



MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

BOX 102037

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA 99510

JULY 1990

Volume 33, Issue 7

JULY MEETING

July 18 7:30 pm Wednesday, top floor of the Pioneer Schoolhouse, Third and Eagle Sts., downtown Anchorage.

SLIDE SHOW Details unavailable at press time, but will feature an outstanding trip somewhere in the Great Land.

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

July 13-15 CROW CREEK - BIRD CREEK

Approximately 16 miles one way (?). Class C. Not an established trail.

Leader: Bill Wakeland 563-6246

15 THE WEDGE

Run or bike via the Powerline Road. Climb via the west ridge. 12 miles round trip. Class C. 55 Ways #32.

Leader: Karen Cafmeyer 345-7546

Jul 20-Aug 5 ARCTIC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Group size limited to 9. Trip is full.

Leader: Don Hansen 243-7184 h, 271-4565 w

July 22 EAST TWIN PEAK

Elev. gain 4400, 10 miles round trip. Class D. 55 Ways #41.

Leader: Ken Schoolcraft 248-4132

August 4-5 SOUTH FORK EAGLE RIVER

Hike up the valley; climbs are possible. Class B.

Leader: Karen Cafmeyer 345-7546

11 PIONEER PEAK

Climb the landmark of the Matanuska valley. 6300' elev. gain. No brush. Need helmet, harness and ascender, and extra water bottle. Class E.

Leader: Neil O'Donnell 274-5069 h 276-1700 w

18 HOMICIDE PEAK

Mountain bike through Powerline Pass and scramble up this Chugach climb. Class C.

Leader: Don Hansen 243-7184

- August 25 PESTLE PEAK
 Located on the Kenai Peninsula above Crescent Lake. Class C.
 Leader: Tom Choate 333-5309
- Sept 1-3 LOST LAKE
 Traditional MCA trip. Excellent trail and campsites. Climb of Mt. Ascension is not only possible, but likely for those interested. Class B for the hike, D for the climb.
 Leader: Karen Cafmeyer 345-7546
- 8-9 BIRD PEAK
 12 mile round trip. Elev. gain 2500'. Hike in Saturday and camp in alpine valley near small lake. Sleep in Sunday or climb the peak (additional 3000'). Return Sunday afternoon. Some brush and side-hilling. May use mountain bikes, if interested. Class C to lake, Class D to summit.
 Leader: Neil O'Donnell 274-5069

The Hiking and Climbing Committee is always looking for leaders. If you have an idea for a trip, whether an afternoon or several weeks, give Tom Brigham a call at 279-4444. H and C Committee: Tom Brigham, Chairman, B. Wakeland, D. Hansen, K. Cafmeyer, T. Choate, N. O'Donnell, W. Hersman.

TRIP REPORTS

Baleful's East Face

Willy Hersman

It's said that starting a trip in the rain is good luck for later on, but when biking around Eklutna Lake on June 23rd, with mud flying up my backside, I would never have believed that the sun was going to shine for the remainder of our ten-day excursion to the far end of Chugach State Park. Tom Choate, Ken Zafren and I met up with Jim Sayler around noon after hauling heavy packs up the East Fork Trail to where he'd been camped for the night, and proceeded to grunt our way up and out of the valley bottom. We made a late camp above the Baleful Gorge, south of the south summit, and enjoyed the wildlife nearby, a real treat if you ever get up that way.

Jim and I noted less snow than the same time last year as we crossed a 5450-foot pass and slid over crevasses on our way to the east face of Baleful Peak (7950+). We camped near the base of a prominent cliff, smoothed over by a glacier which used to cover it at one time. Several waterfalls pour over this 300-foot high cliff. So recent is the melting of this hanging glacier from the cliff that it is not evident on the USGS topo sheet; the contour lines are deceiving. Menacing rocks and seracs tumbling over the cliffs complicate matters, and as yet no way has been found to bypass the mess on ledges.

On the morning of June 25th, Tom began the first of three leads which would take us above to the glacier. He had scoped out a nice crack the night before, and wasted no time proving it would work. Natural chockstones were used as much as anything for protection and a large one provided a great anchor for a fixed line. As I belayed Tom over the last pitch (the crux, at about 5.4), Jim came up the line and three hours from starting we were ready for some walking. Ken elected to watch as we disappeared out of view.

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None of us had any idea what was above since we'd never seen it, but felt very relieved to find that a long couloir extended from the hanging glacier to the major notch between the south and north summits. It was taylor-made, with an easily crossed bergschrund and great step-kicking for 2000 feet. It seemed like we'd be on top in no time, only 500 feet to go, but then the route-finding got interesting. Tom, the master-scrambler, was in his element.

Quite a bit of time was spent deciding on the route; the ridge looked good in profile, but turned out to be very knifey. Increasingly the gullies looked less inviting too, but Tom insisted that the previous parties must have taken a gully somewhere. I spent some time checking the ridgeline as he sped on ahead, and then Jim and I waited a while for his report. He'd been right, because the next time we heard from him was a yell from the summit.

The point where Jim and I stopped was near a risky bit of ice above a nasty drop and though Tom had done fine on it, that didn't really change its nature. I gave up on the ridge idea since Tom had taken all the pro with him and decided to go with his route. Jim elected to wait. This was at about 7700 feet. Two more gullies over I met Tom on his descent and asked if he would like visiting the summit again that pleasant evening, to show me his route. By 9:15 we were on one of the two north summits, having ascended Higgins' chimney just below it.

Of course it is lower than the next one, so we went over there as well. All evidence of previous ascents were gone, but as far as is known we were the third, Greg Higgins having been last in 1980. We dropped a bread bag into a cairn and began a long descent which took us into the next day to camp. Other routes on the east face exist and seem to me preferable to Hoeman's original which takes one over the south summit (quite a bit lower) and encourages much dangerous traversing.

After a rest we continued towards a more easterly glacier which drains into West Fork Hunter Creek via a 4950-foot pass southeast of Peak 5705. A register left by Steve and Jim Hackett in October 1970 called this Siwash Pass, an Indian name for cold and wet. It was hot and dry for us, but not so much for Tom who soloed 5705 ("Siwash Peak") while we waited.

On the 28th the four of us left our camp west of Hunter's Peak, ascended Hackett's Couloir to the pass between Hunter's and Troublesome Peaks and climbed Troublesome (7465) via the north ridge, a second ascent. Nothing remained of any cairn, etc. for that 20-year-old ascent. On the 29th Tom, Ken and I climbed Fissile Peak (6605) via southwest gullies. Fissile shale makes up about 90% of this mountain. Tom and I traversed to 6750 to check out Hunter's Peak and spotted a goat and a sheep tolerating each other quite nicely.

Before June ended we all climbed back up Hackett's Couloir and did the south ridge of Hunter's Peak (7549), which we can recommend for its rock in the lower half. We found part of a plastic container tied to a rock on top while wind devils whipped rock bits about, and Jim nearly lost his hat. Incredibly the weather still held for the two days it took to get back to Eklutna Lake. It still amazes me that we were doing climbs last done 20 years ago. But then why lug a heavy pack around for free in your back yard when you can pay someone to fly you and gourmet food to the Alaska Range.

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RECENT NAME DECISIONS

Two recent decisions of the Geographic Board of Names may be of some interest to members. The Board is changing the practice of publishing its decisions on a quarterly basis, and will only issue an annual list at the end of the year. Please note:

Jackpot Peak (2850), 1.7 miles west of Jackpot Island, Prince William Sound, Sec. 28, T 3 N, R 7 E, Seward B-4.

Keenan Peak (8890), 9 miles southeast of Nabesna, Wrangell-St. Elias National Park, Sec. 11, T 6 N, R 14 E, Nabesna B-4; named for "Joe" Keenan, former Director of the Alaska Division of Lands.

HISTORY CORNER

Willy Hersman

Magpie Peak (5812) is one of the Crow Pass peaks sitting between Raggedtop and Crow. It has easy access for several possible routes, from the Crow Pass trail or from the pass itself. None of the routes is very appealing in terms of the rock, of course. On June 12 Jim Sayler and I climbed from Crow Glacier to the NE ridge, mostly on snow, and followed a fairly reasonable line along the ridge to the summit. We were pleasantly surprised to find that the several gendarmes, visible from the parking lot, were no obstacle to us.

The climb was interesting to me in that it cleared up some early climbing history. Grace Hoeman, in 1969, just two months after Vin's death, decided to do some register housekeeping in the area, apparently to tie up some loose ends that Vin had intended to get to some day. Alone, she climbed the NW ridge of Raggedtop to find no register, only a cairn. Then she traversed the gendarme-plagued ridge connecting to the SE summit to get a register left by Vin two years earlier. Not finding this, she re-traversed the ridge, getting bruised by the fins of slate protruding up, put a new register on the summit and climbed back down her ascent route. (See Scree article, July 1969, p. 5).

Then she set her sights on Magpie's SE ridge, and proceeded with rope, pitons, etc. to climb to that summit in order to locate another register, if it existed, left by the Hart party of 1960. The nature of the rock becoming apparent to her as the ridge steepened, she abandoned her useless pitons and other hardware and just went for it. She reached the summit, found no register and no cairn, wondering at the time whether or not the 1960 ascent was a false claim. Her solo descent of the same ridge must have been a lot of fun.

Jim and I essentially destroyed the cairn looking for Grace's sardine-can register, gone by now. On our way back along the gendarmes I paused for a moment on a high point and noticed an old jar laying on the surface. This was the register Grace had searched for. The decaying paper had one entry, 30 years and two days old, from the five-member Hart party. It was pretty obvious they hadn't gone further, and why not is still a mystery, since the climbing is not bad and the weather, by their admission, was fine.