Flattop - with a band!)

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PIEPS AND SHOVELS

As was announced at the last meeting, and was passed at the last Board Meeting, the Club will buy 6 Pieps - avalanche detectors, to be lent out to Club members only for Club trips or for their own trips if there is nothing scheduled by the Club. A lightweight shovel will also be given with each Pieps since many people do not have a shovel, which is a necessity in an avalanche. A minimal fee will be charged to cover the cost of the batteries for the Pieps. There will also be a seminar on their use for Club members.

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TRACKS

Tracks up a glacier. Ski tracks, almost far enough down to be in the glacier. The five made those tracks all the way to a hut known as Thayer. Two days of work and many electrons coursing through head lamps.

There were other tracks, too, in the mountains. The elusive avalanche had obviously passed by in this night. One, not so elusive, darted down the hillside across from the hut. One track reaching for another.

Blackcap soared up above the tents. Alien odors mixed with moonlight on Christmas Eve.- cheese, wine, french bread with cold, pale moonlight.

Long ski tracks gave way to small, deep foot tracks. Three-foot deep holes leading toward, but not reaching, Sunday Summit. Blackcap ignored the proceedings.

Twelve miles of tracks up the Castner ending below Blackcap. A wind, though, an obliterating wind, erases the record of passage, leaving broken tent poles and lost sleep. Then snow. Three feet of white in twelve hours. A world buried with no tracks.

More tracks finally, far below the surface, made by unseen skis. Slow moving tracks. Fast moving avalanche tracks nearby.

Ski tracks went up the last slope only to be cut by tracks of the sudden and onerous WHOOMP. Cracks for tracks.

Foot holes ventured toward Mary's Rock. The flushing of a napping avalanche below the summit created a new track but turned the foot holes back on themselves.

Tracks, ten days of the things, led back to Trimm's Camp. And then were blown away.

by El Rojohombre

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MT. FORAKER ATTEMPT - SPRING 1977

Kurt Bittlingmaier and I attempted an early may Alpine-style ascent of the east buttress of Mt. Crosson in a bid to reach the northeast ridge of Mt. Foraker. We flew into the N.E. Fork of the Kahiltna Glacier, alternating flights with the Soviet-American Exchange Team. The same day found us skiing with all our gear on packframes and sleds over to the east face of Mt. Crosson. Next day we ascended with heavy packs the east buttress to just under the southeast ridge. Kurt suddenly became extremely ill at around the 9,000 foot level (symptoms indicated acute hypoxia). A very slow descent, by fixing ropes brought us down to the Kahiltna Glacier by early morning. Kurt's sustained high pulse rate influenced our decision to abort the attempt after a two day rest at basecamp.

by Steve W. Hackett

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THREE ALASKAN ALPINISTS VISIT BOUTIQUEVILLE  
SWITZERLAND AND ATTEMPT THE TOURIST ROUTE  
ON THE MIGHTY MATTERHORN

Armed with a new awareness of the mountains, Susan, Pete and I rode the cog line out of the Vallee de Chamonix towards a new alpine adventure.

After the many difficult ascents around the Mont Blanc massif, we certainly felt prepared for a leisurely ascent of the Hornli Ridge on the Matterhorn. Besides, if Whymper managed in 1865, we might today, with Vibrams, Gore-Tex, fuzzy jackets and curved piolets be able to follow in his footsteps. If not, we could use the fixed ropes and ladders. And besides, Pete was Swiss, so to speak, and for a change we could converse with the locals.

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## MATTERHORN cont.

The train clogged its way down the steep canyon into the Rhone Valley where we changed trains at Martigny. The small regional train started and stopped, seldom gaining cruising speed before another village appeared. No spectacular mountain scenery here. Industrialized, agriculturalized and homogenized. That's the Rhone Valley.

At Visp we changed trains for Zermatt. We had several hours, so explored the town. I had been there ten years before on a leave from Viet Nam, but the years had eroded the memory and nothing was familiar. We eventually departed in threatening weather, the summits enclosed in dark stormy clouds.

The train stopped at Tasch, which is at the end of the highway and where to travel further you must catch the train. This was one of the last weekends of the summer season, the parking lots were full. Soon most of the hotels and restaurants would be closed, waiting for winter snows, which would bring a different breed of tourists.

The train pulled into the Zermatt station and I felt like I was in familiar territory again. I left Susan and Pete and pushed my way through the tourists on my way to the Bristol Hotel. They had been gracious hosts to me ten years before, perhaps they would have rooms for us now. Unfortunately, they didn't have a single vacancy and doubted if there were any in the village. Back to the Tourist Office I managed to secure rooms at the Tannenhof, modest by Zermatt standards, but of course we are real alpinists, accustomed to uncomfortable surroundings. As we followed the directions we certainly felt like a minority group, dressed in our old jeans and fuzzy jackets among these boutique clad fat tourists who crowded the narrow streets vying for space with the horse-drawn carriages with the various electric powered mini-vehicles.

The Tannenhof was more than adequate and fitted our budgets. We celebrated something by spending a fortune on dinner, but Pete and I certainly enjoyed our steaks and Susan her trio of squabs. The wine was plentiful and exquisite. We felt good.

After a leisurely continental breakfast at the hotel we hurried around the village purchasing a few food stuffs, then stored our extra gear in the basement and headed for the lift. An ingenious Swiss aerial device whisked us off the valley floor and soon we were using our own limited power along the trail to the Hornli Hut, several thousands of feet above. The weather wasn't ideal. I recall seeing the mountain briefly, actually got one photograph before clouds curtailed it off. The Hut looked abandoned but soon we were installed in a comfortable bunk room along with a dozen or so others. After a short nap we hauled out the cooker and began dinner. Fortunately we had previously learned that the hut wasn't serving food this late in the season, and had prepared ourselves. The inhabitants were friendly and food and conversations were shared. The weather remained as indifferent as our attitude about climbing was, but never-the-less, we packed our summit packs and retired early. If you think that climbing a difficult alpine wall is a challenge, you might try to get some sleep in an alpine hut. That's the real test of a true alpinist.

Fortunately, at 3AM when I went outside to relieve myself it was snowing hard. Some elderly guide type said "No climbing today" and respecting his judgement and smiling from ear to ear, I returned to my cozy wool blankets. Susan and Pete were content with the good/bad news.

The weather certainly was deteriorating and our morale with it. We decided to leave and began packing. The hut dog had broken a trail through the new snow and soon we were at the upper lift, and then back in the valley.

We had bad vibes since our arrival in this fabled mountain village. The overcrowded streets and many boutiques made us long for the open spaces again.

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## MATTERHORN cont.

It was still early morning as we packed at the hotel and headed for the station. The train was about to depart and we found a coach and threw the packs on it. Looking for seats we had a pleasant surprise, when we encountered a friendly familiar face. Cindy Jones (Mt. Huntington 1976, Olympic Park Ranger and 5.10 rock climber and good friend) and her mother had been in the area for several weeks and now were on their way to London via Paris. Stories of brave deeds were exchanged and plans made. Susan and I decided to head to London, while Pete was to return to France and then back to Basel to visit his parents. We would all attempt to meet either in London or in Wales. As it turned out, they took a separate train and we backtracked to Martigny, left Peter and boarded the train to Lausanne, then another to Vallorbe. After a six hour wait the direct arrived. Our Lowe packs offered little comfort on the six hour ride in the aisles as there weren't any vacant seats. After a most unpleasant bivouac we arrived in Paris at day break. We changed trains and attitudes and were off to Calais, this time in a compartment. Soon we would see the white cliffs of Dover and re-enter the English speaking world.

Next month Tales from Wales.

by John R. Dillman

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BRIDALVEIL FALLS

Spurred on by the slides of the Dillman-Hale Christmas epic, Jeff Babcock, Gunnar Naslund and I took off for "Valdisease" hoping to climb the 750 foot frozen waterfall on Thursday and return to Anchorage on Friday. We had a few advantages on our attempt. We knew it had been done once this winter, the days were longer and the ice conditions had improved.

From the road a grueling 6 second walk found us at the base of the magnificent Bridalveil Falls. After a mediocre nights sleep Jeff took on the first lead. I followed his line while Gunnar jumared up the haul line. Gunnar was ten feet below our stance when one of his jumars froze up. He understandably freaked out a bit, since the only thing holding him in place was one half-frozen jumar (it is interesting that our everdry rope froze-up while the non-everdry was relatively free of ice throughout the climb). Second pitch my turn to lead out and freak out. Five feet up I put one of my front points right through the climbing rope. "Oh my!" I said, "I wish I hadn't done that.". After I anchored in and cut off that section of rope I invited Jeff to retake the lead. He did and never relinquished it. He led the whole route, quite a feat, I'd say, especially for an overweight climber. This was the best method though since the route up and down took us 15 hours, and if Gunnar or I had done any of the leads it might have taken us twenty! Not exactly speed climbing material. Also with three people on vertical ice the speed factor is somewhere in the M2 range. (M10 - molasses running down a vertical surface; M1 - molasses running down a horizontal surface.)

The 3rd and 4th pitches were the worst of the lot. The fourth contained a 60 foot curtain which I elected to jumar. The last pitch Jeff led in waning light and Gunnar and I followed in the dark. Night climbing on ice is quite exhilarating and not recommended. Six rappels had to be rigged to descend which we pulled off flawlessly, probably due to our years of climbing together.

The band at the Valdez Club announced that we were the crazies thrashing around on their beloved waterfall all day. This got us a free round of beers and a place to crash for the night.

by Garnett Roehm

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POLLACK MEMORIAL

Dona Agosti received a letter from Dagmar and George Pollack thanking her for her help. They also enclosed an article from the San Jose State University mentioning the Taylor Creek accident. A memorial tree is to be planted for Paul Pollack in Castle Rock State Park in the Santa Cruz Mountains. Anyone interested in participating in this should send a check, payable to "Sempervirens Funds" c/o Mrs. Stefa Kaluis, S.J.S.U. Library, Educational Department, San Jose, California 95112.

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tidbits

Dona Agosti is drawing up a MCA membership list that we hope to publish in the next SCREE.

Dona is also getting the summer hiking schedule ready. P. Denkewalter, MCA Tser for Life, Emir of Lower-Upper Spenard and All-Around Nice Guy is drawing up the climbing schedule. Coordinators for the climbs are needed. Anyone refusing to lead a climb, having been asked by El Presidente, will have his name published in SCREE under some demeaning headline.

A general mountaineering course will be held for MCA members this spring. The class will consist of a classroom session, a self-arrest and rope handling outing near Flattop, a rock climbing seminar down along the Seward Highway and a two day glacier school and climb at Byron Peak. All interested members should sign up as soon as possible, since the class might have to be restricted. Two years ago, some 25-30 people enrolled, and the Ptarmigan climb still has the teachers guffawing.

In April, the meeting will be the annual Swap and Shop. This is usually a high-spirited affair, resembling an Asiatic market place or bazaar. Bring your old useless equipment along with you and trick some poor unsuspecting member into putting out good money for it. There has been some talk of taxing the whole affair in order to add to the current president's retirement fund; - an idea this author thinks deserves serious consideration.

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MINUTES OF FEBRUARY GENERAL MEETING, MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

Wednesday, February 15, 1978, Central Junior High School, Anchorage

The meeting was called to order by President Denkewalter at 8:06 P.M. Vice-President Valerie Lakue presented a mini-slide show of the annual ice-climbing school, led by Terry Decker, held last September in Beautiful weather on the Matanuska Glacier.

Business Meeting: Minutes of the January meeting approved. Treasurer's Report: Checking: \$1,036.20; Savings: \$448.53; Cash-on-hand: \$22.52; Total: \$1,507.25.

President Denkewalter reviewed the previous month's tragic loss of four members in an avalanche, and the need for MCA to have PIERs to loan out to members of the Club on trips. He also mentioned that the helicopter-ski group at Alyeska which wants to help repair the huts at Eagle and Whiteout, as discussed in the December 1977 meeting, it still waiting for a State Parks permit. Attention was called to the interesting ski trip planned for the Mint Glacier Hut on April 1&2. A letter from MCA member T.J. Bruce, now in Korea, was read. The new edition of Hudson Stuck's book "The Ascent of Denali", with additional details, was announced, with a supply available at this and subsequent meetings for purchase by MCA members at a discount price of \$6.25. A letter was read from the American Alpine Club making grants available for deserving explorations and expeditions. Earl Redman is chairman of the Anchorage chapter of the A.A.C.

After the intermission for refreshments, dues payments and book purchases, Carl Dixon presented an interesting slide show of a climbing trip he made with a group  
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MINUTES cont.

to Acongagua (22,835') in western Argentina, the highest peak in the Western Hemisphere.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:50 P.M.

E. Allen Robinson, Secretary

Addendum to December meeting: Jack Duggan announced that a new organization of Alaska based guides has been formed. Anyone interested should contact him about the upcoming meetings.

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MINUTES OF EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING, MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

Thursday, February 23, 1978, President Denkwalter's Home, Anchorage

The meeting was called to order at 7:40 P.M.

There was a discussion of the ski trip the previous month when four members of the club were killed in an avalanche. Sad as this was, tragedies of this type do not pose a liability for the Club due to the inherent danger present in any trip into the wilderness. The need for Pieps on ski tours was discussed, the types available, the costs, use, and the need for instruction in their use. MSP that 6 Pieps be purchased at the lowest price available. After discussion on probes, it was decided not to purchase them. Valerie LaRue mentioned that there was another 3-day avalanche seminar to be given next January.

On the MCA huts in need of repair, it was pointed out that the Alyeska outfit could not get a permit from the State Parks yet. With this in mind, it was MSP that the Club arrange to make repairs by flying the necessary materials in. Dick Thaler, the huts chairman, will arrange this. The need for carpenters was also discussed.

Dave Klinger reviewed the answers to 11 questionnaires received from the December 1977 SCREE. These were passed around. Considerable interest was expressed in hiking, climbing and travel in Alaska. It was generally agreed that a regularly announced hiking and climbing schedule would attract more members to Club outings. This could possibly be helped by a mini-slide show at the beginning of the monthly meetings showing the areas where the trips would be held. During the summer tourists months when the Chamber of Commerce's Log Cabin downtown is open, it was suggested that MCA information be available, including some extra copies of SCREE, publicity on "55 Ways". It was also suggested that the MCA conduct a general mountaineering course for members. In view of the fact that 1978 is the 20th anniversary of the Club, perhaps a summer picnic should be held.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30 P.M.

E. Allen Robinson, Secretary

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thats all!