

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

January 2009
Volume 52 Number 1



The poetry of the earth is never dead.
~John Keats

Monthly Meeting

Wed. January 21 @ 7:30 PM
Brian Okonek with slides from climbs
in the Western Chugach Mountains
and Alaska Range

Basic Mountaineering School
Starts in February

Mt. Michelson
Hidden Peak
Christmas Tree Decorating
Eastern Europe Visit
50th Anniversary Celebration
Peeking Mountain, POM
West Point

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 3rd Wednesday of the month at the First United Methodist Church, 9th Avenue and G Streets next to the ConocoPhillips 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.

Cover photo: North Ridge of Mt. Michelson in the Brooks Range. 'The Shadow' (Wayne Todd), Marcin Ksok, Carrie Wang. Photo by 'The Shadow.'

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.

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Club Meeting Minutes

MCA General Meeting Time Vote

The mountaineering club membership will vote at the next monthly meeting whether to change the monthly meeting time.

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

January 10 – Bird Creek ski tour
Class B, 12 miles, 900 feet elevation gain,
Backcountry skis, and headlamp
Tom Dolan, 223-1308, paradoxx@gci.net

January 24 – Long Lake loop ski tour
Class D, 18 miles, 2500 feet elevation gain,
Prospect Heights trailhead, Backcountry skis
with skins, and headlamp
Tom Dolan, 223-1308, paradoxx@gci.net

February 7 – Ship Lake Pass to Indian ski tour
Class C, 15 miles, 2000 feet elevation gain,
Backcountry skis with skins, Avalanche gear and
headlamp
Tom Dolan, 223-1308, paradoxx@gci.net

February 21 – Prudhoe Bay Rd to Peters Creek ski tour
Class C, 15 miles, 1500 feet elevation gain, Up
the north end of Ram Valley to the saddle
between Mt. Significant and Peeking Mtn. then
down the big gully to Peters Creek, Backcountry
skis with skins, Avalanche gear, ice axe,
crampons, and headlamp

Tom Dolan, 223-1308, paradoxx@gci.net

February 20 to 24 – Mt. Susitna
Class E, Ski in, snowshoe up through alders to
high camp, ice axe, crampons, avalanche gear
to summit. Extreme cold weather gear required.
Snowmachine assistance needed for folks who
want to do it in two or three days, meet at high
camp on evening of the 21st.
Stu Grenier oinkmenow@hotmail.com

February 22 to March 1 – Cooper Lake to Hope ski tour
Class D, 65+ miles, Limited to 6 strong skiers
Greg Bragiel, sign up at January MCA meeting

February 28 – Arctic Valley to Indian ski tour
Class D, 24 miles, 2000 feet elevation gain,
Backcountry skis with skins, Avalanche gear,
and headlamp
Tom Dolan, 223-1308, paradoxx@gci.net

March 1 – Indian to Arctic Valley ski tour
Class D, 7 AM start, usually about a 9 hour trip,
Looking for someone going Arctic to Indian to do

car key switch, will delay for good weather,
Backcountry skis with skins, Avalanche gear,
and headlamp
Stu Grenier oinkmenow@hotmail.com

March 14 – Arctic Valley to Bird ski tour
Class D, 25 miles, 2000 feet elevation gain,
Backcountry skis with skins, Avalanche gear,
and headlamp
Tom Dolan, 223-1308, paradoxx@gci.net

March 19 to 27 – Mt. Marcus Baker expedition
Class E, Climb the tallest mountain in the
Chugach expedition style. glacier travel and
crevasse rescue experience are required. R/T
airfare is \$350. Leaders: Randy Howell and Stan

Olson, sign up at the MCA meeting, questions to
chowellr@gci.net

March 28 – South Fork to North Fork Eagle River ski
Class C, 15 miles, 2000 feet elevation gain,
South Fork of Eagle River trailhead up over
Hanging Valley and down North Fork of Eagle
River to Logan Circle Road, Backcountry skis
with skins, Ice Ax, crampons, Avalanche gear,
and headlamp
Tom Dolan, 223-1308, paradoxx@gci.net

April 4- Center Ridge, Turnagain Pass ski tour
Class B, 10 miles, 1200 feet elevation gain,
Backcountry skis with skins, and headlamp
Tom Dolan, 223-1308, paradoxx@gci.net

Basic Mountainering School

Want to learn how to travel in the mountains? Basic Mountaineering School (BMS) is a month-long series of classroom lectures and weekend outings that will prepare you to travel in the mountain environment. Sign-ups for the BMS will be available at the January MCA Meeting. **The school is limited to 15 participants.** The cost for the complete course is \$80. Individual courses are \$20 each. In order to participate in a weekend outing you must attend the related lecture. BMS graduates will also be expected to take at minimum Wilderness First Aid to qualify as a MCA trip leader or assistant instructor. There will also be an alumni climb scheduled sometime in the spring. For more information contact: Jayme Dixon – 383-0212.

2/3 Lecture on clothing, nutrition and winter camping
Location: TBA, time 7 PM
Lead Instructor: Jayme Dixon

2/7-2/8 Winter Camping Overnight
Location: Turnagain Pass
Lead Instructor: Jayme Dixon

2/10 Lecture on knots, mountaineering and snow travel
Location: TBA, time 7 PM
Lead Instructor: Wayne Todd

2/14-2/15 Snow travel workshop
Location: TBA
Lead Instructor: Wayne Todd

2/17 Lecture on glacier travel and crevasse rescue
Location TBA, time 7 PM

2/21-2/22 Crevasse rescue workshop
Location: Matanuska Glacier
Lead Instructors: Jayme Dixon, Joe McLaughlin and
Dean Carman

2/24 Lecture on avalanche recognition and hazards
(two-night lecture)
Location: TBA, time 7 PM
Lead Instructor: Steve Parry

2/26 Lecture on avalanche recognition and hazards
(second lecture)
Location: TBA, time 7 PM
Lead Instructor: Steve Parry

2/28-3/1 Avalanche workshop
Location: TBA
Lead Instructor: Steve Parry

For more details about these and other MCA training classes become a member and receive *Scree*, the MCA's monthly newsletter, which lists classes, leaders and contact information.


MCA Library

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska library needs a new location (presently it is upstairs at AMH-thanks Paul). We need about 7 feet x 12 feet of wall space in an accessible and secure location. If you have any ideas or suggestions contact a current officer or board member.

Thanks, Wayne L. Todd

Mt. Michelson

by Wayne L. Todd



A clear, brilliant and chilly world greets us at 6 am, four miles northwest of Mt. Michelson. After the nights freeze and the two-hour deluge of rain and hail two nights previous, the mosquitoes are sluggish and sparse. Yesterday at this time we gave this climb attempt a thumbs down, due to low storm clouds (which dropped rain off and on all day). By evening, though, the skies opened to a brilliant blue with our first view of ice- and snow-covered Mt. Michelson. Viewing the snowy north ridge gave me an idea of climbing that, rather than the unseen standard south route. Martin and Carrie agree.

Two days previous we left a Hulahula River camp under threatening skies with the support of the Wang family. In rain and light wind I glance at the horizon through a water-streaked bug net to see myriads of boulders. Boulders with antlers....Becky, Deane, Diane, Carrie, Martin and I slowly walk by many hundreds of caribou as they divide around us. Bulls with immense antlers, cows with calves, black ones, brown ones, tan ones, a lame one, walk, trot and snort/cough by us. We are humbled and briefly forget our cold and damp bodies. A couple hours later we set camp on the wide gentle ridge west of Esetuk Valley.

Martin, Carrie and I hike south along the ridge one half mile to scan for a good descent route to Esetuk Creek. We find one. Although the water is low enough this morning to easily cross, we still hike to just shy of the glacier, crossing on ice to avoid wet

feet. We've had no, none, zero, zip, nada, zilch mosquitoes since camp – pleasant, yet oddly disturbing.

We stick with our north ridge plan despite the allure of the easily accessible and nearby Esetuk Glacier. Frozen pools of water confirm the night's low temperature. We traverse northeast out of the valley, twice ascending too soon and too steeply, dropping a couple hundred feet to utilize level sections and stream beds. The hiking is easy and brush-free with occasional wild flowers. An eagle swoops close to the ground nearby, otherwise the only sound and motions are from the three of us.

After ascending a bouldered streambed, the northwest face of Michelson protrudes in front of us. We cross the mostly unbroken, mildly sloped and boulder speckled west glacier (about 6,000 feet) without crampons or rope to reach the base of the north ridge. Sunny skies, crisp air, trickling water, no bugs, vistas and high hopes lend to a wonderful early lunch. This wheelbarrow-to-vehicle-sized boulder field pyramids onto the north ridge. This seems easier than climbing the 45° crampon-hard snow, so we boulder to the ridge.

Shortly after cramponning up on the hard snow of the north ridge, roping up seems prudent. With only 100 feet (maybe) of rope and two pickets (we left one in Coldfoot to make the planes weight limit), Carrie's and my lead swapping is short, often and slow. We

also place a few screws in sections where ice lies a foot below the snow. Initially, we have exposure to the left and right (east and west), but as we climb the left exposure abates to a level glacier but the right side heightens to steep snow above a hanging glacier.

The ridge angle tapers, but exposure to the right increases. Thunderclouds begin to form (or be noticed) and possibly a clap is heard. The pace slows as the exposed side has firm snow whereas the safe side has wet snow over rounded ice cubes.

Dropping 30 feet to the left toward the level glacier solves the exposure and the really rotten snow problem. Carrie now leads in shin deep wet snow. (Unbeknownst to us, we were being watched with binoculars and photographed from camp until we dropped to the east side). Regaining the ridgeline for the last 50-yard ridge crest, we are awarded with 270-degree mountain splendor; jagged rock and snow ridges to the south and east and descending mountains to the north. Clouds block the northeast views, but the threatening clouds are abating.

Mount Michelson Summit – Tugak Peak in the Back



We enjoy a bug-free second lunch in rocks just off the summit, still with phenomenal views (now unroped, unharnessed and de-cramponed). Scouting a route down the southeast ridge, we can see that the Esetuk Glacier is mostly snow free. A transect plan will probably work.

Descent



A couple of descending rock moves gets us over a crux section and then it is 'choose which of the three gullies to descend' and 'don't drop boulders on your buddies' on the 45° descent to the Esetuk Glacier.

Clouds continue to fade as we gaze at the Esetuk headwall (two pitches of 70- to 90-degree ice and snow) and to our backs, the beckoning snow- and ice-covered north ridge of Tugak Peak. Unequipped for these climbs and satiated with our success on Mounts Chamberlin and Michelson, we trot down the Esetuk Glacier highway (a gradual slope of friction ice with few and obvious crevasses - no crampons or ropes needed).

Esetuk Glacier and Tugak Peak



We finally encounter our missing bug buddies as we top out on the ridge up-valley from camp, relieved after 12 hours without them. Shortly thereafter we spook sheep at close quarters and then encounter the scouting Wangs.

On to whitewater rafting in the sun.

July 11 (9-12), 2008. A 13-mile, 6,000' climbing day. Climbing: Martin Ksok, Carrie Wang and Wayne Todd Hiking, bear viewing and support: Diane, Deane and Becky Wang

Michelson North Ridge from the West



Hidden Peak – Alaska Day Hike

by Jeri Jensen

Seth Victor on the Final Scramble



It has been an unusual Alaska June - cloudier, colder and wetter than usual. The last three weekend hikes I have been on proved to be no exception. Hoping for a change of pace, my hiking partner, Seth Victor, and I had planned a day hike to Hidden Lake and Hidden Peak in the Chugach Mountains. It's raining when we arrive at the Glen Alps parking lot. It looks like another wet, gloomy day of hiking and I consider calling it off until we have better weather. Fortunately Seth talks me into hiking down to the Powerline trail to test it out - see how we feel. Seven and a half hours and 10 miles later we get back to the car after one of the most memorable days of hiking I've had. It was quintessential Alaska.

It rains strongly the entire two and a half miles to the turn off to Hidden Lake. We watch four moose graze across the valley along the way. Fifteen minutes later we spot another four moose across the valley. The rain slows. We turn onto the Hidden Lake trail and cross the South Fork of Campbell Creek and head up into Ship Pass Valley. Twenty minutes into it I notice what I thought were wolves moving across a snow run-out. I pull out the binoculars and realize they are wolverines. Four flat badger-looking animals loping along. They move up the snow at a 45-degree angle away from us. People very rarely see wolverines. Unbelievable! We have enough time to pass the binoculars back and forth twice, enjoying the privilege.

The rain stops, and as we move up into the clouds we lose all view of our surroundings. We continue up and east, knowing eventually we'll find the "Hidden Lake." We kick-step up the snow, then move across tundra - patches of moss covered earth and rocks. We move over snow again, walking in the clouds, the muffled sound of water tumbling down beneath the snowpack over to our left. A break in the clouds and the sun shines through for a fleeting moment - Hidden Lake. At last! Lunch time, we grab a seat next to the lake. Grab some lunch. Wait out the clouds to see how they're going to act. They dissipate and we're sitting in a giant amphitheater, deep blue skies against a white cornice on

the ridge across the lake some 500 feet up. The last of the clouds roll through the jagged rock on the ridge line behind us. I plan our attack on that ridge line which looms nearly 1500 feet above the lake while refueling on a ham and cheese sandwich and some trail mix. Seth sits quietly, holding his head in his hands. "You going to make it?" I ask. "I don't know, man, up there?" he points to the ridgeline. Now it's my turn to talk him into continuing on. I do. Filter water from the lake and gulp it down, crystal clear and cold.

Jeri Jensen above Hidden Lake



We're moving up again over a couple hundred feet of steep scree. Two steps forward, one slide back. Slow progress. Cloud cover gone. Sun beats down. We hit good solid rock and scramble up a couple hundred more feet. More steep scree. We find stretches of moss cementing the rocks together and take those highways up into the sky. The angle forces us to move on all fours. Sweat and sun and muscle pain and heavy breaths and dizziness and paradise - the summit! We rest above the clouds. Ramble around the ridge. Drink some water. Pose for some pictures. It is a very, very good day. On the way down we are able to ski step through most of the scree chutes. The giant sliding rock escalators save us much needed time and energy. My hips and Seth's knees - are not very happy with us.

Jeri Jensen on the ridge near Hidden Peak



Another short break and drink from the lake and we're heading down again. We arrive at our second escalator of the day a long steep snow chute. I throw on rain pants for speed. Seth goes with his hiking pants. We tuck our pants into wool socks, close up the backpacks tight, tuck shirts into pants, and put on the gloves. Jump! Moving fast, riding a pad of snow under my butt, we are kids on a carnival ride. Control balance with our hands. Control speed with our boots. Snow sprays from our feet and hands. I slide ahead of Seth with my rain pants. We slide down into a cloud, moving fast with fog and spraying snow. I look behind and there's no Seth. Moments later my escalator has bottomed out. I roll over and look uphill. See nothing, but hear a body coming down. Seth materializes out of the fog like a magical abominable

snowman sporting a maniacal grin on his face as he hurtles downward. He slides in next to me and comes to a stop. The slope levels off here just enough to prevent glissading. We brush ourselves off and ski-step our way down out of the snow. Move on tundra. Walk out of the clouds. Dirt trail, mud, dirt trail, mud, dirt trail. Clouds overhead now, we are several hundred yards up hill from the creek and the Powerline Trail. We talk about our good luck with the weather and wildlife and the hike. An explosion across the valley! An incredibly loud rumbling, crackling, blasting noise echoes all through the valley. Cloud cover hangs midway up the mountains and we look for and finally see the snow hurtling down below the cloud cover. Avalanche! The final capper to an awesome hike.



Annual Christmas Tree Decorating Ski Outing

by Amy Murphy

Somebody has new skis. Oh, and the Tree



This annual trip took place on December 13th, 2008, and while folks down in Anchorage shivered in sub-zero temperatures, we were fortunate to have sunny skies and “balmy” temperatures in the single digits up at the Glen Alps parking lot. I heard lots of comments from people that it was hard to find the motivation to get out in the really cold temperatures, but once we got moving we warmed up.

The following MCA members came out to ski: Marcy Custer, John Recktenwald, Sam Pepper, Dwight Iverson, Tom Dolan (aka the Grinch), Donna Klecka and myself. I also invited members of the Anchorage Adventurers Meetup group to join us and about 20 of them came along on snowshoes. We all headed out down the Williwaw Lakes Trail in various groups and decorated a tree alongside the trail on a small rise after crossing the bridge. There were a lot of people this year, plus I had numerous ornaments left from previous years, so we were able to hang lots of ornaments on the tree. Some of the ornaments were hand-made and unique,

including a Maalox bottle, an Altoids tin, and plastic cups. There are so many ornaments this year I'm going to have to take a fairly big pack to retrieve them all!

Mount Williwaw



After we decorated the tree we headed back towards the Williwaw Lakes Trail in different groups of skiers and snowshoers. Marcy's feet got cold while decorating the tree so she, John and Sam turned around and left early, leaving Dwight, Tom, Donna and I to enjoy wonderful conditions skiing back toward the lake. Sometimes in the past the conditions have been rather sketchy, with little snow cover and lots of wind, but this year was different. (Note to Steve Gruhn: once again one of my trips had good weather – so I'm a “good” Weather Magnet now!)

We watched the wind whipping along the ridgelines above us with the snow billowing up all over and expected we would get turned around in the upper valley due to wind. We stopped to eat lunch in the trees and were pleasantly surprised that we hadn't encountered wind yet. Tom, Dwight and I took turns breaking trail through the awesome deep, fluffy, virgin snow that blanketed the whole valley and there was no crust, very

few drifts and little evidence of wind blowing the snow around. It was phenomenal to be back there with so much snow cover and no wind and we delighted in the excellent conditions! We were happy to make it all the

way back to the lakes and had a nice packed trail for skiing out. We got back at the trailhead around 4:30 and got to watch a beautiful sunset.



Eastern Europe

by Marcin Ksok

In 2006 Kate Yenik and I visited some parts of Eastern Europe; our first stop was the sandstone towers of Teplice in the Czech Republic. In a day's time we hiked a couple of loop-forming trails, which took us through narrow corridors, between several-hundred-foot walls, next to free-standing towers, and claustrophobic mini-slot canyons. We climbed up a set of stairs and wooden ladders to the remains of a rock-top 13th-century castle. The area is known for rock climbing, but after seeing the widely spaced steel rings driven into crumbly, dirty sandstone I did not feel guilty for not bringing the rope and gear, instead we opted for some low-level bouldering.

Sandstone Towers



A trip to the country's highest point was next on the list. Snezka is on the border with Poland; at 1602 meters it is not a giant, and if you do not mind the crowds at the top, a pleasant hike. The lower trail zigzagged through the forest, before reaching a refuge, then, above tree line it became slightly steeper and provided fine views of the surrounding countryside. Four hours of hiking brought us to the summit, which happens to be the site of an old weather observatory, a chapel, restaurant, and a border crossing. Instead of retracing our steps we opted for crossing briefly into Poland and coming down a path that led past an interesting building, which housed an old water pump. Using the force of water from a pond



The Slovak Tatras

situated a little higher up the hillside, it moved water up to the refuge on the summit. It seemed like quite an ingenious invention, but unfortunately now out of use.

Kate on Snezka



Our next stop was Gerlach - the highest point in Slovakia and all of the Tatra Mountains, alpine in nature, steep and jagged, although not large in area, they have produced a number of world-class climbers. Getting there was quite a hassle. At the base of a dirt road leading to a refuge called Sliezsky Dom we were debating on walking up the hill with heavy backpacks as a green Land Rover showed up. After a confusing conversation the driver hesitantly decided to give us a lift. Not until we told him about coming from Alaska did he open up a little and offer us a can of Tatra beer. Later

we learned that the ride up was free, but we would have to pay for the return trip; we walked instead. Overall the stay at the refuge was a reminder of the not so distant past from which Slovakia is slow to rise. The concrete block building, expensive beds, loose toilets, questionable food, all left a scar on the whole experience, seemed like the iron curtain hasn't fallen yet.

To climb Gerlachovsky Stit one has to hire a guide - park rules; Kate and I both planned on summiting, but after eating in the refuge buffet the night before, she got sick. My guide showed up at 5:30 in the morning, in his late twenties, speaking perfect English he suggested that we give up the tourist route in favor of a ridgeline scramble, I was all for it. The route was not technically difficult, and consisted of only one short rappel, nevertheless my guide insisted on traveling on a short rope, and like a cow I was pulled or pushed to the summit in the time of 2.5 hours. We descended the main route, which was equipped with chains and ladders - a common sight in those parts (to me they seem in violation of the place), allowing guides to get their clients as quickly as possible to the top and back; what an ugly sight it is, though - rusted metal all over the beautiful rock.

View from Gerlachovsky Stit



The Polish side of the Tatras proved a lot nicer, no hidden fees, leaky toilets or poisoned food. We stayed at the refuge by Morskie Oko - a scenic alpine lake. From there we hiked up to the summit of Rysy - the highest peak, where we encountered chains again, but no mandatory guiding service. After negotiating slippery rocks without using the ugly chains just to prove a point, we reached the summit. At the top we encountered heavy fog and wind, no views, but also no one else on the whole way back to the refuge. I have spent a lot of time in Poland on previous visits, but finally I ventured into the mountains, of which the locals are very proud. Although beautiful, they are crowded, to climb there a special permit is required and one must be a member of an alpine club, trails are over maintained and color coded, refuges and hotels abound; I honestly missed Alaska.

Rysy



50th Anniversary Celebration by Stu Grenier

We could not have asked for a more beautiful day for the MCA's 50th Anniversary Party held up at Arctic Valley September 14. The fall colors in the tundra were most vivid as seen from the second floor windows of the Alpenglow Lodge. The walls were adorned with pictures of five decades of MCA history and many recent *Scree* cover photographs. On one table there was an assortment of mountaineering gear from days long past: wooden-handled ice axes and screw-in cleats for climbing boots, which were the norm before the advent of crampons. Another table held large scrapbooks filled with accounts from the early days of the MCA, a *Life* magazine article with a picture of a climber being rescued off Denali, and an assortment of MCA calendars from years gone by. Many new but older faces looking at



**Back - Marie Lundstrom, Helen Nienhueser
Front - Helga Byhre (formerly Bading), Paul Crews Sr.**

each other with curious eyes, as if to ask, "Do you remember?" An awkward moment to say the least, but the room was filled with expectation. When would Helga and Paul speak? What stories would they tell?

After a few introductions the ice was broken. People began to gather in the center of the room. Helga Byhre (formerly Bading) was sitting with Paul Crews, Sr. Helen Nienhueser joined them and soon Marie Lundstrom, too. Tom Meacham wore his sky-blue MCA patch and many others gathered around. Laughter and hand shaking were evident everywhere. A tall, bearded man in his 60s came across the room to give Helga a hug. "And who are you?" she asked. He introduced himself as someone she had never met, but he just wanted to give her a hug. Undoubtedly he was a climber who had heard stories of the woman who had started the MCA when she wanted to meet folks to climb with, the woman who had the first accents of Rainbow Peak, Bashful Peak, Raven Peak, Middle Glacier Peak, Arkose Peak, Mount Spurr, Mount Gilbert, Souvenir Peak, Kickstep Mountain, and Peril Peak.



After a few hours of enjoying the drinks and eats, President Sean Bolender and Vice President Annette Iverson got everyone to quiet down and Helga and Paul came up to the microphone. Taking turns talking, Helga told of how, in 1958, she walked into Gary King's Sporting Goods and asked the cashier if there was a climbing club in Anchorage. This got the ball rolling and soon Paul Crews, Sr., and Johnny Johnston got involved and the club was off and running. Slide shows with Paul's account of a Denali climb and Helga's experiences on Denali (in the previously mentioned *Life* magazine article) and an ascent of Iliamna Volcano—which involved building a log raft to get back to Cook Inlet—were some of the subjects. Then Paul went into detail on the early days of the Eklutna Traverse and how big of a struggle it was to build Pichler's Perch and the other huts. How one stack of plywood blew away and one helicopter sling load was dropped and on and on, yet the hut was built. Helen Nienhueser talked of putting together the first *55 Ways to the Wilderness in Southcentral Alaska* book with the help of the MCA and how the MCA was instrumental in the formation of Chugach State Park.

Paul Crews Sr. and Helga Byhre (formerly Bading)



As speaker after speaker rose to the microphone to talk of memories of high exploits and cherished friendships, or should I say cherished memories and high friendships, a group of tired climbers quietly entered the back of the room still dressed in hiking gear. One from this group was a thin, old, bearded geezer with a pronounced limp and a big smile. He walked up and began shaking hands. It was Tom Choate the goat and he and a few others had just returned from a hut maintenance trip. Soon the Goat walked up to the microphone and began by stating, "I've been here longer than any of you. I was here in the mid '50s..." As Tom talked of Vin and Grace Hoeman, one got the feeling that this guy had seen it all, and yet in his mid-70s here he stood after just coming back from a hut maintenance trip. "My gosh," I thought, "are we looking at the rope that ties this club together?"

Tom Meacham, Paul Crews Sr. and Paul Crews Jr.



Some of the other speakers that rose to the microphone were Charlu Choate, who told of how she attempted to locate Tom, Vin, and company when they were overdue on a traverse of Denali and how she ended up walking the Denali Highway looking for them. Chris Thomsen told of how he was given an ice axe when he was a kid and how that paved his way to a lifelong love affair with the mountains. There were many other speakers that spoke of vivid summits and friendships. It was clear that the people in the room were trying to collectively grab and hang onto something, something that they had and never wanted to lose. Maybe there was no one in the room who remembered them, but they were there, on that one summit, on that certain day, with those few special people. I was there. Weren't you?

Peak of the Month: Peeking Mountain

by Steve Gruhn



Mountain Range: Western Chugach Mountains
Borough: Municipality of Anchorage
Drainage: Falling Water Creek and Peters Creek
Latitude/Longitude: 61° 16' 11" North, 149° 11' 43" West
Elevation: 6925 feet
Prominence: 1875 feet from Korohusk Peak
Adjacent Peaks: Raina Peak (6798) and Peak 5320 near Falling Water Creek and Peters Creek
Distinctness: 675 feet from Raina Peak
USGS Map: Anchorage (B-6)
First Recorded Ascent: July 9, 1966, by Gayle Nienhueser and Helen Wolfe (now Nienhueser)
Route of First Recorded Ascent: South ridge from Raina Peak
Access Point: Ram Valley

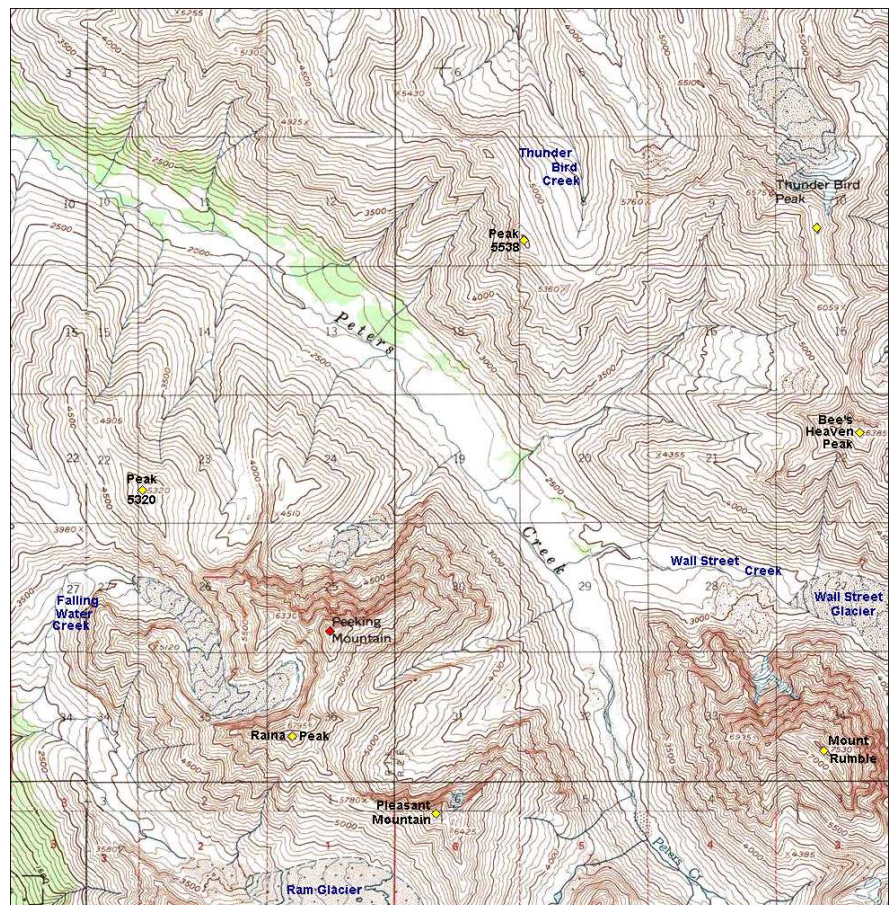
Gayle and Helen started from her homestead in the Eagle River Valley and hiked up the Ram Valley to the terminal moraine of the Ram Glacier. After placing a camp near the terminal moraine, they turned north and ascended the ridge between Raina Peak and Pleasant Mountain (6463). They hiked the ridge to the northwest and climbed to the south summit of Raina Peak where they found a cairn. They traversed over the lower north summit of Raina Peak and continued on to Peeking Mountain, where they built a cairn and left a register. The entire ascent had taken them a little over 12 hours from the Wolfe homestead.

They later proposed the name Peek-a-Boo Peak because from Anchorage it can be seen peeking above the mountains in the foreground. Helen's trip report, including her proposed name, was published in the August 1966 Scree. The MCA's Geographic Names Committee subsequently petitioned the U.S. Geological Survey's Board on Geographic Names to make the proposed name official, but the USGS BGN rejected the name Peek-a-Boo, calling it frivolous and whimsical. In December 1980 the MCA revised its earlier

petition and submitted the name Peeking Mountain to the USGS BGN for approval. In March 1981, the USGS BGN approved the MCA's revised submission, thereby making Peeking Mountain the official name for the peak.

Larry Swanson and Art Ward recorded the second ascent of Peeking Mountain, by the same route, on May 8, 1973, and Swanson's trip report appeared in the June 1973 Scree. Fritz and Durhane Rieger and Bob Spurr made the third ascent, again by the same route, on July 1, 1973. The record of their trip appeared in the August 1973 Scree. When I climbed Peeking Mountain in the early 1990s, I started from Mariah Drive off Prudhoe Bay Road and followed the standard route up Ram Valley and over both summits of Raina Peak. Sheep trails made for quick travel along the ridge and the round trip took around eight hours. Private property near the trailhead has long made access to Ram Valley problematic; however, landowners near Mariah Drive have recently established a trail for hikers to access Ram Valley.

Peeking Mountain's summit elevation is not specified on the map. The highest contour line shown is 6900 feet. However, the August 1986 Scree lists a summit elevation of 6925 feet. The source and accuracy of that figure are unknown.



Map created with TOPO100 ©2003 National Geographic (www.nationalgeographic.com/topo)

West Point, Fairbanks-North Star Borough

by Bob Packard

July 26-27, 2005

John Mitchler and I met in Fairbanks, Alaska, on July 26. We made our separate ways to Art Ward's house in Salcha, about 45 miles southeast of Fairbanks. Art Ward (awardalaska@yahoo.com; 907-488-1453) is a bush pilot familiar with the West Point area. I learned of him through a multi-step research effort with the aim of doing West Point (5865).

In the evening Art flew John and me to a gravel strip on a side valley about 100 miles up the Salcha River from his home field strip in his bush plane fitted with tundra tires. John was left there while Art flew me to an even more primitive gravel, cobble, rock and brush strewn landing site 10 minutes away next to the Salcha River. While I set up the tent Art went back for John and within an hour we were all together.

The next morning we crossed the Salcha River on foot, and then crossed a tributary. Then there was about 500 feet of soft spongy tundra. After that the surface got

more solid and we followed a game trail through bushes and trees. We finally found solid rock above timberline.

West Point was an easy climb. Our round trip took 9.5 hours with about 11 miles round trip and 4,000 feet of elevation gain.

The start of our hike was at 2,200 feet, but there were some ups and downs on the way to the summit. The views were fairly good, but lessened by smoke from forest fires in that part of Alaska. There was a 5-foot cairn on the summit.

After waiting about an hour and a half after return for wind conditions to allow takeoff with one passenger, Art flew John back to the better strip and came back to retrieve me. After we were together at the better strip he flew us both back to his home strip (grass and gravel) in Salcha. We had been gone only 25 hours! We saw three moose from the airplane as well as the Trans-Alaska Pipeline. John said he saw a bear. We saw two caribou on the hike.



Parting Shot



ANWR Caribou, by Wayne L. Todd

MCA 2009 Budget Proposal and Notice of Vote

The 2008-2009 MCA Board reviewed budgets from 2001-2008 and the following projections of revenue and expenses were unanimously approved to present to the membership. Please review as we will vote on the proposed budget at the January 21, 2009, General Membership Meeting.

Mountaineering Club of Alaska 2009 PROPOSED BUDGET

		Proposed for 2009	Change 09 vs 08	Approved for 2008	Current for 2008*
REVENUE					
Membership Dues	<i>received during calendar year</i>	\$6,800.00	=	\$6,800.00	\$7,685.00
Scree subscriptions		\$300.00	=	\$300.00	\$305.00
Training; (+\$1,200 BMS)	<i>ice climbing, crevasse rescue, other</i>	\$6,500.00	=	\$6,500.00	\$6,690.00
Photo Calendar		\$3,000.00	=	\$3,000.00	\$1,339.00
MCA Products: T-Shirts, Patches, Etc.		\$500.00	=	\$500.00	\$721.00
Donations		\$0.00	=	\$0.00	\$0.00
Other--Interest on Accounts		\$200.00	=	\$200.00	\$303.99
Other-MCA Products for 50th Anniversary		0	-	\$3,000.00	360
Other - From Reserve (to balance)		\$1,400.00	-	\$2,200.00	\$0.00
TOTAL REVENUE		\$18,700.00		\$22,500.00	\$17,403.99

EXPENSE					
Training	<i>campsite and access fees, instructors</i>	\$4,800.00	=	\$4,800.00	\$3,974.59
Scree	<i>postage, mailing, printing</i>	\$2,300.00	=	\$2,300.00	\$2,197.93
General Meeting	<i>rent, refreshments, entertainment</i>	\$2,000.00	=	\$2,000.00	\$1,580.89
Administrative	<i>supplies, forms, PO box, bank fees, rewards, phone</i>	\$500.00	=	\$500.00	\$226.99
Hut Construction & Maint.	<i>materials, supplies, hut equipment, lease fees*</i>	\$5,000.00	-	\$6,000.00	\$5,695.78
Club Equipment	<i>climbing gear, misc equipment</i>	\$700.00	=	\$700.00	\$143.98
Library	<i>new books, periodicals, Scree binding</i>	\$500.00	+	\$300.00	\$0.00
Other:	<i>miscellaneous expenses</i>	\$0.00	=	\$0.00	\$0.00
Photo Calendar		\$2,600.00	=	\$2,600.00	\$1,760.00
MCA Products: T-Shirts, Patches, Etc.		\$0.00	=	\$0.00	\$541.00
Other-MCA 50th Anniversary Party, Products		\$0.00	-	\$3,000.00	\$2,541.09
Other - Awards		\$300.00	=	\$300.00	\$250.00
TOTAL EXPENSE		\$18,700.00		\$22,500.00	\$18,912.25

DUE TO (FROM) RESERVE

CASH BALANCE - All Accounts as of Dec 1, 2008

Beginning Balance - January 1, 2008	\$25,811.64
Increase (decrease) during 2008	(\$1,868.26)
Current Balance for 2009	\$23,943.38
Checking - Credit Union 1	\$2,160.82
Money Market - Credit Union 1 (1.1%-2.4%)	\$18,468.71
Pay Pal (1.14%)	\$2,160.07
18-month CD - in trust for hut lease - Northrim Bank (3.54%)	\$1,104.48
Petty Cash	\$50.00
TOTAL ALL ACCOUNTS - for 2009	\$23,944.08
Ending Balance - December 31, 2008	Not Finished*

December 2, Board Meeting Minutes

Submitted 12/3/08
Anmei Goldsmith, Secretary

6:15 Call to Order

1. The outgoing/continuing officers and directors each described continuing projects.
 - a. Updating the handbook and by-laws
 - b. Possibility of moving the library from AMH to different location (Alaska Backpacker's Inn submitted a proposal – tabled until future meeting)
 - c. Inventory, organize, consolidate library?
 - d. Membership up to 500-600
 - e. Training is large source of funds
2. New board should take up issue of Directors and Officers insurance at a future meeting
 - a. Discussion of meeting time and place for board meetings
 - b. Resolved: to hold board meetings the first Wednesday of each month (except December, 2008), at 6:00 pm at the Snow Goose
3. Discussion of sanctioned vs. unsanctioned trips
 - a. Members use the listserv to organize unsanctioned trips
 - b. Should MCA encourage unsanctioned trips?
 - c. Want to encourage trips and people getting together
 - d. Legal issues to consider
 - e. Tabled until next board meeting
4. Discussion of the 2009 budget
 - a. Travis Taylor will discuss with Wayne Todd
 - b. Email to board members for approval
 - c. Try to get it in the next Scree
5. Discussion of the holiday party
 - a. Turkeys
 - b. Roasts
 - c. Hams
 - d. Drinks
 - e. Paper products
 - f. Board and directors arrive at 6:30 to set up
6. Trips Committee
 - a. Richard Baranow volunteered to co-chair with Jayme Dixon
 - b. Try to set up more club-sponsored trips
7. Discussion of Training
 - a. Jayme Dixon will co-chair BMS with Steve Parry for 2009
 - b. Jayme Dixon will eventually take over
 - c. Instructors to commit to classes in their expertise area, rather than whole course
 - d. More approved trip leaders?
 - e. Greg Bragiel to lead a trip leader training class in spring
8. Discussion of website management and listserv
 - a. Current webmaster will eventually retire
 - b. Would be good to train someone else before this happens
 - c. Consider a professional host with better/faster server
 - d. Consider opening the entire site to public access
 - e. Some info kept private still?
 - f. Most user issues with website involve wrong e-mail address
 - g. Should listserv be opt-out?
 - h. Matter tabled until future meeting
9. Discussion of new board
 - a. Outgoing, non-voting members encouraged to come to future meetings to help
 - b. Wayne Todd would like to emphasize more mountaineering trips, more volunteerism
10. Discussion of community activities
 - a. Create a pamphlet/brochure to pass out at events or AMH
 - b. Mark Kimerer can do layout design
 - c. Alpenglowl and MCA used to be one club – try to partner with Alpenglowl and develop relationship between clubs
 - d. Richard Baranow proposed sending an article/letter to American Alpine Journal – Richard will draft letter and submit to board
 - e. Notification of AAC slide shows, reciprocal advertising?
 - f. Tabled for future discussion
11. Miscellaneous
 - a. All officers/directors should have copies of membership forms and waivers to hand out
 - b. Gift for outgoing president – wooden box???

8:40 pm
Adjourn

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

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

President	Wayne Todd	522-6354
Vice-President	Ross Noffsinger	222-0581
Secretary	Annei Goldsmith	301-7055
Treasurer	Travis Taylor	382-4823

Board member	Jayne Dixon	382-0212
Board member	Sean Bolender	830-5102
Board member	Mark Kimerer	360-5935
Board member	Tim Harper	240-1506
Board member	Richard Baranow	694-1500

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 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 in electronic format 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 (change your address here)
Mailing list service: MCAK@yahoogroups.com

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