

# the SCREE

## Mountaineering Club of Alaska

November 2007  
Volume 50 Number 11



I like being near the top of a mountain.  
One can't get lost here.

Wislawia Szymborska

**Mt Godwin  
Mt Yukla  
Ptarmigan Riddle  
Bench Peak  
Portage Lake  
Tusk - POM**

**Monthly Meeting**

**Wed, November 21 @ 7:30**

**Program: Jay Rowe with climbs  
of the Sugar Tooth and the Tusk**

**Also... a gear swap**

# 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)

**Cover photo:** Harold Faust, Matt Faust and George Peck on the north summit of Mt Godwin

**Article Submission:** Articles and photos are best submitted on the web at MCAK.org. You can also attach a word processing document to an email. Due to formatting problems please do not submit material in the body of an email. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. To get on the cover a photo should convey the feeling of mountaineering and show human endeavor.

## Contents

**Mt Godwin**  
**Mt Yukla**  
**Ptarmigan riddle**  
**Bench Peak**  
**Portage Lake**  
**Tusk - Peak of the Month**  
**MCA member in Iraq**  
**Minutes**  
**Adze**  
**Parting Shot**

## Hiking and Climbing Schedule

November 3, Wolverine Peak

A relatively easy climb up a Front Range Peak that grants beautiful views to those who summit. Ice axe, crampons and helmet, Sean Bolender is the trip leader  
[seanbolender@yahoo.com](mailto:seanbolender@yahoo.com)

November 22-25, Bomber Traverse

Yeah, now we're talking. 4 day trip through the Talkeetna Mountains. Up to 10 miles on skis each day with a full pack. Visit the Mint, Bomber and snowbird huts. Sean Bolender is the trip leader.  
[seanbolender@yahoo.com](mailto:seanbolender@yahoo.com)

November 23 – 25, Ski touring and Telemarking

Class B. Powder Hut, Lane Hut or Snowhawk Valley. Ski touring and Telemarking. >12 miles roundtrip. We will go where the snow is. Leader Greg Bragiel 569-3008. Snowshoers welcome.

December 1, Ice climbing

Join one of our MCA leaders on this Saturday adventure to one of the local Ice climbs.

Climbing harness, helmet and belay device. Contact Sean Bolender for more info:  
[seanbolender@yahoo.com](mailto:seanbolender@yahoo.com)

December 8, more ice climbing

Yee haw, more ice climbing as above.  
[seanbolender@yahoo.com](mailto:seanbolender@yahoo.com)

December 29 – January 1, Lost Lake, Clemens Cabin

Ski Touring and Telemarking ~12 miles round trip. Class B Leader Greg Bragiel 569-3008, Snowshoers welcome.

January 19-20, Powder time

Let's find some of that January powder that everyone talks about. Maybe Girdwood's Winner creek or Hatcher Pass. Randonee or Tele gear, avalanche gear (and know how to use it). A limited number of beginners will be allowed to join the crew.

Contact: [seanbolender@yahoo.com](mailto:seanbolender@yahoo.com)

## MCA GEAR SWAP

At the next General Meeting November 21<sup>st</sup>

Bring all your outdoor gear and a pocketbook for great deals and new-to-you toys.  
The trading will begin after the business meeting, around 8:15 pm.



# Mount Godwin first ascent, April 1, 2007

by Harold Faust



The team and the ridge on Mt Godwin

The idea of making a climb of Mount Godwin began when Willy Hersman mentioned that the high point of the Godwin Glacier area had not yet been summited. My son Matt, George Peck, and I considered the idea for several years and decided that a classy way to climb Mount Godwin would be to include the peak in a traverse from the South Fork of Snow River and then out the Godwin Glacier. Ascending the Kindling Glacier would make it easier to find a viable route through a challenging icefall section. Descending the Godwin Glacier would be on known ground; if the weather deteriorated we would not have serious route finding issues. Timing a trip for the deep snow cover of late winter seemed smart for this route, and we thought making a winter ascent would be a nice mark. Local adventurer Dano Michaud signed on for the trip as soon as he heard the plan. The winter of '06-'07 cooperated with plenty of snow, cold weather and wind to plaster the high places, but our work schedules and a trip to Mexican beaches interfered. We realized it would have to be a spring trip and settled on the weekend of April 6-9.

The March weather in Seward was fantastic, with weeks of clear skies, bombproof snow, and some strong north winds. On March 17, I took a reconnaissance flight with a local friend and pilot, Bruce Jaffa. When Mount Godwin came into sight, with its gorgeous west ridge forming a natural all-snow path to the top, I knew our route would go. The deep snow cover on the Kindling and Godwin Glaciers also looked great; given any luck with the weather the traverse would work. By the last

week of March, a storm front was approaching from the Pacific. We had to move the trip up a week, and that change worked for everyone except Dano. We decided that our remaining group of three had sufficient resources and with a few gear switches, the trip was on for Saturday morning, March 30, 2007.

## Approaching on the south Fork



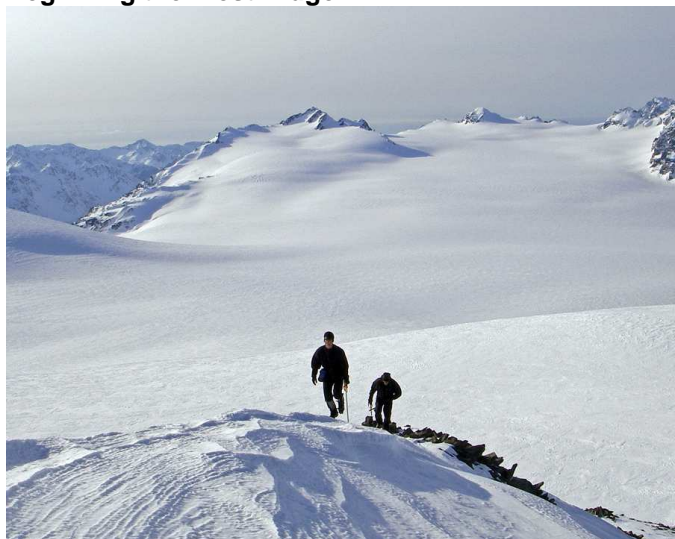
By 6 AM that morning we were shoeing up the South Fork with sixty-pound packs on frozen snow machine trails. At a temperature of about 0° the ice bridges remained in fair shape; we only had one open water crossing and managed to keep our feet dry. It was nearly 7 miles to the toe of the Kindling. There, a route behind the west lateral moraine took us cleanly above treeline. Stunning views began to open up. Hearth Mountain was behind us to the north, the heights of the Sergeant Icefield to the east, and above us the wonderful peaks

and icefalls of the upper Kindling. At about 2500' the moraine merged into the mountainside. The glacier was covered in heavy snow; only a few irregular depressions gave hints of the character of the ice beneath. We side-hilled down across some frozen avalanche debris and then it was time to rope up, spread out, and sharpen our senses.

George led the rope, Matt tied into the middle, and I followed their steps. George and I each shouldered extra loops of the rope, and we were all geared for crevasse rescue. A fantastic jutting black pyramid of rock at the top of the glacier drew our eyes, and we referred to the formation as the "Fin". Midway across the glacier we reversed the order of advance, and I headed for a relatively smooth but steep section in the center of the icefall near the top of the route. As the angle increased, the powdery snow slowed us down, but we advanced without stopping, zigzagging between exposed blue towers. Guessing that we might be visible on the glacier, Dano drove out and glassed the area. He quickly spotted us moving slowly up the icefall and knew we were well on our way.

About 4:30 PM we reached the pass at 4350' and could see the ocean in the distance to the south. Hard-packed sastrugi snow showed evidence of the winds that had recently blasted the pass, but we set up camp in calm air as the low angle light lit up the ridges and summits above us. 4th of July Peak was beautiful, about two miles to the southeast across the top of the Godwin Glacier. The face of the Fin just west of camp was very steep but approachable; Matt was definitely interested. Above us stretched the west ridge of Mount Godwin. Not all of it was visible from camp, but what we could see was continuous and snow-covered with no obvious problems to torment our sleep. We ate supper, melted snow, and watched the light fade from the peaks. After a full day, covering about 11 miles and gaining 4000' with big packs, we were ready for sack time.

### Beginning the West Ridge



The morning sky on April 1 was clear and there was still no wind through the pass. We readied for the ridge climb, stuffing a minimum of gear into daypacks. At about 8:30 AM we headed up the base of the ridge with crampons and axes, leaving the rope in camp. As we spiked our way up the solid snow on the narrowing ridge, the upper Godwin Glacier spread out below to the south. Below the icefall on the Kindling we could see our tracks from the previous day. The ridge continued to narrow down, with exposed sheer cliffs on our right and steep snow slopes falling away out of sight to the left. At about 5200' Matt proposed a route to the left that promised solid snow around a ragged, exposed section of ridge. We carefully crossed about 75 yards of steep ground, but then encountered a layer of ice covering the snow. With no gear to protect our advance on that surface, we had to retrace our steps back to the ridge and check the rock step.

At the step, the right side was very exposed, sheer cliff for hundreds of feet. On the left was a thin layer of snow on downward slanted sediments. The very backbone had several decent steps, spread a bit too far apart, but rather solid looking. I scraped snow from several steps and got a hold with my right hand, then stuck my axe pick into some kind of notch above to the left and pulled up. I made several shuffling moves along on my knees and then got the shaft of the axe into deeper snow. It was only about 15 feet of struggle, but quite a relief to get away from that right edge. With a 30-foot piece of 8mm cord I made a belay wrap around the head of the axe and sent it down. That bit of security and psychological aid got us past the step.

The upper section of the ridge had decent snow along the north edge, and then the ridge ended. There was an open snow face for the final two hundred feet. I slammed my double boots into the fine styrofoam snow and knew that nothing else could keep us from the summit. Bury the axe shaft; take two steps, repeat. We crested out just before 11:30 AM, between twin summit cones of snow about 40 feet apart. The north and east sides fell sharply away to unseen cliffs above glaciers. There were a series of spectacularly corniced pinnacles leading down the south ridge. I used a water bottle to determine that the north peak was the highest by just a few feet. Checking the altimeters we had calibrated at the pass, we agreed that the summit of Mount Godwin is at 5860'. We signed a new summit log and jammed it into a rock crevice below the summit cornice. We took self-timed photos and other shots in every direction, including west towards the Fin, and Kindling Peak, another unclimbed 5500'+ summit at the head of the Kindling Glacier. Bruce Jaffa flew north through the pass well below us. He later shared a photo his son took from the plane that shows us silhouetted on the summit.





After an hour on the top, we backed over the rim and began following our tracks down the steep upper snowfield. It was a ways before we were able to descend facing forward. The glacial world spread before us was incredible, but we concentrated on moving with care, each climber responsible for his own safety. Just before 3 PM we were taking off boots and brewing lunch at the tent.

After some time relaxing in the sun, George walked over to a rock lookout point over the top of the Kindling Glacier, a spot we quickly dubbed Peck's Peak. Matt and I just had to take a crack at the Fin. We geared up for protected climbing and hiked over to the base of the east face at about 4:30 PM. We kicked steps up the thicker snow on the right side, then went on belay. After working our way up and across the face to the left edge, we saw that route wouldn't go without rock gear. Matt quickly called for a rappel retreat down the face. It was nearly dark, time to get off. As he set the anchor for the second rap, Matt realized he had dropped his camera down the

face. Most of our summit photos went with it. By the time Matt set up the fourth and final rap anchor with two pickets pounded into the hard frozen snow of a steep couloir, the moon was coming up over 4th of July Peak. As I stowed the rope, I could see Matt working his way down the runout snows below me, checking every dark object with his headlamp. Suddenly I heard him holler, "Yes!" and then, "It works!" The camera was fine; our photos were safe. We returned to the tent as the moon rose higher over the Godwin. Again, there was no wind, and we enjoyed a night of satisfied sleep.

The last morning, April 2nd, dawned calm and colorful, with some cloud cover gathering to the southwest. We packed our loads, strapped on our snowshoes, and started down the Godwin. The snow surface was rough but solid and we made quick progress along the north edge of the glacier, traveling in each other's tracks to minimize our exposure to possible surprises. The only fractured glacier surface was along the south side, about a mile above the toe, and we easily walked past it. By 2 PM we were off the ice. The temperature was rising late that afternoon as clouds gathered, and the snow in the trees was getting very soft. Our trip out to the creek bottom was a struggle in spots, but we knew the route and were soon tromping the last mile to the truck. Seldom has it felt so good to drop a heavy pack into the truck bed and sit down.

Our total traverse route covered approximately 21 miles. We successfully completed a nice first ascent in fine style with great company. The weather slammed in just as we got off the trail; it then rained and warmed for weeks. No matter; our memories and our photos of a great trip will stay with us.



## Mt Yukla

by Steve Gruhn

I knew it was going to be a long day when I awoke to sprinkles at 3 a.m. Saturday, June 9. Despite the weather I drove to the Eagle River Nature Center to start this MCA trip.

Although he wouldn't be able to join us, Richard Baranow graciously drove me a mile up the road from the ERNC and I began the trek up the valley to meet up with Lisa Ferber and Theo Hunt, who had camped near Icicle Creek the night before. I was busy on Friday night and didn't get home until 11 p.m., so, although I would love to have hiked in the night before, I wasn't able to.

We then hiked up to the Twin Falls basin, where we changed footwear and stashed some gear at the big boulder. We roped up for the small glacier at the head (north side) of the Twin Falls Creek drainage. At Twinsicle Pass, we unroped and angled to the northwest, descending about 100 feet.

After perhaps a quarter mile, we found ourselves in a basin above the Icicle Glacier with the Mount Yukla massif to the west. While it had been pleasantly warm on the south side of the ridge, the temperatures on the north side were in the 20s. But we were warm enough as long as we were moving. We immediately headed up a couloir we thought would give us a straight shot to the ridge. Well, it did – but we didn't want to be where it put us. So, we dropped down and sidehilled over amid terribly variable snow conditions, going in and out of

gullies, trying to find the right one. We encountered everything from rotten, bottomless snow to sugar snow to "snice" that would barely accept crampon, whippet, or ice axe points. After several of these gullies with variable snow conditions, things didn't look promising, so we elected to descend back to the basin and try again aiming for the southwest end of the prominent northeast ridge. This route went smoothly. We crossed over the ridge above a hanging glacier and climbed the snowfield above it.

The snow conditions were again terribly variable. We followed the snow slope upward, hugging the rocks to our left. We could see that we were approaching the summit, but the snow conditions caused us to take a circuitous route, climbing the false summit first, then descending to the notch to the west and finally climbing the westernmost (true) summit, arriving just before 10 p.m. Mount Yukla is the highest point in the Eagle River drainage; the summits of all the nearby peaks were below us and bathed in alpenglow. A strong north wind chased us from the summit and we descended on the east side of the ridge east of the hanging glacier. We retraced our steps and got back to our

gear at the big boulder at about 12:30 a.m. and, after having dinner, we bivied by 2 a.m. That was a long day for me.

The next morning we lounged around in the sun, drying gear and fondly remembering the previous day's climb. I had to get out that afternoon, so we split up and I hiked out. Lisa and Theo went up to the overlook above Blue-

Eyed Lake and then hiked out later that day. Shortly after they left, a shaggy billy goat came up from the creek below us. I hadn't seen goats in that area before, so it was a treat to see him.

All in all, it was a truly wonderful climb that I will remember for years to come. Part of the satisfaction comes from having tried a route that didn't go and then marshalling ourselves to make a second attempt that was successful, and part comes from the favorable weather that we had. But the fondest memories come when I think of the camaraderie the three of us shared. After all, what is more enjoyable than being in the mountains with friends?



**Theo Hunt and Steve Gruhn  
on Yukla**

## Solving Ptarmigan Peak's Riddle

by Steve Gruhn

I've hiked up Ptarmigan Peak many times, but Ross Noffsinger mentioned something to me recently that got me to questioning my perceptions. I had always viewed the USGS map as the authority on the summit elevations of the double-summited peak. Ross maintained that the east summit was higher than the west summit, despite the USGS map indicating to the contrary.

With Ross' comment in the back of my mind, I led Theo Hunt, Kristyna Branum, and John Recktenwald on an after-work hike up Ptarmigan Peak on August 9, 2007. The hike up the Rabbit Lake trail was pretty straightforward and, after leaving the trail about three-quarters of a mile southeast of the end of the old road below Ptarmigan Pass, we were soon on the east summit, the one labeled with an elevation of 4880 feet on the USGS Anchorage (A-7) quadrangle. The west summit certainly appeared lower than the east summit

from that vantage point. My altimeter read 4960 feet and, because I hadn't calibrated it beforehand, I viewed the reading as well within the range of acceptable error.

We hiked over to the west summit, which the USGS quadrangle indicates is between 4900 and 5000 feet in elevation. Here my altimeter indicated the elevation was 4920 feet. I used a partially filled water bottle as a level to confirm that the east peak was higher.

We returned to the Rabbit Lake trail and were back at the vehicles before dusk, having had a wonderful trip and having answered a nagging question.

So, having solved the riddle as to which peak is higher, the next nagging question is, "What is the elevation of the east summit of Ptarmigan Peak?" Inquiring minds want to know.





**Dave Stchyrba crests the ridge**  
All photos by Wayne Todd

## **Bench Peak (5575)**

### **Kenai Mountains**

by Steve 'FOOS' Gruhn

Ross Noffsinger invited me on a climb of Bench Peak on July 7. We planned to bike up the Johnson Trail from the north end and have a go at a peak I attempted to lead a few unsuspecting souls in early August 2006. I was unsuccessful on that trip, so I had some unfinished business with this peak. And as I researched other peaks in the Kenai Mountains for the "Peak of the Month" column, Bench Peak kept striking me as a real prize. Although its summit elevation is only 5575 feet, it is the highest peak for over 7 miles in all directions of mountainous country.

We met at the Carrs Huffman parking lot that morning and Dave Stchyrba, Wayne Todd, and Carrie Wang were also there. I was the least experienced mountain biker of the bunch, so I knew I'd be hustling just to keep up with the rest of the crew.

We arrived at the trailhead and soon were off biking. Well, they were off biking; there were several stretches of the trail where I was off pushing. When I did try to ride, the results proved nearly calamitous. At one point I nearly slid my bike (with me still attached) under the railings of the Center Creek bridge and into the water below. Based on last year's attempt, I knew I was not being invited based on my navigational or mountaineering skills, but based on Wayne's laughter. I

could see that my role on this trip would be that of comic relief for the rest of the party.

We ditched the bikes about a mile after the second Bench Creek bridge, just south of the bridge over the stream that flows from the south side of Bench Peak. Ross threatened to usurp my comic-relief role as he made friends with the majority of the red flies in the Kenai Mountains. Determined to retain my role, I vainly tried to wash off the cow parsnip sap from my bare arms. We locked the bikes together in a grove of alders. Fortunately, groves of alders were not scarce on this trip.

#### **Carrie Wang biking through the cow parsnip**



### Carrie, Dave, FOOS and Ross in the valley



The bushwhacker in me led the group eastward up the valley, connecting patches of alders through the meadows until we were above the tall grasses and sufficiently ensconced in boulder fields. Fortunately, the vegetation growth in the valley had increased substantially since I first ventured there in August 1981, so I was able to avoid most of the meadows. We crossed the unnamed stream on a snow bridge and proceeded to hike up the tundra slopes toward a basin on the southwest side of Bench Peak. Once in the basin, Wayne and Carrie led us up a small pocket glacier. As the route became steeper, I lagged behind further and further. I told the rest of the party that this was due to my being “fat, old, and outta shape.” Wayne abbreviated this condition as “FOOS” and my name became FOOS for the rest of the trip. We put on boots and crampons and Wayne led us over a snow-bridged crevasse and up the side of a cliff to some gentler slopes. Here we traversed to the north and Wayne found a steep couloir that enabled us to reach the ridge immediately southeast of the summit. The snow was getting soft, so we moved one-at-a-time until we were off the snow.

### The Ridge



We lounged around on top, taking photographs, admiring the views, and planning future trips. Mountains and valleys surrounded us. Divide Creek dropped away to the north, Bench Creek to the west, and the Placer River to the east. Fiddlehead Mountain, Isthmus Peak, and Carpathian Peak beckoned to me and I salivated at the views of them. All too soon, though, it was time to leave our lofty perch.

### The crew on the summit



Carrie led us southeast along the ridge for a quarter mile of dancing across the barely balanced boulders. We staged at different locations for a memorable glissade. I descended first, whooping and hollering with youthful exuberance that defied my aging body. Soon the others followed in separate runs southeast of my line. Once they were off the steep slopes, I glissaded most of the way to the bottom of the snow patch, a total elevation loss of about 2100 feet. More whooping and hollering ensued. Within short order, the rest of the party had joined me.

Dave had noticed that he was missing a jacket, so we spread out on the descent to see if we could locate it. We retraced our steps down the valley and – lo and behold – I found Dave’s jacket lying on the ground in an alder patch only a few yards from the trail.

We returned to the bikes and Ross’ red flies and soon the rest of the group was pedaling away while I pushed along the muddy and steep portions. Thankfully, they waited for FOOS at the trailhead, where Carrie reported seeing a black bear on the trip out. Altogether, the entire trip had taken a little over 12 hours.

Overall, despite my backside being tender from a lack of previous riding, the trip was wonderful. There were great views, good friends, decent weather, a lot of laughter, and the satisfaction of achieving an elusive goal. But Fiddlehead, Isthmus, and Carpathian still beckon.



# Peak of the Month: The Tusk

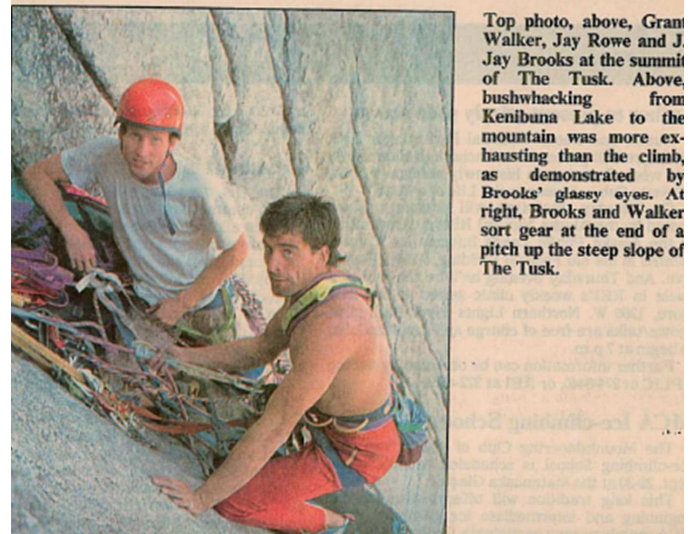
by Steve Gruhn

Jay Rowe will be presenting a slide show on the Tusk and the Sugar Tooth at the November club meeting

Mountain Range: Alaska Range; Hidden Mountains  
Borough: Kenai Peninsula Borough  
Adjacent Pass: Disappointment Col  
Latitude/Longitude: 61°8'24" North, 153°10'4" West  
Elevation: 5730 feet  
Prominence: 780 feet from Peak 6125 (near the Another River)  
Adjacent Peak: Mount Cheops (5715±15)  
Distinctness: 780 feet from Mount Cheops  
USGS Map: Lime Hills (A-1)  
First Recorded Ascent: June 21, 1986, by Paul Bellamy and Gary Speer  
Route of First Recorded Ascent: Elephant Gully (couloir on the southeast side) to Disappointment Col and thence the Walrus Buttress (south arête)  
Access Point: Teardrop Glacier



When geologist Stephan Reid Capps and topographer Gerald FitzGerald first saw The Tusk in 1928 while working for the U.S. Geological Survey, they named it because of "the tusk-like appearance of the glaciated granite pinnacle." Since then its appearance has drawn the attention of some very talented climbing parties, but only two are known to have reached its summit.



Top photo, above, Grant Walker, Jay Rowe and J. Jay Brooks at the summit of The Tusk. Above, bushwhacking from Kenibuna Lake to the mountain was more exhausting than the climb, as demonstrated by Brooks' glassy eyes. At right, Brooks and Walker sort gear at the end of a pitch up the steep slope of The Tusk.

In early July 1971 a party comprised of future MCA President Bill Barnes, MCA President Steve Hackett, future MCA Treasurer Steve Jones, Barry Kircher, future

MCA President Wendell Oderkirk, and Bob Smith started from Kenibuna Lake and waded up the Igitna River and the Another River to reach the southeast face of the Tusk. Hackett and Kircher ascended a gully, reached Disappointment Col, and started up a narrow chute, and



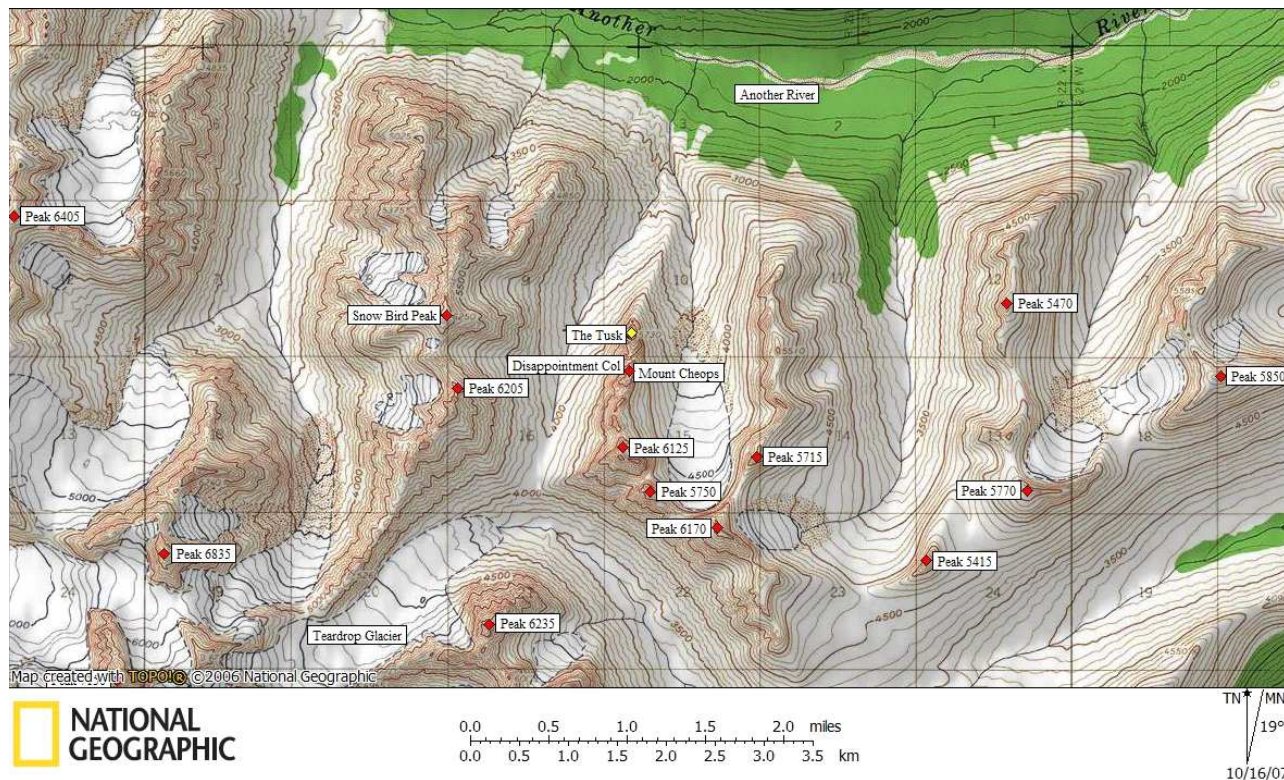
made it a couple more pitches, but were unable to continue due to fatigue and rotten, overhanging rock on the blank headwall of the south arête (later named the Walrus Buttress). They reported that the rock was granite, but of a crumbling nature more akin to sandstone or Chugach Crud. The February 1972 *Scrie* includes Kircher's account of their attempt.

In June 1977 Fred Beckey, Eric Bjornstad, and Craig Martinson reached about the same point as Hackett and Kircher and turned around after encountering what world-renowned climber Beckey called the worst rock he had been on in 20 years. Both Beckey and Bjornstad had been hit by rockfall and Bjornstad was narrowly missed by a television-sized rock as it fell. A summary of their attempt was included on page 94 of the June 1978 issue of *Appalachia*. Bjornstad's account of their attempt was later published on page 515 of the 1978 *American Alpine Journal*.

The summit was finally reached on June 21, 1986, by Paul Bellamy and Gary Speer after Lowell Thomas, Jr., dropped them off in his Helio Courier on the Teardrop Glacier southwest of The Tusk in the Neacola River drainage. The party climbed a 5.7 couloir on the southeast side of The Tusk, naming it Elephant Gully. Although only 5.7, they both found it a challenge. In the gully Bellamy took a 20-foot leader fall, Speer was hit by a melon-sized rock, Bellamy was hit by a baseball-sized rock, and the haul strap on their pack broke while bringing it up, causing the loss of a camera and a set of binoculars. After reaching Disappointment Col, they climbed the 5.8 Walrus Buttress to the north, bypassing the headwall with a 40-foot traverse to a dihedral on the

east face. It had taken three pitches of 5.8 climbing. From the top of the buttress, it took six easy pitches (Class 3 to mid-Class 5) to reach the summit. Speer rated the entire climb as Grade IV, 5.8. They left a cairn and a register on the summit, but their register included only a sketch of the peak. They also reported accidentally leaving a camera on the top of the Walrus Buttress. Speer's trip report appeared in the December 1986 *Scrie*.

The Tusk saw its second ascent on August 15, 1990, when J. Jay Brooks, Jay Rowe, and Grant Walker reached the summit after Ketchum Air dropped them off at Kenibuna Lake and they fought the brush up the Igitna River and Another River drainages for two and a half days before reaching the alpine country. For their climb they selected a prominent crack system, ascending the tallest section of the 1,700-foot east face. The first day the party climbed 10 pitches on solid granite up to 5.10, A2 before settling in for the night on a spacious bivy ledge. The next day they climbed five free pitches in a dihedral system to the summit, where they found the cairn and register of the first ascent party. They took the obligatory summit photograph and Jay recently recalled noting that The Tusk was higher than Mount Cheops to the south. The trio rappelled back to the bivy ledge for another night and descended the rest of the route the following day. After fighting brush for another two days on the way out, the team arrived at their pickup point on Kenibuna Lake an hour before the floatplane touched down. An article covering their climb appeared on page H-1 of the September 16, 1990, *Anchorage Times*





# Portage Lake

by Tim Kelley

In the January 2007 issue of Scree I wrote a short article about my attempt to re-create a 93 year old photograph of Portage Glacier and Lake. I got close to the location where the original was taken. But close only counts in horseshoes and hand grenades. So I went back this year and had more success in finding the exact spot the original pictures was taken. You can compare the old 1914 NOAA R. P. Strough survey crew picture to mine to see what global warming in our backyard is all about.

While doing research for this 1914 picture in USGS and NOAA digital archive databases, I gleaned some mountain name information from picture captions. It seems that back in the early 1900's surveys like to name mountain ridges "shoulders". During that time Shakespeare Shoulder was named. Survey crews

referred to the south ridge of Maynard Mountain, or arguably Maynard Mountain itself, as Portage Shoulder. And the southern ridge of Begich Peak, topping out at 2780' in Section 12, was referred to back then as Turnagain Shoulder. This last name did not make it to current day USGS maps. The location I re-took the Portage Glacier photo was actually an old triangulation benchmark, labeled the "Turnagain" benchmark on current USGS maps, on Turnagain Shoulder.

If you search the USGS photo archives database for the keywords 'Turnagain' and 'Shoulder' you will find the references I speak of. I'm not sure why this name never made it to USGS maps. I guess somewhere along the line someone decided to give Turnagain Shoulder the cold shoulder.



**'The best climber in the world  
is the one who's having the most fun'  
Alex Lowe**

**Thank you to  
MCA member Laura Mack in Iraq**

(On the left with some friends), you can reach her at [laura.mack@iraq.centcom.mil](mailto:laura.mack@iraq.centcom.mil)



## MCA Board Meeting Minutes

October 2007

- I. Call to Order 6:20 pm
- II. Attendance: Bridget Paule, Sean Bolender, Steve Gruhn, Travis Taylor, Randy Howell, Annette Iverson, Sarah Ellen, Dean Carman.
- III. Old Business:
  - Huts Update—Greg is working on the design and construction of the Mint Hut outhouse and has approached Dean for possible help on the project. Sean will forward initial the plans to Dean for his input and an estimate on materials and cost. Public notice was posted Sept. 11<sup>th</sup> regarding our renewal of the six hut leases. The 30-day comment period will end Oct. 11<sup>th</sup>. We will be renewing the leases for a ten year period, but only paying for five years. Payment will be made in November or December.

Ice Festival Report—The Festival was attended by about 111 students, instructors and volunteers. It was pulled off without any reported injuries, and with great weather.

October Elections—Most officers will be seeking re-election, with the possible exception of our

Vice President. We will also be recruiting about three new Board Members at the October General Membership Meeting.

Winter Trips—We will have a sign-up sheet for recruiting new trip leaders at the October Meeting and will advertise a trip leader training at the November meeting. Also discussed on this topic was the need for regular, periodic events such as the end of the month traverse and the Saturday ski events. These regular events might encourage increased participation. Also, the contribution of informal trips and those organized via the listserve was recognized. Some ideas for making the list-service more accessible: including it as an option on the membership form or sending a flyer/announcement out with the December Scree.

#### IV. New Business:

Budget Planning—The 2008 budget will look very similar to 2007, with slightly more expenditures than income. However, given our comfortable financial situation, the Board feels no need to consider raising dues or increasing fundraising. However, there are several grants we might pursue for huts projects once they are finalized. Committee chairs need to submit budget proposals if they have any special requests. An additional item will likely be the purchase of a Club laptop for record keeping.



## Adze

### For Sale

Arcteryx Bora 65 backpack, \$75

Mike – asmcj1@hotmail.com

### Info Needed

I am planning a trip to Argentina and Chile this winter. I am seeking first hand knowledge about hiking in the national parks and Patagonia. In short, If you have traveled there, I would love to hear about it.

Mark Kimerer – markkimerer@hotmail.com

MCA Library—This is currently still housed at AMH but is underused due to lack of security for our books. Should we have a librarian? An online catalog? Might it be donated to a local library? AMH should not be responsible for its maintenance and any check-out system, so the Board is soliciting solutions.

Next Meeting: The Transition Board Meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tues., Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>, 6:00 pm at the Snow Goose.

V. Adjourn 7:30 pm

Submitted 10/17/07

Bridget Paule

## Parting shot

**Good Partners are hard to find**



**Greg Higgins and Emmitt on Mt Ripinsky**

## 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

## General Rules for MCA Sanctioned Trips

1. Proper equipment is available from the trip leader.
2. No dogs. (Among the reasons are bear problems.)
3. The trip leader can require special equipment and refuse participation to any person that is ill-prepared (e.g. inappropriate clothing/gear).
4. The leader's suggestions are to be followed. Do not go off alone, return or rush ahead without his (her) permission, and don't ford a stream before the leader assesses the situation. Remember, this is a club trip and the leader must know where all participants are. Anyone separating from the group without the leader's approval is no longer considered a participant the MCA Sanctioned trip.
5. The trip leader has the authority to split the group (fast and slow), dependent upon current conditions. However, he/she must appoint a qualified co-leader to lead the second group using the guidelines specified in the current Trip Leader Responsibilities.
6. Trip participants who, in the leader's opinion, put themselves or other members of the group in danger by disregarding the leader's suggestions, shall be subject to sanction by the club. Sanctions may include, but are not limited to, reprimand at general meeting, exclusion from future trips, termination of annual membership, or lifetime exclusion from the club.
7. You must sign up on a trip roster (club meetings) or contact the leader, and you must have signed the club waiver to be on a club trip.
8. If you find you cannot participate after signing up on the roster, please let the leader know, both for transportation and gear-planning and so someone else can go. If you are the leader, help find a replacement.
9. Total number of people on club trips:  
Minimum: 4 (for safety reasons)  
Maximum: Leader option, depends upon the trail and campsite conditions, but generally limited to 12 in trail-less areas or State/ National Parks
10. Firearms are not encouraged, and please let the leader know if you want to carry one - it will be leader's option. Aerosol bear repellent is preferred.

Approved: MCA Board, February 15, 2000



## 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): \_\_\_\_\_

# Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Sean Bolender	333-0213
Vice-President	Annette Iverson	222-0581
Secretary	Bridget Paule	230-9903
Treasurer	Travis Taylor	382-4823

Board member	Steve Gruhn	344-1219
Board member	Don Hansen	243-7184
Board member	Randy Howell	346-4608
Board member	Andy Rembert	688-3230
Board member	Sara Ellen Hutchison	382-7097

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, notes and letters submitted for publication in the newsletter should be submitted on the web at [www.mcak.org](http://www.mcak.org) or e-mailed to the Scree Editor. Articles should be received by the monthly club meeting (third Wednesday of the month) to be in the next month's Scree.

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: Yukiko Hayano and Randy Plant 243-1438  
Hiking and Climbing Committee: Randy Howell – 346-4608, Jayme Dixon – 382-0212  
Huts: Greg Bragiel - 569-3008  
Calendar: Stuart Grenier 337-5127  
Scree Editor: John Recktenwald 346-2589  
Web: [www.mcak.org](http://www.mcak.org) (change your address here)  
Mailing list service: [MCAK@yahoogroups.com](mailto:MCAK@yahoogroups.com)

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