

JULY MEETING

Wednesday

July 15, 7:30 pm

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

**Picnic: The club will have burgers, dogs, and drinks.
Please bring additional items such as potato
salad, beans, chips, watermelon.**

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

Jul 24-25 Calliope Mt.

Class E. Leave Friday evening, camp near Symphony Lake. Saturday, climb via Sheep Col (saddle between Cantata and Calliope, descend and hike out. Attempt to recover lost gear near base of Cantata. Ice axe and crampons needed.

Leader: Kirk Towner 344-5424

Jul 24-26 Kenai Kaper & Traverse

Class D. Strenuous traverse of prime back-country terrain in the Kenai Mountains of the Chugach National Forest with a peak-bagging ridge run. Approximately 13 to 14 miles, mostly above tree line; estimated 6500 feet or more gain. Proficiency with ice axe/crampons. Must be at least 18 years old. Car shuttle needed to do the trip. Cabin stay Friday and after trip on Saturday evening. Limit: 7 Need ice axe, crampons, water pump or tablets, bug dope, stream wading shoes. \$7 cabin fee.

Leader: Scott Bailey 696-7250

Jul 25- Aug 8 Kongakut River and Aichilik River

Brooks Range. Distance: 60 miles. Elevation gain: 4000 feet. Class D. Trip is full, wait list.
Leader: Don Hansen 243-7184

Sep 5-7 Bomber Glacier Traverse

Class: Glacier Travel. Visit two of the MCA's huts and view the remains of an Air Force bomber plane that crashed on the glacier. This is not a training class. Participants must be experienced with glacier travel.

Leader: Gary Runa 275-3613

TRIP REPORTS

Pioneer Peak

by Kirk Townner



It was a dark and stormy night. Well, to be honest it didn't start out dark. Club member Shawn O'Donnell and I set out on Friday night to climb Pioneer Peak (6398) via a gully leading to the northwest ridge. My trusty forecast promised that the 40 MPH+ wind should die down overnight, but at the start it gave us quite a boost as the wind funneled up the avalanche-debris strewn gully. We made good time on packed snow to nearly 4000 where the wind shifted to a menacing downward flow.

We then spent nearly two hours covering the final 1000 feet or so to camp, occasionally crawling on hands and knees to brace against the worst gusts! At one point, my empty Nalgene bottle was ripped from its holster, hardly touching ground as it sailed out of sight down the slope. We reached the saddle in the last light of day and spotted a perfect site to dig in our tent, protected from the wind by a packed cornice. By 1:30 AM we had a bombproof camp, a hot bowl of Ramen, and less than 2000 feet to reach the summit. Life was good.

We started climbing at the crack of noon, following sheep trails where possible and staying at least 500 feet below the ridge to avoid gendarmes. The clouds were thick, but the snow was solid with occasional patches of half-frozen moss and scree to dull our crampons. Eventually we roped up as the exposure increased; a running belay was sufficient to get us by the short sections of sketch. We passed low across the first of two major couloirs on the southeast face. When we reached the second couloir, the shifting clouds revealed only a maze of imposing rock. It seemed a good time to try the ridge crest.

We worked our way to the top of a false peak where the sky briefly cleared for a first glimpse of the summit. Just a stone's throw away across one final couloir, even now it was retreating behind the persistent clouds. I was certain it could be no more than 50 feet higher than the point where I was standing. From there the ridge rolled steeply out of sight with no visible rock to use for protection. Two pickets just didn't cut it, even though the snow seemed stable enough.

We turned back down to the low road,

searching for a safe route into the final couloir. Nothing looked good. The clouds came in even thicker, threatening to snow. We seriously considered retreat. With dwindling hope, we dropped even lower until we found it — an easy ramp leading to the center of the couloir! A short rappel and quick drop down could only mean that things were looking up! We continued a running belay up a string of gullies and topped out into a solid blast of sunshine — a truly perfect summit. The view to the north and east was excellent, so we soaked it all in for nearly an hour. The descent was straightforward reversing our route; we even found a way to sneak around our rappel. I let Shawn go first as he slithered across a sloping ledge with plenty of air below him. Later we startled a group of four rams as we rounded the last corner back to camp. A safe and successful trip.

This is an excellent route for a May climb (possibly June in a heavier snow year). Park by the Knik River Bridge and walk less than a half-mile to an obvious ravine. Be sure to respect private property. The brush-free approach leads straight through section #12 on the USGS map, west of point 3950. Turn right at the 4900-foot saddle and stay low on the ridge until you reach the last couloir leading to the top.

Rescue below Cantata

Bill Romberg and Kirk Townner



Bill was dead. That was the only explanation I could imagine as I shouted his name into the hole once again. No response. I was leaning as far as I dared over a break in the snowpack under which poured a full-force meltwater stream; Bill's footsteps ended here, with a scuff on the downslope edge indicating a futile attempt to stop from being sucked under the thick crust. I retrieved my ice axe from the end of a makeshift string of webbing and prussik cords that I had lowered into the flow. Just minutes ago I was impatiently waiting for Bill to join me on another glissade — now I just wanted to find him alive!

I moved downslope and tried probing for a soft spot; maybe I could dig down to the water and lower the axe again from there. I added the time in my mind: I had waited for Bill maybe five minutes before walking back up to look for him. When I saw the hole and didn't hear an answer to my shouts, I ran back to my pack and dug out all of the webbing and



cord I could find (Bill had the rope in his pack). Another five minutes. Strapping one end of this rescue line to my ice axe and the other to my harness, I backed up with a manky picket and lowered the axe 30 feet into the torrent, hoping Bill could grab hold, all the while shouting Bill's name and listening for any response.

That tactic had failed, and the snowpack was too thick to effectively dig without a shovel. I was running out of ideas; fifteen minutes total by now. I prayed for the dozenth time that I might find some way to help Bill, not daring to imagine what it must be like trapped in the stream, possibly right under my feet.

(Bill). After one final glissade down to the level of the creek, we began paralleling the lake outlet on the snow slope on the north side of the creek. Kirk, with his long legs and quick stride, was ahead of me, probably 150 ft, getting ready to walk further to the right in order to glissade into the valley below. I was walking near his footsteps and was getting ready to follow him when I felt myself breaking through the snow and falling backwards. I knew instantly that I must be falling into the creek, but could do nothing as it happened so quickly.

I remember the sensation of falling, and thinking – “why was I falling so far?” Then I stopped dead and felt as if I was being pinned down by a large hand. I was choking on water, fighting desperately to get up, get my head out of the water so I could breathe. I realized that I was facing up into the rushing water. The thought that I was going to drown flashed through my head and my whole being screamed “NO!!!!”

Somehow, I was able to flip myself over, the water now pouring onto my head and pack – pushing me down with surprising force. But I could breathe! Reaching out with my left hand I found a ledge of rock to grab and pulled myself up enough to stand on another small ledge while I leaned into the wall of snow behind me. I knew I was hurt, (my face felt weird and my teeth weren't in the right spot), but I was alive! I knew that I wouldn't last long in the cold water and that I had fallen some distance, so I had to act fast.

Looking up, water pounded into my face. Between dousings, I could see that if I moved a little to my right, I'd be out of the main force of the waterfall. However, I was afraid to move on the slippery rock particularly with my pack because it seemed to weigh a ton. Below my feet, I could see the water rushing into unknown depths, and my Gore-Tex pants were half torn and hanging from my legs. I knew my pack and pants would have to come off if I wanted to get out of here.

I unclipped the waist belt and dropped the pack behind me. It disappeared beneath my feet in the rushing water. About that time, the realization hit me that the rope was in my pack and that Kirk had nothing to help me get out of here! Thoughts raced through my mind; would Kirk know I had fallen? Could he find me? Even if he could, he had nothing to help me with because I had the rope! I thought of my wife; she would be so devastated if I didn't make it, especially with her Mom already dying of cancer. I told myself that I couldn't give up – not without trying.

Determined not to die in this cold, wet hell, I quickly realized that if I was going to make it I would have to climb out by myself. I wrestled with my torn pants with one hand, not wanting to let go of the rock ledge, and finally got them off. Looking up, between dousings of water, I could see light above me where I had broken through the snow and knew that my only hope was to climb up the wet, slippery rock to the right of the main flow. It appeared that there was a sharp “horn” of rock sticking out about 15 feet above me. I told myself that if I could make it to there, I might have a chance. Luckily, I still had my ice axe in my right hand. I swung the axe above my head to plant it in the snow above me, then felt for a left handhold under the water to pull up on.

With my shoulder against the roof of the cave, in a partial chimney move, I pulled myself up enough to stand on a wet, sloping ledge. I repeated this process and moved a little higher, but before I could re-set my axe again, my left foot slipped off the wet rock and I fell back into the gap where I had originally fallen – my ice axe still stuck in the snow above my head. Desperately, I crawled out of the water and back up to my first stance where I could just reach the sling of my ice axe.

(Kirk). I scanned the area and noticed a large boulder off to the right. The snow had melted away from the edge of the rock a few inches, and I could look down and see water flowing 10 feet below me. I shouted for Bill once again and heard a faint response of “Help!” It was one of the best sounds I have ever heard – just knowing he was alive! I quickly dug the hole wider and lowered the axe down. A minute later I felt the tension as Bill grabbed hold of the axe!

(Bill). About that time, I heard a noise from above – had Kirk found me? I yelled at the top of my lungs – “Kirk! Help!”. Determined to keep him there, I began climbing again. I was getting ready to move, when I saw an ice axe to my left. My first thought was: my God! did Kirk fall in too? Then I noticed that the axe hung from a sling. Kirk had rigged a rescue line for me!

Quickly, I grabbed the axe and wound the sling around my wrist several times because my hands were becoming very numb and I didn't want to lose my grip on

the axe and fall again. Not having a harness, there was no way I could fasten the sling or axe to my body to prevent falling further. If I was going to make it, I would have to use the second axe to help haul myself up to where I could get decent footing. I swung my right axe into the snow/ice above my head and then pulled with both arms, hoping to find a good place for my feet a little higher; "You can do this," I told myself. "just hang on!"

Two similar moves brought me to the horn of rock I had seen from below and I jammed my whole right arm between it and the snow roof which pinched down toward the rock at that spot. I could hang here forever with this "arm jam", I told myself.

By now I could hear Kirk again, but could not understand much of what he was saying. I was exhausted and extremely cold, gasping for air from the exertion and from the cold that was penetrating my body. I kept asking him to wait for me before pulling on the sling. I knew that if I could hang on to make one or two more moves, I would make it. I kept telling myself: "You can do it." The next thing I remember is Kirk's hand, reaching down to help pull me out. I yelled as I crawled out of the icy hole - "I had made it!"

(Kirk). Bill was able to stand on his own as I quickly evaluated the damage: a mess of blood around his nose and mouth, multiple cuts on his left knee with blood dripping in the snow at each step, severe lower back pain, hands numb, no pack, helmet intact, completely soaked, and definitely hypothermic. Bill refused to remain anywhere near the water and started hobbling down to the scree slope where I had left my pack. I helped him sit down and asked him about his injuries as I threw everything in my pack. It had been raining all afternoon, as it was now, and Bill was coherent enough to point out that it was futile trying to dry out before reaching camp - over a mile away. He was able to move, but his back was in agony and his left leg wouldn't bend. He was determined not to stop, and I concurred since his own body heat was the best way to warm him up.

We glissaded down a lower slope with Bill right behind me, using the axe to continually brake. Stopping at level ground, I helped Bill into my Primaloft sweater under his Gore-Tex jacket, along with a balaclava, fleece hat, and my Gore-Tex pants. He already had my warmest gloves. His long johns seemed to have stopped the bleeding on his leg by sticking to the cuts, so I left that alone. He drank some water and tried a tube of "Goo"; it was all he could eat since he was missing several front teeth.

(Bill). We began slowly walking toward camp- Kirk supporting me under one shoulder and I with a ski

pole in my other hand. It wasn't long before I really began to feel my injuries. My left leg did not want to bend very far and my lower back was killing me. Every step/shuffle was painful, but I knew that I needed to keep moving to keep from getting stiffer and that I needed to get to camp to get warm. I fell several times when it was impossible for us to walk side by side with him supporting me. However, I wasn't going to quit now.

(Kirk). His shivering gradually subsided as we continued to camp on the south end of Symphony Lake. It took several hours of limping with me supporting him as best I could, but we made it to camp. It was a miserable ordeal. Without a doubt Bill is the toughest guy I've met. His response: "I wasn't going to die in that freezing water!"

At the tent I helped Bill change to dry clothes and bandages and get into both sleeping bags, then fired up the stove in the vestibule for a cup of hot cocoa and prescription painkillers. His fingertips would stay numb for several days, but the rest of him quickly thawed out. I ate a quick supper and let Bill make the final decision to call in the rescue troops. Since stopping he had stiffened up so badly that he could barely roll over without help. Sitting up was impossible. He would never be able to hike out tomorrow and the codeine would be gone by morning. Without knowing the full extent of his injuries it was the only option; fortunately he was stable enough now for me to leave.

I started out down the trail and didn't stop until I reached the nearest house, just across from the trailhead. Mike Bowden invited me in to use his phone for a series of calls to 911, State Trooper dispatch, Chugach State Park ranger Dan Amyot, and eventually the 210th Air National Guard Rescue Coordination Center. The weather was fair here, but marginal everywhere else, so Dan also called in the Alaska Mountain Rescue Group (AMRG) as a backup in case the helicopter was unable to complete the evacuation.

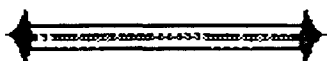
(Bill). For the next several hours, I lay in the tent, sleeping little and thinking a lot. I tried to figure out how I had ended up in the hole. How far away from Kirk's steps had I been? Why didn't I see that it was a snow bridge? I was disgusted with myself for making such a stupid mistake that had nearly cost me my life. A firm believer in self-sufficiency, I also hated the fact that I would now need a rescue. Mostly, though, I was glad to still be alive as I waited for help to arrive.

(Kirk). Two hours and ten minutes from my first call, the 210th's Blackhawk helicopter arrived on



the scene, proceeding directly to the camp and efficiently attending to Bill, then flying him directly to the hospital. At 5:00 AM Sunday morning Bill was released from the care of Dr. Dow at Alaska Regional Emergency with (amazingly) no broken bones—only an assortment of bruises, cuts, stitches, and the loss of four teeth. Bill's response: "Well, they were crooked anyway!"

A special thanks to everyone who assisted with the evacuation and medical care, particularly those mentioned in the article. Your efforts were greatly appreciated.



MINUTES

JUNE MEETING

Meeting was called to order at 7:50.

TREASURY REPORT

Kirk Towner reported Membership Dues receipts at 58% of that projected for 1998. Revenue is \$3200 and expenses are \$3300. Total of all accounts is \$5948.38

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Hiking and Climbing

Steve Gruhn gave the rundown: Flattop, Mt. Ascension, Kenai Caper, Brooks Range (filled), Bomber Glacier, Calliope.

Huts

Mark Miraglia reported nothing new.

Equipment

Mark Miraglia reported that 9 of 10 crampons are in useable shape for members' use.

OLD BUSINESS

Still pursuing the road signs for highway and railroad climbing areas.

40th anniversary patches are \$5.00 each.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mark Flannum is selling his gear, as it won't be necessary in the land of Oz, highpoint Mt. Sunflower, 4039 feet.

Azi Azegami is still looking for selected peak photos for a guide book.

Look for a red and black pack if you are near Cantata, call Kirk Towner.

Harry Hunt was at the meeting promoting a new **Rock Climbers Guide** to the local area, written by Kristian Sieling and called the SCAR.

After adjournment, Kirk Towner showed slides of Mt. Bear.

Submitted by Matt Needom

ADZE



For Sale

Patagonia Gridman 1-Piece Goretex Suit - Large. Never used - still in original wrapping. \$350 (\$725 new)

Feathered Friends Rock & Ice Down/Gtx Parka. Warmest expedition parka on the planet. 1 expedition. \$350 (\$650 new)

Integral Designs MK1XL 2-Person Single-Wall Expedition Tent (Bibler Style). 3 years old, 3 expeditions. \$300 (\$550 new)

North Face Westwind 2-Person Expedition Tent. Bombproof Tent. 5 years old, only 3 expeditions. \$225 (\$375 new)

Beal 300' x 9 mil climbing rope. Never used - still in original wrapping. \$150 (\$250 new)

Beal 50m x 10.5m climbing rope. Never used - still in original wrapping. \$60 (\$100+ new)

Koflach Valluga Randonée Ski Boots - Size 10.5. 10 years old, but functional. \$40

Ramer Adjustable Ski Poles. \$40 (\$80 new)

Titanium Ice Screws. Never used - still in original wrapping. \$8 each (\$12+ new)

Dave 338-0554

Feathered Friends Parkas, 700 fill, large, \$350 & \$450

Tubb Snowshoes, sm. \$135

Feathered Friends Sleeping Bag, (-50), dryloft, \$500

Western Mountaineering Sleeping Bag (-30), dryloft \$400

Jannu One Sport Climbing Boots, men's 10 \$100

Merrill Wilderness Hiking Boots, men's 10 \$75

Lifelink Shovels - \$40 & \$25, Grain scoop \$20

Ordovox Crevasse Probe \$40

and more. Call 349-5037 before 9:30 p.m.