



AUGUST 1996

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AUGUST MEETING

Wednesday

August 21st, 7:30

**Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets
Downtown Anchorage**

**Slide Show: Climbs of Minya Konka
and Gongga Shan will be shown by
Dana Coffield.**

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

Aug 17-18

Bird Peak and Penguin Peak

Crampons, ice axe, stream shoes, bear proof food cache needed. May hike in Friday evening.

Leader: Scott Bailey 696-7250

Aug 24

Avalanche and Homicide Peaks

Bike, hike and climb to these Western Chugach peaks from Glen Alps. Class D.

Leader: Mark Miraglia 338-0705

Sep 14

Pioneer Ridge Trail

Class B. Behind Pioneer Peak.

Leader: Neil O'Donnell 274-5069

Sep 28-29

Ice Climbing Class

Annual class held at the Matanuska Glacier to teach the basics of waterfall ice-climbing. Club equipment fee and camping fee required (under \$20 total). Coordinator: Nick Parker 272-1811

Your MCA card shows you signed the waiver. If you can't find it, or don't have one, remove the back page of Scree and fill out the waiver for the trip leader. Thanks.

TRIP REPORTS

Kiliak

by Kneely Taylor



Kiliak is a Chugach peak at 7340 feet which you can see from much of Anchorage. It is also on the list of twenty one peaks over 7000 feet in the Western Chugach that many MCA members (including me) are slightly obsessed with. I finally got around to trying Kiliak this spring.

My first attempt was with Peter Dedych on May 17-19. Both of us had planned to climb Peril Peak and had taken off Friday and Monday so as to have a four day weekend. But at the last minute we changed our minds because of fear of melting snow bridges over the crevasses of the Eklutna Glacier.

Peter and I both wanted to climb Kiliak as we felt it was safer, but had heard terrible tales of a "class 5.8 bushwhack" up Icicle Creek. As usual, I called Willy Hersman and asked what to do. Willy usually has great advice, and I always call, but this time he was wrong. He said to go up Eagle River Valley to Twin Falls, climb up from there over the col between Yukla and Soggy, descend Icicle Glacier, and then climb Kiliak. That would involve roughly 16,000 vertical feet of climbing, most of it with a pack.

Being lazy, I rejected Willy's advice and decided to try Icicle Creek. It was only two miles of bushwhacking, and the total vertical would be 6500 feet. For me it was an obvious choice. And besides, Tim Kelly had told me of a faint sheep trail high above Icicle creek, just under the cliffs.

Lo and behold, there was a trail! And a fair one considering the reputation of Icicle Creek. It starts on a big flat spot about five hundred feet above Eagle River Valley, on the west side of Icicle Creek, and then stays high, paralleling Icicle Creek just under the cliffs. Eventually it works its way down to the creek where the creek levels off, and boulder hopping up the creek is feasible.

The creek finally flattens out about the 2500-foot level. Here you are above most of the brush. At this point there is a large boulder next to the creek which has an overhang under which you can camp. Hunters have obviously camped here (leaving supplies and trash) and we dubbed the place "Hunters' Rock." We camped nearby, very pleased with ourselves for having discovered a route up Icicle Creek.

Peter and I had bad weather the next day, and added to that we got a late start. After climbing up a long miserable scree field, between the 2800 and 4500-foot levels, we followed several snow filled gullies, until we reached the SW. ridge of Kiliak at about the 7000-foot level. We put on our crampons but never used the rope. Although it was just a "walk up", the climbing was pretty steep for me. But when we reached the ridge, it was 5:15 P.M. and snowing, and we got disoriented in the snow and fog. Thinking we were much farther from the peak than we were, and that the route above us was impassable, we gave up and climbed down the way we had come. We returned to Anchorage the next day sure we had gone wrong, but not sure how.

Two weekends later, after getting additional advice from Willy, I returned with Bryan Carey and Sheridan Bishop. We went in late on May 30 and camped on the big flat spot above Eagle River Valley at the mouth of Icicle Creek. There is no water here so we carried up water. The next day we started at 6:00 A.M. and by 8:00 were back at "Hunters' Rock." We ascended the large scree field leading to the 4500-foot level, as Peter and I had done before. Bryan is a good orienteer and wanted to take the route Peter and I had taken before, but I refused saying that I was certain that it would not go, so we went up the big snow gully leading to the col between Kiliak and East Kiliak.

Bryan was right. Once we reached the col between East Kiliak and Kiliak, we could not proceed up the east ridge to the summit. Instead, we down-climbed and started traversing across the south side of Kiliak looking for a way up. We never would have made the summit if it had not been for Willy's advice. Willy had said he had climbed Kiliak by first climbing Korohusk and then following the ridge between Korohusk and Kiliak to the summit (the west ridge). The west ridge was very difficult and he got to the summit of Kiliak late, and so he took an easier descent by down-climbing somewhere on the south side of Kiliak, eventually exiting via Icicle Creek after bivouacking near Hunter's Rock. He said that he and Tom Choate had down-climbed the south side of Kiliak, somewhere (he couldn't remember exactly where) without a rope! Since nothing I was looking at could be down-climbed without a rope, I knew I was in the wrong place. And so we kept traversing under the summit of Kiliak looking for a way up. It was difficult and we definitely needed our rope. After three hours of traversing, we had traversed all the way across the south side of Kiliak to exactly the same spot where Peter and I had been two weeks earlier. i.e. at about 7000 feet on the SW ridge.

Peter and I had been in the right place after all. In the clear, sunny, windless weather we could see a

relatively easy route straight up the remainder of the SW ridge. We quickly went that way, using the rope on only one short section, and made the summit at 7:15 P.M. It was Sheridan's first 7000-footer, and with clear skies he got a great first look at the Western Chugach. Also clearly visible was Anchorage, which looks remarkably close by from the summit.

The summit register was only a small glass jar. There had no entries made in it since 1990 when Willy, Tom, and Ken Zafren signed it. Before that there appeared to be only two other entries, but the writing was quite faded, and one entry was completely unreadable. I am surprised there were so few entries, as I have heard of several other ascents. Perhaps there was another register which blew away.

We descended the peak the same way Peter and I had come up two weeks before. It was an easy descent, but even so, we did not get back Hunters Rock until 11:00 P.M., and the junction of Icicle Creek and the primitive trail at 12:00 P.M.

It was a gorgeous spring evening with twilight lasting all night, and a full moon rising above the peaks on the other side of Eagle River. But despite all the beauty, the light was so dim that it was exceedingly difficult not to get lost. Just above our camp the primitive trail disappears in steep grassy meadows interspersed with rock outcroppings, small cliffs, and clumps of stunted aspens and alders. In the dim light, I could not gauge the pitch of the slopes, or see clearly, and I became quite nervous. I would have gotten us lost again, or bivouacked, but Bryan took the lead, without objection from me. Using his considerable orienteering skills, and some folk wisdom, he led us safely back to camp; at 1:30 A.M. The folk wisdom is this. "Whenever mountain climbers feel they are in trouble, they go high. So go low when you think you are in trouble. Chances are that what you think is 'low' is just right." It worked.

Back in camp, we relaxed and took in the midnight view. It was still twilight, the moon full, and the sky cloudless. Directly below us, down about 500 feet, was the flood plain of Icicle Creek where it joins Eagle River. The view up and down Eagle River was unobstructed for many miles. Across Eagle River were Polar Bear, Organ, and Flute peaks, and the snow and glaciers between them. We heated water, made some soup and hot chocolate, and sat up for an hour gazing at the midnight scenery. It was great.

Mt. Saint Elias' South (Harvard) Ridge

by David Hart



akutat Marine Operator, this is the Nunatak, over."

"Go ahead, Nunatak."

"I'd like to place a long distance calling-card call to Anchorage, over."

"Okay, Nunatak. What is your radio call sign, please?"

"I don't know my call sign, over," I innocently replied. What I didn't admit was that I not only didn't know my call sign, but I didn't even have one. Furthermore, I wasn't on the Nunatak and I wasn't even sure there was such a vessel. I was on the summit of Mt. Saint Elias and the nearest boat was 18000 feet below us on the calm waters of Icy Bay.

"Nunatak, in the future I suggest that you find out your call sign and post it next to your radio. And please don't yell into the radio; I can hear you just fine. Now, what number would you like to call?"

I couldn't very well explain to her my position up here; that it was ten degrees below zero and the wind was gusting thirty-five miles per hour creating a wind chill of -66° F. All I could offer was my apology. "I'm sorry. The number I'd like to call is area code nine-zero-seven, two-six-five..."

Mt. Saint Elias, at 18008 feet, has the largest vertical relief of any coastal mountain in the world. Its proximity to the Gulf of Alaska provides an unlimited source of moisture for the region's notoriously heinous storms. Several years ago, a group of Anchorage climbers attempting the mountain received over thirty feet of snow during a two week period. An expedition to this coastal region of Alaska is a serious endeavor, indeed.

On May 1, six of us rendezvoused in Chitina to begin our 1996 Mt. Saint Elias expedition. Our group consisted of Paul Barry, Kurt Bauer, Jacques Boutet, Brad Gessner, John Lapkass and myself, all from Anchorage. Some of our gear included 250 pounds of food, 9 gallons of fuel, 90 carabiners, 20 ice screws and 10 snow pickets. A lightweight expedition, we were not.

Paul Claus, and his father John, of Ultima Thule Outfitters met us on the Chitina airstrip with their DeHavilland Beaver and Piper Super Cub. Several members of our group have used the Claus' flight service on five prior expeditions, and we have always been pleased



with their excellent service. From Chitina, it was a ninety minute flight to the 7900-foot level of the Bagley Ice Field, just north of Saint Elias. Both planes regrouped here, as our 9750-foot landing site on west ridge of Mt. Haydon (11950 feet) was only large enough to accommodate the smaller Super Cub. During the next three hours Paul shuttled us and our gear from the Bagley Ice Field onto the mountain. We all felt the effects of the altitude, and it was 6:00 PM before we had our base camp completely set up.

"OK, when do you guys want me to come back for you?" Paul asked.

"Two weeks from today - May 14," we answered. Given good weather, we felt we could be to the summit and back within a week. We hoped an additional week would allow for any storm delays we might encounter along the way. With that, Paul gunned the Cub's engine, and he was gone.

"Hmm. Well, we're here. Now what?" we wondered.

The South Ridge (1947 Harvard Route) of Mt. Saint Elias has received increasing attention during recent years. If Saint Elias has a standard route, this South Ridge might be it. Rated an Alaska Grade 3 (on a scale of 1 to 6), it is one of the easier routes up the mountain and only slightly more difficult than Abruzzi's original 1897 route, one usually avoided due to its very high serac avalanche exposure. This is not to say that the South Ridge is completely safe. It certainly is not, as much of the route is prone to slab avalanches immediately after a storm. We were especially concerned with the notorious mile long traverse around the north side of Mt. Haydon. These twenty-five to forty degree slopes are extremely dangerous during or immediately after a storm. Still, several parties each year usually attempt the route and we were the second expedition of 1996. Two months earlier, a hearty trio succeeded in making the first winter ascent of the mountain via the same route.

"If we get an early start in the morning, we may be able to make both double-carries to the Haydon Col tomorrow," someone suggested. Our first camp was two-and-a-half miles to our east, in the col between Haydon and Saint Elias. Our strategy was to double-carry two weeks of supplies to the col so that we could comfortably wait out any storm, and not be forced to cross the dangerous Haydon Traverse when it was unsafe. From our base camp, the route to Camp 1 would ascend the ridge east for one and a half miles, then traverse the north side of Mt. Haydon for one mile before reaching the col.

We went to sleep that night feeling fortunate that we had been able to establish base camp the same day we left Anchorage.

"I'll take the first lead," John volunteered the next morning, stepping into his randonee ski bindings. The sun was shining, the winds were calm, and the views were amazing. Glistening far below us, Icy Bay and the Gulf of Alaska reminded us that we were almost two vertical miles in the sky.

"Let's hold back here, and give John and Jacques some space," Paul suggested. Our first rope team had just crossed a snow bridge spanning a massive crevasse. Immediately beyond that was the mental crux of the route, the Haydon Traverse. We were confident that the snow conditions were stable, yet safe practice dictated some space between rope teams on such a huge avalanche slope. When John and Jacques were but tiny dots across the face, Paul and I followed. Brad and Kurt did the same.

After a bit of route-finding to minimize our slope angle, we reached Camp 1 and cached our gear on the leeward side of the col. We had been told that this col can be an exceptionally nasty place during a storm, so we were prepared to dig huge snow walls for protection when we finally did move camp here.

A one hour ski back to base camp was much more enjoyable than the four hours we spent carrying our loads to Camp 1. It was early evening by the time we returned to base camp so we deferred moving the second half of our gear over to Camp 1 until the next morning.

"OK, we'll see you guys over at the Col." Paul and I bid farewell to the other four and began retracing our tracks from the day before. Beautiful weather and a set trail made for a relaxing ski until we reached the Haydon Traverse.

"Dave, I think I see a fracture up ahead," Paul said. Indeed, just downhill of our old ski tracks was a half inch wide fracture paralleling our route for a hundred feet.

"Twenty-nine degrees," I said to Paul after measuring the slope angle. "I'm sure this wasn't here on our first trip across." Even though we still felt confident about the snow stability, we unroped and spaced apart for the remainder of the traverse. It was a welcome relief to finally reach Camp 1. For the next seven days, we would all be hoping more than anything else that these slopes remained safe until we passed across them one final time.

"Do you want the lead or shall I?" Paul asked.



"It's all yours, Paul. I'll throw the fixed line in my pack, and we can cache it wherever we turn back." Paul and I headed off for a couple of hours before dinner to explore the route above Camp 1.

"Dave, I don't think this will go," Paul shouted back down to me, part way up a steep ice face. "Go ahead and belay me back in."

"Sure thing. Let's try that traverse over to the left," I answered. Paul climbed back down fifty feet to his last ice screw and then traversed left, around the corner. Three pitches later, we were on the gentle slopes leading up to the crux rock band.

"The rock band doesn't look so bad from here, Dave. We may not need the fixed line after all. Let's cache it and go have some dinner." Just as we started down, John and Jacques arrived at our high point. They, too, were curious to explore the route before donning our heavy packs the following morning. As the four of us descended the 1000 feet back to Camp 1, we left our ice screws in place so that they would be awaiting our return twelve hours later.

"John sure is making good time," I commented to Paul, as he and I arrived at the base of the rock band the next morning. John was almost a full pitch above the five of us, climbing smoothly through mixed terrain in the fifty degree couloir. As the rope came taut on Jacques, he and John began simul-climbing with running belays. Kurt and Brad followed a few minutes later, and then Paul and I brought up the rear. Two pitches later, we were all sitting on top of the rock band at 11,700 feet, enjoying the warm afternoon sun. Looming above us was a huge forty to fifty degree snow and ice face more than 2000 feet long. Half way up this face was a four foot thick fracture line extending 1000 feet across the entire face. Below this fracture, the snow had avalanched down to bare ice. It must have been an incredible sight to watch this massive slide obliterate everything in its path. At least we knew the slope was now safe.

Through the combined effort of four engineers, two doctors and an altimeter, it didn't take long for us to figure out that we were still 1600 vertical feet and fifteen pitches shy of Camp 2. We still had a full afternoon's work in front of us.

"Paul, I don't like this. I'm not sure we should go on." We were seven pitches above the rock band, and I had just followed Paul's lead up the four foot fracture and on to the snow slopes above. The security of our ice screws was now gone, as the snow was too deep to reach the underlying ice. In theory, when a slope avalanches, the resulting fracture line is the boundary between stable

and unstable snow. We knew that it should be safe to continue on, although it was difficult to convince ourselves of this at the time.

Two pitches higher we reached the security of a rock outcrop at 12700 feet. It was getting late, and rappelling back down the ice face would take some time. We decided to cache our gear in the rocks and retrieve it as we passed through with our remaining gear the following afternoon.

"What are you doing to my poor picket over there, Dave?" Paul asked. The only suitable anchor for our cache was to pound a snow picket "piton-style" into the rock. At least we knew our cache wasn't going anywhere.

Five rappels and some down-climbing found us back at the top of the rock band where we made one final rappel. Again, we left all eighteen pickets and ice screws in place as we descended to Camp 1 so that our return trip would be quicker the following day. Twelve hours after leaving, we returned to Camp 1, happy to have climbed through the crux of the route. As we melted snow for dinner, we were treated to a fiery pink alpenglow sunset.

"It doesn't look very good outside, guys," came the comment from an adjacent tent the next morning. Scattered clouds, light wind and snow flurries greeted us as we peeked outside. Up higher, gale force winds were shooting large snow plumes into the sky. None of us were too keen to repeat yesterday's route and climb into a brewing storm, so we took a welcome rest day. Fortunately, the weather settled down and by mid-afternoon it was sunny again. It appeared that we would only loose that one day.

"Well, it looks pretty soaked in again," Paul said the next morning. "It's not really snowing or blowing; I just can't see anything. But, we should still be able to follow our route; what do you say we give it a go?" With that, we hopped outside and packed up camp.

Three hours later Paul and I were the first to leave camp and climb above the col. As we climbed higher, the clouds began to dissipate and blue skies prevailed. Our ice screws and snow pickets were still in place, so all we had to do was clip in our rope and climb on. We were enjoying possibly the highest "sport-mountaineering" in North America. It turned out to be a wonderful day. Wonderful, that is, until we reached our cache and had to single-carry all sixty pounds of our gear the final 600 feet to Camp 2.

"Maybe we can dig in on the other side of that crevasse?" I suggested. Camp 2 was located on a large

and very exposed bench at 13300 feet. The high winds during the past week had scoured away much of the snow, revealing glacier ice and neve ice. After a bit of exploring we finally found a spot with enough snow to dig a reasonably protected camp. Three hours later the six of us were brewing up dinner inside our cozy tents.

"With any luck, we'll be at high camp tomorrow night, guys. Let's cross our fingers."

To our dismay, the winds picked up later that night. Unbeknownst to the rest of us, Jacques and John's snow walls had blown over onto their tent during the night, requiring a midnight reconstruction session. By the next morning, the winds were blowing a constant forty miles per hour with gusts up to sixty.

"It's pretty bad out here, Paul," I shouted through the nylon tent walls. I had spent almost two hours in the windstorm reinforcing our own snow walls and digging out our tent. "It's clear, but really windy! There's no way we're traveling in these conditions."

"Well, come on back inside and let's wait it out," came the reply.

Later that afternoon, the winds died down enough that we felt we might be able to reach Camp 3 at 15200 feet. We packed up camp, and started climbing at 4:00 PM.

"Are we being stupid here, Dave?" Kurt shouted through the wind, ten minutes later. The -40° F wind chill was certainly bordering on what we thought was dangerous. Fortunately, the terrain between Camps 2 and 3 was not overly difficult, and we were able to move quickly to keep warm.

"Let's push on a bit further. If it gets much worse, we can always head back down."

The one advantage of these high winds was that it stripped away deep snow, exposing solid footing for our crampons. As a result, we were able to climb quickly, and by 6:30 PM Brad kicked the last step up to our bomb proof Camp 3.

Our high camp was located in a massive bergshund crevasse at 15200 feet. Whereas our last camp had been very exposed and limited in the amount of snow available for walls, this camp was paradise. We felt we could safely weather any storm here.

During the past thirty hours we had gained over 5000 feet of elevation. Our bodies recognized this as we prepared our high camp with throbbing heads and heavy breathing.

"... forecast for Yakutat and vicinity is scattered clouds and light wind with little chance of precipitation..." came the voice from our VHF marine radio.

"Great!" we all shouted. It appeared that tomorrow would allow us a shot at the summit. With that, we agreed to set our alarms for 7:00 AM.

"Brr, it's cold. I can't wait to get into the sun," I complained, my head frosty from brushing against the interior tent wall. Our high camp was so well protected that we wouldn't receive direct sunlight until early afternoon. As a result, the overnight low temperature of -15° F seemed worse as we melted snow for breakfast. According to the weather forecast, Yakutat was experiencing temperatures ten degrees above normal. I shivered at the thought of even lower temperatures up here if a cold front came through.

"Two quarts of water, some food, my down parka and some wands," I answered, describing the contents of my summit pack. We were hoping to travel light for the final 2800-foot climb.

We left high camp at 11:00 AM with calm blue skies above us, and scattered clouds below 13,000 feet. This morning was the first time that the upper mountain did not have snow plumes shooting from its ridges. That was a welcome omen.

"What do you think, Paul? Should we try the rocky south ridge, or the snow face to the right?" Paul and I were once again first out of camp this morning so we got to choose the route to the summit.

"Let's stay off the ridge; the rocks may slow us down. The snow on the right looks pretty good." With that, we began an ascending traverse to the right up the forty degree slopes, keeping the south ridge proper just to our left.

"Paul, why don't you come on up. I'll belay you in." I was tired from leading for the last two hours, and it appeared that our intended route to the summit would be more than we had bargained for. "It looks like the snow changes to ice right above us, Paul. It will take a long time to safely climb this last 1500 feet of forty-five degree ice. And climbing past those huge snow mushrooms on top of the face looks really tough. Maybe we can traverse further to the right across the southeast face, and try those snow slopes over there?" I said, pointing a quarter mile to our right.

"Sounds good. Let's see if Kurt and Brad want to lead for a while." We gladly followed the others as they traversed below some unavoidable seracs to gain the

snow slopes far to our right. For the next two hours, Kurt's steady pace carried us up the forty to fifty degree slopes.

Five hundred feet below the summit, Paul volunteered to lead through the final obstacle, a six foot up-thrust crevasse extending across the entire face. There was no avoiding this, so we each had to grunt our way up the overhanging gap in less than perfect style.

"Hold on; I've got to put on some clothes, Dave," Paul yelled back to me. As soon as we exited the southeast face onto the upper east ridge, we were blasted by a frigid thirty-five mile per hour breeze blowing in from Canada. We instantly lost the reflective heat and wind protection offered by our southeast face route. The wind chill immediately plunged to -66°F. As Paul hastily grabbed some more clothes from his pack, I leap-frogged past him, not wanting to stop in the biting wind. Ten minutes later we reached the 18008-foot summit of Mt. Saint Elias. It was 4:00 PM and we had been climbing for five hours. It had been only seven days since we landed in base camp, 8000 feet below us.

Reaching the summit was special for all six of us. Saint Elias is a beautiful mountain in a spectacular setting. Its difficulty and notoriety made our good fortune all the more satisfying. As a bonus for me, Saint Elias was my fifth summit of Alaska's five tallest peaks. And for Paul, it was his fifth summit of Alaska's six tallest.

As a novelty, we pulled out our VHF marine band radio and made a few radio phone calls to some friends back in Anchorage to let them know we were safe, and on our way down.

"Dave, we've got to start down. I'm getting cold," Paul said with some urgency.

"You're right; let's get out of here." Our ten minutes on top went all too fast. We took one final look around and headed down as fast as we could, just as Jacques and John arrived on the summit. Kurt and Brad were only minutes behind them. They, too, only stayed long enough for a few photos, before joining us back on the protected southeast face. We had completed only half of our day's journey, and we were very careful not to let down our guard until we reached the security of our high camp two-and-a-half hours later.

That night the weather forecast again predicted clear skies and calm wind for the next two days. "Congratulations, everyone," we all offered. "Just one more long day and we'll be back at base camp!"

Our eighth day on the mountain dawned crystal

clear as far as the eye could see. Our entire route was laid out below us. Unfortunately, base camp looked very far away. The sky above was a deep violet, and three miles below us the waters of Icy Bay glistened in the sun, enticing us for a swim. But that would have to wait. We packed up camp, and at 11:00 AM began the long process of clearing all our belongings from the mountain. When we reached Camp 2 an hour later, we found eight inches of fresh snow awaiting us. During our summit bid, the lower mountain had received a healthy dump of snow. Over a foot of fresh snow now covered the crux ice face between Camps 1 and 2, making down-climbing considerably easier. As a result, we had to rappel only two pitches to reach Camp 1.

"I guess we should keep going, as opposed to camping here?" someone suggested. With that, we retrieved our cache at Camp 1, and began plowing a three hour trench across the Haydon Traverse. Almost two feet of fresh snow made this section particularly difficult, especially when combined with our monstrous loads and an already long day. Fortunately, the new snow covering the Traverse had fallen slowly and without any wind, allowing it to bond well with the existing snow pack. Although somewhat nerve-racking due to its notoriety as an avalanche slope, our return to base camp was uneventful.

Thirteen hours after leaving our high camp, we had descended over 8000 feet, and arrived at base camp safe and sound. An hour earlier we had placed a call to Charlie Sassara, Ultima Thule's Anchorage contact, to let him know that we would like to be picked up the following afternoon.

It was a welcome relief to finally fall asleep at 3:00 AM knowing the dangers were over, and we could relax until the sun cooked us out of our tents the following morning.

As promised, Paul Claus arrived in his Super Cub ten hours later, at 1:00 PM. Our expedition was over. That night we were all back home in Anchorage after only a ten day absence. For such a successful trip up Mt. Saint Elias, we were truly fortunate that it was not much longer.

Summary of Statistics:

AREA: Saint Elias Mountains

ROUTE: South (1947 Harvard) Ridge (Alaska Grade III), Mount Saint Elias, 5489 meters, 18008 feet, May 1-10, 1996 (whole party).

PERSONNEL: Paul Barry, Kurt Bauer, Jacques Boutet, Brad Gessner, David Hart, John Lapkass





nother MCA trip hits the dusty trail.

June 27th seven of us headed out to Resurrection Pass for a three-day marathon trip. This being the first trip I've ever led, I was just a little apprehensive. What if I got a group of people who didn't get along? My tent partner, the legendary Alaskan hiker, Diane Sallee had to cancel out on me so I was sharing my tent with some stranger I'd never met before. Another Alaskan experience.

Great group of people. There was Harry House from Wisconsin, aka Scary Harry. He was my tent partner, never met the man before and we spent three nights together. He was a good tent partner, even carried most of the weight and did most of the setting up and tearing down. Thank you Harry, that was really sweet. There was Dave Storkel, aka Pack Man, due to the fact that he worked on my pack so much the first day making adjustments that any time anyone had trouble, they looked to him. Not to mention that his new 6000 cubic inch pack was so full it was just about as big as he was! His wife, Heather, who carried a light load because she was in training, Caren Della Cioppa, who I called Wild McKinley Woman, as she just finished the mountain the weekend before and I couldn't believe she had the energy for another trip. Her dog, Foxtrot, who insisted on being in front of the pack and carried her own pack, Jacob Smith, aka Cubby, or chubby, myself, the Boss, as Harry called me and Elaine Flaven, the pied piper with her penny whistle, led an excellent pace with her long stride.

The only rules of the trip being no drinking or wild stunts, we started off in good spirits doing about three miles per hour. Great pace for having full loads. Trail was easy and everyone was fresh, having spent the night at the trail's end and driving up to Hope Friday morning.

The pace was good, we all stuck together, in fact we were so close upon each other's heels that if someone neglected to mention they were stopping, there was the dominos effect. By lunch I had trouble with my pack hurting my back and my knee was hurting so bad I was getting worried. I don't know what happened, it felt like a major injury, but I had done nothing. The pain started in my left foot and went up my knee. I put on my knee brace, which helped a little. I worried about the distance left to go, we were just getting started! Maybe someone would

have to hike out and send in a helicopter to get a crippled leader!

We took an hour lunch. Why not, what's the rush? Most of that time Pack Man was working on my pack. The first day we did 15 miles, the last two of those became quiet. When we spotted our campground, there were shouts of joy and somehow we found spare energy to cook and set up camp. Cubby went fishing! The peace was disrupted at dinner by Elaine, who became highly excitable over something she found in her food bag. She had forgotten she had some Tapioca pudding. Make my day! As we sat cooking dinner, we watched several caribou up on the hill above us grazing. We were close to the cabin, and around nine we heard shouts coming from up on the trail. Pack Man thought it was me yelling so he yelled back. More yelling from the trail and soon there were three kids and two moms headed for the cabin. They were from Kenai. They rent the cabins every year. This year they brought the kids. I called them Cabin Kids.

Day two found everyone a little stiff. My knee had bothered me in the night but now was miraculously healed. We took our time with a leisurely breakfast and then we headed down the trail for another beautiful day and another 15 miles. I told everyone to stop whenever they liked. My motto is need a break, take it. If one person wanted to stop, everyone else took advantage of the break in some way. At one point we caught up to the Cabin Crew, but they passed us up again when we stopped for lunch. It was great the way we all stuck together. We were about to find out the meaning of group support. We didn't get one half mile when we started climbing and Foxtrot sat in the middle of the hill and refused to move. Her hind legs were sticking up strangely and her eyes appeared to be rolling around. We all thought something was wrong with her. Cubby unhooked her pack and she jumped up and flew up the mountain! Caren let her loosen up some before putting the pack back on.

When we reached the top of the 2600-foot pass, Pack Man declared, "We have summited."

Heather was having problems with her knee. Her problems were worse than mine. I gave her the knee brace to try. We were doing about two miles per hour by this time. We took more breaks but still managed to get to camp at a reasonable hour. We camped at Juneau Lake. Harry had gone on ahead, Elaine, Caren and I were in the middle, Dave, Heather and Cubby were at the rear of the pack. It was the first time we were separated. I became concerned that Dave and his group were getting too far behind. My

idea was that we stop at the first good campsite, 15 miles or not, but when we came to the first campsite, Harry wasn't there. The original plan was to get to the lake so that's where he waited for us. We decided that we'd set up camp there, I could cook some dinner for Pack Man, Heather and Cubby, so that when they arrived they would have a good hot meal ready. Harry was going to go down the trail to let them know where we were. He didn't get far when they showed up. Both Heather's knees were in bad shape. Everyone was getting crippled up with blisters and knee problems. I was worried about Caren's legs, they were hurting her and she had just finished a big hike! She had two carabiners hooked up to straps on top of her pack and sometimes I'd look back at her and she would be holding on to them and leaning forward as if she were pulling herself along. A good tip for you mountaineers, it really works!

Camp was set up and dinner was about finished when it started raining. Everyone was ready for bed any way. Caren and Elaine were getting up early and leaving before us.

The rain lasted about an hour. We woke up Sunday morning to a perfect day. We were so lucky. I crawled out of the tent around 8:30 to find Harry all bundled up and hunched over on a log. He looked as if he was having a nap. He had already eaten and was ready to go. I asked if he was OK, he said yes, but I wondered. Caren and Elaine were gone. Cubby and Pack Man appeared but no Heather. She was not having a good time. Her knees were still hurting and she didn't look happy. I felt bad for her but there was nothing anyone could do. We had breakfast in silence, tore up camp and headed out, putting Heather in the lead so no one got too far ahead. I saw tears in her eyes several times, especially on the down hills. We all tried to encourage her, to let her know we weren't getting impatient. "Take your time." We took lots of breaks. We saw a fresh grizz track in the mud. After spending two days getting to know each other and sharing past trip details and equipment opinions and advice, it was much too quiet. At that point, Pack Man started singing entertaining songs with his wonderful voice, which gave us all something else to think about besides our aches and pains.

I think it was maybe 6 ½ hours finishing that last nine miles, but we were happy campers to see the parking lot. Pack Man took off running through the woods, pack and all. Incredible energy.

I want to thank everyone for making this trip a wonderful experience and for being so responsible. Hope to see you on the trails again some day!

ADZE



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MINUTES

July Meeting

The annual club picnic drew more than 50 members and several visitors. President James Larabee kept the meeting part short, having trip leaders announce trips and holding a drawing for a gift certificate. All trip leaders that led a club trip the first half of the year were eligible. Bill Wakeland won, but since he had already won recently, he declined, so a second drawing was held. James Larabee won, but since he had won recently, a third drawing was held. Curvin Metzler won on the third drawing -congratulations!

The picnic was a great success. Special thanks to Mark Miraglia, Dave Hart, James Larabee, Richard Barranow, Wendy Sanem and to all those who helped out.

