

JUNE 1994

*A Publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc.*

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Box 102037, Anchorage, Alaska 99510

## JUNE MEETING

Wednesday

June 15th, 7:30

Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets

Downtown Anchorage

**Slide Show:** A Tour through Scotland by Jonathan Rose.

## HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

- June 11-12 Wiliwaw Lakes and Peak  
Western Chugach. Hike to lakes on Saturday, climb on Sunday. Need ice axe and self-arrest ability. Class C. See 55 Ways trip 33.  
Leader: Dennis Morford 522-1179
- 18-19 Flute Glacier  
Near South Fork of Eagle River. Class Glacier Travel. Need ice axe, harness, crampons. Contact leader for details.  
Leader: Dave Logan 276-2666
- 18-19 Flattop  
Traditional solstice sleepout. Class C. No leader needed. See 55 Ways trip 31.

- 26 Peak 5450  
Western Chugach, Eklutna Lake. Non-technical climb. Class D. Elevation gain of 4500 feet.  
Leader: Mindy Baum 338-6396
- July 2-4 Kesugi Ridge  
Denali State Park. Great views of Denali on this beautiful alpine ridge. Class B.  
Leader: Bill Wakeland 563-6246
- 9 Eagle River Overlook  
High point 5130'. Class C. See 55 Ways #37.  
Leader: Marty Bassett 694-3917
- 9-24 Vampire Peaks, N.W.T., Canada  
This is a return to the area visited last year. Varies from easy walking to technical, both rock and ice. We will have 2 or 3 camps from which we will climb nearby peaks. \$500 flight to the

peaks. Class: Glacier Travel.  
Leader: Dave Logan 276-2666

July 16 South Suicide Peak  
Western Chugach. From Falls Creek trail. Hikers to Falls Lake only are welcome. Class D.  
Leader: Don Hansen 243-7184 h,  
271-6656 w

22-24 Mint Hut  
Nine miles to the hut. Class C.  
Leader: Roy Smith 562-0822

July 23- Arrigetch Peaks, Gates of the Arctic N.P.  
Aug 8 Backpacking trip to this scenic granite mountain area with lots of day hikes and optional easy climbs. Transportation costs are \$600 from Anchorage, but you can save \$200 by driving to Fairbanks. Fly commercial to Bettles, then charter to Circle Lake. Bears may be common. Class C.  
Leader: Don Hansen 243-7184 h,  
271-6656 w

Aug 27 Suicide Peaks  
Western Chugach. Class D.  
Leader: Roy Smith 562-0822



## TRIP REPORTS

### Mt. Torbert

by Kneeland Taylor

**M**t. Torbert is across Cook Inlet From Anchorage in the Tordrillo Mts. The best known peak in the Tordrillos is Mt. Spurr, at 11,070 feet, while Torbert is higher, at 11,413 feet. Both are clearly visible from Anchorage, but both are rarely climbed. As far as we know, our ascent of Torbert was the first time it has been climbed from the west, and we believe that this was only the third ascent of Torbert. Its first ascent (Rod Wilson party, 1964) was from the Capps Glacier, and its second ascent (Tom Choate party) was

from the north.

Four of us flew into the Nagishlamina River valley on the west side of the Tordrillos on April 10, 1994. In our group were Dave Johnston (Minus 148), Jim Sprott, Tom Meacham, and me. At age 46, I was the baby of the group. We referred to ourselves as the "geezer expedition." We had a beautiful flight, going quite close to Spurr's crater on the south-west side. The crater was giving off a substantial amount of steam, and looked like the real thing.

We landed in a large wide open area below the terminus of the Harpoon Glacier at roughly 2700 feet. The landing area and conditions were perfect for a plane on skis.

The next day we skied east six miles up the Harpoon Glacier to approximately 5600 feet where we camped below tow ice falls coming down from the north off of Torbert's western ridge. There were few crevasses visible on the glacier, and we had a lovely day, in spite of a light snowfall all day. Dave used the first day to demonstrate on of his better ways of doing things in the mountains; which is that he used two sleds, pulling one behind the other. The sleds did not flip over as my single sled does when I overload it, and Dave was able to reduce the load in his pack to roughly 20 lbs.

The next day we climbed the western of the two ice falls. Avalanche danger would have been a severe problem on many days, but was not for us because we had climbed above most of the clouds, and there was no more than two inches of new snow on top of a very solid base. We camped at 8500 feet, just above the cloud tops and sat in the sun until late evening, enjoying the scenery. Dave used day two to demonstrate his technique of carrying his sleeping bag outside of his pack, so that when evening arrived it was fully dried out.

Wednesday morning dawned cloudy and cold, about -10F. We headed up the icefall, which was easier at this point and reached Torbert's west ridge at about 9300 feet, where once again we climbed above the clouds into the sun. We traversed the ridge upwards toward the summit, encountering some steep icy snow with frightening exposure, but not much else. We placed a few ice screws for protection, and easily climbed up the last portion of the ridge to the summit plateau at 10700 feet. We then proceeded roughly a mile west along the plateau to



he summit.

Only the summits of mountains above 11000 were visible because the clouds had risen to a point where they were just below us, and even occasionally enveloping us. The view was grand as we could see Spurr, the other Tordrillo peaks, Redoubt, Iliamna, McKinley, Foraker and more. For Jim, reaching the summit of Torbert completed all four of the named Tordrillo peaks over 11000 feet and we believe he is the first. For Dave, summit day was another day to demonstrate different ways of doing things. He climbed in bunny boots all day, including front pointing with crampons, and he was not even deterred when the toe bracket holding his crampon together broke. I was aghast when he fastened the pieces of his crampons together with bailing wire. Next trip I'm bringing bailing wire and leaving behind all the other tools and fix-it junk I bring.

On day four we descended all the way to our base camp uneventfully. Dave used day four to acquaint us with another of his time-tested mountaineering techniques, namely washing with snow. The secret seems to be to wait until midday when you are warm from exercise, and the sun is out. Even though it was little more than zero degrees, Dave walked around barefoot for several minutes cleaning his feet in the snow. I later tried snow for cleaning other parts of my body, and found snow to be an effective and humane cleaning agent.

On Friday, Dave, Jim and I set off to climb peak 6750, located SW of and overlooking our base camp. It is an impressive-looking mountain and the highest in the range of 6000-foot peaks lying between the Nagishlamina and Chilligan rivers. We believe that it had not been previously climbed. A new weather system had blown in that night, and Friday was our coldest day, in both absolute temperature and wind chill. We skied about one mile down the Nagishlamina River valley and then started up a steep valley on the SE sided of the mountain. Dave intended to climb the east ridge, and we started up a gully which looked promising. At about 5:00 PM we reached the eastern ridge at 5500 feet. The climbing was difficult, it was cold and windy, and we were a long way from the summit. We downclimbed the gully and I discovered a more promising canyon-like gully. But I was cold, and went back to base camp. Dave and Jim went up the new gully and reached what they believed to be the summit at 10:00 PM.

They may not have made the true summit, however, as the USGS topo sheet shows two points at more than 6740 feet, and they only climbed one, the northern one.

Looking down from the top, Dave and Jim located a much easier climbing route, but descended the way they came up for safety's sake. They arrived in camp at 4:00 AM, under clear skies and Northern Lights.

The next morning Dave proposed naming the mountain "Bumble Mountain," because of all the mistakes in finding a route and the gully they ascended "Kneely's Gully." I am not sure whether I should take his proposal as an insult or not. After all, the gully is obviously the wrong way up the mountain. But what the heck, I would rather have someone propose naming the wrong gully up "Bumble Mountain" after me than many of the alternatives.

While discussing names for Peak 6750, our pre-arranged plane surprised us when it buzzed our camp. We ran down to the plane with our gear falling out all over the field, but eventually got in with everything, and flew home to Anchorage. As we flew out I took a hard look at Peak 6750 and it looked to me like Dave and Jim had not climbed the higher of the two summits. So, Peak 6750 may not be "Bumble Mountain" and the honors will probably go to someone else.

## Point 11300

by Jonathan Rose

**I**t seemed big from the Mountain House, 11300 ft tall, rising 5600 ft from where I stood. It even seemed bigger than Denali, which stood behind, with a tongue of cloud being pushed north over its summit. The wall of the South Buttress provided a backdrop and Reality Ridge and the South East Spur provided the side curtains to this steep snow-capped peak which has no better name than Point 11300. It lies about five miles up the West Fork of the Ruth Glacier. It has been climbed before but our information was limited to an attempt foiled by a forgotten stove, which only reached about 8300 ft. There is nothing like limited research to ensure an adventure.

Our route started from the West Fork of the Ruth, under the watchful eye of Huntington's North Face. We took the longer of two south



facing gullies to the crest of the south west ridge. In the cold of the early morning, and away from the gully sides, the avalanche debris was firm and we cramponed upwards roped together. The angle steepened towards the top, but felt safe. Once on the ridge, the rock was warm and solid. The snow of the previous week crowded on ledges and slopes, obscuring holds, but not providing adequate boot or ax support. Beaver found a way around the first rock steps, up a thin gully with a rapidly diminishing quantity of snow. We had to shuffle our anchor point forward 50 ft to allow Beaver to finish the pitch. Five people crammed onto a stance designed for two created a rope tangle and doubts in my mind.


We continued for another five pitches alternately searching for good snow, clean rock and protection. The snow was extensively faceted and each step was a gamble between boots sliding on rock and a thigh deep posthole. By early evening the sun moved out and a front moved in. We found a spot where there was enough snow for a kitchen and two snowholes. At an angle of 50 degrees it was a low energy dig and we burrowed between rock and snow, pushing a way through the rotten snow, hoping there would be space enough for all of us.

By lunch time the next day, the wind had abated, the clouds had started to disperse but our one day remaining food and fuel was clearly inadequate to continue from 8760 ft to 11300 ft and descend. The most challenging parts of the ridge were above us and we were five people with just two ropes. Three long rappels and a stuck rope took us four hours to reach a palatial bivvy site. We tip-toed down our gully the next morning hoping that it would not slide. We used a mix of rappelling from snow bollards, nuts and rock horns and down climbing to descend. The snow of the previous 24 hours had already released and the last 300 ft were soft, warm and deep in debris.

Looking back up at the ridge from the glacier, we could see our high point. Rockspires, pinnacles and snow benches marked the route above 8760 ft. It was definitely a five day trip in the conditions that we experienced. More if you were unlucky with weather. Perhaps it would be quicker to do the whole horseshoe and descend the east south southwestern ridge. Next time, with less people, with more food, with better weather..... Such is climbing in Alaska; experimental, demanding, surprising and thrilling

## Bird Peak

by James Larabee

 In the weekend of May 14 and 15 nine MCA'ers decided to tackle the SW ridge of Bird Peak. Bird Peak towers high above the north side of rapidly flowing Penguin Creek. The commonly climbed Bird Ridge lies further to the west and is not directly connected to Bird Peak. Bird Peak is identified by name in the SE corner of the Anchorage A7 quad.

Three climbers were compelled to make a one-day sprint of the climb; Tim Kelley on Saturday, Tom Choate and Steve Gruhn on Sunday. All three were amazingly quick and all three made the summit. The rest of us were forced to endure two days of splendid sunshine and some of the best weather that I've seen in this part of the Chugach in some time.

On Saturday we followed an old logging road through Bird Creek valley. After crossing Penguin Creek we followed a fork that climbed along the north side of the creek. Eventually this ATV trail becomes a foot path which side-hills for a mile or two before fizzling into bands of alder. We found an excellent campsite in a grassy avalanche clearing that stretched completely down to Penguin Creek. That evening we had two visitors: Tim Kelley on his way home after picking off the summit, and a black bear that rolled in the grass 300 feet above camp.

Val Chabot and Wayne Todd earned special thanks ( and a few pretzels) for blazing a step-kicked trail up a 700-foot gully that gains the top of Bird's SW ridge. From there we casually followed the ridge, stopping only to admire two mountain goats and for a long lunch. It was there at 4840 feet that Tom Choate caught up to us and then led the charge up the last 1000 feet.

Like so many other peaks, Bird's final challenge was choosing the highest bump to climb for the true summit. Tom had this problem solved as he stuck to the ridge line and climbed them all until he found the highest one. I, along with a few others, chose to take the low road and positioned ourselves underneath the highest point before climbing up. But the difficulty was in deciding which high point was highest. We had narrowed the choice down to two bumps and were 100 feet below the first when Tom began climbing it. I shouted, "Hey

Tom is that the summit?" He shouted back, "Well, it's *one* summit. And there's another *one* over there." In "Tom-ese" that meant the second bump was higher, so I changed course and headed for it.

A bit of a knife-edge and a cornice were our last distractions before spending a sun-drenched hour on top. MCA members who got to enjoy the sun and the climb with me were: Tim, Tom, Steve, Val, Wayne, Mike Paoletti, Riff Patton, and Roy Smith.

## ADZE



<u>AWS Summer Program</u>	
Rock Climbing (Graham Macdonald)	Ice Climbing (Graham Macdonald)
Intro June 1-5, July 11-17, Aug 1-7	Intro Aug 8-14
Intermediate July 25-31	Mountaineering (Karen Cafmeyer)
Rock Climbing II Aug 15-21	Mtrg I May 31- Aug 2
	Ruth Glacier (Graham Macdonald)
	June 8-15

## MINUTES

### MAY MEETING

May 18th 1994. Dave Hart called the meeting to order and had new members introduce themselves.

#### COMMITTEE REPORTS.

##### *Huts.*

Chr. Maxine Franklin requests that she be contacted about disrepairs.

##### *Hiking and Climbing.*

Chr. Don Hansen announced eight trips with leaders commenting.

##### *Parks Advisory.*

Chr. Scott Bailey reported that final plans are being drawn in regards to the trails near Fire Lake in Chugiak, as well as other trails around Anchorage; all in response to public input.

Chugach State Park is seeking volunteers, contact Scott Bailey.

Riff Patton mentioned a meeting to be held at the Loussac Library about the coastal trail.

Dave Hart mentioned State Park plans to re-route the Flattop trail to be more user-friendly. A South Fork resident wants to build a powerhouse at the South Fork Eagle River waterfall. A new cabin may be built on Eklutna Lake.

#### OLD BUSINESS.

The freeze-dried dinners arrived and were distributed.

#### NEW BUSINESS.

Questions were asked about trip leadership guidelines and discussed. Some of the questions were: Do you need to be a member? (No.) What qualifies a leader? (Majority vote of Hiking and Climbing Committee.) When can a leader separate the group? (Appoint a co-leader when needed.)

#### ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Alan Julliard announced a new climbing wall to open June 6 at Anchorage Gymnastics Association, 525 West Potter Dr. (563-3041). It will be the largest in town. They need a part-time employee.

Contact Larry Rundquist (279-7394) or Cathy Gleason (248-0442) for information about the Anchorage Waterways Council's 8th Annual Photo Contest. Deadline: October 31. Subjects should include Anchorage waterways.

Dave Hart is seeking climbing partners for Mt. Bona.

Tom Choate is seeking volunteers for refreshments.

Thanks to Harry Hunt for his slide show of the Cassin Ridge.

Respectfully Submitted,

Roy Smith

