



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 2037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

February 1985

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FEBRUARY MEETING

The meeting will be held Wednesday, February 20th at 7:30 p.m. in the Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd and Eagle St., Anchorage, Alaska. After the business meeting, Mark Skok will present a slide show depicting his search for the specter of cold weather injury. The selected short subject is a slide presentation on skiing in Idaho's Sawtooth Mountains.

MINUTES FOR THE JANUARY MEETING

The meeting was held on January 16, 1985 on the top floor of the Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd and Eagle Sts. The meeting was to order at 7:40 p.m. by President Doug Van Etten.

Dues all expired on 12/31/84. We continue to accept dues for 1985. Please renew as soon as possible so you can continue to receive SCREE. Send a check to the post office box.

MCA
P.O. Box 102037
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

\$7.50 for single membership
10.00 for family membership

I. OLD BUSINESS

The club still needs someone to head the hiking committee activities. Doug asked again for volunteers to come forward before the warm season is officially upon us. You would not be expected to lead all hikes of course, but you would need to make sure there is a schedule of hikes and that an effort is made to find leaders. It's not as hard as it sounds.

II. New Business

A. Chugach State Park Advisory Board

Mark Skok reported that the board, at their January meeting, reiterated support for the concept of a road around Eklutna Lake. However, members said they will not endorse the Army's proposal to rebuild the road until the Army holds a public hearing to fully outline its plans for using the park.

The hearing was to be scheduled after the Army provided board members a written outline of its plans. The Army has discussed its plan for road-building, but regarding park use, only said it would be in the Eklutna area between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. on weekdays.

Park Superintendant Bill Gary said he would not endorse the road project until the hearing was held. He expressed concern about the problems of trash, intoxicated drivers and search-and-rescues if the rugged, glaciated area at the head of the lake is opened to road traffic. An additional ranger and park technician will be needed to patrol that area if the road is opened.

B. First Aid Committee

A seminar is planned for February 13th, at the Spenard Community Center. This will be a one-hour seminar on basic backcountry first-aid. Please see the article following the minutes for details.

C. SCREE

The newsletter is in need of your trip reports, notes and comments. If nothing else, draw a picture. You don't need to write much, just something that will further inform MCA members about what people are doing outdoors in Alaska.

Respectfully Submitted,
Nan DeGood, Secretary

Basic Backcountry First Aid

Anchorage physician Dr. Frank Hollingshead will present a one-hour seminar on basic backcountry first aid at 7 p.m., Wednesday, February 13th at the Spenard Community Center at 2020 West 48th Street.

The seminar is geared toward skiers and hikers who have not had a recent first aid course, and could find themselves faced with a medical problem 24 hours away from professional help. The program will cover treatment for hypothermia, frostbite, burns, cuts, broken bones and various possible illnesses. Dr. Hollinshead also will suggest contents for a first aid kit, including prescription medicines.

Dr. Hollingshead is an emergency room physician at Humana Hospital. For the past three years he has been involved in studies of altitude sickness and cold weather injury at a research facility on Denali. He is an excellent speaker and quite knowledgeable about wilderness medicine. I strongly suggest that all MCA members attend.

To get to Spenard Community Center, go west on Tudor Road after it crosses Minnesota. Tudor turns south into Taft. Follow Taft to the end, and turn right on to 48th. The community center is the first large, unmarked building on the left.

Mark Skok

Idaho Offers Warm Sun, Fine Backcountry Skiing

In early December I explored the southcentral Idaho high country near Galena Pass. The occasion, to "familiarize" writers with Sun Valley, was sponsored by Alaska Airlines and the Sun Valley Chamber of Commerce. Needless to say, accommodations and alpine skiing in the valley were first class, and for a holiday, not particularly expensive (had I been paying for it.) What made the trip particularly special were the warm winter sun and fine powder snow there, and lack of sun and snow here.

The highlight for me was a Nordic ski trek into Sawtooth National Forest. We camped in a yurt in a beautiful valley five miles in from the roadway entrance to Redfish Lake campground. The yurt was outfitted with a barrel stove and French chef whose cuisine and wine matched the scenery

I extended my stay by three days to poke around the high country with the guides. We skinned our skis and broke trail to a high camp (8700 ft.) built by Bob Jonas, proprietor of Sun Valley Trekking. Jonas is establishing a winter

hut system in the National Forest. He is sanctioned by the Forest Service, and is leading trips of varying lengths across what he calls his "haute route". Participants stay in yurts or wall tents. He charges about \$100 per day for deluxe trips.

For a winter holiday, I would recommend Sawtooth National Forest. This year the snow was fine and deep and unbroken, apparently along hundreds of miles of Forest Service trails that wind along streams and through deep forest. Douglas fir and lodgepole pine grow to about 9000. The sun and wind don't disturb the snow underneath, so the telemarking is wonderful. The trees also anchor the snowpack, which provides a secure feeling on avalanche-grade slopes. Still, we carried Pieps and shovels.

Winter Access to Matanuska Glacier

The chinooks that have plagued Anchorage and the Five Fingers waterfalls at Portage haven't reached the Matanuska Glacier. The river is well bridged with ice below the snout. Here is a recipe for a fine ski outing, accessible ice climbing and glacier travel practice (plenty of crevasses hidden by snow): Drive to Mile 101 on the Glenn Hwy. Fifty yards past, and to the right, is a state park campground, where you can park. A road leads to the river. Find an ice bridge and cross. We went across where the road nears the river and makes a bend to the right. To the left is a cabin with a sign that says "no trespassing". A snow machine and ski trail leads to the glacier snout, about 2 and a half miles to the east.

The ski in is as pretty as the climbing is fine. Because the route is level and open, pulling your hardware on a sled is a snap. If you can't find the trail, stay on the river bank. The seracs at the glacier's edge offer climbing that ranges from scrambling to overhanging. However, the hidden crevasses are no joke. Be prepared to haul yourself or your partner out of a hole. Also, you have to cross another stream to get onto the glacier. Overflow can be a problem, judging by the looks of the streambed, which was solid when we crossed it Jan. 19 and 20.

Mark Skok

BOOK REVIEW

ON TOP OF THE WORLD -- FIVE WOMEN EXPLORERS IN TIBET. By Luree Miller.
The Mountaineers Books. Seattle, 1984. \$8.95, paper. Reviewed by Mark Skok.

The art of staying warm is a theme that never dies. People keep going outdoors and often for no good reason, they get cold. So, when skiers and climbers gather, the topic keeps coming up. At the same time, mountaineers today keep wondering whether high-country explorers of the pre-polypropylene days were tougher than we are now. Could they stand the cold and other hardships better than we?

The subject of staying warm tends to focus on appropriate clothing, eating and drinking habits, and being reasonably sensible about exposure. The second subject takes people in circles: sure they did amazing things 80 years ago, considering available gear, but look at what some of the recent Himalayan climbers have done. Equipment improvements are countered by spending more time in colder places.

I don't think eras have anything to do with vigor. A few individuals, then and now, are simply tougher than most. There always will be John Muirs and Peter Habelers. But a look at historic accomplishments always is invigorating. Luree Miller presents us five women who organized and led incredible trips into Tibet in the late 1800s and first decades of this century. She writes about gumption, and includes a lesson on staying warm.

Of the five explorers, Miller was most impressed by the French Alexandra David-Neel. An expert on Buddhism and fluent in Tibetan, David-Neel disguised herself as a peasant and set out on foot from the Gobi Desert in China for Lhasa. It was October, 1923, China was wracked by civil war, David-Neel was 56 and she was accompanied only by a young Sikkimese lama named Yongden. During the next year David-Neel would walk 2,000 miles and become the first European woman to see the Forbidden City.

In her writings David-Neel didn't concentrate on the difficulties of the route. Rather, after crossing a 21,700-foot mountain, she would summarize the experience with a comment like, "the scenery was grand beyond all description". Despite the severe weather of a Himalayan winter and her lack of clothing--she wore a coarse woolen Tibetan robe--David-Neel never was slowed by the cold, and she never mentioned frostbite.

One day the two had traveled for 19 hours, much of it through deep snow on a high pass. They stopped at night at the snowline, frigid and exhausted, and discovered that their flint and steel were wet. While Yongden gathered dried cow dung and sticks, David-Neel thought of the practice of thumo reskiang, the willed generation of internal heat. She wrote, "I had (in the past) inured

myself, during five months of the cold season, to wearing the single thin cotton garment of the students at a 13,000-foot level..."

She tucked the flint, steel and some moss under her robe and meditated. She thought of flames rising around her. When Yongden returned, David-Neel was warm, the flint and steel were dry and they made a fire.

David-Neel simply used what means were available to survive. What she had most of was determination, and it proved more important than food, clothing or human assistance.

If there's a basic difference between the eras--or more accurately, between the David-Neels and thoroughly equipped expeditions--it's that we often bank too heavily on our gear, and give up emotionally when it fails us.

If you get cold despite proper use of modern technology, make up your mind that you ARE going to get through with fingers and toes intact. You're as tough as you have to be.

(On Top Of The World is available to MCA members at the library at AMH.)

Desert Camping

New Year's Eve found us camped out on the sand 100 yards from the Paria River in Northern Arizona on a trip to the desert. The Paria flows through the Vermillion Cliffs before entering the Colorado River and has eroded some interesting canyons in the sandstone and natural arches and the river goes through narrows that are nothing but big joints in the sandstone. This area gets less than five inches of precipitation a year. It's cactus country -- really dry desert. The sun shines almost every day here.

January along the Paria River is too cold for most people (except Alaskans), judging from the hikers' register. Visitors are rare at this time of year but number in hundreds when the western colleges have spring vacation. In the winter, a pair of insulated rubber boots are good for the frequent fords through ice water necessitated by cliffs along the water. Spring and fall are the most popular times to visit the Paria, but in Summer the Paria Canyon is an oven. The river water looks like liquid Ex-lax and has about the same effect on the system if not allowed time for settling, and the opposite effect if the water is not then boiled.

Dan O'Haire

Eklutna - Eagle River Traverse

I plan to do a six-day traverse from Eklutna Lake to Eagle River, leaving Thursday, Feb. 21. The group will be limited to six people. All must have glacier travel and crevasse rescue experience. If you're interested, call me at 274-3934.

Mark Skok

HISTORY CORNER

September 1984 marked the twentieth anniversary of the construction of the Mountaineering Club's first mountain hut, Pichler's Perch. Considering its location, atop an exposed ridge just above the Eklutna Glacier, and given the occasional severe winds and heavy snows which have passed in those twenty years it is a tribute to those early members of the club who participated in its construction that Pichler's original hut still stands ready to shelter the weary travellers and climbers who happen to pass by.

Pre-cut beams, plywood and joists were flown in during the summer before actual construction which took place over Labor Day weekend. Joe Pichler supervised the work of Gregg Erickson, Dave DeVoe, Jim Fraser, Ron Linder, Dale Nienhueser, Dave Meyers, Shiro Nishimae and Helga Bading, who all made the A-frame a reality. A few weeks later Dave Meyers, Dave DeVoe, Nick Parker and Mike Judd cut out the door and piled on the many rocks which have kept the structure from blowing off the ridge. Only two months after building the hut which now bears his name, Joe Pichler died.

The hut on the Whiteout Glacier was built over 4th of July weekend in 1968. Lumber was pre-cut by Tony Bockstahler, and driven up the Eklutna Road (which was open all the way), where it was then helicoptered to the glacier. Lowell Thomas flew most of the club members who participated in the construction into the location site. The work party included John Samuelson, Dave Meyers, Gary Hansen, Diddle Van Der Pant, Roelf Van Der Laan, Hans Van Der Laan, Jim Betty, Frank Nosek, Lowell Thomas, Jr. and Paul Crews, Sr. The building went on for three days and before departing the crew piled on the all-important rocks around the new A-frame.

Hans Van Der Laan was a prominent member of the MCA and was once the president. Less than three years after his help and guidance in erecting the hut on the Whiteout Glacier he was to die a short distance away in an avalanche below Pichler's Perch. Although the name doesn't seem to have remained to date, the cabin on the Whiteout was named by the club as Hans' Hut.

No further hut construction was planned or even possible so soon after the Whiteout venture went through. The treasury of the small but active club was empty. However, late in the summer of 1968 an anonymous donor came up with \$1,000 for another hut and before the end of August the Eklutna Traverse was complete with three huts. The Eagle Glacier hut was designed by the same Tony Bockstahler who designed Hans' Hut, and materials were helicoptered in from the Eagle River Rd. Most of the crew was flown in again by Lowell Thomas: Ted Shohl, Dave Meyers, Andy Goulding, Andy Anderson, Barney Seiler, Keith Bittner and Frank Nosek. After three days of construction (and of course rock-piling), the hut was finished. The hut became known later as Rosie's Roost in honor of the anonymous donor.

The MCA huts have a colorful history in terms of the people who built them, the first ascents which were made from them, and the people who spent many stormy as well as lovely nights in them. Hopefully in another twenty years our children will still be able to use them. Hans, Joe, and Rosie would have liked that I think.

Willy Hersman