



# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

January 2006  
Volume 49 Number 1

**Hans' Bad Swim**

**In the hole on Marcus Baker**

**Knight Island Peak Scrambling**

**Moonlight Adventure**

**Schedule of upcoming club trips**

**Monthly Meeting**  
**Wednesday, January 18<sup>th</sup> @ 7:30 PM**  
**Program: Richard Baranow will show**  
**slides of his trip from Eureka to Valdez**

**Security is mostly a superstition.**  
**It does not exist in nature...**

**--Helen Keller**



## Editor's corner

Welcome to 2006. Hope you like the new face of the Scree. I've been soldiering along as editor since last March listening to what people like and don't like about the Scree. The traditional look has been OK by me, but... I'd like to have more people reading this thing. The one comment that is universal is that people like the increased use of pictures. We can do that. A new laptop and some new software and I'm ready for the new year.

The cover is a photo that goes with an article in December ("Kenai Fjords National Park – McCarty Peak"). It's the summit ridge of McCarty Peak, 6,450 feet and the highpoint of the Kenai Fjords National Park. Have a look below at the great photo of Marcus Baker by Jayme Dixon then check out the article "In the hole on Marcus Baker" in this issue. Among some river runners a "bad swim" is a euphemism for a near death experience. In this issue Hans Nedig relates the story of an adventure race gone awry in "Hans' Bad Swim". There is some good writing and pictures this month and a few lessons to be learned. We finish up with Tim Kelly and some great scenic peak bagging in Prince William Sound.

Write up those trips and adventures you have had and send them in. A few suggestions: Keep it short. Include pictures and credit them please. Oh boy, another outlet for good photography. Please send the pictures at the same time as the article. The best way to submit material is on line at [MCAK.org](http://MCAK.org).

John



**Marcus Baker by Jayme Dixon**

# The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

*"to maintain, promote and perpetuate the association of persons who are interested in promoting, sponsoring, improving, stimulating and contributing to the exercise of skill and safety in the Art and Science of Mountaineering"*

Join us for our club meetings the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of the month at the First United Methodist Church, 9<sup>th</sup> and G Streets next to the Philips Building (you may use marked parking after hours)

Contact information is provided on the back page or visit us on the web at [www.mcak.org](http://www.mcak.org)

## Departments and Features

### Hiking and climbing schedule

#### Training

#### Hans' Bad Swim

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#### Moonlight Hiking

#### Miscellany

#### Club Meeting minutes

#### The Adze

## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

### January 7 – Middle fork Snowshoe Trip

Class A, Meet at the Prospect Heights trailhead and carpool up to Glen Alps. From there we will hike down the middle fork trail to Prospect Heights. Bring snowshoes, food, water and appropriate clothing.

Contact Amy Murphy at 338-3979 or [hayduchesslives@yahoo.com](mailto:hayduchesslives@yahoo.com)

January 7-8 Ship Creek Trail clearing and campout. Snowshoe about 5 miles up Ship Creek from Arctic valley Road, clear trail and camp out.

Stu Grenier 337-5127 or

[oinkmenow@hotmail.com](mailto:oinkmenow@hotmail.com).

### January. 11 - Nearly Full Moon Hike

The nearly full moon hike this month will be up Harp Mountain in the S. Fork Eagle River area on January 11, starting at 6:00 p.m. This is a Class C trip that is mainly ridge walking. Bring crampons, ice axe, snowshoes and headlamp (just in case) and appropriate clothing for existing weather conditions. For more information or to sign up, contact Amy Murphy at 338-3979, or via e-mail: [hayduchesslives@yahoo.com](mailto:hayduchesslives@yahoo.com).

### January 14-15 Temptation Peak 5005ft.

If winter arrives we will use skis/skins or snowshoes. We hope to reserve the upper Snowhawk Hut. Bring crampons and ice ax, avalanche gear. If conditions are right we may ski Temptation. Team leader and hut renter get choice of bunks. Stu Grenier 337-5127 or [oinkmenow@hotmail.com](mailto:oinkmenow@hotmail.com)

### January. 17 - Night Hike/Snowshoe Trip

This is a Class A after-work hike that will start at the Huffman Trailhead at 5:45 p.m. We'll meander through the trees up to Hemlock Dome, where there's a great view overlooking Anchorage. Then we'll hike back down the Gasline trail to the parking lot. Bring snowshoes, headlamp, smiles and appropriate clothing. For more information, contact Amy Murphy at 338-3979, or [hayduchesslives@yahoo.com](mailto:hayduchesslives@yahoo.com).

### January 21 - Peter's Creek Ski Trip

Explore the beautiful Peter's Creek valley on backcountry skis! This Class B trip is not difficult but isn't suitable for beginning skiers. Bring skis, water, food and plenty of warm gear as we'll be out all day, arriving back at the trailhead before dark. Please leave your dogs at home. For more information or to sign up, contact trip leader Amy Murphy at 338-3979 or the best way is via e-mail: [hayduchesslives@yahoo.com](mailto:hayduchesslives@yahoo.com)

### January 29 End-of-Month Traverse

Portage Pass, Class A. 8 miles R.T. Elevation gain 600'. Skis with skins desirable. Expect wind in the pass, could be quite cold. Hop over to Whittier, have a drink, go back the same way.

Leader: Willy Hersman, [mcak@gci.net](mailto:mcak@gci.net)

February 11 – 12 Indian to Arctic reconnaissance  
Overnight trip Class D Elevation gain 1800'  
+ Distance 21 miles Contact Greg Bragiel  
@ 569-3008

February 11 – 12 King Mountain  
Class "D" climb, first you have to hike  
across the frozen Mat River, then climb King  
Mountain. Gear needed: AV gear, ice axe,  
crampons, snowshoes, and winter gear.  
There is some exposure near the summit  
but basically a ridge climb. Leader Stu  
Grenier oinkmenow@hotmail.com 337-  
5127.

February 18 – 19 Indian to Arctic traverse  
Overnight trip. Info is same as  
reconnaissance above

February 25 End-of-Month Traverse:  
Glen Alps to Campbell Airstrip, Class B. 10  
miles. No elevation gain, all down. Skis  
only. Requires spotting vehicles, which must  
be capable of getting to Glen Alps. Leader:  
Willy Hersman, mcak@gci.net

February 26 - Indian to Arctic Day Ski.  
Get a very early start and ski the 23 plus  
miles over the famous trail. Skins and  
touring skis. Stu Grenier 337-5127 or  
oinkmewnow@hotmail.com

April 01 - 02 Eklutna Traverse training weekend  
A preparation and familiarity session for  
Eklutna Traverse participants.

April 09 - 15 Eklutna Traverse  
Glacier Travel. Elevation gain: 6000'+  
Distance is 30+ miles Contact: Greg Bragiel  
569-3008

## Training

January 19, Mountaineering  
The Winter Mountaineering series begins. The  
class is full, More instructors always welcome.

March 4 – 5, Wilderness First Aid  
Two days with Deb Ajango, 9am to 6pm each  
day. National Wilderness First Aid certification  
provided upon successful completion of the  
course. E-mail Andi to get a registration form.  
(enviroknow@acsalaska.net)

## Trip Reports

### Hans' Bad Swim 2005 Alaska Mountain Wilderness Classic



calm peacefulness overwhelmed me. I stopped struggling then. I knew I was dying, and oddly enough that was okay. I am not sure how long it had been since my last breath—30 seconds, a minute, two minutes? I didn't know. My body, which was being violently tossed and rolled, seemed as if it were no longer connected to me. The warm and blissful peace beckoned to me and I accepted its curiously appealing power.

"It has been a good life," I thought. I was ebbing further from life when a second and more powerful thought flashed through my mind... I thought about my glorious wife—Anna. "I Can't do this to Anna!" Like a bad cliché, I suddenly had the strength to kick and flail one last time in my bid to escape the unrelenting suck-hole.

Miraculously, I soon found myself at the surface bobbing downstream and gasping for air. Still panicked, I spun around to face any challenges the river might next throw my way. I was in luck. The river was swift and deep, but also relatively mellow. This was little solace, as I had to still act quickly to reach the bank before being swept into the next set of thundering rapids downriver. After a brief struggle, I finally got myself untangled from my boat spray deck and began to try to swim toward shore. My shoulder made painful protest to this effort. I could hardly summon the strength or energy to swim, but the adrenaline coursing through me served my efforts well, and soon I had one arm around a boulder at the side of the river. Resting my head on the boulder, I continued to gasp for air. The sheltered nature of my small rock allowed my body and legs to float in the river without too much drag from the current. I did not have the strength to pull myself out of the water any further. I laid there gasping, amazed that I was alive and rejoicing with every breath. I was badly shaken, but I was alive.

Just 26 hours earlier, the 2005 Alaska Mountain Wilderness Classic start was like all the others. It was fairly cool, partly cloudy, muddy and threatening to rain. For the final year, in the three

year cycle, we would be racing once again from Eureka to Talkeetna. The start, as always was unceremonious. Just a simple "Go," and we were off at 10am.

My partner was Lt. Col. Dave Looney—a Pavehawk pilot for the Air Guard at Kulis in Anchorage, and a veteran adventure racer. With our 20 lb. packs, we set a strong pace, but had no intention of keeping up with the group of four rabbits in front of us (the eventual winners). It wasn't long before we couldn't see them any longer or anyone behind us for that matter. We spent much of the first 30 miles jogging where we could. Unfortunately, we were hit by some severe thunder storms. This should have been an omen for what we would find ahead, but we pushed through the flooding creeks and slick muddy trails without seeming to lose too much time. However, the difficult conditions did prove to be a liability, and we discovered that we were much slower than previous years at some key time checks.

While planning for the 2005 race, I had decided that a new route was in order. I didn't want to have to float the Talkeetna River for a third time, and then bushwhack the heinous Talkeetna Canyon again—14 miles of the four Bs--bushwhacking, bears, bugs and blaspheming. After considerable deliberation, flights and pouring over maps, I decided on a new route (never done for the race) that would take us up the Caribou River to Glass Creek, then over a pass to the Chickaloon River (58 miles). From there we would float down the Chickaloon to Castle Mountain (25 miles). At that point, we would be on foot again to traverse over to the Kings River, and then follow the route of Butch Allen and Jim McDonough in 2004 up Kings River to the Sheep Glacier, cross the Glacier to the Sheep River (36 miles) and then Float the Sheep River to the Talkeetna River (below the Talkeetna Canyon), and end in Talkeetna (60 miles). The total mileage would be about 174 miles (89 on foot, and 85 floating). We would climb approximately 11,000 ft and descend about the same. With any luck, we would finish in 50 hours. However, luck wasn't with us early on. The flash floods from the cloud bursts were giving us problems. Normally we can cross the Caribou River at will as we work up its bed, but this year was different. Both of us struggled against the current with arms linked, and in the end we were swept off our feet twice and had to swim for it. This is always a joy in a glacial river, not to mention a bit unnerving.

Undaunted, we continued on, and ended up bushwhacking much more than previous years so that we didn't have to cross the river again. By 11pm we made it to the confluence of Glass Creek. We almost got swept crossing this small side stream which would have had dire consequences. If we had lost our feet here, we would have been swept right into a tight rock canyon with high cliff walls on the upper caribou which would have led to a questionable outcome. At this point, we were already about 5 hours behind schedule.

Despite being slow, Dave suggested that we stop, get a quick rest, make a fire and dry out before we attempted to climb up and over Glass Pass (6,100') through the night. I concurred. Being dry would be a good thing when we got above brush-line and into the snow of the high mountains. Plus, I was ready for dinner and a break. Within minutes the fire was going and we were huddled under our one space blanket. We each managed a 15 minute nap. Then, with dry clothes, and after consuming liberal quantities of Ibuprofen and chocolate covered espresso beans, we were moving again by midnight-ish.

By 3 am we were looking down the steep snow couloir from the top of Glass Pass. Fortunately, the snow had set-up nicely through the night. Consequently, the climb up the pass was fairly easy. We only had to contend with minimal post-holing in our trail running shoes. We were also able to plunge step down much of the steep slope before we started post-holing again. At 5am we were passing the five tents of what we suspected was a semi-large wilderness class expedition. Instead of succumbing to the urge for mischief (making bear sounds or hiding their packs), we continued down valley quickly.

**Dave with the Chickaloon far below us**



By 10am we were at the Chickaloon and blowing up our boats. We had traveled about 58 miles in 24 hours, and had made our first and highest climb of



about 6100'. If everything went smoothly, we could still finish in 55 hours.

We were eager to put our boats into the upper Chickaloon and enjoy the 25 mile rest for our feet and legs that floating would bestow. No doubt, paddling through the warmth of the day would be a bonus as well. We anticipated that our float would take about 5 hours. We based this on the unseasonably high water and the information we had received from Butch and Jim who had paddled it two weeks prior from a spot down river about 6 miles from our present put-in location.

We made great time to where Butch and Jim had put in. Due to the continuing thunder storms (so much for the warmth of day), the river was surging and there were many areas of rapids, but we were able to navigate all of it. The rapids were intense and demanding, but manageable in our small "butt boats" (Alpacka packrafts). Suddenly the water mellowed from white water froth and waves, and we easily avoided several very large boulders in the river before rounding a blind corner in a semi canyon-like section of the river. Dave was in the lead and rounded the corner first. We both attempted to hug the inside edge of the river, but there was no where to pull out when we realized we had entered a garden of huge boulders. The water was charged as it tumbled through and around the rocks, but we seemed to be okay. Currents and eddies were pushing and pulling us, but we were still managing. Then it all came apart. Dave snuck through a tight fit between two large boulders and some pinned logs then disappeared from view. I followed.

Upon rounding a big boulder, I saw Dave in his boat stuck on a log jam that was stuck on the nose of yet another huge boulder. The main river went hard to the left and he was trying to pull himself toward that current and off his dangerous perch. A large eddy was behind him sucking him backward toward a hole through the boulder—a hole I was headed for despite my now panicked paddling.

I saw Dave pull himself free, as I realized I was not going to be able to get away from the surging water channeled through the hole in the rock. The current was too strong, and I had failed to assess the danger and react in time to escape its powerful pull. In that instant, I knew that if I was sucked into that rock tunnel in my boat, I would plug it and die. So, in less time than it takes to blink, I made the decision to jump out of my boat toward the main

current and swim for it. Unfortunately, my boat spray deck caught on me and ripped off the boat too. It was quickly tangled in my legs which did not prove helpful to my swimming effort. Now I knew I was going into that hole, that there was nothing I could do, and that I would likely die there when it constricted down and I plugged it or got pinned against hidden tree debris or the rock itself.

As I approached the hole, I could see light on the other side of the boulder through what looked to be about a foot of clearance through the wedge-shaped tunnel (between the roof of the rock hole and the water). As I put my hands up to protect my head from hitting the rock, I was sucked under water and into the hole by the powerful current. I don't remember much of this ride, except the feeling of pure panic and my shoulder painfully popping as I torpedoed through the tunnel.

When I came out the other side my shoulder popped again and then I surfaced and was breathing—gasping might be a more accurate word for it. I had made it through! However, before I could enjoy the moment I was rolled over another boulder, and then into the side of another large one that I feared I would be pinned against. My boat spray deck was still tangled in my legs when I rolled off the rock and fell into a suck-hole. I struggled mightily to swim clear, but the hole kept pulling me down. My life jacket and spray deck (still inflated) kept me from going deep in the hole so I couldn't try to push off the bottom. Fortunately, I was able to keep stealing breathes as it cycled me back to the surface. It was not long until I was exhausted and too weak to fight it, and then I didn't get another breath.

**The suck hole one fourth of the way from the right  
The tunnel is through the center rock**



After finally getting out of the suck-hole and swimming to shore, I noted that Dave was scurrying along the river toward me from down stream. He was yelling, but I could not hear him over the roar

of the river. His intent, however, was clear. He wanted to know if I was all right. By the third try I was able to weakly raise a thumb to signal him that I was all right. I was alive.

**The helicopter landed in the grey patch lower right, Hans swam ashore downstream, left of the LZ**



As I laid there and continued to assess my physical wellness, Dave went up river to look for my raft and gear. He had only seen my paddle float by, but was unable to grab it without getting himself sucked into the next big set of rapids. After a long rest, I struggled to finally pull myself out of the water and then up the high bank away from the river. After some monumental effort, I was able to make it to the top of the bank and began walking downstream to Dave's gear. Once there, I laid down again. I was too exhausted to move any further, and my shoulder was beginning to hurt like hell.

Dave made it back to me with my boat and gear which had miraculously stayed in the eddy above the rock tunnel boulder. Dave assessed the situation quickly upon making it back to me. I am quite sure I was a sight—pale, slightly shaking, and complaining about my shoulder. I could see the worry in his eyes as he pulled his satellite phone from his pack and made the call to the rescue coordination center at Kulis—better to be safe than sorry. Within an hour I was on a Pave-hawk headed for Anchorage. Our race was over.

In the end, we traveled roughly 75 miles in approximately 26 hours. We had been making great time down the Chickaloon River. What had taken Butch and Jim five hours to float would have only taken us about 3. We had floated for only about an hour and half, yet we were already over half way down to our pull-out point. Apparently, the Chickaloon was higher, due to the thunder storms, than the high water Butch and Jim had paddled several weeks earlier.

#### **POSTSCRIPT (October, 2005)**

My shoulder is still healing, and I may have to go in for surgery after my next evaluation. It turns out that I had dislocated it.

The rescue did NOT cost the tax payers anything, since the para-rescue jumpers and helicopters have daily rescues or training flights already in their budget. In fact, the crew was already on a training flight when Dave made the call for assistance, so they simply re-directed to our location. No hoist was needed, as there was an open creek bottom they were able to fit the bird into.

This was my fourth AMWC race. I had finished all the other races, and had even won in 2003. Nature has a way of humbling those feeling too secure in their abilities or strengths. Apparently, this time it was my turn to be humbled.

**Looking upstream from where they waited for the helicopter**



#### **AWMC background**

Since 1982 the Alaska Mountain Wilderness Classic has represented perhaps the purist adventure racing challenge in the world. Each of the previous Classics has been an off-road, point-to-point, few rules, multi-sport team or solo event with a choice of route, and no outside support. On courses where participants could drop out (Hope to Homer, Mentasta to McKinley, Nabesna to McCarthy, Eureka to Talkeetna) roughly half did. Although inexperienced racers have finished routes, usually in the company of more seasoned adventurers, good judgment in mountain, river, and wilderness travel is considered required "equipment." There are **no safety checks, no safety personnel, and no checkpoints.**





## In the hole on Marcus Baker

submitted by Dano as told by ex-MCAer Dahr Jamail

*April 22, 2003, Tuesday, Earth Day, Day 1.*



oday Dano Michaud, Paul Bezilla, Sean Attebury and I Dahr Jamail have been flown a little over half way up the Matanuska Glacier to attempt Marcus Baker (13, 126') in the

Chugach Mountains of Alaska. We're here for a climb, yet even more we're here for the fellowship. We are here to simply experience this: four men doing a climb together on a big mountain in Alaska.

Mike Meekins flew us in one at a time in his Super Cub, to our base camp at 5600'. It has been a mostly cloudy day, with no view at our entire mountain yet. Tomorrow we shall move camp further up the glacier, hopefully to the base of our route.

We have settled in well, and everyone is happy, jovial, much joking around going on. Dano has brought in a rubber chicken as our mascot, as well as an attempt to get the rest of us to do the funky chicken.

*April 23, 2003, Wednesday, Day 2.*

We awoke to perfectly clear weather, and a mild down-glacier breeze. We broke camp after waking up around 7, and pulled out around 10. Sean and I were a rope team, followed by Dano and Paul. The wind died down to leave an already clear day stunningly beautiful. And hot. We were all peeling layers off as the day progressed, and I ended up just wearing my climbing bibs and polypro. We were traveling quite slowly, as everyone was settling into a groove on our first day to move. Sean and I pulled away from Paul and Dano as the hours slipped by. They would catch us on our breaks, but then we'd head out shortly after their arrival, each

time lengthening our lead on them. This would come into play later as a very big mistake.

We witnessed several large avalanches-mostly huge ice releases from hanging glaciers above being heated by the sun. Oftentimes the avalanche plumes would nearly reach the fringes of our traveling route. It was hot enough I fantasized of being blasted by a nice icy breeze.

It grew into the afternoon and I began to grow impatient with our not having arrived at camp yet. The small rock band near the base of the gully we would climb up towards high camp was nearing...despite several warnings from my intuition, as well as Sean asking me at one point if I thought it might be best to wait up some for Dano and Paul, I opted to continue on to try to get into our next camp and start setting up for the night.

We entered a heavily crevassed area, doing well route finding our way through it at the start. We crested an upper area and were headed nearly directly towards where we wanted to camp, and were maybe 300m below it. I took a step and as I put my foot down it felt as if I were stepping into very deep, soft snow, and it just continued to drop. The sound of falling ice and snow, like an instantly heavy rain shower, was all around me. My last visual was of Sean and the surrounding mountains racing up towards the sky as the ground was racing up towards me. I screamed out, "Fall!" and before I finished saying the word I was in darkness.

It felt as if I were in slow motion, falling and falling. A variety of differing shades of blue were flashing by inside the crevasse. I was accompanied by large amounts of snow and ice as I fell, bouncing off the sides of the crevasse. Time felt slowed, only as it does in those moments before the car crashes, that moment you get the news of a close friend or relative is sick with a terrible disease. It felt as if I fell for 30 seconds, but I found out later from Sean that he figured it took 8-9 seconds. As I fell I muttered through my tighten chest, "Oh f---. Oh f---. Oh f---." Quite the rough prayer indeed.

I had time to look sideways in both directions as I continued to fall, dark flashes then deep blues



ripping by...snow and ice flakes all around, and the constant loud scraping and scratching noises as my body and gear bounced further down into the slot. Fortunately, my pack caught the brunt of the bouncing as I fell.

I passed a point where I thought sure that Sean must be in the crevasse as well, for we were only traveling with 40 feet of rope between us. I continued falling, wondering when it would end. When would I hit the bottom? Would it be water? When would Sean come down on top of me? I thought, "This is what it feels like to die in the bottom of a crevasse." I waited...

Then, as suddenly as the fall began, I stopped. The rope was suddenly taught and present right in front of my face and I bounced a few times. Sean had checked my fall.

In disbelief, surprise, and relief I looked up to see a small hole of blue sky, surrounded by myriad of blue crystalline shapes of the crevasse. My glacier glasses hung from one ear, one of the side shields popped off and barely clinging to it. I quickly stuffed them in my bib pocket, wiped all the snow and ice off myself, and pulled my polypro sleeves down. I knew I needed to conserve heat, especially since I wasn't wearing a jacket or gloves.

I took it easy and calmed myself the best I could. Breathing, checking myself for injuries-only a cut on my thumb and several minor scrapes on my hands, and being emotionally shaken and scared. I tried to only breathe through my nose, thinking that if I panted out of my mouth it would waste heat and energy. My adrenaline was pumping in the red zone so high I felt hot at first, even after being covered in ice and snow. I slowly and gently removed my snowshoes and clipped them to my harness on a carabineer. While I did so I looked down, hoping to see a bottom. Unfortunately, all I saw was black. The walls of the crevasse continued down as far as I could see, with only blackness between them. I looked back up at the sky through my skylight, and told myself not to look down again.

Terribly shaken and afraid, I kept thinking the shelf Sean was on would give and he would be crashing down upon me. I prayed a lot, and tried to just accept the situation, where I was at, and that this could be the end. Praying and meditating were what I tried to focus on, to stay centered and present.

I was using a lame little chest harness which I have always used-while it kept me upright, it made it nearly impossible to remove my pack and sled in order to free myself. This was very unfortunate.

I wondered how Sean had checked my fall, and knew he must be right on the edge of the slot by how far down the hole I was. I knew it'd be best to leave him alone, and eventually he called down that he had two pickets in but that he himself was still the primary anchor. I was going to try to jumal out, but he said it wasn't very solid and that it would be better to wait for the other team. I had my ascenders on the rope, but I just sat still and tried not to do anything to cause him any more strain. On two separate occasions the rope quickly jerked downwards as it shifted more deeply into the snow of the lip above, scaring me to death that the bigger fall was about to occur.

Sean continued to whistle for Paul and Dano. I knew again how very much on the edge of the hole Sean was by how well I could hear him-I'd been in a slot before for practice and knew they are virtually sound-proof chambers.

#### Not much margin for error here



I had checked my watch upon immediately falling in-it was 4:45pm at that time. It was getting close to 6 by the time I heard Sean talking to Paul and Dano. I scolded myself for having gotten so far ahead of them. Paul stuck his head over the hole, a very welcome sight. I breathed deeper knowing he and Dano were here, and would help get us out of this situation. He yelled down, "Are you alright?" I replied, "Yeah, I'm alright. Just a little cold." To this he responded, "We'll have you out of there quick Dahr, just hang on." My prayers then shifted from, "Please God, get me out of this." to "C'mon boys,

get me outta here." I had so much adrenaline I never really felt cold, except that every 15 minutes or so my body would shake uncontrollably for a few seconds, then stop. Each time I would try to refocus on breathing and keeping my heat within my body. It would work for 15 minutes, and then the cycle would repeat itself.

Slowly they began to raise me. I would spin lazily each time they had to stop to reset the system. By now the pack straps and weight of both the pack and sled hanging off my body, all of which being held by my harness, was excruciating. My hips and shoulders were throbbing, and my left arm kept falling asleep. The raising continued, taking a bit of time, for I knew it was a huge load they were hauling out. They got me up to the lip, and the rope of course had dug in about five feet. I eventually learned that this is what had checked our fall-the rope had dug deep enough into the lip from the back of Sean's sled that it flipped the sled over just at the lip of the crevasse to use it as an anchor...virtually turning both Sean and his sled into a double anchor holding me dangling off the other end of the rope down in the slot.

It was really difficult getting out-I had Paul lower another line for me to clip into as the original climbing rope was simply pulling me directly into the side of the crevasse at this point. On top of this, I asked him to lower yet another for me to hold onto to keep me upright as I was nearly completely horizontal at this point because of the rope angle, thus making it extremely difficult to breath.

Near the top now, they helped me by kicking out the lip. Dano threw me some gloves-only able to get one on, I threw the other back to him and then commenced digging out snow from the lip. They hauled me the rest of the way out...as my head crested the surface; I saw them pulling the line, a relieved look on everyone's face. I was crawling and grunting and thrashing my way out, in full adrenaline once again. The shade had just covered the slot, and it was 6:35pm. I had been in the crevasse for one hour and fifty minutes.

Everyone was so happy and relieved. Each of them hugged me and told me how good it was to see me. When I looked at each of their faces my eyes welled with tears.

I didn't have any idea how cold I had become, aside from knowing that I couldn't feel my hands any longer. I felt hands holding up my arms while

other hands pulled off my soaked shirt, and yet more hands pulling another down on top of me. Then a fleece jacket, then a down jacket. Paul placed a pad and a pack on the snow for me to sit on, then sat beside me pulling a down bag around us, even over our heads, and held me against his chest. I began shaking violently, teeth chattering, and breathing heavily. I spoke as best I could, "I...didn't...know...I...was...this...cold..." This went on for several minutes, and Paul said, "I know man. I'd be more worried if you weren't shaking at all. You're going to be alright." Next thing I knew someone gave me a bottle with hot chocolate. I drank it, and forced myself to finish the warmth.

Paul was in rescue mode, and was ace. He and everyone else were working great as a team. Each person played a crucial part in the rescue. It took all three of them to pull me out of the slot, literally and figuratively. Any doubt about lack of experience or team cohesiveness was now put to rest in that crevasse. I slowly came around, shaken and one of my hands a bit cut up with a few frostbitten patches on my fingers. As I was sitting with the sleeping bag pulled over me, the magnitude of what had just occurred hit me. As it did so, realizing how close I was to dying, I began to weep. I cried for how close we'd come, Sean and I, as well as tears of relief. My body and mind were finally compensating for what they'd just been through.

A few minutes later I got up, looked at Paul and teared up immediately and he said with an emphatic smile, "I know Dahr." I thanked him, Dano and Sean several times each, hugging all of them. What an amazing experience we all went through together. For a team, essentially each of them was in the crevasse with me. Dano gave me a huge hug and told me he was glad I was with them, as did Sean and Paul. I then walked the two steps to the edge of our feeble camp, looked at the mountains across the valley, and let out two deeply primal screams of relief, angst towards the crevasse, and just roaring to be alive.

Sean and I helped, albeit feebly, to get our tent set up and our things placed inside after they had probed out a small campsite for us. With the sun down, it was getting quite cold. I manned the stoves the best I could for awhile, and then jumped inside the tent. Paul and Dano were of maximum service to Sean and me, feeding us and getting us everything else we needed, in addition to setting up their own tent and feeding themselves.



Sean and I sat eating, forcing the food down as neither of us were hungry. We sat in disbelief as it all kept sinking in. At one point he said, "We're two dead men sitting here eating." He was right. It truly was an act of miracle that the rope turned his sled into the anchor which checked our fall. A whim...Eventually I finally drifted off, grateful for warmth, my sleeping bag, the tent, and most of all, my three friends who had just collectively saved my life.

We continued for the next three days proceeding up the mountain only to make it to 10,000' high camp. We decided to retreat back based on the lack snow, the intense heat and the exposure of open crevasses. We spent a day back tracking to our pick-up camp at the base of the Scandi hut.

The toll the crevasse had taken was as follows: new ski poles, my hat, a bandana, a snow picket with carabineer and webbing, and my ego. What the crevasse gave me was this: humility, closer bonds with my friends, and greater team unity and confidence.

## Knight Island Peak Scrambling

Tim Kelly



In Prince William Sound trips in recent years distant views of Knight Island would catch my eye. And how couldn't they? The rugged peaks that form the spine of this long island scream out: "Hey! Look at me!" So on June 17<sup>th</sup> I hooked up with cross country ski racer pals Colin Quinn-Hurst and Rob Whitney. We took off by boat

out of Whittier bound for Solf Cove with hopes of scrambling up the two prominent northern peaks of Knight Island.

We encountered glassy water and dissipating fog while crossing Knight Passage. As we approached Herring Bay we noticed a pod of Dall's Porpoises nearby. When I cut the engines these orca-colored torpedoes decided to come over and check us out. They had a great time diving under the boat and surfacing nearby. And of course, as we started motoring again they had to show-off and leap out of the water in front of the bow. This was a good omen - being welcomed to the island by these very cool creatures. We then boated to the southeast section of Herring Bay and anchored at the head of Solf Cove, near the outlets of Solf Lake.

I have to give credit to Jim and Nancy Lethcoe for the idea of this peak bagging trip. In the Solf Cove section in their guidebook "A Cruising Guide to Prince William Sound" they mention: "Portaging a light boat into the lake is possible and opens up a virtually unvisited area to exploration." This statement caught my eye and definitely prompted me to visit this nook of Knight Island.

From our anchorage we launched our three sea kayaks. After paddling a short ways we got to a rock outcrop where we could land and then portage our kayaks to Solf Lake. Soon we were in the lake and paddled over to a Forest Service research camp to say 'Hi'. Then we paddled to the southern end of the lake.

Switching from paddling to bushwhacking we headed upwards, due south. We quickly noticed something different about this area of Prince William Sound - deer tracks. Eventually we caught a glimpse of a fleeing deer. These are sure easily spooked animals; likely from the hunting of them that takes place here.

After wrestling underbrush to gain 700 feet or so, we reached the main snowfield that leads upwards towards the notch between a 2368' peak and a 2130' sub-peak. From our distance away, this notch looked "iffy" - a steep snow ramp leading up between a cliff wall and a ravine.

As we paused to fill water bottles I pointed uphill and said to Rob and Colin: "Maybe that guy knows the route up to ridge-top!?" A black bear a couple hundred yards above on the snowfield was watching us. A loud yell of "Hey Bear!" set our

mountain guide off in the right direction. And we followed behind in his (or her) footsteps.

As we neared the notch we found that it looked tougher from afar than it actually was. Soon we were on the ridge-top where we turned to the northwest and scrambled up a 2368 foot summit. Great, cloudless views were had in all directions, and very impressive views of the larger Knight Island peaks to the south. What a place! We found no sign of a cairn on top, so we left a small one.

Backtracking, we ran down to the pass where we found the bear tracks, made only an hour ago, mostly melted away in the nearly 80 degree temperatures. We cruised up solar-oven-heated snowfields to the top of the nearby 2130' peak (not a true peak). Here we found an old cairn. Apparently someone once found their way to this spot, maybe the Lethcoes? Judging by comments in their boating guidebook, the Lethcoes have done their share of Prince William Sound peak bagging.

After the notch leading to the ridge-top not being as difficult as it looked, I told Colin and Rob that the shallow gully up the west face of our 2410' goal to the east wouldn't be that bad. Well, I was wrong. We bailed off that route and then glissaded 500 vertical south towards the Bay of Isles. At tundra line we scrambled up to a notch in the prominent southeast ridge of this 2410' peak.

As we were heading up this ridge I did a double-take. The map and the terrain did not seem to jive. There were sheer basalt walls on the east side of the mountain that I did not expect. A closer look at the map showed that the map was correct, but one could easily be deceived by glancing at it. The reason – the elevation of the peak was printed right on top of where the cliffs were. So the tightening of map contour lines was obliterated by the elevation numbers.

Luckily this ridge route worked. There was a steep section, but overall the ridge was a good find. The basalt of these Knight Island peaks, if you can find some without moss covering it, makes for lots of vegi-technical routes. So you count your blessings when a safe non-technical route is found.

On top we were impressed by Montague Island in the distance. Numerous glaciers smother the north sides of Montague's "first-line of defense" mountain range as it guards Prince William Sound from incoming storms. And judging by the haze building

to the southeast, we knew that a storm was on its way. We built a small cairn on top and headed back to the lake.

### Lets go jump in the Sound



Back at the boat we took our customary post peak bagging dive off the boat for an end of trip, refreshing and cold, salt bath. I wanted to head back across Knight Island Passage before the bad weather hit, but that was not to be. So we spent the night in Bear Cove to the north before heading back the next day. We refer to the two true peaks we climbed as Solf Peak (2410' Seward B2, T4N, S28) and Herring Peak (2368' Seward B2, T4N, R10E, S29).

## Moonlight Adventure



read on.

hat time does the moon rise? If you look at an almost full moon how can you tell if it is before or after a full moon? If you can't afford a headlamp or batteries

The club has several full moon hikes coming up in January thanks to Amy Murphy. These are very enjoyable times to be out; for the most part you will not even need to turn on a headlamp. With a few moon facts you can plan outings around the moonlight.

Here are the essential moon facts to know:

The full moon rises at sunset. Moonrise takes place about 50 minutes later each day than the day before. The quarter moon is only about 10 percent as bright as the full moon. If you see a nearly full moon in the Northern hemisphere and the left side



is dark, a full moon is on the way. If the right side is dark, the full moon has past. During the 3 days of the full moon werewolves are at their strongest.

#### People who can't afford batteries on Wolverine



Lee Whitten photo

Some other moon facts: The New Moon always rises at sunrise. The first quarter Moon rises at noon. The last (or third) quarter Moon rises at midnight. When a month has two full moons, the second is often called a Blue Moon.

A 'quarter moon' appears twice in a moon cycle. Quarter refers to one quarter of the orbit around the earth. A quarter moon is sometimes called a half moon since it appears as a half a disk. Many calendars (including the MCA calendar) depict a crescent moon for the quarter moon.

So, knowing the moon's cycle (and the topography), You might plan an afterwork hike a few days before the full moon since the moon will be up sooner. The MCA calendar has the full and new moon dates marked. The full moon in January is on Saturday the 14<sup>th</sup>, the first day of a 3 day weekend for many of the working folks. See you out there.

## Miscellany

### Boy Scouts

Western Alaska Council, Boy Scouts of America sincerely appreciates members of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska that so generously gave of their time and talent to instruct at OKPIK 2005 (scout leader cold weather training) December 3, 2005 Camp Carlquist.  
Thank you!!!

Yours in Scouting,  
Greg Bragiel (OKPIK chairman)

MCA Instructors-Sam Pepper, Jenny Magee, Carl Battreall, James Szender, John Hauth, Carol Akerson, Mary Beth Bragiel, Eric Holloway

## Calendars

The 07 MCA Calendars will be horizontal. So please start thinking about what you would like to enter. We may be collecting photos as soon as the February General Meeting for voting in March. The 06 calendars as of Dec. 23 are for sale at AMH and the Alaska Rock Gym. Once sold out at these locations we may go into a third printing for pay in advance customers only.

Stu [oinkmenow@hotmail.com](mailto:oinkmenow@hotmail.com)

## The Recipe this month was last seen at the Christmas Potluck, From Marcy Custer

Heath Bar Candy

Line pan with aluminum foil (cookie sheet size with edges)

Line/lay out saltine crackers

Melt 1 c. butter (2 sticks) with 1 c. sugar until dissolved

Pour evenly over crackers

Bake at 350 degrees x 15 minutes

Once out of oven & bubbling settles, spread 1 pkg milk chocolate chips over the top

Spread & smooth evenly as chips melt

Sprinkle chopped walnuts on top

Cool in refrigerator

Break into pieces

Store in air tight container (or in coffee tin decorated with Sponge Bob wrapping paper, or other festive wrap)

Enjoy!

## Board Meeting Minutes

MCA BOARD MEETING 12/14/05  
7:30 PM AT THE SNOW GOOSE  
MINUTES FROM MEETING

IN ATTENDANCE: Steve Gruhn, Sean Bolender, Annette Iverson, SaraEllen Hutchison, Debbie

Arens, Rebecca Bissette, Randy Howell, Steve Parry, Hans Neidig. Eric Teela was not present.

**OLD BUSINESS:** Last month the board approved a printing run of 125 more calendars by an email vote. The board also voted, via email, to have MCA send a letter in support of Chugach State Park's grant request for trail maintenance.

**GENERAL MEETING AND POTLUCK:** December potluck and general meeting to vote on the budget will be December 21, 7pm at the First Methodist Church at 9<sup>th</sup> and G. We are going to vote on the budget before eating. Debbie Arens will write the budget on a dry erase board.

Debbie and Rebecca had already purchased plastic silverware and dishes prior to the board meeting. We also discussed other food and decorative items and figured out who would bring what. Annette has extra silverware in her car if it is needed. Food will be kept hot at Annette's house prior to the meeting, and we can also use the church kitchen.

As for the slide presentations, members who wish to show slides will have to bring their own carousels, and Kodak trays are preferred since that is the projector available. Steve Parry plans to borrow a laptop for digital presentations.

The room will be set up by Randy, Steve Parry, Annette, and Rebecca, at 5:30pm. SaraEllen will be there for cleanup and will hopefully enlist many helpers.

**AWARDS COMMITTEE:** Recommendations for the Hoeman are on the way. We are seeking recommendations for the Meekins award, which is for climbers under 26 years old.

**THE FLATTOP SLEEPOUT** for 12/23 was also discussed and volunteers were sought to attend in place of the President, who was unavailable that day.

**THE MCA LISTSERV** has plenty of options for a backup moderator, according to Sean Bolender.

**MCA OFFICER HANDBOOKS** are in the progress of being updated and will be distributed as soon as technical difficulties are resolved.

**HUTS REPORT BY HANS NEIDIG:** Hans and Steve Gruhn reported that the Mountaineering Club will not be receiving a donated hut, but the

proposed Snowbird Hut acquisition remains an ongoing discussion, as well as the prospect of building a new hut. The board continues to discuss the financial, structural, environmental, recreational, and legal issues concerning the Snowbird Hut. The board should make a decision on whether to acquire the Snowbird Hut by June of 2006, a time frame which coincides with the Department of Natural Resources permit process.

Hut maintenance and waste disposal remains a big issue for the Mountaineering Club of Alaska, especially with heavily used huts like the Mint Hut. The board will pick up the discussion of waste removal systems and the costs and benefits of each option at the next board meeting.

**THE NEXT BOARD MEETING** will be at the Snow Goose upstairs conference room, January 11, at 6pm.

**LIBRARY:** Sean reports that the club needs a laptop donated to help manage the library. Sean will contact AMH to discuss the location of the library. The committee is planning to box up the American Alpine journals, but members will still have access to them.

**T-SHIRTS:** Orders for polypropylene t-shirts will be taken at the January meeting. By that time, Aimee will get logos to the board so that a decision can be made as to the appearance of the logo on the t-shirt.

**ACCESS ISSUES:** The board discussed access to ice climbing on native corporation land. Eklutna has been requiring permits. Concerned over potential high costs and waivers of liability, the board has asked the lawyer members of MCA to research the issue and get back to us.

Also of concern are trips across private property. The Hiking Committee must obtain legal access before advertising a trip. Official club trips need permission from private landowners, and members are advised to always be aware of where they are going.

**NEW BUSINESS:** An extended membership is currently for a two-year period. So far, MCA has no longer-term memberships established.

**GOOD LUCK** to Director Rebecca Bissette; she is to be deployed in early January, but will have email access. Come home soon Rebecca!



## General membership Meeting Minutes

### GENERAL MEETING

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2005

7:30PM AT FIRST METHODIST CHURCH

Tonight's agenda was to pass the 2006 budget and enjoy a holiday season potluck meal together.

Steve Gruhn opened the meeting by asking new members to introduce themselves. Two new members made brief introductions.

The budget was discussed and voted on before dinner. Treasurer Debbie Arens wrote the numbers on a dry erase board for all to see. Steve Gruhn briefly outlined the differences between the current and the proposed budgets and then fielded questions from members. A couple of points were clarified; the huts figure was just for maintenance. The equipment budget factored in the cost of purchasing new ropes, crampons, and a few helmets.

The budget was quickly approved by a majority of the members present.

Dinner was potluck-style with many delicious homemade treats. Slides were shown after dinner. After cleanup, the leftover food was donated to the Brother Francis Shelter.

## Adze

### For Sale

Mens La Sportiva Makalu mountain boots size 9 1/2. Excellent condition. Used twice. Crampon compatible. Tough enough for any season in the mountains. Bids start at \$120.

Matt at 278-3648 or [antigravity@acsalaska.net](mailto:antigravity@acsalaska.net)

Mountaineering Boots, La Sportiva Eiger, Men's Size 9.5 (used one summer).

Travis at 276-5885 days or 274-7023 nights

## 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 nontechnical 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: MCA Board, February 15, 2000

# Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President Steve Gruhn 344-1219  
Vice-President Sean Bolender 333-0213  
Secretary SaraEllen Hutchison 269-6300  
Treasurer Debbie Arens 563-1960

Board member Eric Teela 240-9693  
Board member Annette Iverson 222-0581  
Board member Randy Howell 346-4608  
Board member Rebecca Bissette 375-0959  
Board member Steve Parry 248-8710

Annual membership dues: Single \$15, Family \$20

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 will not forward the newsletter.

The '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 emailed to [Scree@yahoogroups.com](mailto:Scree@yahoogroups.com) or submitted on the web at [www.mcak.org](http://www.mcak.org) or mailed to Scree Editor Box 102037 Anchorage Alaska 99510. Articles should be received by January 18th (the club meeting) to be 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.

Missing your MCA membership card? Stop by our monthly meeting to pick it up or send a self-addressed stamped envelope and we'll mail it to you.

Mailing list/database entry: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008  
Hiking Committee: Matt Nedom - 278-3648, Carlene Van Tol - 748-5270  
Climbing Committee: Richard Baranow - 694-1500, Randy Howell - 346-4608  
Huts: Hans Neidig 355-3244  
Calendar: Stuart Grenier 337-5127  
Scree Editor: John Recktenwald 770-1636  
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