

JANUARY 2000

A Publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska

Volume 43 Issue 01

Box 102037, Anchorage, Alaska 99510

JANUARY MEETING

Wednesday

January 19, 7:30 pm

Pioneer Schoolhouse, 3rd & Eagle Streets

Downtown Anchorage

Program: Curvin Metzler will show slides of

Chitistone Pass , Wrangell Mountains: hiking,
climbing and caving.

February preview: Mountains of the Alps and Caucasus.

HIKING AND CLIMBING SCHEDULE

- Jan 15-16 Echo Bend Ice Climbing
Class Technical. Call trip leader for details.
Leader: Richard Baranow 694-1500
- Feb 5 Williwaw Lakes Ski Trip
Eleven mile round-trip day ski to Williwaw Lakes,
frozen this time of year, for lunch and a good time
skiing. Hopefully we'll again have snow by then!
Leaders: Laila Eklund 338-5337 and Matt
Needom 278-3648
- 12 (or 13) Notch Mountain
Class C. Ski (or snowshoe, depending on condi-
tions) along a Cat track above Winner Creek,
Girdwood. Bring a shovel and beacon along with
your lunch. Contact trip leader for details.
Leader: Tom Choate 333-5309

- 18-21 Resurrection Pass Ski Trip
4 days, 3 nights. 38 miles total. Maximum group
size: 8 persons. We will be staying in cabins each
night. Required equipment: backcountry skis with
climbing skins, avalanche beacon, avalanche probe,
snow shovel. Participants must have experience
skiing backcountry trails with a full pack. Partici-
pants will share cost of cabin reservations: \$15-20
per person for trip. Class C.
Leader: Tom McDermott 694-3216.

- Mar 11 Fern Mine Ski Trip
Class B. Ski a couple of hours up the gentle Reed
Lakes trail to the Fern Mine cabin. Again, bring a
lunch.
Leader: Laila Eklund 338-5337

Future trips include the Little Susitna, Indian to
Arctic Valley, Powerline Pass, climbing Explorer Pk,
Whiteout Pk, Goat Pk, Indian House Mt., O'Malley, N.
Suicide, Triangle, and the Wedge. Keep checking Scree, the
meetings, the MCA hotline, 566-4MCA and the web page.

TRAINING SCHEDULE

Jan 20, 27, 29-30 Winter Camping Class

The course is limited to 20 students and will be free to all club members. Thursday, Jan. 20, a 2-hr classroom session on essential winter camping gear and techniques, including clothing systems, food/nutrition, cooking, and shelters. Thurs, Jan 27, a required gear shakedown where participants must bring in their winter camping gear to be checked by course instructors prior to the weekend field trip. Sat/Sun, Jan 29-30, an overnight camping trip to a local area where participants will receive hands-on instruction in setting up camp, cooking safely in cold weather, and other aspects of cold weather camping and survival.

Leaders: Brian Palmatier and Tom McDermott
694-3216

Winter 2000 Mountain Safety Training

1. Avalanche Preparedness

Terrain evaluation, route selection, snow stability, weather, rescue procedures, beacon, searches, probe lines, first aid. 1 day outdoors

2. Winter Camping / Survival

Clothing, gear, food, minimum impact camping, shelters, map/compass/GPS, orienteering, communications, wilderness travel. 2-3 days outdoors (overnight)

3. Mountain Travel Skills

Ropes, knots, gear, belay, rappel, anchors/pro, self-arrest, route selection, roped climbing techniques, expedition planning. 2-3 days outdoors

4. Glacier Travel / Crevasse Rescue

Glaciology, glacier gear, route selection, roped travel, ascending, rescue procedures, mechanical advantage. 2-3 days outdoors

5. Mountain Rescue

Site/victim evaluation, first aid, raising/lowering systems, evacuation. 1 day outdoors

Leave message with course interests and your schedule preferences and/or conflicts.

Coordinator: Gary Runa 275-3613



TRIP REPORTS

EXPLORING THE BIRD COUNTRY - Part III

by Tom Choate



Most of us have climbed Bird Creek Ridge (3505 feet) and many have continued on up to Bird Ridge Overlook (4625 feet), but few know the interesting and rugged peaks farther back. Until this summer I had not allotted the extra days

for a full exploration. Jim Saylor introduced us (January 1993 Scree) and made some first ascents, but every time I tried from Indian, Ship, or Bird Creeks, it had rained before I reached a summit.

Steve Gruhn had some peaks left to bag here, and after a rainy trip in the Eklutna Glacier area where I finished the 20 7000-footers, it cleared on our way out, so we decided to spend the last 2 ½ days of our time off in the Bird country. So on the afternoon of Friday, June 4th, we headed off and humped our packs up the trail, attracting curiosity from the shorts-n-tennies crowd. Spring flowers were everywhere, so when I needed a breather, I'd say, "Steve, look at this great bunch of (yellow alpine cinquefoil ... etc.)". Soon we were enjoying the views and snacking on the high point (3505 feet wrongly called Bird's Eye Peak on the Anchorage Recreation Map, originally called Bird Creek Ridge). The trail was good along the top, as we cruised along and scanned for sheep from Point 3855 feet before I climbed up to Bird Ridge Overlook (4625 feet) at about 9:30 p.m. Since he had already climbed this peak, Steve waited down on the sheep trail for me. From here the trail continues nicely, dropping several hundred feet before climbing back up to the next peak. Beware the Recreation Map, which shows the trail going over peak 4730 feet, which has some 300 feet of cliffs on both the west and east faces, forming a rock-climbing route along the narrow crest between them. The sheep track actually follows two routes on the east below the cliffs and ends abruptly on the east ridge.

Despite the late hour (now 11:00 p.m.), we dropped our packs, as it seemed the summit was only a short climb away. Wrong! I went ahead to scout the route, scrambling chimneys, ledges, and ridges, but it never got easy and I passed a couple



of pitches that really should have been roped, where I think Steve turned back. Finally, I had checked all four high points and found no cairn, so I made one with a note suggesting a tentative name, "The Beak" (or The Eyrie), to indicate the steep summit.

Carefully scrambling down in the midnight twilight, I joined Steve to pick up packs and quickly traverse to the corniced ridge. The steep snowfields dropping into the lake cirque were intimidating, especially directly below us where they were interrupted by cliffs. But Steve had been through this area before. So, after some careful step kicking and traversing, we were able to glissade and at dusk we were searching the tundra ridge above the lake for a level tent site.

It was hard to rise the next morning, but the weather was great and we had several peaks to explore. First, we ascended the tundra and went over rocky points on the east ridge to Point 4300 feet and then followed an animal trail on across to the high basin southwest of peak 4950 feet. Rocky stripes led between snow banks for a few hundred feet, but soon we had to punch steps up the final ridge to the summit. What a fine view, not only of the Bird country peaks, but also of the near-Anchorage peaks across Ship Creek! Jim Saylor has the F.R.A. and others have followed, yet we found no cairn, so built one with a note suggesting a suitable bird name, "The Wing."

The north ridge is precipitous with gendarmes, so we retraced our steps partway to the col leading to Peak 4970 (Bird's Eye Peak), then glissaded a narrow chute most of the way into the cirque to the east. At about 3500 feet I found a reasonable traverse that led over some gullies before I could regain the ridge and climb on up to the northernmost peak, 4960 feet. Tim Kelley and Tim Miller have the F.R.A., and Wendy Sanem and Bethan Gilmartin, in a subsequent climb, called it "Tail Feather." This seemed a logical name to me, as it is at the far end of the Bird Ridge, and a feather in your cap, if you follow the ridge all the way to it. So we left a cairn with my trademark vitamin bottle using this name.

Descending the north ridge to the col, I found the snow gully dropping to the northwest was starting to catch afternoon sun, creating wet avalanches on the face to the right. After ten minutes watching, while Steve caught up, it seemed that the left edge in the shadows might provide a route. Checking it carefully, with heart beating loudly, I glissaded and ran nearly to the

bottom before giving Steve (now 1,000 feet above) the high sign. Strenuous step plunging in the sloppy snow led us over and up to the col (3300 feet). From here it was a reasonable ridge climb to the top of Peak 4255, the farthest outlier of Bird Ridge, here splitting forks of Ship Creek. This dominance over ship country led me to christen it "The Sail" when again no cairn or register was found. Does anyone know of an ascent of this small peak?

By now it was getting late and a long way to camp, three peaks away. I decided to pick up a 4th peak and try for a high route back. Since he had already climbed this peak, Steve set out for the South Fork of Ship Creek to make a low route around to the 4,000-foot col leading to camp. The snow was punchy and tiring as I slogged along the valley and up onto the east ridge of Peak 4010. Tim Kelley and Tim Miller have the F.R.A. of this middle outlier on the west of Bird Ridge, and called it "Shaman Dome." The last of the alpenglow was leaving the peaks as I made a register and entry, furtively eyeing the steep buttress where the ridge from Shaman Dome joins the main Bird Ridge west of The Wing. The ridge narrowed considerably and the light was really poor as I reached the col, with no apparent route up the wall ahead. Luckily, the narrowness had focused the sheep, leaving a findable trail that I could follow up slippery slopes to the pass, and gentle slopes with big sheep trails along the top. Forty minutes later I had to turn on my light to find the route down to the tent, empty! Steve was still battling deep, punchy snow and steep slopes to the west, finally arriving two hours after me.

After a long, four-peak day, getting up in five hours was terrible, but there was the highest peak waiting, and the weather was still great. Since he had already climbed this peak, I let Steve sleep in. A quick walk down the moraine ledges and a half mile of plunging into sometimes supportive snow in the valley led me to the stream crossing below the south face of Peak 4970. Lots of newly sprouting anemones and other flowers proclaimed spring at 3100 feet. Climbing up the now overly warm, steep slope, I found ample opportunities to admire the view and flowers before the route became a narrow, snow-filled canyon between cliffs. At the top of this the slope steepened to 45 degrees, but seemed safe as I pigeonholed to the ridge top. The south ridge made a safe and easy access to the summit, with its perfectly named "Bird's Eye" view of Bird Creek, Ship Creek, and the "musical" peaks. Leaving my last register and a note about this



being the correct "Bird's Eye Peak" (F.R.A. Mark Fouts and Scott Jeffryes), I hurried back. Good glissading got me to the stream in 15 minutes, and the slog to camp was reasonable.

By noon we were climbing the steep tundra with packs, headed westward. Steve wanted another go at "The Beak" by the easier north ridge, so I hung out at the 4000-foot col, taking in the sun, flowers, distant sheep, and resting tired muscles. Unfortunately, he found the last 70 feet to the summit too technical to try alone, and soon returned. Glissading and plunge-stepping brought us 1,500 feet down the west side in short order, and soon we were traversing leftward toward the last true peak in the Bird Ridge complex that we hadn't visited, Peak 3835. We had to cross an ice-covered stream where Steve broke through the ice, discovering the joys of being immersed in icy water on a hot day.

I headed around the eastern rim of the summit cirque via two pinnacles (worth climbing), while Steve crossed over the pass at 3100 feet, dropped his pack at an unmapped lake, and took the direct way up the north ridge to the true summit. We met at the rocky top, and I celebrated completing all nine peaks in a 2½-day weekend. Tim Kelley (F.R.A.) didn't leave a register on this "Indian Pass peak," but I think I left something suggesting the name "Bidarka" (appropriately, an Indian ship).

Steve headed back around the middle ridge system to the 3600-foot pass to retrieve his pack, while I followed Steve's advice and took the south ridge to a corner (where I couldn't see that a route led down steeply to Indian Creek) and then northwards to Indian Creek Pass. Steve followed the unmapped stream to Indian Creek Pass and then hiked the trail to a bridge across Indian Creek about 2 miles south of Indian Creek Pass where he waited for me. A sheep carcass and lots of tracks in the snow patches on the pass trail, including Steve's, a recent big brown bear with cubs, a recent black bear, and a wolf, kept me alert and more apprehensive than the cliffs of the preceding days!

Steve and I hiked together for a mile or so until he convinced me to give him the keys to my truck (parked at the Bird Ridge Trailhead). He continued on at a faster pace (that sleeping in now paying off). Nothing appeared as I trudged on, until, with about 1½ miles to go, Steve appeared as a welcome sight out of the now dark forest (it was shortly after 1:00 a.m.). He had

heroically jogged out to the highway to fetch Grampa's truck to save the day for tired ol' me. What a good ending to a tour-de-force of the nine Bird Ridge area peaks!

MCA Winter Solstice, Flattop Mt.

by Bill Romberg



CA members Paul Templeton, Erin Dovichin, Bill Romberg, Kirk Towner, Cory Hinds, Sara ?, and one hairy wolf-dog, Kavik braved gale-force winds to maintain the tradition of a winter solstice sleep-out on Flattop, Saturday, Dec 18.

Saturday afternoon and evening, the wind was blowing 25-30 mph with gusts to 40; however, only light snow was falling and visibility was good (between gusts). Despite the winds and the lack of snow for walls on the summit, three tents were eventually erected near the large, central rock shelter. Most of the evening was passed in Paul and Erin's dome tent where several rounds of food and beverages were shared along with a few hands of the Himalayan card game. Hot chocolate with Butternips and Kirk's bagel-dogs were among the favorite items, along with summit cookies and other special treats. The cedar campfire logs brought up by Kirk and Sara went unused as the winds kept us tentbound. By 10 p.m., the steady winds had diminished somewhat, replaced by periods of calm punctuated by strong gusts. Cory, the engineer among us, deduced that we had approximately a 4-minute window in which to expose our more sensitive areas during a bathroom break. We were, however, able to enjoy a special moment as a group surveying the lights of Anchorage below before we turned in for the night.

Around 6 a.m. the next morning the wind returned with renewed vengeance, and by 6:30 it was impossible to sleep over the wind and tent noise. Each gust seemed to get a little stronger and last a little bit longer. We estimated that the wind was blowing a steady 30-35 mph with gusts to 50+ mph. Sometime during the early morning, Paul and Erin's tent sustained a broken pole and partially collapsed. An hour later, a guy-line loosened on the windward side of Bill and Kirk's tent, forcing them to pack quickly while Kirk held up one side of the tent (Kirk translates: "I sat in the tent sipping Butternips while Bill did all the



work"). Given the situation, we collectively decided to pack up and get off the summit before the wind and the visibility grew any worse.

After hastily packing up gear and stowing the wind-dismantled tents, we headed for the summit marker. Walking with loaded packs required leaning sideways into the wind and bracing against the stronger gusts that threatened to topple us over. Getting to the edge of the hard snow drift that led to the normal (west face) route was an exercise in timing, requiring us to sink our axes/poles into the snow and hunker down in order to avoid getting blown off the summit. One by one, between the stronger gusts, each of us scampered to the lip and then over. It was a rude introduction to winter climbing for Erin, who at one point exclaimed "You guys are \$#&*ing nuts!" Kirk, meanwhile, did his best to secure photos for next year's Photo Contest.

Once in the lee of the W. face, travel was significantly easier. Kirk had graciously offered to let me carry all of the heavy items in my pack on the way down to help keep me from getting blown off the summit as I broke trail (he's always thinking of others...). We slowly made our way down the ridge and safely arrived back to the parking lot around 9:30 a.m. Since breakfast was out of the question on the summit, we sped down the hill to Kirk's abode where pancakes with blueberry syrup and sausage muffins were expertly prepared and quickly consumed (Thanks Kirk!). All agreed that the last MCA winter solstice sleep-out of the century was a "blast" — literally. Certainly, it was one of the more memorable solstice trips among this group and a fitting way to end to the millenium.

For those who didn't make it to the winter solstice (Richard, where were you, man?), here's a sampling of the fun you missed....

"Damn that drink is good, what's in that?"

"The time between wind gusts is 4 minutes, so if you go out to pee, be sure you zip 'em up before your 4 minutes is up."

"Richard didn't make it up here, but at least he gave me some of this..."

Kirk: "Bill, I pulled you out of a hole last summer, now go get my food."

"I am not gonna smoke that in a bagel dog, now where's the pipe?"

Glacier Creek Circumnavigation

by Tim Kelley



For many years I have gazed at the headwaters of Glacier Creek while driving past Girdwood on the Seward Highway. I figured a classic local alpine trek would be a loop around the headwaters of this valley. From Girdwood you can see most of this route. Starting with the Gulch Creek ridge that leads from the Crow Creek Road to Eagle Glacier, the route then winds among crumbly Chugach peaks and high alpine glaciers and runs a long return on the ridge that crests Notch Mountain and descends to Winner Creek Gorge.

This trip had long been on my to do list. But like many trips had not yet made it to the top of the list. Meeting Jim Renkert at a trail race in June was the catalyst needed. Jim expressed interest in doing this route. Without any effort we convinced Bill Spencer that he needed to do this trip too. We were ready to go.

Our schedules and the weather connected on July 10th and we set off for Girdwood. We parked on a Crow Creek Road turnoff at the base of Glacier Gulch. After making last minute gear and food choices we started the 4000-foot bushwhack and climb to the Eagle Glacier.

It was 9:45 P.M.! This may seem an odd time to start a climb. But summer in Alaska draws some people to the unique experience of climbing at night. For me, words cannot adequately describe traveling in the perpetual and surreal twilight of an Alaskan summer's early morning hour. It's enlightening and addictive.

All of us had traveled the ascent route to Eagle Glacier multiple times before. But in terms of route finding this fact didn't seem to matter much. Soon the faint trail we were following disappeared into jungle. Swinging and wrestling through alders we worked our way down to the devils club infested creek bed. Once free of the creek bed we were escorted to the tundra line by swarms of red flies, which seemed overly abundant this year. On the backbone of the ridge a cool breeze freed us from the insects. We gazed down at the lights of a sleepy Girdwood below.



At the 5000-foot level, in dusk and drizzle, we reacquainted ourselves with how loose the scree that covered the high section of this ridge was. After much "two steps forward and one back" exertion we reached the highpoint of the ridge, Pt. 6060. We hunkered down behind a rock band to get out of the chill wind that was rising from the Glacier Creek drainage. Changing to climbing boots and slipping into our climbing harnesses we readied ourselves for crossing the Eagle glacier to the Nordic Training Center.

Once on the glacier we were spared from the wind. It was 1:30 A.M. Under a moody overcast, twilight struggled to exist. The white expanse of the Eagle Glacier magnified what few light rays penetrated this nether world. Serene and mystical, traveling on glaciers in the late summer night is definitely a treat.

Around 2:15 A.M. we reached the Nordic Training Center. This building was erected 15 years or so ago for the purpose of providing summer ski training for cross-country skiers. This site offers the lowest glacier ski-training site in the world (5500 to 6000 feet). Since the center's creation its use has been cyclic. Maintenance funds and the draconian doctrines of the US Forest Service have been a challenge to its operations.

Inside the center we changed into dry clothes, ate and kicked back on the couches! We reminisced and joked about previous trips to Eagle Glacier and the characters that had accompanied us. Bill had spent the most time here of all of us, a true Eagle Glacier rat.

Around 3:00 A.M. we decided to get some sleep. We commented on how much we were "roughing it" as we each claimed a mattress, pillows and a pile of wool blankets. Before hitting the hay Jim made a quick trip outside to regurgitate a pre-trip burrito that had developed a bad attitude. Bill and I winced as we lay comfortably in our beds and listened to the wretch fest going on outside. Before long Jim returned, pale but as ebullient as ever. Tough guy!

Around 9:00 A.M. we woke up on the inside of a cloud. The visibility outside was about 50 feet. We decided to wait a bit and hopefully the clouds would dissipate some. In the mean time we set to boarding up two upstairs windows that had blown out. The latest permit skirmish with the USFS made the center go unused for the

summer of 1999. Later in the fall, APU apparently worked things out with the USFS and a substantial amount of repairs were made.

At 11:00 we stored away the ladder and tools we had been using for repairs. The fog bank had shown a few faint glimmers of dissipation so we began traveling east along the rocky ridge that forms the southern edge of the glacier. Before long we roped up and resumed glacier travel. We traveled Eagle Glacier for a while and then scrambled to a higher pocket glacier that led to the 6200-foot pass at the top of Section 18. From here we descended, hopped over a bergschrund and headed south on the SE fork of Eagle Glacier.

At the southern edge of the SE fork of the Eagle Glacier there is a cliff band that forms the divide between the Eagle River and Twentymile River drainages. To get down off this step we found a route which we carefully down climbed part way to a prominent rock protrusion. We slung this anchor and then rappelled to the glacier below.

We headed south to a pass that dropped us onto a prominent glacier in the Glacier Creek drainage (Section 20). We skirted bergschrunds and contoured our way back up the 5500-foot point on the main ridge. On our climb back to the ridge we noticed something colored and out of place on the snowfield. When we got to it we found a 1 by 6 board painted orange. At the top of the ridge we found more boards and realized this was a heli-skiing landing spot.

Now out of the glacier traversing part of the trip we unroped and stopped long enough to refuel for the long ridge trek out. Though far from a clear day, the clouds had now cleared to offer views of the surrounding peaks, particularly those of the Twentymile drainage.

Soon we were back on the move. Clouds rolled in as we began the ascent of the north ridge of Peak 5350 (a.k.a. Mystery Mountain). The ridge we were on steepened and narrowed, but remained wide enough for safe scrambling. Visibility off each side of the ridge was nil. The ridge continued up into a brilliant haze that indicated we were just about to break out of the clouds. Sure enough the summit was clear and we uncovered a register that Bill, Tim Miller and I had left 6 years ago. There was only one sign-in since we placed the register. It came as no surprise to me that the lone visitor was Jim Saylor.



Near the top of this peak there was another heli-skiing landing spot. Here again there were boards painted orange that had been used to mark the landing site. But they were now blown randomly over the glacier that clung to the ridge. I picked up a few of the boards and threw them into a crevasse to clean the place up. A half-eaten apple that had been tossed by a heli skier further fueled my dismay that this area had definitely changed for the worst in the last 6 years. What a disgrace. This pristine wild ridge had not ever seen litter. Not since the creation of the world. Now it's being trashed by noisy, exhaust-belching helicopters dispensing tourists in the name of instant gratification and greed. And of course, the US Forest Service will readily allow this activity in the Glacier Creek area. But at the same time make it difficult for cross-country skiers to quietly train on the Eagle Glacier. No doubt there must be more permit money for the USFS in commercial heli-skiing operations than non-profit cross-country ski training centers. Screw the environment, money talks!

Well, enough spleen venting ... back to the trip. It was late afternoon and we hoofed down the long ridge between Glacier and Winner Creeks. We linked tundra hiking with snowfield glissades to get to the summit, Sunny-side, one half mile north east of Notch Mountain. Before we descended below tree line, and back into the red flies, we stopped to view the ridge loop that we were about to complete. After a quick feed we continued down the new snow cat trail that climbed from the valley floor to our ridge location. The bamboo poles wrapped with plastic tape that littered the trail, cat track scarred tundra and chainsaw slashed swath through virgin hemlock invoked remorse that I felt at the heli-pads.

Eventually we found the trail that parallels Glacier Creek. Following it to Winner Creek Gorge we then veered right and down to the steel cables that cross Glacier Creek. We found that crevasse rescue pulleys were just the right size to fit on the upstream cable. After rigging up our harnesses we had fun ferrying our packs and selves across the glacial torrent.

Once on the other side of Glacier Creek we followed a horse trail to the Crow Creek Mine road. Here we hid our packs in the woods and began the three-mile run up the Crow Creek road to Jim's car. All of us being cross-country ski racer types, inevitably the pace quickened as we

neared the car. The last 50 meters degenerated into an all-out, no holds barred sprint!

As we caught our breath, smiles of contentment settled in. It had taken a bit more than 15 hours of travel time to complete this trip (4:15 the first day, 11 the second). This trip confirmed that the Glacier Creek circumnavigation is indeed a classic local alpine trek. And we were again reminded how lucky we are to have the phenomenal and unique Chugach Mountains "backyard" that we do.

Eklutna Hut - Inaugural Ice Climb

by Paul Templeton

Friday Afternoon:

"Yo, Cory. What time do you want to get going tomorrow?" "8 o'clock." "Eight? It's Saturday. Don't do this to me." "O.K. Nine." "Better. On second thought, we don't have much light and it is two hours to the cabin. Eight." "O.K. Eight."

Friday Evening (after Officers' Meeting and beers at Harry's):

"Have you packed anything" "No." "Me either and I don't feel like doing it tonight." "O.K. Nine."

Saturday Morning (9:45 am):

"Well, Erin, I guess we are packed and ready to go. Wonder where Cory and Elena are?"

Minutes later as I was getting trip food for the mighty-mutt, Kavick, I observed a white Ford pickup stuck in my driveway pointed downhill. It was Cory and Elena, alright, in the midst of a most peculiar dilemma.

"Yo, dude, I was trying to back up your drive and I think my transmission is locked up."

"Damn. We ain't getting' no where fast today," I thought to myself as I walked down to meet the friends Erin and I were to spend the weekend with at the new Eklutna Hut and who now, it appeared, would spend the weekend at our house playing charades. "Try putting your gearbox in neutral."

Cory, tried something (still don't know what) and, at once, all of the Ford's potential energy was converted to kinetic and it sped down the drive to the snow-covered flats below.



Alright! We were going after all. A few more questions about who brought what and a stop for cocoa and we were heading for the Hut.

The Eklutna Hut has been under construction now since mid-September as a joint Alaska State Parks/MCA/AAC venture. Many volunteers have toiled below the Eklutna Glacier to construct what will be the largest cabin in the State Parks system. The basic structure is in place but there is finish work both in and out to complete. We were scheduled to participate in a work day on Sunday along with other MCA members. To kill time, we were astute enough to bring our ice tools, tunes, and other accoutrements

First we had to get there. Time was not the only factor working against us this morning. Mother Nature needed a laugh as well and sent warm temperatures and rain to turn snow into wet concrete on the 13-mile road around Eklutna Lake. It is in very marginal condition for 4-wheeled vehicles at this point. At about the 9-mile point, it becomes quite questionable, and at about the 12-mile point, pretty stupid. We ended up shoveling a track up the last hill and making several runs to finally bulldoze our way over the top to the Hut.

We quickly unloaded gear into the cabin and made some small spatial rearrangements for comfort. Our focus then shifted to the wood stove and what we would put in it. Never mind that I had over two cords of seasoned wood at the house (if only I had thought to bring a bit of it), we were going to dig wet logs out of the snow and try to coax heat out of them. It was like trying to smoke a soaked cigar. Some lamp oil and dry kindling in the Hut helped to start an initial fire but the damp timber did little besides hiss and smoke and provided only ambiance.

As the hour hand on the watch distanced itself ever further from the vertical, we felt it was time to have a closer look at the ice climbs across the (mostly) frozen Eklutna River. Cory and I quickly gathered our climbing gear, donned snowshoes, and made a beeline to the base of the climb. Elena was to follow shortly on skis, and Erin (not feeling quite up to par) settled into an easy chair by the fire to read and periodically watch the action across the river through a pair of binoculars.

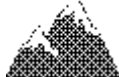
As we departed, I noted the cabin's impressive position below the Eklutna Glacier. The serene flats of the river stretch to the unseen toe

of the glacier sitting above the valley - a white wedge accentuated by blue crevasses and their shadows. Peril Peak stabs the sky beyond. In the opposite direction, Eklutna Lake is a turquoise gemstone. A shoulder of the Mitre towers above the cabin to the north while Benign's bulk looms ominously to the south displaying two prominent ice climbs on its eastern flank - Serenity Falls and Iron Curtain.

Passing beneath an eagle's wings we came to the edge of the alder forest guarding the base of Iron Curtain. With minimal effort we punched through the meager defense, ascended a short snow slope, and strained our necks to survey the heights above. (It is a whole 15 minutes from the hut to the base of the climb!)

The first pitch of about 100 feet wasn't too difficult - my kind of lead. There was a short vertical section of good quality, albeit wet, ice that put me in a good position to place a screw. Another couple of moves put me on top of the first step facing some lower angle ice (or should I say slush). Trusting the consistency of the ice even less than my climbing ability, I placed one more screw in the firmest ice I could find and angled right for what I perceived to be the most secure part of the falls. This mixture of slush and ice remained fairly consistent to the top of the pitch where the ice got thin and rock and running water could be seen below it. Shallow pick placements and one more screw got me off the ice and onto a snow slope heading for the alders and a belay station. As Cory followed, Elena skied to the foot of the falls and set up to take a turn as well.

After lowering Elena, Cory and I set forth up a long snow slope taking a hard right after about 300 feet on to a steeper snow and ice ramp and one more left to the base of the upper section of Iron Curtain. This section was much fatter than the first and more aesthetically pleasing with ice stalactites forming on a giant rock overhang. An 80-degree prow of ice sprouting from the lower mass was impressive silhouetted against the whiteness of Benign. Cory's turn to lead. The gallant lad confidently and methodically made short work of a 40-foot pillar of solid Grade IV ice. I had to describe the flight of our resident eagle as it again passed over while Cory was setting his first piece of protection. The route took a slightly tricky turn to the right at the roof of the rock overhang where the ice quality degraded momentarily and angled for another 50 feet toward the prow. Cory showed little concern



as he placed an ice screw and moved out on to the prow but, as I was to find out shortly, it required a bit of finesse. The ice quality, though, was the best yet and you almost had to try not to get a good bite for the next 40 feet. I followed on Cory's belay thoroughly enjoying the fine climbing and unique setting. I paused at one point to notice the smoke rising from the cabin below and across the river and mentally compared comfort levels with its occupant(s).

Light was now waning fast and it was time to beat a hasty retreat. Two rappels and a hip belay and we were back with our packs and snowshoes. Moments later, we were heading for the cabin. Once through the alders we could see the warm glow of an oil lamp in the windows. I imagined hot drinks and a warm fire and a chance to dry my thoroughly soaked gloves. Instead, we were treated to a warm and enthusiastic "Glad to see you" but the cabin was relatively cold and malfunctioning stoves precluded cooking. Oh well, ya' can't have it all. (Round trip time from the hut was approximately 3 hours.)

Fixing the stoves, we remedied the hot drink situation and proceeded to really warm things up when the author inadvertently dumped $\frac{3}{4}$ of a can of jalapenos in the Alfredo. Good discussion and a toast or two followed (Happy Anniversary to Cory and Elena!). Soon it was time to dream of future ice climbs staged from the Eklutna Hut. I thought I heard Cory scream in the night but I can't be sure. Might have been a coyote.

The work party on Sunday placed insulation, wrapped the exterior in Tyvek, installed sheet metal on the outside, and plywood sheeting on the inside. Access for the rest of the winter will be via snow machine or by foot only.



Editor's Note:

The MCA web page is under development. At some time in the future, past issues of Scree will be downloadable and address changes will be possible with password protection. Some difficulties with web security are being worked out now, so we are allowing the most current issue of Scree to be downloaded only.

ADZE



Wanted

Two technical ice axes, older models fine. Winter sleeping bag. Supergaitors - Mens size 6 & 10.5 (Koflach). Strap-on or step-in crampons. Jim or Cynthia - 727-2782 or cmmonroe@afsc.org

Found

Black duffel containing outdoor clothing on Huffman Rd on Dec 20. If can accurately describe contents, bag will be returned. Doug 267-2339

Lost

From Matanuska Glacier ice climbing clinic and rescue practice, a simple blue chest harness with an old locking 'biner. It was in a dark green stuff sack that may have had a few prussiks and slings too. It hasn't shown up in Richard's lost and found box. Randy, 248-8923 or RTH@shanwil.com.

For Sale

Black Diamond switchblade crampons. Out of the box, never used. \$75. Kristen 694-5788

Ice Climbing Festival

Canmore, Alberta. February 18 - 20, 2000. Features of this year's event include instruction for all abilities, "Try Ice Climbing" Sessions at the downtown ice wall, demonstrations and demo gear, slide show socials, a North American Speed Competition, and of course the ICE2K Party. The region offers some of the best and most accessible ice climbing available anywhere.

Aaron McConnell, toll free: 1-877-678-1635, aaron@altitudeevents.com, www.altitudesports.ab.ca/iceclimb.htm

MINUTES

DECEMBER MEETING

It was decided that people should eat before conducting business. Thanks to the refreshments committee and all members who donated time and food for the superb spread. There were a total of approximately 75 people in attendance. Approximately 8 new members or visitors introduced themselves.

TREASURER

Treasurer **Patty McPherson** introduced the 2000 budget. The budget was also published in the December Scree. Questions and suggestions were voiced. The issue of raising dues was discussed, but tabled for further discussion by the board. At present, the club has no shortage of money for the current activities.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Hiking and Climbing

A list of upcoming trips will be posted in the Scree. A wish list of local trips will also be published in the Scree in hopes of generating interest in our established leaders. Established leaders are encouraged to choose a trip and contact the Hiking & Climbing Chair people Matt Needom and Paul Templeton.

Huts

The club will be looking for solutions for dealing with human waste at our huts. A system used in Canada was discussed.

Training

Gary Runa is offering a suite of courses starting soon. Signup sheets were posted.

A course in winter camping is being offered by Tom McDermott and Brian Palmatier. Avalanche training will be offered although dates are yet to be decided. AMH has a package deal for beacons, shovels, and probes.

Parks Advisory

Chairperson **Scott Bailey** announced that closure of comments for "Traditional" Uses in Denali Park is 11 January.

OLD BUSINESS

Calendars are done but were not ready for the meeting. They can be picked up at AMH or by contacting Kirk Towner.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

There is a permanent Ranger **position open** in Talkeetna.

Candyland climbing permit – club members were reminded that a free access permit is required for ice climbing on ARRC property at Candyland. Stop by the ARRC headquarters at Ship Creek to pick up a permit. Note that one of the pull-outs off the highway will be plowed for parking – please use it

The slideshow was a free-for-all with members showing slides from Chugach, Wrangell, and Talkeetna Mountains, and Utah.

Respectfully submitted,
Cory Hinds

BOARD MEETING

(Barnes & Noble)

12/14/99

The following members attended the meeting: Richard Baranow, Dolly Lefever, Patty McPherson, Tom Choate, Kirk Towner, Matt Nedom, Bill Romberg and Cory Hinds. The following was discussed:

Next meeting

Turkeys for the Christmas Party. Ordered.
Space at the Pioneer School House is getting tight. Stay with current location for present.

MCA Traverse Huts and CSP

Mark Miraglia presented a draft letter on Chugach State Parks Policy on Eklutna/Whiteout/Eagle Glacier Huts. This letter contains MCA input into the draft policy. Richard requested that the board take the letter home and bring comments to the next board meeting.

Avalanche training

Sean Dewalt has withdrawn his training proposal. Nick Parker may provide training to the club for free. An alternate course is offered by Reed McDonald for approximately \$160/person. Richard will check with Nick about his availability to teach. Dates will be announced in January Scree. AMH will offer a package deal on shovels, beacons and avalanche probes. Richard will finalize prices with AMH.

Hiking and Climbing Trips

A concern expressed by the board and the H&C committee was that trip leader qualifications are too vague. Richard requested that board members review trip leader qualifications (see Bylaws & Policies) and discuss at the next board meeting.

Meeting length

Willy presents two Emails requesting that the length of the business meeting be cut down. Board agrees and makes a plan to speed things up.

Calendars

Trying to have ready by December meeting (didn't happen).

Next board meeting is Tuesday 21 January at 8pm. All members are invited to attend.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cory Hinds



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 or stream-crossing 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 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, February 1995

General Rules for MCA Sanctioned Trips

1. Proper equipment is on the reverse side of this list.
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 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 longer.
7. If you find you cannot participate after signing up on the roster, please let the leader know, both for transportation and gear-planning and so someone else can go. If you are the leader, help find a replacement.
8. Total number of people on club trips:
Minimum: 4 (for safety reasons)
Maximum: Leader option, depends upon the trail and campsite conditions, but generally limited to 12 in trailless areas or State and National Parks
9. Firearms are not encouraged, and please let the leader know if you want to carry one - it will be leader's option. Aerosol bear repellent is preferred.

Approved by MCA Board, February 1995

Equipment

Summer

Raingear that works
Windgear
Wool or fleece pants
Shorts
Light longjohns
Wool shirt
Jacket
Baseball cap
Gloves
Extra socks
Wool or pile hat
Hiking boots
Stream-crossing footwear
Sunscreen
Mosquito repellent
Whistle
Large plastic bag
Lighter, matches
Map, compass
Aerosol bear repellent
Moleskin/Spenco 2nd skin

Ace bandage
Surgical tape
Aspirin
Gauze
Anti-bacterial ointment
4" x 4" pads, band-aids
Wire
Vice grips or pliers
Utility cord
Sewing kit
Tent
Sleeping pad
Sleeping bag
Backpack cover
Cook pot
Stove (fires not allowed)
Fuel bottle
Walking stick or ice axe
Water bottles (not canteens)
FOOD

Additional for Glaciers

Ice axe
Gaitors
Climbing boots
Slings, carabiners
Rappel device
Belay device
Rope
Wands
Mittens
Crampons
Seat Harness
Ice screw(s)
Pulleys
Prussiks/ascenders
Glacier glasses/cream
If snow on glacier:
Picket
Skis or snowshoes

Winter

Windgear
Wool/fleece pants
Wool/fleece shirt
Longjohns
Down jacket
Wool/fleece hat
Face mask
Mittens
Double boots
Avalanche beacon
Shovel
Lighter
Headlamp

First aid kit
Repair kit
Tent (or snow shelters)
Sleeping bag
Sleeping pad
Large cook pot
Stove
Windscreen for stove
Fuel bottle
Thermos
Gaitors
Thermometer
Skis or snowshoes

Approved by MCA Board, February 1995

Leader Qualifications

1. Must be a member of the MCA.
2. Must have approval of the Hiking and Climbing Committee (A simple majority.)
3. Must have participated in trips of the same or higher classification than the one being led, showing competence in the opinion of the leaders of those trips; or equivalent experience acceptable to the Hiking and Climbing Committee.
4. Leaders on trips which may involve any avalanche-prone terrain must have passed formal avalanche training approved by the Hiking and Climbing Committee.
5. Leaders on trips which involve any hazardous stream crossings must have either formal training in safe stream crossing methods or have extensive experience crossing streams.

Leader Guidelines

1. Must follow the general rules for MCA Sanctioned Trips.
2. Must have a sign-up sheet with all participants' names on it.
3. Select a meeting time and place disclosed only to those persons on the sign-up sheet, unless call-ins are acceptable to the leader.
4. Must verify that each participant has signed a valid waiver and that it is on file.
5. Can require special equipment and refuse participation to any person that is ill-equipped (including clothing).
6. Has the authority to split the group (fast and slow), but must select a co-leader to help.
7. Must report any injuries to the MCA President.
8. Must report any personnel problems to the Hiking and Climbing Committee.

Approved by MCA Board, February 1995



Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc.

Membership Application

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska (MCA) was formed in 1958 to promote the enjoyment of hiking and climbing in Alaska and the exploration of its mountains. We welcome anyone who wishes to become a member.

Participate and Learn The MCA conducts scheduled hikes and climbs led by experienced club members, technical mountaineering and climbing courses, and other instruction throughout the year. The club maintains eight mountain huts in the nearby Chugach and Talkeetna Mountains. The MCA/Vin Hoeman Library, located upstairs in Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking on Spenard Road, contains hundreds of books, periodicals, bound volumes of Scree, and a 'peak file' with information on local climbs. The club also loans climbing gear to members, including ice axes, helmets, crampons, snowshoes and avalanche beacons.

Stay Informed The MCA publishes a monthly newsletter, Scree, and sends it to all members. The Scree contains the minutes of general meetings, announcements of upcoming events, the trip schedule and trip reports written by club members. A monthly meeting and presentation is held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30 P.M. in the basement of the Pioneer Schoolhouse (corner of 3rd and Eagle Streets, downtown Anchorage). Special events or changes to the meeting will be noted in *Scree*.

- **Complete both parts of this form** if you intend to participate in club-sponsored trips, or visit an MCA hut.
- Please make checks payable to Mountaineering Club of Alaska.
- Dues are \$10.00 for an individual or \$15.00 for a family (one Scree per family).
- Membership is for one calendar year, through the 31st of December. Memberships paid after October 1st are good through the following year.
- If applying by mail, please include a self-addressed envelope for your membership card which is required to participate on club trips and training. Or you may pick it up at any monthly meeting.

Our address is: MCA
Box 102037
Anchorage, Ak 99510

NEW	<input type="checkbox"/>	DATE	
RENEWAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	NAME	
INDIVIDUAL(\$10)	<input type="checkbox"/>	FAMILY	
FAMILY(\$15)	<input type="checkbox"/>	MEMBERS	
MAILING ADDRESS FOR SCREE			
STREET or PO BOX			
CITY/STATE/ZIP			
TELEPHONE			
Join a committee?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hiking & Climbing, Parks, Equipment, Training, Library, Other	
Lead a trip?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Location: _____ Date _____	
COMMENTS _____			

Paid: ☐ \$10 ☐ \$15 on Date: ____/____/____
☐ Cash or Check Number: _____

Membership Card Issued for Year: _____. ☐
Address added to Mailing List ☐

RELEASE OF LIABILITY — READ CAREFULLY

I, _____ (print name), am aware that mountaineering sports (including hiking; backpacking; rock, snow, and ice climbing; mountaineering; skiing; and ski mountaineering) are hazardous activities. I wish to participate and/or receive instruction in these activities with the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc. ("MCA") I recognize that these activities involve numerous risks, which include, by way of example and not limitation, falling while hiking, climbing, skiing or crossing rivers or glaciers; being struck by falling rock, ice or snow; avalanches; lightning; fire; hypothermia; frostbite; defective or malfunctioning equipment; and attack by insects or animals. I further recognize that the remoteness of the activities may preclude prompt medical care. I further recognize that risk of injury or death may be caused or enhanced by mistakes or negligence on the part of either my fellow participants or MCA officers, directors, guides, instructors, or trip leaders. I nevertheless agree to accept any and all risks of injury, death, or property damage that may occur in connection with any MCA activity, including use of MCA furnished equipment and use of MCA backcountry huts.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

GIVING UP MY LEGAL RIGHTS

By signing this Agreement, I agree to give up for myself and for my heirs all legal rights I may have against the MCA or my fellow participants in MCA activities. **I give up these legal rights regardless of whether the injury, death, or property damage results from mistakes or negligence on the part of either my fellow participants or the MCA.** (As used in this agreement, MCA means the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc., and all of its officers, directors, guides, instructors and trip leaders.) I understand this agreement shall remain in effect until such time as I provide signed written notice of its revocation to the MCA.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

MY PROMISE NOT TO SUE

I agree that I will not sue, or otherwise make any claim against, the MCA or my fellow participants in MCA activities for injury, death, or property damage which occurs in the course of my participation or instruction in mountaineering sports.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

MY RELEASE OF LIABILITY

I also agree to release and discharge the MCA and my fellow participants in MCA activities from all actions, claims, or demands, both for myself and for my heirs, dependents, and/or personal representative, for injury, death, or property damage occurring in the course of my participation or instruction in mountaineering sports.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

MY PROMISE TO INDEMNIFY

I agree to pay all expenses, including attorney's fees and court costs, that the MCA may incur as a consequence of any legal action arising out of injury, death, or property damage suffered by me, or suffered by someone else as a result of my conduct.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

MY CONSENT TO MEDICAL TREATMENT

I consent to any hospital care or medical or surgical diagnosis or treatment which may be necessary as a result of my participation in activities with the MCA. I also understand and agree that I am solely responsible for all applicable charges for such medical treatment, including evacuation and/or rescue cost.

_____ (initial that you have read this paragraph)

I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THIS AGREEMENT AND FULLY UNDERSTAND ITS CONTENTS. I AM AWARE THAT THIS IS A BINDING, LEGAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN ME AND THE MCA AND I SIGN IT OF MY OWN FREE WILL.

Dated: _____ Signature: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if under 19): _____

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

Officers

President Richard Baranow 694-1500
Vice-President Tom Choate 333-5309
Secretary Cory Hinds 277-2412
Treasurer Patty McPherson 563-4806

Board

Kirk Towner 344-5424
Shawn O'Donnell 333-9176
Dolly Lefever 243-7027
Wendy Sanem 694-0825
Bill Romberg 677-3993

Annual membership dues: Single \$10.00 Family \$15.00 (one *Scree* per family)

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the treasurer at the MCA address below. If you want a membership card, please fill out the club application found on the previous page and mail it with a self-addressed, stamped envelope. If you fail to receive the newsletter, or have questions about your membership, contact the club treasurer. The post office does not forward the newsletter.

SCREE is a monthly publication of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. Articles and notes submitted for publication and other communication related to the newsletter should be mailed to my address: 1106 W. 54th Ave., Anchorage, AK 99518, or e-mailed to mca@alaska.net. Articles should be received by January 28 to be included in the February issue.

Paid ads may be submitted to the attention of the Vice-President at the club address and should be "camera ready" and pre-paid. Your cooperation will be appreciated...
Willy Hersman, Editor, 269-8828.

MAILING: richard baranow

HIKING/CLIMBING CHAIRS: matt needom, 278-3648, paul templeton

Web Page: <http://www.alaska.net/~mca>

Hot Line: 566-4MCA



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