

# Moun<sup>tain</sup>aineering Club of Alaska

*A monthly members-only publication*

## SSCRINE

**December 2002 • • • • • Volume 45 Issue 12**

I hope my MCA membership has not expired....



Mailing Address: P.O. Box 102037  
Anchorage, Alaska 99510

On the web: <http://www.mcak.org>

List Serv: <http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/MCAK>

### December Meeting

Wednesday, December 18th, 7:30 pm

First United Methodist Church

9th & G Streets

Next to the Phillips Building

(you may use marked parking after hours...)

#### **Downtown Anchorage**

POTLUCK-Annual Christmas Dinner. The club will provide turkey, stuffing, bread and beverages. You bring the real food like:

If your LAST NAME begins with- bring:

A-C	~	veggies (hot dishes mo bedda)
D-H	~	pasta, rice, potatoes
I-M	~	salads, fruits
N-R	~	appetizers, condiments
S-Z	~	desserts

BRING 5-10 OF YOUR FAV SLIDES TO SHOW WITH THE GROUP

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- DEC 21** Day of Departure: Saturday  
Semi-Annual Club Solstice hike of Flat Top. Organize your own group or just come on up to the top. The weather has forbidden this trip the past few years so this mild weather should afford the hike for all hands. The conditions might require crampons and other safety gear required for dynamic weather patterns. Solo hikes are not recommended.
- 22** Day of Departure: SUNDAY  
Time of Departure: 8AM  
Class: Class B  
Trip Description: SNOWSHOE HIKE EAGLE RIVER VALLEY

Leader Name: Jayme Mack  
Primary Phone: 694-1500 Secondary Phone: 272-1811  
Email: jaymack@alaska.net

XTRA COMMENTS: Snow Pending we will day-hike on snowshoes in the North Fork of the Eagle River Drainage. If no-snow we will hike and do the snow dance. Meet at the Eagle River Nature Center at 8AM. Dogs allowed if well behaved. Bring snowshoes, poles, food, drink, good boots, warm clothes and a sense of humor. Bring a few Christmas Carols to sing. Popcorn and Hot Cocoa afterwards.

For the most current trips listing,  
please visit the MCA website:

**www.mcak.org**

*I haven't done any  
thing that anyone else  
couldn't have done.  
I just did it.  
(Norman Vaughan)*

## **Letter from the Editor:**

It is with regret I must announce my termination of Editor status no later than the January issue. As my business continues to get busier, the task of managing input, designing and doing the layout for each month's publication and coordinating with various committee chairs is becoming more and more difficult.

Interested candidates should contact Jayme Mack, our new Club President and assume the duties, responsibilities and privileges of being the next Scree Editor.

The Editor candidate should have some desktop publishing capabilities; but I guess a typewriter could still work. But, having Quark, Pagemaker or Publisher would make your life easier.

The January Scree already has allocated Trip Reports, so future submissions should be postponed until the announcement of the new Editor.

**If a new Editor is not announced in the January issue, the Scree will not be published until there is some sort of resolve.**

Robert Baker SCREE EDITOR  
1830 E. Parks Hwy. #600  
Wasilla, AK 99654 (907) 357-2946



# MCA HOEMAN AWARD

## HERSMAN RECEIVES NEW HOEMAN AWARD

Willy Hersman, veteran climber and dedicated MCA member, was honored as the first recipient of the MCA Hoeman Award during a brief ceremony at the November 2002 general meeting.

Established by the Board in 2001 in honor of pioneer club members and climbers Vin and Grace Hoeman, the Hoeman Award recognizes current and former club members who have made a significant contribution to the exploration, documentation, and promotion of hiking and climbing opportunities in Alaska's mountain ranges.

The MCA Awards Committee recommended that Willy be the first to receive the Hoeman Award because he has made significant contributions to climbing and exploration in Alaska as well as documentation of climbing in Alaska through his exceptional service to the MCA during the past two decades.

According to MCA documents, Willy has 27 first ascents in Alaska and the Yukon to his name, including the first winter ascent of Mt. Logan, and a traverse of Denali from Petersville Rd. Mr. Hersman was also the first person to climb all 21 peaks above 7,000 feet in nearby Chugach State Park.

Willy's service to the MCA has also been exemplary. He served as the editor of the club's newsletter, SCREE, for over 15 years, has led more than 50 club trips and 8 training classes. In addition, he has submitted over 65 trip reports and presentations to the club, has served as club President, Director, and chair of numerous club committees. He also developed and continues to maintain and improve the club's website and membership database.

An engraved award plaque was presented to Willy during the ceremony by Past-President Bill Romberg, and his name was engraved on the first of 20 name plates on the newly-unveiled permanent award plaque that will be housed in the Vin Hoeman Library at Alaska Mountaineering and Hiking (AMH).

In addition to receiving the Hoeman Award, Willy was also presented with an Honorary Membership Certificate to recognize his outstanding service to the club, the details of which are described in the accompanying nomination letter from the MCA Honorary Membership Committee (below).

Future Hoeman Awards will be given on an ad hoc basis. Nominations for the Hoeman Award are accepted year round and should be made in writing to the club's address. Nominations should include the name of the candidate(s), the name(s) of the person(s) nominating the candidate(s), a written description of the contributions the candidate(s) has made to the exploration, documentation, and promotion of hiking and climbing opportunities in Alaska, and the name(s) and contact information of club members or other persons who may be able to provide more information to the Awards Committee regarding the candidate's contributions.

**Submitted by Bill Romberg**

## MCA Honorary Membership Committee

November 9, 2002

Jayme Mack  
President  
Mountaineering Club of Alaska

Dear Jayme:

As the Chairman of the Honorary Membership Committee, I am writing to nominate Willy Hersman for an honorary membership in the Mountaineering Club of Alaska. This nomination is based on Willy's longstanding and dedicated service to both the MCA and the sport of mountaineering. A short list of Willy's many contributions to the Club include:

- \* Editor of the Scree for nearly 20 years
- \* Leader of over 50 official Club trips
- \* Leader and organizer of numerous Club training classes
- \* Serving as the driving force for construction of several of the Club's huts
- \* Serving as, variously, officer, director and president of the Club

As impressive as these objective contributions are, the committee feels that Willy's greatest gifts to the Club have been the encouragement, guidance and friendship he has extended to many of the club members over the past two decades. Willy is a superb mountaineer whose many achievements include the traverse of Denali starting from the Petersville Road, the first winter ascent of Mt. Logan in 1986 and the ascent of all 23 peaks above 7,000 feet in Chugach State Park. Willy was the first person to achieve the latter milestone. Willy's concurrent history of mountaineering achievement and mountaineering safety reflects his confident, competent and unassuming personality. Despite his lofty mountaineering achievements, Willy has also spent a great deal of time with novice and intermediate climbers through his many MCA activities and trips. Individuals who have climbed with Willy over the years have been impressed with his preparedness, skill, judgment and good humor.

Willy has served as exemplary leader of the club for over two decades. In recognition of this many contributions to mountaineering and the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, the Honorary Membership Committee nominates Willy Hersman for a honorary membership.

**Sincerely,**  
**Neil O'Donnell**  
**Chairman**  
**Honorary Membership Committee**



## Trip Reports

### Beginning and Ending Summer in Cochrane Bay

(by Tim Kelley)

"It's a nice place, but most people just cruise by it on their way to other places further out in Prince William Sound". I heard this response several times when I asked veteran boaters about Cochrane Bay. Being new to boating in PWS, this information on Cochrane Bay perked my interest. Not many people, quiet, lots of snow and rugged little peaks ... sounds like the place for me!

My first trip to Cochrane Bay was June 22nd of this year, the first day of summer. The reason for the visit was skiing. Spring crust skiing, in summer. The previous week I had noticed the plentiful snowpack on the ridges to the southeast of the head of the bay. So I figured it wasn't time yet to put away the cross-country skis.

(Side note: The previous week my wife, Tammy Thiele, and I had climbed Perry Peak on Perry Island. If you go to PWS, this is a must-do easy scramble. We climbed it from East Twin Bay on a cloudless day. The 360 degree views from island peak rivals any mountain-top view I have seen in Alaska)

After anchoring in the enchanted Three Finger Cove, James Southam, Colin Quinn-Hurst and I began our first ski workout of the summer. We kicked steps up an avalanche gully for 1000 feet to gain the ridge top to the south of Three Finger Cove. From that point the skis went on and we spent hours skating and shredding turns in cloudless skies, and 70 degrees!

Despite the fact it was June 22nd, Lake Shrode and Lake Jack were still ice covered - even though these lakes are just a few stories above sea level. The lingering ice is likely a testament to the huge yearly snowpack that insulates this lake ice.

Not wanting to descend the chute we used to get to the high country, we descended the drainage to the south of Lake Shrode. Here we found some excellent gully skiing. And in particular a snaky section of narrow, rock-walled gorge packed with snow.

We were able to ski right to the shoreline of Three Finger Cove. Here we dropped the skis and ended the day with a refreshing cliff dive into the 48 degree seawater. (Okay, I'll admit ... I couldn't be shown up by the youngsters, so peer pressure forced me off the cliff!). Taking a food break on the mother ship, I realized that this area of PWS is perfect for extending the spring skiing season. Skiing here in May and June could easily become a future habit for me.

Various PWS exploits kept me out of Cochrane Bay until September 10th. On this day I returned with Tammy to do some peak scrambling. Starting at low tide on the eastern shore, about one-half mile from the end of the bay, we set off for Peak 2600+ (Seward C-4, T6N, R6E, S19). Salmon were spawning in the stream at the head of the bay. Many dozens of half-eaten fish carcasses indicated that the bears in the area were in late summer gorging mode.

Making plenty of noise, we followed the maze of bear trails that lead from the buffet stream up into the wet forest. We negotiated the large and copious puddles of black goo in the trails ... the byproduct of black bears eating a pure-protein diet. A small high-pressure system was moving through the area. So the forest now steamed with mist as the sun began its attempt to evaporate moisture from the previous week's rain. After an hour of bushwhacking, muskeg meandering, moss slipping and branch pulling we gained the dry tundra zone. At this point the PWS hiking experience changes abruptly from ordeal to ideal.

We got cliffed out on the east-northeast ridge to the summit, so we back-tracked to the ridge that rises from the pass that defined the Cochrane Bay

and West Finger Inlet drainages. From there it was straightforward scrambling up tundra, rock and snowfields to the summit.

On the summit we could see this little white dot down in Cochrane Bay - our boat. This sight reminded me of the challenge with peak bagging by boat, other than kayak, in PWS. There is always the chance that your ride home will drag anchor and be nowhere to be found when you get back to shore.

I've always had this superstition that you should never urinate within site of a mountain's summit. I figure that this is disrespectful to the mountain, and bad luck could follow. Like I said, this is a superstition and I always wondered if it was a silly rule to follow or not. Well, Tammy did not know of this dogma and, out of discomfort and urgency, violated this sacred taboo. She would pay for this act. An hour later on the descent she slipped and dislocated her shoulder. Being the tough Alaskan woman she is, Tammy reset her shoulder herself, and then painfully completed the descent to the boat. After this episode, I will never question my mountaintop anti-urination superstition again!

Despite Tammy's shoulder incident, Cochrane Bay still called. So on the last day of summer, September 21st, Tammy, Trond Jensen and I headed back. The goal of the day would be Peak 2850 (Seward C-4, T6N, R6E, S18) and Peak 3500+ (Seward C-5, T6N, R5E, S24). The 3500' peak was the prime goal. Viewed from the water, this peak was distinctive. A long swooping northeast ridge led up to a pronounced summit cone. From five miles distant, and from the tight concentric circles on the map, it was hard to tell if the last few hundred feet would be a technical climb or not.

Tammy, nursing a sore shoulder, planned on spending the day paddling the head of the bay, beachcombing and berry picking. So at 11:00 AM Trond and I started bushwhacking upwards from the west side of a small cove created by a narrow tundra cloaked peninsula. To make it to both summits, back to the boat and back to Whittier before dark we would have to move fast. In 45 minutes we were above the brush line and heading south on the long ridge that leads to Peak 2850. Ledge ponds had the first ice glaze of the year thanks to the previous cold clear night. Crusty remnants of the season's first snow-fall spackled shaded northern slopes.

As Trond and I are both competitive cross-country ski racers (and compete against each other!) the pace was quite brisk. Fast hiking was interspersed with some running. Soon we were at the glacier and the base of the northwest ridge of Peak 2850. From here several hundred feet of this ascent was what I call "attentive scrambling". It wasn't technical, but you had to be very focused and alert. Riding the loose crud we were climbing off either side of the ridge would have been a really bad deal.

We crested the summit at just under 2 hours. Yet another cloudless day in Cochrane Bay! Norwegian Trond, who has climbed high peaks on several continents, was impressed with this gem of a location. Rock, tundra, ice, snow, forest and sea - interwoven in every direction. Even though we were a couple of miles closer to Peak 3600, we still couldn't gage whether the last pitch to the top was a scramble or a technical climb. But we didn't waste time and set off to check it out.

The long ridge leading to the summit was as fun a scramble as it looked from the water. We were impressed with the amount of bear scat we saw at these higher elevations. Here, on a high ridge of rock and snow, the bears would be a long ways above their food sources. I thought that it would be interesting to be able to ask a local bear: "What are you doing up here?". I'm sure the bear's reply would be something like: "Dude! This is my home! What are YOU doing here?"

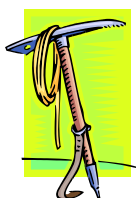
With less than 500 feet to go to the summit, the ridge abruptly narrowed to shoulder width, with a 700 foot drop to the east. We noticed a few yards before this very sketchy section of the ridge a large deposit of bear scat. It seemed that a bear had earlier tried this route but had the crap scared out of it! We took this omen to heart, turned back, and down-climbed a ramp to the glacier to the west of the ridge. Traveling up the glacier a bit we then got back



on the ridge and found a non-technical route to the top. On top, as with the other two peaks climbed in this area, we found no sign of a previous ascent and left a small cairn.

We retraced our route back to the bay. Except for me almost nailing Trond with a runaway rock when he was on the most dicey section of the Peak 2850 descent, the return trip went smooth and quick. While descending to Cochrane Bay I grabbed a handful of salmonberries. The tart taste in my mouth confirmed that summer was drawing to an end, as the salmonberries were starting to get fermented. Hmmm, I thought ... maybe this is the reason the local black bears cruise the high ridges of the area. They get all frisky and crazed from bellies full of fermented salmonberries. And then decide to head to the high country and do some peak bagging!

After just under 6 hours we broke out of the brush and met Tammy on the shore of Cochrane Bay. We paddled back to the boat, ate and then set off for Whittier. Looking back over our wake, under my breath I thanked Cochrane Bay for the great summer trips. And said: "See you next summer!"



## In Washburn's Footprints: an Ascent of Mt. Lucania and Mt. Steele

By David Hart

Bradford Washburn is hero to many Alaskan mountaineers for his exploratory travels, mountain photography and cartography in addition to his early mountaineering feats in Alaska and Canada. Perhaps Washburn's most spectacular epic occurred in the summer of 1937 when he and Robert Bates were dropped off at the base of Mt. Steele (16,625') and the unclimbed Mt. Lucania (17,150') in the middle of the St. Elias Range, Yukon Territory. Upon landing, their bush pilot Bob Reeves decided he'd not be able to return for them due to soft snow. Thirty-two days later, Washburn and Bates completed their traverse and walked out to Burwash Landing having made the first ascent of Mt. Lucania and the second ascent of Mt. Steele. Their epic survival story will soon be featured in a new book written by David Roberts.

I've had the privilege to follow in Washburn's pioneering footsteps up several Alaskan and Canadian peaks: Mt. Sanford, Mt. Marcus Baker, Denali, and now Mt. Steele and Mt. Lucania. Washburn's accomplishments in the 1930's and 1940's were far ahead of his time.

On April 23, 2000 Paul Barry, Jeannie Wall and our newest St. Elias Range climbing friend Dick Dorworth landed at 9,400' on a narrow spur of the Walsh Glacier on the south side of the Lucania/Steele massif, a scant two miles from the base of the Washburn Ridge. Our pilot Paul Claus had never landed in this location before, but had no problem setting down his Beaver exactly where we wanted. Few people climb Lucania and Steele, and those prior had landed miles further from the mountain. I've never been one to turn down a short approach so we asked Claus to land us as close as possible. On our first afternoon we skied a small load two miles up glacier to the base of the Washburn Ridge at 10,400'. Breaking trail, we encountered funky depth hoar as our skis broke through a 6" crust the crust. Hopefully we wouldn't find similar conditions on the route.

The next day we carried another load to the base of the ridge intent on dropping supplies at 12,300', halfway up the ridge where it begins to broaden out. We accessed the base of the ridge from the glacier just left of a rock buttress, up an old avalanche path. It was well packed so trail breaking was easy. We

initially tried further left where it was less steep, but a "whoomf" and shooting crack made us reconsider for the steeper consolidated route. We were becoming concerned our route just might be out of shape due to avalanches, especially for our summit day on Lucania which is notorious for avalanche potential. We unroped and climbed the avalanche gully to the ridge crest at 11,000'. Beyond, we found a narrow ridge with no crevasses until 12,000' where several hidden slots appeared just below our intended camp. There were no campsites between 10,400' and 12,300'. We decided to carry our skis up the ridge for use on the plateau. Willy Hersman had experienced very deep snow on the three-mile long plateau in 1992 and we hoped skis would be worth the extra weight down low. Caching gear at our first camp, we returned to base camp happy with our progress. The next morning we made the final cut on what gear to leave behind, and moved up to occupy our camp 1. We were all feeling well and having a great time.

On April 26 we continued our double-carrying strategy and moved extra food, clothing and skis up the icy ridge from 12,300' to 13,500'. We were roped up due to the increased crevasses and some technical terrain. We placed a couple ice screws for protection on an ice dome around 13,000'. Our icy ridge ended at a huge serac wall protecting access to the 14,100' plateau. We debated going either far left or far right and eventually settled on an ascending traverse right up 30- to 40-degree snowfields below the seracs for 500 meters until we could easily gain the plateau. We found a great spot for a camp at 14,100' in a protected bowl with plenty of snow to dig into. We returned to our first camp within six hours. The following morning was again clear with views to the south of the entire Mt. Logan massif. We packed up camp 1 and reached our plateau camp by early afternoon. We were within an easy 2,300' and three miles of the summit of Mt. Steele on the edge of the massive plateau dubbed Shangri La by Washburn and Bates. It was going much quicker than we expected. So much better, in fact, that we had been climbing so fast that we were concerned about rushing to the summit the next day. But as fortune would have it, we woke the next morning to a mellow storm day, requiring a full day of tent bound story telling and relaxing. That night the skies cleared and temperatures hit -15F.

On April 29, the four of us left camp at 9am, dressed in over boots and parkas, as the wind was bitter cold. We skied up the hard packed southwest slopes of Mt. Steele to the last 500' pyramid that required crampons. Only the final 50-feet was at all challenging. As soon as we popped up on top the full force of the wind made frostbite a real threat. One photo later we headed down to the skis where we were protected and could enjoy a quick descent back to Shangri La. Jeannie and Dick are expert skiers, and quickly left Paul and I in their dust. Though we were only gone for 7 hours, the wind and cold made it seem like a much longer day. We were again thankful that we woke the next day to another storm. The light wind and snow was actually soothing as it fell on our nylon tents. It was nice to have another rest day. I wish we could always pick and choose when they came around.

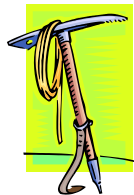
During the night the temperatures again dropped, this time to -20F. We knew we'd be moving camp across the plateau to below Mt. Lucania the next morning. We used our skis, but out of habit as opposed to necessity. It only took 2-1/2 hours to move the three miles to our final camp below the east peak of Lucania. Soft snow was at a premium and we had to work hard to dig a protected campsite. This is in contrast to the deep snow conditions Willy experienced here eight years prior. That fact bode well for us as hard pack snow means fast traveling. That afternoon as we were setting up camp, Paul Claus flew overhead. He might just have the best job in the world. Before dinner we skied to the base of our proposed route to check it out. With any luck we'd be going for the top in a few short hours. Or not. We woke at 4am for breakfast to light snow, no visibility and winds screaming up top. With wind chills approaching -60F on the summit there was no discussion about returning to our warm cocoons for the day.

Again, luck was with us. On May 3, after another well timed storm day we decided to try for Lucania. It was a blue-sky day, yet bitter cold at -20F with fortunately no wind. Dick opted to remain in camp due to prior cold injuries to his toes; he wisely didn't want to risk further damage. At 9am Jeannie, Paul and I started out on skis for the first mile to the base of the peak. We



were hyper sensitive to the avalanche potential of the shadowed north facing leeward slopes. Still, we felt we could choose a safe route up the north face that would gain the eastern summit ridge between the east and central sub peaks of Lucania. From 13,800' to 15,000' we cramponed and partially wallowed up a mostly avalanche-protected broad depression. A few seracs towered overhead, but most of the exposure was off to the left or right. With proper route finding in good weather we knew we could decipher a safe route, and with our wands in place we could make it back even if clouds descended. However, we also recognized that trying to find a safe route up this face in a whiteout would be crazy. The last 1,000' to the ridge was deeper snow and slightly suspect in spots, so we took our time avoiding a couple spooky snow slopes. We had intended to make a direct line for the saddle between the central and main summit, but seracs, crevasses and dangerous slopes forced us to the left to the saddle between the central and east peak. Once at the saddle, we hung a right towards the central peak. We had no desire to climb the additional 500 feet up and over the central peak. Instead, we traversed its north face at 16,000'. It was pretty straightforward and safe, except for the last 200 meters before we reached the saddle leading up towards Lucania. Here we found 100 meters exposed to a hanging serac after which the slopes got steeper. We ended up traversing these 50-60 degree slopes just before the saddle. After a major snowstorm this last traverse would have been loaded and scary. There was no other way to avoid this section of the traverse without backtracking and climbing over the central peak. Fortunately for us we found safe conditions. It was windy when we hit the final saddle at 2pm, but once we headed up the last 1,000 feet to the summit the winds quit. Surprisingly, it turned out to be a nice warm summit day, far warmer on top than we had experienced during the last week. We reached the summit at 3pm after 6 hours and spent 30 minutes on top. It was an uneventful 3-1/2 hour return to base camp by 7pm for a 10 hour day.

The following morning the weather again turned marginal and we descended our wanded route all the way back to base camp in seven hours, arriving at 5:30pm. It snowed lightly most of the day, keeping us on edge hoping it didn't deteriorate. We slept in the next morning until sunshine drove us from the tents with just enough time to go for a quick ski before Paul Claus returned for us at 10am to bring us home, bringing an end to our 13 day trip in Washburn's footsteps.



## Eklutna Traverse the Norwegian Way

by Trond Bjorn Jensen

Per Arne (Pedersen) and I were sweating our way up Goat Mountain thigh-deep in wet spring snow while Frode (Lillefjell) was showing off doing Moose Huffs with a 20 pound pack on his back. Frode has a habit of winning the Bird Ridge race in the spring. Per Arne and I were mere coach potatoes compared to him. It was May 18th, the day after the Norwegian national holiday - perhaps I shouldn't have partied so hard last night. Oh well - it was too late to worry about that now. Two days ago we had decided to go for the Eklutna Traverse. A friend had dropped us at the trailhead below Crow Pass at about 3 pm. It was reasonably easy going in the beginning - avoiding the alder thickets by moving up old avalanche cones. But gaining the ridge leading up to Goat mountain was a chore in thigh deep mush. It was too early in the year to do the traverse from the South ridge of Goat Mnt over to the Eagle Glacier. So we decided to head up the South ridge and over Goat Mnt. As we moved up the ridge a rather large avalanche crossed our would-be traverse so we were happy with our decision

to take the longer route over the top. 4 hours after leaving the trailhead we crested South Goat Mnt at about 6060 ft and stepped onto the Eagle Glacier. The sun was now low in the horizon and the snow was starting to crust. In the setting sun we had dinner at the top of the world accompanied by beautiful vistas in all directions. Things were looking really good for our glacier crossing tomorrow.

The alarm went off at 4 am. I was not ready to get up yet. Sometimes I think I am getting too old for these early morning starts. But usually it pays off to be an early bird. At 5:45 am I was shooting pictures in the sunrise and rearing to go. Another beautiful morning. It was not very cold so I was a little uneasy about the crust. It was 25 degrees and it promised to be pretty warm. We needed to get moving right away. I had selected to use skinny skies, while Frode and Per Arne had mountain skies. So I would be really hurting if the crust wouldn't carry me.

The trip down from the top of Eagle Glacier past Rosie's Roost was awesome. A nice downhill grade and perfect crust. We zoomed down the Eagle Glacier unroped in easy telemark turns (we weren't quite that gracious with our 20 lb packs, but it sure felt great). Our skies weren't even making the smallest dent on the snow and we felt no danger from crevasses. The 3-4 miles down past Rosie's Roost took all of 30 minutes. Everything was working out great, but this was just the start.

Getting down to where the Whiteout Glacier joins the Eagle Glacier, we saw a perfect, smooth surface leading up the glacier fall towards Whiteout. This coincided with the "trail" on the Chugach State Park map and would avoid descending below about 3800 ft. So we put purple klisters on our skies and started up the sidehill (no wimpy skins for this crew). But after gaining about 500 ft we crest a small hill and find ourselves in a heavily crevassed area. Dead-end! So we have to go back down to 3800 ft and then all the way to 3500 ft to a little cirque right below where the medial moraine comes down from Whiteout Glacier. We had just wasted one hour, and all the klisters were gone from our skies from telemarking down the hill. However, from here it was easy traveling up towards Whiteout (after putting on new layers of klisters courtesy of XC coach Frode). The first part was steep enough that we took our skies off and kick-stepped up. After about 500 feet, we put our skies back on, with fresh klisters, and headed on up. The right center of the glacier provided the easiest and safest passage.

On our way up this glacier arm towards the top of Whiteout Glacier we saw fresh bear tracks crossing the snow. Wonder what the bear was doing up here? There is nothing to eat up here except scrawny Norwegian mountaineers. About a mile ahead there is something dark and black moving across the ice ... is it a bear? No ... just a large boulder stuck in the ice.

Around 10 am we arrive at the top of Whiteout Glacier. By now, the sun was fully out and it was getting warm. And not a breath of air. Pretty soon the snow is going to melt and make the going tougher. Oh, how fun it would be to climb Whiteout Peak and some of the other pretty ladies around here. But that would mean having to stay another night and we had people expecting us back in town that night so we decided against it.

Whiteout Glacier is bathing in sunlight and sports a flawless snow crust which by now has 1/2 inch soft layer on top - "hero snow". Innumerable summers with glacier skiing has never seen anything like this. The gradual downhill to Whiteout Pass was perfect for skating. A little tricky with a large backpack, but great speed. 3 miles and 15 minutes later and we are at the Whiteout Pass. Three guys roped together and skating across the glaciers - that must have been quite a sight.

By now we are sure to make it down and off the glacier before it gets too warm and we stop for a little fun and play. At Whiteout Pass there are a couple of small peaks just screaming to be telemark skied ... so we had to oblige. But not for too long. Pretty soon we're on our way again towards Pichler's Perch. Still we can just glide and skate our way down the Eklutna Glacier. By 1 pm, we're at the Pichler's Perch.





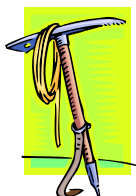
Good advice from Alaska-seasoned Tim Kelley prompts us to take a wide swath out to the West to where the West Eklutna Glacier comes down to join the Eastern branch. This saw us safely past the steep bowl where two mountaineers were avalanched and died in 1971. From here it was just to follow the right hand side of the glacier for as long as possible. Once the West face of the Mitre became too steep and looming we regained the middle of the glacier and skied over to the center moraine, but we entered the moraine too early. We could have kept going down as far as there was snow. But we were ready to get off the glacier. So we packed up our rope and skies and scrambled down the medial moraine to the end of the glacier. Exiting the glacier was quite easy and no ropes or rappelling were necessary ... a result of many years of melting and receding glacier. The valley bottom at the base of the glacier was probable the scariest part of the whole trip. With steep canyon walls on both sides and fresh sign of rock-fall we literally ran past the terminus lake to where the valley opens up a little.

Our planning did not leave time to place bicycles at the end of Eklutna Lake. Slogging out the 12 miles to the Eklutna Lake trailhead in the dust of 4-wheelers took more time and effort than I care to remember. Even Frode and Per Arne were happy to see the trailhead appear in the distance.

So what's next? Maybe we will try to do it all in one day next year, weather and snow conditions permitting. Starting from Girdwood at about 3 am, and traveling light, one could gain the Eagle Glacier around 6 am. With 6 hours across the glaciers to the Eklutna end where bikes are waiting, one could "easily" be back at the Eklutna Lake trailhead by 3 pm. One can always dream .....

Route finding on the Eklutna Traverse is quite easy (as long as the weather cooperates). However, the trails indicated on the local Chugach State Park maps can be misleading in a couple of places. Here are a couple of pointers for those of you planning to do the trip (keeping in mind that optimal route selection may change with the seasons):

1. At intersection between Eagle Glacier and Whiteout Glacier by Rosie's Roost, go all the way to the bottom (below Rosie's Roost) at about 3500' before turning up towards Whiteout Glacier. Cross boulder patches on north side of main terminus valley to gain Whiteout Glacier arm. Shortcut (to maintain elevation 38-4000') leads to crevassed area and should be avoided). Head up right center of the arm leading up towards Whiteout Glacier (rather staying on the far right hand side as indicated on the map).
2. At Pichler's Perch hut, ski out west to the middle of Eklutna Glacier where it meets with West Eklutna. Make long sweeping right hand turn towards East to avoid crevasse area and steep bowl directly below hut.
3. Stay at East side of glacier (on snow field) until glacier opens up again. Continue down center of glacier until snow runs out, then gain central moraine which can easily be followed to exit the glacier.
4. Exit glacier on left hand side (NW) and quickly move past terminus lake on West side. Move quickly to minimize rock-fall danger.
5. Cross Eklutna river to East side immediately below terminus lake. Follow East side until bottom of valley is reached. Here, either cross back to the West side of the river to find the Eklutna Lake trail or hook up with new trail on East side of river (as described in Mitre report in Scree, October, 2002).



## “Half-Track” – The Upper Pitches of Ski Tracks by Cory Hinds

Ski Tracks is the name of a mixed ice and rock-climbing route on Ptarmigan Peak. Not only is this an extremely enjoyable alpine route with challenging climbing and world-class views (Chugach Mountains, the Anchorage bowl, and Denali), but it is also easily accessible, and at least half of it can be done even on the shortest days of the year.

The miserable warm and wet early conditions this winter are terrible for skiing and ice climbing at lower elevations. However, these same conditions helped us on December 1 as we biked to the base of Ptarmigan Peak and found better than average conditions on the route.

The Ski Tracks are located on the north face of Ptarmigan Peak, west of the North Couloir (aka the S-gully). The tracks are two parallel grooves in the upper north face, trending slightly east to west, appearing like the tracks of some gigantic ski goddess who pointed her tips straight down from the summit. A unique feature of this climb is a cliff band that allows climbers to enter or exit at half height. Our program was to climb the upper portion of the route.

Here's how it went. LL-Cool James Dietzman and I left the Glen Alps parking lot at 7:45 am and biked to the base of the peak. I enjoyed watching James do an “endo” when his front tire sank in a mud hole. We worked our way up to Ptarmigan Pass (the saddle between Ptarmigan and Peak 4, at the small tarn) where we suited up and left our packs. Continuing up the shoulder, we hiked up toward the north face. Arriving at an obvious small col, we walked north (away from the face) along the shoulder and got a look at the route. From the col, you can look down and see two snow-covered benches continuing across the north face. This is the cliff band that separates the upper and lower sections of the climb. We dropped down approximately 100 feet and post-holed across the upper bench, around a corner, to the base of the climb.

We quickly set up a belay anchor and ran up a short pitch to the base of a steep section, getting a solid anchor in the ice. This was the first time that I've found the solid “Styrofoam” snow in the Chugach, and I like it! We found the steep section, one of the cruxes, with enough ice to climb and protect with 17cm ice screws. The angle was just off vertical, and would be rated WI4. We used a Spector in the thin ice above the lip. Easier terrain led to a belay at the base of a right-facing corner, with a solid anchor in rock using medium cams. Gazing out at the Wedge, O'Malley Peak, the Ramp, and down at downtown Anchorage, thousands of feet up this wall, I felt happy and fortunate to have this caliber of climbing so close to home.

James led up the corner, passing a fixed nut with blue webbing, over snow-covered rotten ice, and up left via several tricky rock moves through a narrow slot to another solid belay in the rock. I was happy that James left me his belay jacket, because the cold belay made it obvious that I was not acclimated to winter!

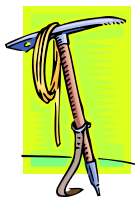
At this belay, top of pitch 2.5 or 3, we were slightly above and right of the continuing Left Ski Track. Rather than post-holing up this snow-filled Left Ski Track, we moved up and right, crossing over into Right Ski Track, and moved quickly up a snow ramp to another solid rock anchor at the base of another ice step. This step was lower angle, enough ice to protect with screws, and totally fun! Above the lip, we chose a path to the right of the fall line and climbed ice runnels to the exit of the climb onto the upper bowl. Yes, ice runnels right here in the Chugach! They are so fun!



The rocks near the summit were all covered with rime ice – we pretended we were in Patagonia. Unroping, we headed up an obvious ramp to the ridge just below the west summit, just in time to catch the last red glow of the setting sun. Perfect. Dropping easily down a gully on the south side, we wrapped back around to the tarn and our packs. Making good time, we continued down to the bikes and cruised out to the parking lot, arriving just after dark at 5:30 pm. A great climb here in our backyard.

Some history of the Ski Tracks provided by Charlie Sassara:

"It was first climbed in 1984 by two guys working at Gary Kings. Don't know their names, but they showed me photos so I know it was real. They camped below the route, worked it over several tries and actually had some aid. The upper thin pitches to right of where you started were climbed by Grant Walker and Jay Rowe in the late nineties. I think Carl Tobin and I did the first one day ascent of the entire route last year. Not sure about that though. I first climbed the lower pitches with John Bauman in 1985. We traversed off right where you came in. There are at least two starts from the North gully I know of. Evan Phillips has done one further up left of my start. Generally the crux is the short ice section you climbed. Last year Carl and I couldn't do it safely so we traversed right a hundred feet or so and found a passage through the rock band. I have been on the route, either top/bottom or complete 6 or 7 times."



Do not forget to  
renew your MCA  
membership. Unless  
you have prepaid for two  
years, all memberships  
expire 12/02 and must be  
renewed. Completing the mem-  
bership application ahead of  
time will make the  
Treasurer's job easier  
and more efficient!

## November 2002 GENERAL MEETING MINUTES

Seventy One people attended the Wednesday, November 20th 2002 meeting at the First Methodist Church on 9th and G streets. Eight new members introduced themselves.

### Treasurer's Report

Total in all accounts is \$16,341.32. That includes 1,000 in a CD for the Huts.

### Hiking and Climbing

Matt Nedom announced new trips for the month of November and December. See the December Scree for more details. The Hiking and Climbing Committee is looking for leaders, please volunteer your time.

### Training Committee

Steve Parry is looking for volunteers to help with the up and coming training classes. The committee is looking for volunteers for the classes in, Medical support, Instructors and general help.

### New Business

Robert Baker has informed the MCA that he must step down from his role as the SCREE editor. Robert will finish the December SCREE, but he is looking for someone to take over. If anyone is interested in this role please call Jayme Mack.

Bill Romberg presented the the Holeman Award to Willy Hersman. Over the years Willy has made a significant contributions to the MCA and has worked hard on the documentation of climbing in Alaska.

Willy also received an honorary member award for his 20 years as a SCREE editor and an estimated 50 club led trips.

### Christmas Dinner

The MCA will provide a turkey dinner at the December general meeting. The members will provide a dish that coincides with their first letter of their last name.

### Announcements

The AAC will host a slide show series in the B.P. Energy center. The next show will be held on Dec. 10 at 6:30pm., Charlie Sasara will present his slide show on climbing in Italy.





# MOUNTAINEERING CLUB OF ALASKA

## 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 all who wish to become members.

**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's Vin Hoeman Library, located upstairs in Alaska Mountaineering & Hiking at 2633 Spenard Road, contains hundreds of books, numerous periodicals, bound volumes of the **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 announcements of upcoming events, the hiking and climbing trip schedule, and trip reports written by club members. A monthly meeting and slide show are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. at the First United Methodist Church at 725 West Ninth Avenue (corner of Ninth & G Streets, downtown Anchorage). Special events or changes to the meeting will be noted in the **SCREE**. Be sure to visit our website at: [www.mcak.org](http://www.mcak.org)

- ? **Complete both sides of this form. Write neatly!** To participate in club-sponsored trips, every member must read and complete the Release of Liability Agreement on the back of this application.
- ? Please make checks payable to **Mountaineering Club of Alaska, Inc.**
- ? Annual dues are \$10 for an individual or \$15 for a family (includes electronic **SCREE** subscription – either **delivered** to your e-mail address or **downloaded** from the MCA webpage).
- ? Mailed **SCREE** subscriptions are \$10 per year and are non-refundable (one **SCREE** per family).
- ? Annual membership is for one calendar year, through the 31st of December.
- ? Two-year, non-refundable, memberships are available for double the annual dues.
- ? Memberships paid after October 1st are good through December 31 of the following year.
- ? If applying by mail, please include a self-addressed, **stamped** envelope for your membership card. Otherwise, you may pick it up at the next monthly meeting.
- Our address is: **P.O. Box 102037, Anchorage, Alaska 99510-2037** [www.mcak.org](http://www.mcak.org)

NEW	<input type="checkbox"/>	DATE	<input type="text"/>
RENEWAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	NAME	<input type="text"/>
INDIVIDUAL (\$10)	<input type="checkbox"/>	FAMILY MEMBERS	<input type="text"/>
FAMILY (\$15)	<input type="checkbox"/>		
2-YR MEMBERSHIP	<input type="checkbox"/>		

**Note that two-year membership dues are double the annual dues and subscription fee.**

How do you want your **SCREE** delivered? (check one or both)

ELECTRONIC (Free) ☐ E-mail attachment or notify when available for downloading (circle one).

PAPER (\$10/yr.) ☐ Postal Service – please include \$15/year if outside the U.S.

STREET or P.O. BOX

CITY / STATE / ZIP

TELEPHONE

E-MAIL ADDRESS

I am interested in joining a committee (Circle which ones: Programs, Hiking & Climbing, Huts, Geographic Names, Parks Advisory, Equipment, Honorary, Membership, Training, or ad hoc committees). \_\_\_\_\_ I am interested in leading a trip. \_\_\_\_

Do not write below this line:

Pd: ~~\$10~~ ~~\$15~~ ~~\$20~~ ~~\$30~~ ~~\$10 for paper~~ **SCREE** ~~\$20 for 2 years of paper~~ **SCREE** Membership Card Issued for Yr: \_\_\_\_\_  
on Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ ~~Cash~~ or Check Number: \_\_\_\_\_ 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 only, falling while hiking, climbing, skiing or crossing rivers or glaciers; failure of a belay; being struck by climbing equipment or 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 all risks of injury, death, or property damage that may occur in connection with any MCA activity, including use of MCA furnished equipment and 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 and my fellow participants in MCA activities (except to the extent that insurance coverage for any claim is provided by an automobile insurance policy or related excess insurance policies). **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. Any lawsuit relating to MCA activities or this release shall only be filed in the Superior Court for the State of Alaska, Third Judicial District., Anchorage, Alaska. The provisions of this release are severable and if any part of this release is found unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect.

\_\_\_\_\_ (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 or my fellow participants in MCA activities may incur as a consequence of any legal action arising out of injury, death, or property damage suffered by me.

\_\_\_\_\_ (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 CONTENT. I AM AWARE THAT THIS IS A BINDING, LEGAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN ME AND THE MCA.**

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent or Guardian (if under 19): \_\_\_\_\_

## **Policy: Club Sanctioned Trips**

**Approved: MCA Board, February 1995; Amended Feb 15, 2000, Feb 13, 2001; published periodically**

### **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.

# Mountaineering Club of Alaska

## *Officers*

<b>President</b>	<b>Jayne Mack</b>	<b>694-1500</b>
<b>Vice-President</b>	<b>Karen Herzenberg</b>	<b>223-0351</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Sean Bolender</b>	<b>274-4457</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Tom McDermott</b>	<b>277-0774</b>

## *Board*

<b>Richard Baranow</b>	<b>694-1500</b>
<b>Matt Nedom</b>	<b>278-3648</b>
<b>Dave Hart</b>	<b>227-9584</b>
<b>Stuart Grenier</b>	<b>337-5127</b>

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 a club waiver 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. Trips should be submitted via <http://photoalaska.biz/scree>. Articles and notes submitted for publication and other communication related to the newsletter should be mailed to my address: 1830 E. Parks Hwy. #600, Wasilla, AK 99654, or e-mailed to [scree@photoalaska.biz](mailto:scree@photoalaska.biz). Articles should be received by January 4th, 2003 to be included in the New Year issue. Sorry, no exceptions.

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... Robert Baker, Editor, 357-2946.

Missing your MCA membership card? If so, stop by one of our monthly meetings to pick it up or send us a self-addressed stamped envelope and we'll mail it to you.

MAILING LIST/DATABASE ENTRY: Don Smith

HIKING/CLIMBING CHAIR: Matt Nedom, 278-3648

HUTS: Mark Miraglia, 338-0705

EQUIPMENT CHAIR: Carl Battreal, 258-0075

WEB: [www.mcak.org](http://www.mcak.org) (go here to change your address)

MAILING LIST SERVICE: [mcak@yahoogroups.com](mailto:mcak@yahoogroups.com)