



AUGUST 1994

A Publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc.  
Box 102037, Anchorage, Alaska 99510

Volume 37 Issue 08

## AUGUST MEETING

Wednesday

August 17th, 7:30

Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets  
Downtown Anchorage

**Slide Show:** Dr Bill Cox will present a show  
on *Outer Mongolia*.

### HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

Aug 13-14

~~Peak  
Western Chugach, Class F  
helpful. Mountain needed.  
Jonathan Rose 562-0822~~

20

#### Homicide Peak

Western Chugach. Class C. Mountain bike to near Powerline Pass from Glen Alps. Cache bikes and hike just over the pass and up the peak to the right of the pass.

Leader: Don Hansen 243-7184

20

#### Didilkama

Talkeetnas. Class D. Crampons, ice axe, harness or webbing. Summit block requires some minimal climbing skills. Easy glacier travel involved on Lane Glacier. 4WD helps get to the trailhead. Leader: James Larabee 345-5406

27

#### Suicide Peaks

Western Chugach. Class D.

Leader: Roy Smith 562-0822

### TRIP REPORTS

#### South Suicide Peak


by Don Hansen

**U**nder a partly cloudy sky we started up the Falls Creek trail. As we ascended the trail, the sky became overcast and the wind picked up when we reached the upper valley the ridge leading to the summit. The wind blew strongest in the saddle of the

left ridge which we ascended in somewhat foggy conditions. At least it was not raining. The wind and cool temperature were comfortable for the climb and kept the bugs down. We had good views down the valley and of Indianhouse Mountain and Turnagain Arm, but the view to the north and west were obscured by clouds on our summit. However, this turned out to be a pleasant trip of 5,000 feet elevation gain, a good days' exercise, and good company which included: Rick Malone, Charles Lane, Patrice Icardi, Larry Sorensen, Peter Clifford and Marcy Custer.

## Kesugi Ridge

by Don Hansen

n Saturday, July 2, eight MCA members, Bob and Mary Jo Cadieux, Dave Brown, Bill Sherwonit, Patrice Icardi, Stan Aarsund, Janet Lund and I left Anchorage under gray clouds for Denali State Park and Kesugi Ridge. As we traveled north the weather got much better and we left the Little Coal Creek trailhead and ascended the ridge with sunny skies and great views of Denali and the surrounding mountains. The trail was in good shape with recent brushing. We camped at the small lake just over a knoll from where the trail runs southward on the ridge and crosses Little Coal Creek. We spent the afternoon hiking up to the ridge crest with views down Indian River.


Sunday morning we broke camp under foggy gray skies and headed south as the trail ascended higher up the ridge. Upon reaching a high point we startled a beautiful dark brown fox with black and white markings. It ran across our path and along the ridge line, displaying its bushy white-tipped tail. As the morning progressed, fog continued to roll up the ridge obscuring any view down the Chulitna River or the mountains beyond. At about 1:00 P.M. we met Tom and Charlu Choate, who were camped at ten-mile cairn the night before. Because the weather did not look very promising I decided that we should hike along the ridge as far as our energy levels would take us and perhaps reach the lake where the Kesugi Ridge Trail meets the Ermine Lake Trail. This is where we planned to descend the ridge on Monday. About nine to ten miles from our first campsite on the ridge we found a nice bench and adjacent stream where we set up camp, about one half-mile from the lake where Ermine Lake Trail forks off the Kesugi Ridge Trail. The weather cleared somewhat that evening and I went down the trail a short distance to visit Scott Bailey and his crew of eight hikers camped on a bench on the other side of the stream. Most of his group were planning to come down the ridge at Byers Lake on Tuesday.

Monday morning was gray and drizzle with a high enough ceiling to see down the ridge to the Parks Highway and the Chulitna Lodge where our shuttle vehicle was left to pick up the other cars at Little Coal Creek. The Ermine Lake Trail is easy to follow although brushy, as it gradually descends along the creek drainage coming off the ridge, then plunges very deeply through the forest for the last two to three hundred feet from the ridge (no switchbacks) into the drainage. Surprisingly there is a newly built bridge crossing the fast flowing stream at the bottom of the hill as the trail winds its way around bogs to the highway. There is no trail marker on the highway where the trail begins in an alder thicket about 100 yards north of the Chulitna Lodge.

## Nagoon Mountain

by Steve Gruhn

(Seward D-6, T10N, R3E, S17, NE ¼)

n Friday, July 8, I decided that working on a sunny day was tantamount to a criminal offense. So, after sleeping in late, I headed to Alyeska to go for a hike up Winner Creek.

I headed northeast on Arlberg Road to the new Alyeska Prince hotel. I parked in the tram parking area (no overnight parking) and headed to the tram ticket office at the base of the tram. Skirting some fresh landscaping, I headed behind the tram ticket office and up the hill to the left (northeast). From here a well-marked trail headed into the spruce and hemlock forest. I stopped and signed in at the trailhead, writing Nagoon Mountain (4352) as my destination.

The southeastern portion of the Municipality gets considerably more rainfall than the rest of Anchorage. Consequently, the forests are some of the northernmost temperate rain forest in North America. The ground beside the well-maintained trail was covered with mosses and lush undergrowth. Fortunately, new wooden planking had bridged the many wet spots on the trail so that I did not even get my feet wet. I followed the trail approximately 2.5 miles to a point overlooking the left bank of Winner Creek. Here a sign directs the hiker to either the Winner Creek Gorge downstream to the left or up Winner Creek to the right, beyond the ruins of an old cabin.

I took a right and headed up stream. The trail became much less traveled, but was still in good condition, although there was no more wooden planking. After about a mile of rolling hills, I came across the ruins of the old cabin. Here I found the remnants of a *Saturday Evening Post* from December 20, 1924, with parts of it still in good enough condition to read.

Continuing up the valley, the trees gave way to open country with several favorable camping sites. Further upstream the open country gave way to thick alders and devil's club. Still, the trail continued, with evidence of freshly cut alders. Occasionally, blue survey tape marked the route. At one point it was necessary to cross a stream descending from Winner Creek Glacier (Sec. 14, 24) to Winner Creek on a fallen cottonwood tree. The trail continued, at times on gravel bars, until it abruptly stopped at the confluence of Winner Creek and a tributary (NE ¼ Sec. 13). From here orange survey tape led me up the tributary. Not up the side of the tributary, but rather up the center of the tributary. I waded the knee-deep water until my feet became numb. then I decided to battle the brush until I had my fill of that. I alternated between the two, making my way up the main valley until I could see some spruce trees on the lower slopes of Nagoon Mountain to my right. Figuring that I could make better time when I could see where I was going, I swam through the alders until I reached the base of the hill - Nirvana!

From here it was an easy hike through the forest until I reached timberline. I headed toward the southwest ridge of Point 3240. Once on the ridge, I followed it just south of the ridge line to avoid evergreens and steep rocks. At point 3240, finding no previous human presence, I built a small cairn. the summit ridge of Nagoon Mountain was visible from here, with a spire on the north separated from the main ridge by a steep couloir. This looked to be the highest point.

I followed the ridge southeast, counter-clockwise around the cirque to my left. It was easy fourth-class scrambling until I reached the summit on a separate pinnacle on the north edge of the summit ridge. Here I found no evidence of any previous human visits, so I built a small cairn and left a film canister with a business card in it. I did not leave a pencil, so I scratched the name of the mountain into the back of the card.

Now, ready for the descent, I faced the prospect of retracing my steps through the brush and the creeks. I decided to descend down the stream that emanates from the glacier between Nagoon Mountain

and Lingon Mountain (4075) (T10N, R3E, S17, SW ¼, S.M.). After a short distance, this stream enters a narrow canyon. Figuring I could find some better terrain to the south, I made my way across the alpine tundra, nearly stepping on a very startled cow moose. As I descended, however, the alpine tundra turned into the legendary alder undergrowth of the Chugach Mountains.

This mess was every bit as difficult as before. After crossing a couple of streams, I came to a small opening in the brush where I spied a large rock pile devoid of vegetation. I made my way to this point and actually was able to see more than three feet in front of me.

On the southwest side of this rock pile is a stream that looked to have a direct route to the trail. I waded downstream until the creek turned into a beaver pond. Here wading became closer to swimming. I tried to make my way through the flooded alder, only to have it spit me back out into the pond. After crossing a series of three beaver dams, I rounded a corner and saw the fallen cottonwood that I had crossed earlier in the day. I knew where I was! From this point out the hike was pleasantly uneventful.

After arriving home, I did some calling around and researching of old copies of the Scree. I could find no record of other ascents of Nagoon Mountain. Therefore, I am tentatively calling this trip a first recorded ascent. If anyone knows of other historical information pertaining to mountains in the Winner Creek, Rosehip Creek (flowing from T10N, R3E, S21, S.M.), Glacier Creek or Twentymile River drainages, I would appreciate a call either at home (344-1219) or at work (563-8102).

## Hunter Creek Peaks

by Jonathan Rose

**I**t's easy to report the facts of the trip but to capture the adventure is not so easy, especially in just 1000 words.

Dave Hart and I took a helicopter from Birchwood to Hunter Creek Glacier on July 4th weekend and camped at 4600 feet on a moraine below Hunter's Peak. We had to do a bit of shuttling from the end of Knik river road because the aircraft was so small.



Only Palmer Peak is named on the map, but there are many others. We had four 7000+ foot peaks in our sights, all of which had been climbed but a handful of times. Friday dawned fine and clear and we aimed for Troublesome at the southern end of Hunter Creek Glacier, and Hunter's Peak, a mile or so north west. A hike over glacier and a climb up a snowy gully on the east flank brought us to the snowy ridge crest. Fifteen minutes later we were on the summit. After retracing our steps for a mile we struck off for the south ridge of Hunter's Peak. Loose rock, scree, talus, a few solid boulders, one roped pitch and a lot of effort brought us to the summit. Ten hours of work for our first day. Two hours later we arrived back in camp to an unexpected welcome. An additional tent, Mikki and, to our dismay, fresh pizza in its cardboard box.

Saturday's weather was cloudy but not foul so the three of us headed west for Mountaineer's Peak. A two mile glacier hike and grovel up the loose rock and scree of the south west ridge brought us to a summit ridge of snow. A few false summits later we found the register. On the way down we took a short cut to the glacier down a snow gully which ended in a cliff and some dynamic moves to the bergschrund.

Sunday dawned cloudy with drizzle and rain, but by lunch time things looked promising. Dave and I set out for Devil's Club Peak, northeast of our campsite. We dropped 500 feet to enter a valley below the west ridge of the mountain. About half a mile up the valley we started another grovel up a 1300-foot gully of ball bearing-like scree. Once on the ridge things got better and we topped out an hour later. Downwards was easy and fast.

In three days we had made the third ascent of Troublesome and Devil's Club and the fourth ascent of Hunter's and Mountaineer's - not many places in Europe where that can be done.

The weather on Monday was bad, so we hiked out leaving some of our gear at 2500 feet, below the glacier for the helicopter to pick up.

Others who passed the same way before us will testify to the hardships and uncertainty of bushwhacking up to the glacier, which for us was a quick whisk of \$130; they will testify to the endurance of packing in from Eklutna whilst investing vacation and bruised shoulders in two of the four peaks we picked off in half the time.

Despite the easy access I met obstacles that even when overcome did not give me that relaxed sense of comfort, knowing that it was all downhill

from here on. The helicopter itself was an objective danger to someone who likes to have at least three points of contact when the going gets tough. Piloted by a high school student from Switzerland, who assured me that although he wasn't getting paid, our flight was legal, I had the sense that we were adding unnecessarily to the dangers of the trip.

Glaciers in July never give you the feeling of security. Crevasses starting to feel hungry after their hibernation; soggy snow and balled up crampons; the long and indirect way back to camp. Even on Monday when we finally stepped off the ice, we still had to find our way through seven miles of brush and thicket.

Entering this world is like diving into a submerged cave, not knowing quite where the next breath of air will come from. I found that the fear of entering is worse than the reality, and gravity helped our cause greatly. Of course we had to do a river crossing because there was a known trail on the east bank and we were on the west. For a while I had visions of us reversing our bushwhack and waiting for the helicopter, but through perseverance and necessity we crossed at a spot which was only knee deep. That was a first for me, and perhaps for Mikki and Dave also.

Mikki had injured her knee and was limping so the consequences of missing the trail loomed large. Let's just find it and go home. Half an hour of thrashing brought us to a fair interstate of a trail and the road seemed just a cruise downhill. The trail lead into undergrowth and dwindled, split and disappeared into muskeg. We retraced our steps once. Plenty of bear signs kept us singing, although I'm not sure how cheerful it was. Every time the trail disappeared it seemed to reappear after a bushwhack, twice as wide as before. I was getting used to this way of traveling.

A road does not always signify civilization. Knik River Road is just such a place with hostile signs and no public telephones. By lucky chance the dying strains of the Hunter Creek Folk Festival gave a hint of modern communications. As Belinda answered the phone I knew that at last we had completed the trip.

For me, mountaineering is a learning and growing experience, but how far had I grown and how much had I learned? The answer I hope will be evident next time I head for the hills.

## Mount Hunter's West Ridge

by Dave Hart

**M**orning came all too early. It was 5:30 AM and our two frosty Bibler tents were perched at our 10,500' high camp on Mt. Hunter's classic West Ridge. Last night's 8:00 PM Kahiltna Base Camp weather forecast was not encouraging. I was secretly almost hoping for a storm day to catch up on sleeping and eating in preparation for what we figured would be a 20+ hour summit day. But when Dave peeked outside, he found that May 26 had dawned calm and clear; today was a go!

Three MCA'ers John Howie, Ron Rickman and myself, along with Dave Armon, had left our 6,900' Kahiltna Glacier base camp below Mt. Hunter's Northwest Basin three days before. Climbing alpine style meant that we carried sixty pound packs including 8 days of food and 10 days of fuel each. In anticipation of the many rappel anchors needed to safeguard our descent, our group hardware consisted of 10 ice screws, 8 snow pickets, 40 carabiners, a few chocks, extra webbing, and two 50-meter 9 mil. climbing ropes. Even though a Wyoming pair had made a 36-hour round trip ascent of our route during last summer's excellent weather, we envisioned a more realistic time of five days, assuming no weather or snow condition delays.

Our first morning on the route saw us entering Hunter's Northwest Basin about 6:00 AM, a couple hours ahead of a four-man Colorado team who had set their sights on this same route. Exploring the lower sections of the route during the past two days from our base camp had both our teams in agreement that sharing the trail breaking duties would make it easier for each of us. A storm four days prior had dumped over three feet of snow on our route, and we all had concerns of not only unpleasant post holing, but dangerous avalanche conditions as well. It had been only two weeks since an avalanche injured two Wyoming climbers in this Northwest Basin, which we were using to gain the West Ridge. This, combined with our base camp knoll getting dusted by the powder blast of a nearby avalanche only five hours before, had us slightly unnerved that morning! Still, we were comforted that the hot afternoon sun had begun to consolidate the Basin's slopes during the past two days, and triggered numerous small point releases on our route up to the ridge. We felt we could minimize our risk as long as we were off the slopes before the sun hit them again.

Previous accounts of this Northwest Basin approach had mentioned "some exposure to hanging

seracs" while traveling in the Basin. We all breathed a great sigh of relief as our two hour dash up the debris strewn glacier beneath monstrous seracs finally led to the start of the true climbing at the 8,500' head of the Basin. An initial couple pitches of lower angled wallowing finally gave way to the steeper climbing we had been anticipating for months. Since it was only 8:00 AM, the shadowed slopes above were still well frozen. As the angle increased to forty-five degrees, the snow climbing became more solid and enjoyable. Our running belays consisted of one picket per rope length until we reached the 9,500' base of the couloir we would use to access the West Ridge proper at 10,300'. At this point, the faster Colorado team passed us on their way to the 10,100' Camp 1 just below the ridge crest.

The steepest, most varied and certainly most enjoyable climbing of the day was encountered in this couloir which we climbed on its left side in about six pitches. The fifty to sixty degree snow and ice climbing was interspersed with some steeper rocky sections down low. It was a joy to encounter solid granite after having trained all winter on Chugach crud! As it began to snow, occasional spin drift sloughs would pour down from between the rocks above onto our route. Although not yet dangerous, we were glad when, eleven hours and 3,200' after leaving our base camp, we finally reached our cozy Camp 1 situated on a beautifully exposed narrow spur a couple pitches below the West Ridge proper. We envied the Colorado guys as they had already dug in and were brewing up supper as we arrived.

The snow continued to fall until about 3:00 AM at which point Ron and I dug out our tents from beneath the one and a half feet of new snow. Surprisingly, the weather had cleared by the time we finished a couple of hours later. Even though our second day continued to be sunny and warm, both our teams decided to not move camp in the hopes that the sun and wind would consolidate the new snow and make our traveling easier the next day. So as not to have the day a total loss, two of the Colorado guys spent a few hours scouting the next four pitches up to the base of the 10,600' point on the West Ridge. We were all envious watching them climb the beautiful seventy degree ice pitch up from our camp to the ridge crest, although our hearts game basking in the afternoon sun was enjoyable, too!

Day 3 saw us again leaving camp before the Colorado team, although they caught up to us at the base of the 10,600' point on the West Ridge. To avoid route congestion, we traversed the point through the rocks on the right, while they took the steepest most direct route over the top. John led us through the first



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crux, an exposed rock step. Easier, yet exposed, traversing on snow and ice found us one pitch below the top of point 10,600'. Dave led the next short vertical ice step and finished up through mixed terrain. Both groups reached the top of point 10,600' simultaneously and continued on to the saddle between points 10,600' and 10,800' early that evening. We chose to make our high camp here at 10,500' rather than carry everything up and over point 10,800' to the traditional high camp. We felt we could make better time across this terrain in the morning with light summit packs, and we wanted to get to bed as early as possible for our long summit day.

The huge cornices hanging from the ridge crest made it apparent how inhospitable this ridge can be during a storm. Fortunately, on that evening there was barely a breath of wind, although the weather forecast was for increasing clouds and snow through the night. Brewing up water, eating dinner and packing for summit day kept us busy until after 10:00 PM. We all went to sleep wondering what tomorrow's 5:30 AM wake up alarm would have in store for us.

... May 26 had dawned calm and clear; it was a go!

Summit packs are always disappointingly heavy. Still, we didn't want to risk an unplanned bivouac without essential survival gear. Each of us carried food, water, a down parka, pile pants and extra gloves and socks. Our group gear consisted of a shovel, a stove and cook set, a CB radio, a bivy bag and a foam pad. We left high camp just after the Colorado team at 7:45 AM under sunny and clear skies.

Surmounting point 10,800' was straightforward, and except for a few crevasses along the ridge, we reached the 10,600' saddle at the base of The Shield without difficulty. The Shield is a very exposed nine pitch forty-five to sixty degree snow and ice face one must climb and traverse to reach the relatively easy ground from 11,200' to just below the summit plateau at 13,000'. Our running belays again consisted of one picket or screw per rope length. Although I tried not to look down too often, the ever steepening 3,500' of exposure to the glacier below was quite a sight. With only half a pitch of cornice traversing left to reach Ron and John at the base of the easy slopes, the ground suddenly shook beneath my feet with a roar. Ron and John looked up just in time to see the bottom half of one of those monster cornices on the opposite side of the knife-edged ridge we were traversing drop 3,000' to the glacier below. We appreciated the reminder that we were merely visitors on this wild ridge and that we should tread lightly.

After a quick lunch break in intermittent clouds, we could see the Colorado team a couple hours in front of us approaching the serac band guarding the summit plateau. Apparently in some years these seracs can be impassable, so we were encouraged by their speed in gaining the summit plateau. Although a few clouds continued to roll in and out, we couldn't have asked for better weather as we topped out onto the summit plateau at 3:15 PM.

At last, our route up the final summit ridge of Hunter's North Peak could be seen in profile from our new vantage point. After crossing the half mile wide plateau, an initial two pitch ice couloir followed by some mixed snow and rock climbing along the ridge crest would lead to the final 1,000' of straightforward ridge climbing to the summit. We could see the Colorado team just finishing the mixed section and judging from their progress, we knew our evening was just beginning.

Dave led across the bergschrund and found the fifty degree ice in the couloir varied from friendly and plastic to hard and brittle. Unfortunately both Dave and I got a little over zealous in our axe placements near the top of the couloir and we each broke the pick from one of our tools on some thinly iced rocks. No wonder we couldn't get a good placement in that section! Fortunately we were finished with the difficult ice and all that remained were a few pitches of running belays along the mixed rocky ridge leading to the final 1,000' summit ridge.

The Colorado team passed us on their descent about 6:30 PM at 13,500' with tales of great views from the summit. We were almost there!

The 8:00 PM weather forecast found us not quite on top, so we took a few minutes to find out what our nighttime descent had in store for us. Unfortunately, flurries were still predicted through the night and into the morning. During each of the past several days the weather had been better than predicted and we again hoped for the same good fortune. We picked up the pace as best we could and reached the 14,570' summit of Mount Hunter twenty minutes later, twelve and a half hours after leaving our 10,500' high camp.

The view was, as promised, wonderful. Even though we could go no higher, Denali and Foraker still seemed to dwarf our position. Down on the 13,000' plateau we had crossed five hours earlier, we could see the Colorado team preparing to descend onto the West Ridge. Fortunately, the wind was only about 10 mph and the temperature hovered around

live degrees. All things considered, a very pleasant summit evening. Our stay lasted only about ten minutes; long enough to snap a few photos and catch our breaths.

Two and a half hours of down climbing and four rappels later found us back on the summit plateau. Having run out of water hours earlier, we took a half-hour break to brew up for the descent. As midnight came and went, the clouds held off long enough for us to be treated to a wonderful display of pink and orange alpenglow before descending onto the West Ridge. The wind and spin drift picked up during the next few hours and made waiting at the rappel anchors rather uncomfortable. As it began to get light again the wind fortunately died down and the visibility increased.

We all felt and looked like zombies as we staggered back into high camp at 6:15 AM; eleven rappels and almost ten hours after leaving the summit. Our twenty-two and a half hour summit day had drained us physically and emotionally, and after a quick breakfast, we dove into our tents for some much needed sleep.

Five hours later, we woke to decide when we would descend to our base camp. We wanted to travel through the Northwest Basin in the middle of the night, so we planned to leave high camp around 10:00 PM that night. The Colorado team was even more anxious to get down and left around 5:00 PM. We rested for the remainder of the day and began our descent as planned, five hours behind the Colorado team. Upon reaching our first camp around midnight we were surprised to see the Colorado team camped there. Apparently they did not like the late afternoon snow conditions, so decided to spend the night there and start again early in the morning.

We opted to continue our descent as snow conditions had improved considerably through the evening. After nine rappels and an hour of hurried traveling beneath the hanging seracs, several of which had calved off during our five day absence, we reached our base camp at 8:00 AM. As we were digging out our cache and packing up our sleds, we could see the Colorado team just beginning their descent. For the first time in five days, we actually beat them somewhere!

During the three mile ski back to the Kahiltna Glacier landing strip, I would occasionally glance up at Hunter and amaze myself with what we had put ourselves through during the past two days. Not only did we reach the summit, but more importantly we came back better friends than when we left. For me,

that's how one must judge the success or failure of a climb, and we succeeded in a big way.

## Mount Bona's Northeast Ridge

by Dave Hart

**I**t was early June and I still didn't have commitments from any climbing partners or a glacier pilot for a hopeful ascent of 16,500' Mount Bona, in the Wrangell Mountains. Fortunately, during the next week both problems were resolved as Paul Claus agreed to fly MCA'ers Paul Barry and myself, along with Norm Lawler onto Mount Bona.

One hour after arriving in Chitna for our 2:00 PM pickup on June 16 the three of us were airborne in Ultima Thule's DeHavilland Beaver. Our next stop was the Claus' remote wilderness lodge nestled along the Copper River in the heart of the Wrangell - St. Elias National Park. A quick lunch of sandwiches on homemade bread and homemade cookies greeted us as we landed at the lodge. After a much too short stay of less than an hour, we were again airborne heading for the 10,400' level of the Klutlan Glacier on the south side of Mount Bona.

A three man Ultima Thule guided party was waiting at base camp when we landed. They had summited the day before and weren't due to be picked up for three more days. Needless to say, they were pleased to see us. It turned out that the guide was a fellow I went to college with back in Colorado and whom I hadn't seen since two years ago on Denali. Small world.

Flying from sea level to 10,400' had a noticeable affect on our physiology so we planned to take it easy for the first couple of days on the mountain. We awoke our first morning to what would become the norm for the next nine of eleven days: winds, white-out and snow.

During the next three days we wanded the route to, carried gear to, and finally moved to our first camp at 12,500', much of the time with visibility limited to less than one rope length. Fortunately we had over two hundred wands, enough to mark the entire trail from base camp to summit. It turned out this was a necessity for this trip.

The weather worsened during our next three days at camp 1 and we found ourselves shoveling out our tent on a regular schedule. One method we discovered for increasing the time between shoveling





duties was to build a second snow wall upwind about 5 meters beyond our primary snow wall. This acted as a wind break and most of the snow that would have piled onto our tent collected in this moat between the walls.

Finally, on our seventh day on the mountain we saw our first day of clear skies. Although it was still windy, we'd take it! We moved camp up to 14,300' and by early afternoon we were dug into our high camp hoping for a second day of good weather. The views were amazing. So many of the big mountains I'd only read about could be seen in the distance: Mounts Logan, St. Elias, Bear, Steele, Lucania and countless smaller unnamed and unclimbed peaks. The moonrise that night over the Mount Logan massif was something none of us will ever forget.

We woke at 4:00 AM on June 23 and found that although the twenty to thirty mile-per-hour winds had not died down, the skies had remained clear. We left camp on skis at 6:00 AM and switched to crampons around 8:00 AM after skiing across the 15,000' plateau between Mounts Bona and Churchill.

The wind was noticeably stronger as we reached 16,000'. We had been warned that the final northeast summit ridge seems endless, and this rang especially true in the fifty mile-per-hour winds. A constant plume of snow screamed hundreds of feet off of Mt. Churchill's 15,500' summit ridge only a few miles away. Our climbing rope bowed out horizontally, never touching the snow between us. The angle at which we leaned into the wind as Paul led us up the last quarter mile to the summit was almost comical. Throughout the winter, back in Anchorage, I would hike up Flattop with my hand-held anemometer on especially windy evenings to practice climbing in winds like this. The only difference here was the altitude. Gusts on the final summit ridge were certainly at least sixty miles an hour. Because of this, our 10:00 AM stay on Mt. Bona's summit was limited to only about two minutes; enough time to snap a couple photos.

Our original plan had been to consider an ascent of Mt. Churchill this same day. After dealing with Bona's winds and seeing the huge plumes shooting from Churchill's ridge, we decided that our main goal of summiting Mt. Bona had been realized. We hurried back to high camp with our tails between our legs. Although the skies were still clear, the winds persisted and we had an uneasy feeling about the weather. Rather than spend the afternoon resting in camp and heading down in the morning, we felt we could rest much easier knowing we were back in base camp. The less time spent in our exposed high camp,

the better. By 2:00 PM our packs were loaded and we were off to base camp.

Three hours later with our base camp in sight, and only one more crevasse bridge to cross, our luck ran out. Paul crossed the eight foot wide bridge without trouble, but Norm only made it to the far edge before the entire length of the bridge collapsed in a wave-like fashion for one hundred feet to either side of Norm. The displaced air from this bottomless crevasse worked its way through a maze of unseen chambers, and geyser-like snow plumes shot out from numerous nearby slots. What a sight! For a moment, Norm held on to the far edge of the crevasse lip, and it seemed like he would be able to inch himself out of the hole. Then he was gone, and I felt the gentle tug of the weighted rope as it became taught upon both Paul and I. The next hour was spent extricating first Norm and then his pack from twenty feet into the crevasse. I've never seen such a happy camper as Norm after he climbed out of his slot. Even from base camp half a mile away, this crevasse looked huge!

Our pick up day was three days off, but we hoped John Claus would be in to check on us and hopefully pick us up as early as the next day. We spent several hours digging out and reinforcing our base camp under sunny skies in case the sun dogs we had been seeing all day long did in fact alert us to another impending storm.

We were not at all surprised to wake up later that night to our tent being buried yet again by blowing snow. Our thirty-six hour window of good weather had come to an end and the shoveling had begun again.

On our intended pick up day three mornings later, we were surprised to wake up to the sound of a small aircraft at 7:00 AM. We got on our radio and spoke with John who was somewhat concerned about what he thought was a low lying fog layer on the glacier. We convinced him the glacier was clear and quickly set out some runway markers after which he landed his Cessna 185 next to our tents. Norm and Paul grabbed a few things and hopped into the awaiting plane, as I was left behind to pack up camp. Forty minutes later, John was back for me and the remainder of our gear. Oh, what a joy to be heading home after so many days and nights of relentless wind and storm.

I was treated to an unexpected bonus on the flight out. John had to check on a group of three climbers attempting a new route on the southwest side of Mt. Bona. Our flight to these climbers took us on a fly-by around one of the most impressive peaks



in Alaska, University Peak. It is obvious why this has only seen one ascent, thirty-nine years ago. We circled above the basin nestled between Mt. Bona and University Peak for many minutes searching for the climbers and eventually reaching them by radio. They had had enough, and John would be back for them as soon as possible.

Our trip up Mt. Bona can be summarized in two words: wind and storm. We didn't do as much climbing as we did shoveling, reading and card playing during our stay in the Wrangells. But that's OK. We got to know each other much better than before, and had a great time in the process. And that's why I climb.

ADZE

Partners Wanted  
For Ptarmigan Peak, North  
couloir and other climbs.  
John 522-4246



### 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

### General Rules for MCA Sanctioned Trips

1. Proper equipment is listed at the end of the rules.
2. No dogs. (Among the reasons are bear problems.)
3. The leader's suggestions are to be followed. Do not go off alone, return or rush ahead without his (her) permission, and don't ford a stream before the leader assesses the situation. Remember, this is a club trip and the leader must know where all participants are. Anyone separating from the group without the leader's approval is no longer considered a participant in the MCA Sanctioned trip.
4. Trip participants who, in the leader's opinion, put themselves or other members of the group in danger by disregarding the leader's suggestions, shall be subject to sanction by the club. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, reprimand at general meeting, exclusion from future trips, termination of annual membership or lifetime exclusion from the club.
5. You must sign up on a trip roster (club meetings) or contact the leader, and you must have signed the club waiver to be on a club trip.
6. When carpools are arranged, please plan to pay the driver your share without his (her) asking you. Generally \$5 - short trips, \$10 or more for

