



DECEMBER 1995

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

Volume 38 Issue 12

## DECEMBER MEETING

Wednesday

December 20th, 7:30

Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets  
Downtown Anchorage

Potluck Dinner - Please use the following guideline:

<u>Last name starts</u>	<u>Bring</u>
<i>A-D</i>	Salads/Fruits
<i>E-I</i>	Relish Plates/ Breads
<i>J-N</i>	Desserts
<i>O-Z</i>	Casseroles/Veggy Dishes

*M.C.A.* Turkey, Drinks, Plates

**Slide Show:** Bring in 10-15 slides from trips  
you did during the last year to share.

### HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

Dec 16

#### Flattop Solstice

This is the annual sleepout that everyone wants to go on. Picture a cold, wind swept summit with no snow to make walls or caves. A hard, rocky, ice-encrusted bed for 18 hours of sleepless

night. Relentless chilling wind to make you feel even more isolated in your pole-bent house of nylon. So many have expressed desire to participate that a sign-up sheet would be superfluous. Just show up when you want; you know the place. The traditional leader is the club pres. We know he'll be the first headlamp in line, so if you're feeling a bit lost, call him.

Leader: James Larabee 522-3854

Dec 30-Jan 7 XC Hut to Hut in the Colorado Rockies

Ski the 10th Mountain Division Hut system, visiting three high altitude lodges and day tripping in the spectacular Gore Range. This trip is for skiers who do regular vigorous conditioning and have backcountry gear and experience. The entire trip is above 9000'. Participants arrange and provide their own transportation to Denver, CO. Cost of \$430 includes all lodging, guides, and transportation (except airfare). A non-refundable \$100 deposit (made out to Charlotte Clarke) reserves your spot. Send 3 SASEs (Self Addressed Stamped Envelopes) and experience and conditioning resume to leader.

Leader: Charlotte Clarke, Assistant,  
Scott Bailey

Charlotte Clarke  
PO Box 592  
Frisco, CO 80443  
970-668-8353

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6311 DeBarr  
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## TRIP REPORTS

### Summer Ramblings

by Tim Kelley



Peak 6690 - Talkeetna Mtns: Moose Creek Drainage (Anchorage D-6, T 21N, R 3E, S 20). During the Labor Day weekend of 1994 Bill Spencer had given this peak two unsuccessful solo tries while in the area climbing with Willy Hersman and Kneely Taylor. During this

trip Kneely suggested that this peak be called 'Vegetarian.' Why? ... you'll have to ask him.

Wiley Bland, Bill and I, wanting to take care of the unfinished business with this peak, set off on Friday, June 16th, at 9:15 PM from the Mother Lode parking lot for another attempt. Just after midnight I opened the inner door of the Mint Hut to a wide eyed Willy Hersman peering down from the loft. Willy had hiked in to assess recent bear damage to the hut. His

startled look quickly changed to relief when he realized he hadn't been jolted from sleep by the bear barging through the door for another visit.

The next morning the weather said 'CLIMB ON!' so we headed up the Mint Glacier, over Grizzly Pass and descended glacier and snow to Moose Creek. As it was June in the Talkeetnas there was plenty of post-holing, but it wasn't as bad as it could have been. What was amazingly bad was this year's mosquito hatch. I can't remember seeing such swarms of bugs at the high-alpine tundra snow-line.

Following the northernmost easterly tributary of Moose Creek to its headwaters we scrambled 1500 feet of snow and rotten rock to the 6200-foot level of the peak's southwest ridge. On top of the ridge we roped up and started traversing the glacier on the north side of this peak.

From the glacier we could see that rotting cornices on the north side of the summit were calving. We took the glacier route as far as it was safe and then climbed loose rock back to the summit ridge. A large gendarme of crumbly rock soon kicked us off the ridge and we carefully began working our way across the rotten rock gullies of the south face. When we figured that we were far enough along to be under the summit, we climbed upward and hit a small col just to the east of the true summit.

On the summit we had patchy, but decent, views of the Talkeetnas. A treat for me was my first unclouded view of Mt. Besh and Dewlap Peak. Bill and I had ascended these summits in the past couple of years in cloudy weather and I had never seen the whole of them at once. We found no sign of previous ascent on the summit and left a cairn and register.

We scouted alternate descent routes, but ended up retracing our route across the south face, rappelling to the north glacier and following our tracks back to Moose Creek. The new MCA Moose Creek hut wasn't in place yet. But we could see that it will offer good access to new easterly ridge routes up the likes of Troublemint and Doublemint.

After the 2500 foot slog back up to Grizzly Pass, Bill swore for the third time that this was the last time he was climbing from Moose Creek to Grizzly Pass. We cruised across the glacier back to the hut. Arriving just before 1:00 AM, making it 16 hours of climbing for the day, we spread out a smorgasbord of our remaining food on the rocks in front of the hut. All of us being thrashed to satisfaction, we chowed down in celebration of a wonderful day in the Talkeetnas.

After sleeping in the next morning Wiley pushed the pace on the hike out. We left the hut at 9:15 AM and were at the parking lot by noon.

**Peak 6650 - Western Chugach Mtns: East Fork Twentymile River Drainage (Seward D-5, T 10N, R 5E, S 6).** It was Friday afternoon and rain was hammering mid-town Anchorage about as hard as it ever does. The weekend forecast was for more of the same. Our plans were to climb in the Twentymile area, where there is usually much more precipitation than Anchorage. "If it's raining this much here, we'll need SCUBA gear to breath in Portage" I said over the phone to Bill, "I'm bagging out!"

I got up early Saturday, July 8th, to check the weather just in case. I was shocked to see blue sky to the southeast of Anchorage. I quickly called Bill up, "Oh man! We, okay - 'I', screwed up ... let's get out of town!"

Bill rounded up former UAA cross-country skiers Tuomo Latva-Kistola and Patrick Bauer (visiting from Sweden) and we headed out of town at noon. Our destination was Peak 6650, the highest peak in the Twentymile River Drainage.

We boated up the Twentymile River to a point a mile or so past the 'Grass Lake' area. At 4:30 PM we began the five mile trek to the terminus of the unnamed glacier that feeds the East Fork of the Twentymile River. Bill and I had done this section during one of our three previous climbing trips to the Twentymile area. Still, it seemed like there was a lot more wading and bushwhacking than I remembered. Whenever we were able to get out of the brush and follow gravel banks next to the East Fork torrent, we would find a lone wolf's tracks going our way.

At the end of the valley the map shows the glacier reaching the valley floor. The glacier terminus is actually eight to nine hundred feet above the valley floor. (Bill and I have found that there are many inaccuracies in the USGS mapping of this area, but that's another story.) Getting to the glacier is challenging due to steep glacier-polished ledges alternating with unconsolidated glacial till and thick alders.

Right above the terminus of the glacier is a standout landmark of this valley. We call it the Ice Tongue. It's a long hanging glacier shaped like a tongue. Next to the Ice Tongue is a now partially ice free nunatak that we call 'The Perch.' This enchanted rock walled island is topped with tundra ponds and is a favorite hangout for goats in this area.

We climbed along the edge of the glacier and jettisoned extra gear at the 2000 foot snow-line. We prepared for an all-night push to the summit and at 11:00 PM we roped up and headed out onto the glacier.

From a previous trip to this area Bill and I realized that one crux of this route would be getting above the two side-by-side ice falls that guard the upper elevations of this glaciated area. One of the ice falls is about 1200 feet high.

Once out on the glacier, and in the midst of a crevasse field, we ran into the lone wolf's tracks again. They seemed very fresh and I peered into the dimming light to try and catch a glimpse of the glacier beast. The tracks turned away from the ice falls and headed up a series of previously hidden snow fields to The Perch. And so did we.

When the wolf tracks veered off to the top of The Perch we saw that we now had a good snow ramp to follow that would take us above the ice falls. Beneath my breath I thanked the wolf for sharing his secret route with us.

The next 2000 feet of climbing was a constant grade to the east, frequently slowed by crevasse end-running. We were now in the early hours of the morning. The wind picked up from the southeast and an ominous stationary cloud bank hung over us. Black to the north, clear to the south, we were concerned whether it would engulf us or blow away. We hiked on without head lamps. It was still light enough to see without them, which was good, because no one had brought one.

All-night snow and glacier climbing in Alaska near the summer solstice is a real treat. It's something that I try to do every year. The ethereal and persistent late night twilight of this time of year can't be justly described by words. It's an experience that defines why one chooses to live in Alaska.

Around 4:30 AM we reached the 5500-foot level. We were now in the clouds and had to adjust our course to the south to hit the summit. Making our best guess of the direction, we headed up into near whiteout visibility. We stopped several times to reassess our position, and to determine if we were going up or down!

Within an hour the sun began to rise and the thick haze that we were in began to burn off. We climbed a steep ice ridge that finally brought us above cloud level. Except for wisps of clouds that were



quickly dissipating in the morning sunshine, we could see that the day was offering cloudless skies in all directions. We were pumped!

We could now see the summit, bathed in morning alpenglow, a half-mile away. Our glacial route rose gradually to a bergshund which was followed by a final 300-foot pitch of 60-degree snow to the summit. Adrenaline flowing after this last pitch we stepped onto the rocky summit and were floored by the 360-degree panorama. Prince William Sound and the Sergeant Ice Field to the south, endless Main Chugach peaks to the east, Marcus Baker to the north, Cook Inlet and the Aleutian Range to the west.

We stayed on the sun drenched, windless summit for about an hour, as no one was in a hurry to leave such a beautiful site. We found no evidence of previous climbs, so we built a cairn and left a register. Bill and I didn't come to a consensus on a proposed name for this peak. I thought of 'Vigesimal', from Latin for twentieth. Bill suggested 'Sunup' because we reached the summit at sunrise. But then again no name is not a problem. This peak has survived for eons without a whimsical name from lowly mortals.

Our descent followed the ascent route back to our gear stash where we took a short nap. We got back to our starting point at 5:30 PM. The climb had taken 25 hours with 1 1/2 hours of sleep.

**Peaks 3850, 4150, and Mount Alpenglow -** Kenai Mtns: Falls Creek Drainage (Seward D-7, T 9N, R 1E, S 20, 19 and 29) BLAM! .... BLAM! BLAM! BLAM! By reflex I ducked. "What the hell!" I thought, "Someone's shooting at us!" The next barrage of explosions from the woods on the other side of the river were so close together it became evident that we were dealing with firecrackers, not firearms. "Damn 'Firecracker-man'" I mumbled, "Get a life!"

Bill Spencer and I had just kayaked across Sixmile Creek near Sunrise. The 'Firecracker-man' had just given us a send-off to a peak I had wanted to climb for some time.

I had done several climbs in the peaks that are clustered between the Seward and Hope Highways in the past. What had caught my eye was the dominant peak of the ridge between Walker and Falls Creeks - Peak 4150. This peak had the most concentrated contours of the peaks in this area and it looked like it would provide a worthy scramble.

At 1:30 P.M. (okay, so we slept in!), July 23, we set off from the Sixmile and immediately began

bushwhacking upwards to the southeast. We found a safe ford of Falls Creek and climbed through mossy coastal rain-forest vegetation to tundra-line just below the 'Walker' benchmark.

On top of the ridge we looked back over our approach route up the verdant Sixmile Creek valley. Even from 3500 feet above the river we could still hear the powder brain as he continued to blast away. "Firecracker-man!" I yelled out over the valley, "Get - a - liiiiife!"

We now were entering the 'goat zone.' The ridge we were on was swarming with goats, we counted 25 of them. The funny thing about goats is that when they sense that something's not right they tend to climb uphill. Soon we noticed that goats on the main ridge and side ridges were all heading to the summit of Peak 3850. Bill joked that we'd probably have to elbow our way through the goats the last few yards to the top. On top we did get some confused stares from nearby goats now that we were higher than them.

Which of the three high points on this ridge is actually the true summit of Peak 3850 we never figured out. Up to this point the climbing was easy and undoubtedly hunters (most likely successful ones) had been here in the past.

Once past the 3 humps of Peak 3850, the ridge got more challenging as we picked our way up snow and rotten rock to the summit of peak 4150. On top we were reminded why this area of the Kenai is so neat. There is such a wide range of eco-zones in a very small area - ocean, rain forest, alpine tundra and glaciers all within a few miles. Falls Creek with its cataracts, gorges and punchbowls is also very impressive.

It was 6:00 PM and time to make a decision - how to get back before total darkness. We didn't want to down-climb the way we had come up and slam dancing with alders along the Falls Creek valley floor didn't have much appeal either.

We decided instead on a third option - to exit by way of Mount Alpenglow. We descended scree and snow gullies to the northeast, crossed Falls Creek and hammered up 4000 feet to the summit of Mount Alpenglow. Arriving on the summit at 10:00 PM we were awed by a lucent Turnagain Arm radiating in the day's last light.

After 20 minutes on the summit we made haste on the ridge westward down scree, snow and tundra to tree-line. In a now lost race against dark-



As we scurried down game trails, with bear repellent in hand, hooting and hollering to warn bruins of our approach. When the terrain began to flatten, the darkness of the forest canopy began to take its toll on navigation and pace. Inevitably it got much darker and we found ourselves shin deep in muck, trying to squeeze through walls of alders woven with Devils Club.

Just then - "BLAM! ... BLAM!" "Firecracker-man!" we proclaimed in unison and adjusted our course towards the sound. Soon we emerged from the brush right on top of where Bill had stashed his kayak. It was now 1:00 AM.

To the 'Firecracker-man' we would like to say, "Thank you for leading us out of the darkness and the weeds. Even though you are quite obnoxious, you proved that there can be good in not having a life."

## BOARD MEETING

November 9, 1995

The new officers held their first board meeting November 9th and started formulating plans to make 1996 a packed year with a guidebook, more trips and training, improved hut maintenance and great slide shows at the monthly meetings.

### Guidebook

Mark Flanum reported on the progress of the Club's draft guidebook. The initial effort is to describe routes up readily accessible, yet challenging local mountains. He already has received commitments from Club members to write the descriptions for all 20 peaks and plans to present a draft to the Club for comment in the Spring of 1996. Great work Mark!

### EPIRB

Unlike other club equipment available for use by Club members, the recently purchased Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) will have a few rules of its own. The Board discussed conditions of use because the only way to determine if the battery is going to work is to monitor usage of the battery. Replacing the battery after every use is too expensive at \$50 a piece. Some rules will be presented at the December 1995 meeting for the Club's consideration.

### Huts

The Board discussed huts and in particular, hut maintenance. The hut committee hopes to inventory maintenance needs and may plan some Club trips in 1996 to keep the huts in top shape.

### Training

Training trips have proven to be very popular and the Board

explored several ideas to improve and expand types of training to offer.

### Hiking and Climbing Committee

Mark Fouts was appointed and accepted chair of the Hiking and Climbing committee for the 1996 season. The board felt the Club should offer a lot of trips, appealing to a wide range of members.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Mark Fouts

## ADZE



### For Sale

-30 deg synthetic sleeping bag -  
'Slumberjack' \$150.  
New large, lightweight rain coat -  
'Helly Hansen' \$25.  
522-6354

### Wanted

Roomate. Call Wayne, 522-6354

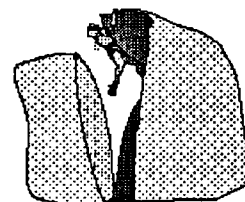
### Wanted

Ice climbing partner. Contact  
John Bradford.

## Climbing Notes

### Thunder Bird Peak

This peak can be a good choice for a long early-season conditioning hike and climb. Bill Spencer and I did this peak at the end of May from the Eklutna Lake parking lot. We climbed up the ridge to the south, dropped down into the Thunder Bird Creek drainage and climbed the northwest ridge to the summit. We descended via the glacier to the north of the peak back to the valley and followed our approach route out. In all, 9 1/2 hours of tundra, snow and easy rock scrambling without much bushwhacking.



On the approach I finally got a chance to use the Leatherman Tool that I had been carrying for years. While bushwhacking upwards from the lake, we came across a porcupine that was scampering up a tree. I climbed up the tree after the

porcupine to frame a close-up shot of it with the Twin Peaks in the background.

The porcupine obliged me by allowing the picture. But as I was climbing down the porcupine decided to twirl around and nail my hand with a flick of its tail. I figured that I got what I deserved as I used the Leatherman pliers to pluck 10 quills out of my fingers and hand!

### Bashful Peak

Future climbers of Bashful - please take good care of the summit register. It's a real gem, in great shape and even has the note from the Rodman Wilson first ascent party in 1959. Make sure it's closed tight and covered well with rocks.

On August 6th Bill Spencer, Tim Miller and I did a 13 hour round trip day climb of Bashful from the Eklutna Lake parking lot. This was our first encounter with the infamous 'Chickenshit Gully' near the 7000 foot level. If the gully is dry or filled with solid snow it's probably not too bad. But we hit it on a day when it was frosted with new wet snow. Slippery wet snow on loose rock - not fun. For conditions like this it's probably better to go around the gully to the right. I've heard Willy Hersman and Jim Saylor talk about this route.

On our descent we opted to rappel, instead of down-climb, the gully because it was so slippery. There's a bomber sling placement for the first rappel pitch. When you near the end of the first rap look to the left for a piton and carabiner above a ledge that you can stand on.

This is an old piton, possibly one of Nick Parker's from the 60's (if you want to hear a good Chickenshit Gully story ask Nick to tell you his). We yanked on it and it seemed really solid so we used it to rap the second pitch. We would have liked to back it up with something else. But the solid cracks here are small and the smallest piece of pro we had was a #3 Wild Country wired nut. To be really safe here one should bring smaller nuts (ha-ha) or pitons.

### Calliope Mtn.

"Athabaskan Indians were ice climbers!" This might be the conclusion of anthropologists of future centuries if they unearth what Bill Spencer dropped on the glacier of Calliope's north face.

John Mitchell, Bill and I were at the Hiland Road trailhead preparing for a late August day-trip of Calliope when Bill realized that he had forgotten his ice axe. Bill shrugged off his oversight and decided to give Calliope a go anyhow.

On the approach, just past Symphony Lake, Bill disappeared into a stand of willows. He emerged with a freshly whittled 'ice axe' carved from a forked willow branch. He joked that in light of current ice tools having names like 'Predator' and 'Piranha', his new creation would be dubbed the 'Beaver'!

Due to our limited technical outlay we decided to circle around to the southeast side of Calliope and work scree gullies to the summit. On top we scouted and decided to descend a route down the glaciers on the north face. The fact that we were soon to run out of daylight, and no one had head lamps, also contributed to this route decision.

The 'Beaver' didn't fail Bill on the glacier descent, until just above the bergshroud. While crossing an ice runnel the 'Beaver' slipped out of his grip and skittered off down the glacier. No doubt the next generation 'Beaver' will be equipped with a moose-hide wrist loop!

Tim Kelley

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## OCTOBER MEETING

James Larabee called the meeting to order at 7:35 p.m.

### TREASURY REPORT

Money Market:	3870.08
Checking:	2112.29
Petty cash:	<u>50.00</u>
Total in treasury:	\$6033.17

### COMMITTEE REPORTS

#### *Parks Advisory.*

Susie Hartigan of the Alaska Center for the Environment discussed logging in Chugach National Forest near Resurrection Pass and Sixmile Creek. Public comment ends November 24. Please submit opinions by then to the National Forest. Susie handed out the public comment



as which can be mailed in.

**Huts.**

Moose Creek Hut needs a bit of work, thanks for everyone who helped. Anyone visiting huts, please tell club of any repairs needed.

**Scree.**

**Dave Hart** made a plea for more articles.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**EPIRB.** The rules for it were discussed. Only club members can borrow it. Club trips have priority. Users responsible for returning it in the same shape as when checked out. Deposit for private trips.

**NEW BUSINESS**

None.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Dave Hart** asked for anyone interested to contact him if they want to do a "Mountain of the Month" presentation. (15-20 minutes long, done prior to slide shows).

Thanks to **Roman Dial** for an excellent slide show of packrafting in the Brooks Range, racing the Alaska Mountain Wilderness Classic in the Alaska Range and biking from Hope to Homer over the Harding Icefield.

Respectfully submitted,

Dave Hart

**Mountaineering Club of Alaska**

**Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) Use Rules**

An EPIRB transmits a signal so that rescue aircraft can "home" to the EPIRB. It is to only be used in an emergency situations.

1. Club sanctioned trips have priority use, even if a member using the EPIRB for a personal trip had previously scheduled the EPIRB.
2. On Club sanctioned trips, the leader or a co-leader, is responsible for the EPIRB.
3. No deposit is required on Club trips.
4. A \$50 deposit is required on non-Club trips. This is to cover the cost of the battery if the EPIRB seal is broken.
5. Only Club members may check-out and use the EPIRB.
6. The Hiking and Climbing Committee Chair stores the EPIRB. Club members can make reservations for the EPIRB by contacting the committee chair.
7. If the device is lost, destroyed or made inoperable when used on an MCA sanctioned trip, the Club will assume responsibility. If a Club member on a personal trip, the member who checked out the device must refund the club the replacement value of the device within 30 days of Date Received.
8. The device may be checked out for Club trips of any duration, but for non-Club trips, the device can only be checked out for 2 weeks.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date Received

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date to be Returned

I have read these terms and agree to them. I know how to operate the device.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



Letter from a Small Island  
December 1995

Of all the things I miss from Alaska, I think the one that I feel most keenly is coffee to go; and of all the things I miss least, it is probably Spring Cleanup day. Britons can neither make coffee nor volunteer to keep the place clean. The in betweeny things graduate from instant adventure to roadside diners to breakup.

Aberdeen is a cold place, famous for its gray stone buildings and its thrifty people. Temperatures have dropped below freezing just once or twice, but the humidity guarantees that even the warm days are cold. It is said that fifty pence pieces have seven sides so that you can get them off an Aberdonian - with a wrench.

The mountains are smaller than I remember and more populated with sheep. Yes, we too have wild sheep, although they are officially domesticated and roam the hillsides all winter. No-one stops to stare and photograph and the sheep don't seem to expect it. I think the recession must be responsible for smaller mountains.

Our adventures in the last six months have been but a few days on the North West coast, testing out the ocean to see if it is suitable for kayaking. We eased into the trip by staying in bed and breakfast, with warm water and a soft bed. Our first day out was around the Summer Isles, 10 miles of wind behind and paddle slow. It must be something to do with the Coriolis effect because it was a round trip. The next day the predominantly westerly wind blew us the 3 mile length of Loch Glencoul in a trice but was no help on the return leg. Coriolis clearly does not work on a Monday. The lack of real adventure is compensated for by the ease of access. The road meets the ocean pretty much everywhere and you only have to point your kayak downwind, travel until you're tired, and pull out. Like as not there will be a bus passing sometime within the next few hours which will gather you up for the return journey. Being on an island also means that if you keep going in one direction eventually you'll return to where you started.

I'm not sure that safety standards for outdoor pursuits have yet reached the high level of Alaska. We went to a slide presentation given by a Scottish couple, recently rescued from their kayak just to the south of the Faroe Islands, some 100 miles from the mainland. No rescue expenses, but there again no contingency fee law practice. I think there must be a connection. People are either braver, or more foolhardy over here, because there is a sense of immortality in their approach to outdoor activities. I think peer pressure in a densely populated country, with obvious geographic limitations must be a contributing factor. Or perhaps we're all inbred.

Our island is a small place, often noted by transatlantic visitors, and particularly so compared to the space that we enjoyed in Alaska. In fact it now surprises me that we all fit in without anyone falling off the edges. It is not without its advantages as we have spent a large part of the summer hurtling around the island at no less than 70 miles an hour, visiting family and friends and yes, we are now finding it pleasantly small, if not a little dangerous because of the crazy drivers.

We are slowly becoming more British. We've stopped feeling hurt when the grocery store checkout person does not wish us a nice day; I'm off the AMH/REI withdrawal recovery group; we're drinking warm beer and liking it and we're paying three times as much for gas and not muttering under our breath about inalienable rights to a vehicle.

Santa arrived in the stores at the end of September. He must be traveling west this year because I distinctly remember him arriving in Anchorage at about Thanksgiving time last year.

Hope you all have a happy Christmas

Jonathan (Rose)