



AUGUST 1993

A Publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc.

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Box 102037, Anchorage, Alaska 99510

## AUGUST MEETING

Wednesday

August 18, 7:30

Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets  
Downtown Anchorage

**Slide Show:** Slides of local climbs will be  
shown by Mark Fouts.

## TRIP REPORTS

### Big Timber Peak

by Willy Hersman

Climbs in the Western Chugach which are approached from the western boundary are kind of rare. As I was crawling beneath yet another alder branch above the Knik River I could only think of one other climb I'd read

about from this direction. Grace Hoeman, in 1970, probably had similar thoughts to mine when she climbed Mt. Palmer. There must be a better way.

Bertrand Poinsonnet, Randy Howell and Isaac Howell were trusting that I'd figured this all out before starting. I didn't tell them any different. We'd had an easy day following the river from the end of the road on July 24th, the day before. In fact, it had taken us only two hours to go as far as we wanted, not caring to struggle through the jungle with big packs. Seven miles remained to the summit of our peak, and we'd do it all on Sunday.

The mosquitos greeted us as soon as we hit the brush in the morning and followed us for 2700 feet of noisy bashing. Devil's club was in full bloom, with umbrella-like leaves hiding stalks of dense thorns, some as strong as small tree branches. I held my arms in the air like a captured outlaw as I walked through gardens of them. Alder branches, pointing downhill, further arrested my progress as I cursed their existence and wondered of their worth on the planet. My boots filled with muck in bog patches hidden in the weeds, and sneezes filled the air from our thrashes in the tall pollen-laden grass.

## HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

- |      |       |   |
|------|-------|---|
| Aug  | 28    | <u>East Twin Pass</u><br>Class C. See 55 Ways # 41.<br>Leader: Marty Bassett 694-3917   |
| Sept | 11-12 | <u>Bird Peak</u><br>Class C. Chugach State Park. Third annual attempt to beat the weather.<br>Leader: Neil O'Donnell 274-5069 |
|      | 25-26 | <u>Ice Climbing School</u><br>See description in this issue.<br>Coordinator: Paul Denkewalter 272-1811                        |



Bertrand seemed unbothered by the Satanic Salad. He'd charge ahead through the mess, like a bull moose, stopping only to clean out the watermelon berries he'd find, a plant he'd just discovered. "What else can we eat out here?", he asked. Raspberries, cranberries, blueberries, bearberries, bunchberries, all kinds of berries were out and ripe. We all looked curiously at the rare and juicy cloudberry, not knowing they were edible. They're still there if anyone cares to pick them.

What's not there to pick anymore is the first ascent of Big Timber Peak. After crawling above the brush, we traversed the slopes above the river and dropped into Big Timber Creek, which probably hadn't seen many footprints of the human kind. It's a wonderful valley dominated by the north face of the peak, with a hanging glacier and a nice wall of Chugach rock. We chose a rib which leads into the face and scrambled up scree and easy rock bands to the summit ridge. The summit looked untouched, at 6675 feet, the highest one left in the Western Chugach. We wrote our names in a jar and looked around a bit, hoping to keep the moment forever. Hunter Creek looked less brushy from above.

We thought we had a better way down, but ended up in the thick of it anyway. The downsloping branches seemed to help us exit to our camp, but the needles and thorns still got in their last licks. It was getting late as we reached the river, and we decided to ford it, instead of creeping along the banks in a couple of places. It required locking arms. With our feet near numbness we sloshed past floating ice cubes.

Bertrand and Isaac seemed as fresh as they had 19 hours earlier when we reached the road. I was jealous of their ages and fell into the car with a long sigh, swearing off the brush forever once more. By next year I'll have forgotten it again.

## ADZE



### Call for Presentations

Third Annual

Alaska Outdoor Education Conference  
Relationships: The Fourth "R"

March 25-27, 1994. Advertising space

in the program guide and exhibit space

available. For presenter's packet, or more

information, contact Todd Miner, Alaska

Wilderness Studies, UAA, 3211 Providence

Dr., Anchorage, Alaska 99508. 786-1468 786-1563 (fax).

### Plastic Climbing Boots

Lowa Quantums; Size 10; good condition, they just don't fit well. \$199.

Gordy Vernon owner. Contact Willy Hersman 265-1447 days.

### Ski Bindings Needed

Berwin Bindings for Antarctic Expedition

Dolly Lefever 243-7027

Carolyn Vaughn 694-1451



## TECHNICAL ICE CLIMBING SCHOOL

place: Matanuska Glacier

date: September 25-26

fees: \$ 5.00 equipment replacement fee  
\$12.50 access to glacier and camping

meeting: Thursday, September 23, Pioneer School house 7:30 pm. This meeting is mandatory, so plan to attend.

The school will present the techniques necessary to become at least a competent second on steep ice. We will not emphasize glacier travel techniques.

### PRE-REGISTRATION WILL BE REQUIRED.

Sign-ups are at the August and September meetings for MCA members only. If you cannot attend by the September meeting you may call Paul at AMH, 272-1811. We will not be signing up students (or new members) at the organization meeting on the 23rd. All students should be members by the September MCA general meeting since AMH does not collect dues.

An equipment check will be done at the organization meeting on the 23rd. Students are required to bring their boots, crampons and ice axes for inspection. Club equipment will be handed out. (The club has limited supplies of crampons, ice axes and helmets.) Fees will be collected. Questions will be answered. **ALL STUDENTS MUST ATTEND.**

⌚ The school will begin at 9:30 am on Saturday, September 25th, at Matanuska Glacier at the parking lot closest to the glacier. Plan on leaving Anchorage no later than 7:00 am or go up Friday night (no extra charge in the campground).



## ICE CLIMBING SCHOOL EQUIPMENT LIST

*Everyone must have all equipment underlined.*

- Ice axe - 70 cm or shorter, curved pick with a web sling  
Ice hammer - get one if you can  
Crampons - 12 points, hinged or rigid or foot-fangs  
Helmet  
Harness - 1 or 2-piece or 22 feet of 1-inch tubular webbing  
Locking carabiner - or two regular carabiners  
Rigid-sole boots - plastic boots are best  
Lunch - for two days, a thermos is a good idea  
Wind parka and pants - Goretex or other semi-waterproof  
Pile or wool pants - definitely no jeans or cotton  
Pile or wool jacket - or synchilla, polarguard, whatever they have these days  
Wool hat  
Gloves and mitts - bring extras, it's wet out there  
Overmitts - water repellent  
Gaitors  
Sunglasses, sun cream, bandana, camera, guitar, violin, sax, trumpet, drums, walkmann, post-climbing refreshments, etc.  
Day pack - for all this junk  
Car camping gear, lawn chairs, salmon roasts, barbeque sauce, campfire stories

## 55 Ways Update



Helen Nienhueser is doing revisions to 55 Ways to the Wilderness in Southcentral Alaska. Her son, John Wolfe, is also helping. Helen is asking MCA members for information on changes they may have noticed to the descriptions found in the last edition (third edition). She also has an invitation to anyone in the club to help by either taking trip descriptions with them or going on trips with her or John during the last half of August.

Please contact: Helen Nienhueser 277-9330  
John Wolfe 279-4663



## Climbing Notes

Jim Sayler and Phil Fortner report that they climbed recently in the Coal Creek area of the Chugach Mountains, making a second and a first ascent of two peaks over 8000'. Alabaster Peak, 8065, had not seen an ascent since 1970 when it was first done by Bob Spurr's party from the Spectrum Glacier. This second ascent was over thin snow and ice on the northwest face. Spurr's register was retrieved.

Ambrosia Peak was suggested after a first ascent of 8260, south and west of Alabaster. Jim and Phil chose the north ridge. Awesome Peak, north of Alabaster has one ascent and Awful Peak, 8170, northwest of Awesome, remains unattempted.



The American Alpine News reported recently on a U.I.A.A. Safety Commission statement that it recommends the friction or Munter hitch as the safest method of belaying. This is in contrast to independent studies done by REI in 1988-89 on several belay devices which were shown to give better braking performance than the Munter hitch. The body belay, still taught by most climbing guides and schools is considered unacceptable for belaying on high angle climbs, although it may be the best choice in some alpine situations and for glacier travel. More information is available in a recent *Rock and Ice* article (March-April 1993).

## Editor's Column

### Ram Valley Problems

Hikers and climbers who have been using Prudhoe Bay Road as access to Chugach State Park may find a few changes up there from now on. On a recent outing, Maxine Stoddard and I found that we could not start hiking where we usually do, at Darlene Road, above Prudhoe Bay Road. Not only could we not park there, we could not drive there. A local landowner had chained and locked off the road. To continue with the traditional access, we would have to walk the road to the trailhead and ignore "no trespassing" signs, which until this summer were never there.

This stems from several incidents over the years, most notably this spring, when a thoughtless person parked



along a section of the road blocking part of it with his vehicle. This kept the homeowner from plowing. Later in the spring, someone with a 4-wheel drive truck deeply rutted the road, which made it nearly impossible to drive on. It had to be filled in. Determined not to be hassled by people going up to the park again, the property owner is keeping everyone out.

Here we go again with access problems. All that most of us want to do is get into Chugach State Park. We never destroy property or park in a way to block anyone out, and our objective is not to shoot at wildlife or hassle anyone.

Ram Valley is an excellent place to hike, camp, walk up to a glacier or view Dall sheep and there is no brush to fight. It provides easy access for climbs of Mt. Significant, Cumulus Mt., Pleasant Mt., Raina Peak, Peeking Mt. and the north face of Korohusk. It is also the best access to reach upper Peter's Creek, by going over Bombardment Pass. Six of the Western Chugach's 20 peaks over 7000 feet are reached using Ram Valley.

The next closest access to the valley is not a good alternative. You *could* hike up the Eagle River trail, going beyond all the private property problems, and bushwack your way up a moose trail next to Dishwater Creek. Once you left the brush and reached the hanging valley of Kiliak Glacier you could ascend to a bench on the west ridge of Korohusk Peak and skirt the ridge to reach another hanging valley south of Cumulus Mt. Then you could either climb steeply to a pass above 5000 feet and descend steeply to reach upper Ram Valley, or you could climb up to the northwest ridge of Cumulus Mt. and descend its narrow sections until you reached lower Ram Valley. Or you could come all the way in from Peter's Creek. These are very convoluted ways to get there!

While it is true that local residents have a valid interest in protecting their property rights, park users also have an interest in maintaining reasonable access to recreation. Some kind of compromise needs to be worked out in these situations. The park could buy the access (at fair market value), or users could work out an agreement with the locals, or something like that. But it doesn't seem fair that a few can keep the rest of us from what is important to our happiness.

Once again I am reminded of statements used by development-minded people during the 1979 controversy, when Jimmy Carter put much of Alaska into the National Park system. "It will lock up the land," they said. Well folks, I'm sorry, but just the opposite is true. Private ownership locks up the land. Chugach State Park has enough natural defences to keep users from getting in. We don't need man-made ones.

## MCA Trip Classifications

The classifications below do not take into account individual trip hazards such as river crossings, scree slopes, snow fields, bears, etc. Trip leaders are required to inform the trip participants of any such hazards either verbally, on the sign-up sheet, or in the trip description. Leader approval is required for participation on all trips.

**NON-TECHNICAL:** Following are a few standards used to classify non-technical trips. The classification is made in terms of hiking distance and altitude gain. Many trips are not on established trails.

**CLASS A:** Easy hikes with a maximum distance of 8 miles for day trips or 4 miles per day for overnight trips. Altitude gain up to 1200 feet.

**CLASS B:** Trips involving a maximum distance of up to 12 miles for a day trip or 6 miles per day for an overnight trip. Altitude gain of 1200 to 2500 feet.

**CLASS C:** Trips up to 15 miles for a day hike or 8 miles per day for an overnight trip. Altitude gain up to 3500 feet. Scree, steep grass or other rough terrain problems may be encountered.

**CLASS D:** Hikes and climbs with an altitude gain of over 3500 feet or a distance of greater than 15 miles for a day-hike or greater than 8 miles a day for an overnight trip. Peaks in this classification may require minimal climbing skills.

**CLASS E:** Hazardous climbing conditions may be encountered. A basic mountaineering course may be required.

**TECHNICAL:** Technical trips are open to all qualified climbers. However, the registration on any particular trip must be restricted to a safe and manageable number of climbers. Registration is made directly with the leader, who determines the qualifications needed for the trip.

**GLACIER TRAVEL:** Trips requiring roped travel over glaciers. Knowledge of crevasse rescue, and ice axe and crampon skills are required. Basic understanding of ice and snow anchors is also required.

**FIFTH CLASS:** Trips which involve fifth class climbing. A Basic Mountaineering course or equivalent is required. Knowledge of belay and rappel techniques and placing anchors is required. Climbing difficulty varies widely with each trip.

**TRIP PARTICIPANTS** have the obligation to acquaint themselves with the nature of the trip and to verify that it is within their capability and experience. Anyone wishing to participate in any trip above CLASS A must have completed one or more trips of the next lower classification, or the equivalent.

Approved by MCA Board, March 1987

