

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

February 2010
Volume 53 Number 2



"In Nature's infinite book of secrecy a little I can read."
~ William Shakespeare

Monthly Meeting
Wed. February 17 @ 6:30 PM
Program: Michael Loso will present results
from research on local glaciers.

Near Chugach Loop
Eagle River Ski Trip
Indian to Arctic
POM, Minya Peak
Mount Susitna New Year's Fun

The Mountaineering Club of Alaska

www.mcak.org

"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 third Wednesday of the month at the BP Energy Center, 900 East Benson Boulevard, Anchorage, AK

www.akpeac.org/conference/BPEC_map_06-04-03.pdf

Cover Photo: Carrie Wang descending the west face of Peters Peak
Wayne L. Todd Photo

Article Submission: Text/video/photography submissions for the Scree can be sent as attachments to mcascree@gmail.com. Do not submit material in the body of the email. We prefer articles that are under 1,000 words. If you have a blog or website, send us the link. You can also submit an article on the web at www.mcak.org. Cover photo selection is based on portraits of human endeavor in the outdoors.

On-Line Viewing: If you are reading this with Adobe Reader on a monitor and you haven't already done this, go up top, click on *View* and then click on *Full Screen*. Now you can page forward or backward with the *Page Down* and *Page Up* keys. Use the *Esc* key to exit.

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Hiking and Climbing Schedule

Feb 19 - 28 SKI TOUR - Resurrection Trail Ski Tour

Resurrection Trail- Seward to Hope. Distance - 80+ miles, Class- D, Elevation Gain - A lot of up and down. Participants can ski Seward to Cooper Landing and/or Cooper Landing to Hope. Hazards - Avalanche, weather conditions. Must be able to ski while carrying your gear. (some narrow trails with dangerous drop offs) Cabin fees to be shared among participants. Sign-up available at the February meeting.

Greg Bragiel – 569-3008

Feb 27 Indian to Arctic or Arctic to Indian

Do the old switcheroo with the cars so everybody can drive straight home. Often a good introduction to this trail for competent back-country Nordic skiers. We will reschedule if conditions are less than average.

Stu oinkmenow@hotmail.com 337-5127

March 21 - 28 SKI MOUNTAINEERING - Bomber Traverse Plus

Ski Tour/Mountaineering - Archangel Valley to Moose Creek Valley Via Bomber traverse. Distance- 30+ miles Class - Glacier Travel Elevation Gain - ~7000' Hazards - Crevasses, Avalanche, Rockfall. Sign up at February MCA meeting.

Greg Bragiel – 569-3008

April 24 - May 02 MOUNTAINEERING - Scandinavian Peaks

Scandinavian Peaks Class - Glacier and Some 4th or 5th class. Elevation Gain - Plenty, Hazards- Crevasses, Avalanche, Rockfall, Weather. Air transport fees apply. Sign-up at March MCA meeting.

Greg Bragiel – 569-3008



Near Chugach Loop

by Wayne L. Todd

Photos by Wayne Todd except as noted

We're not really bad-weather magnets, but we managed numerous trips during the few inclement weather cycles this summer.

Hiking up through Ram Valley, we encounter headwinds and snow. The local sheep are unfazed, and continue browsing. Sadly, the lake area north of Bombardment Pass is becoming littered.

Setting up camp at the headwaters of Peters Creek in high winds is comical, (at least to an observer) as gear flies away and tents writhe against humans and stakes.

The next day we wait out a preplanned weather day with cards, napping, and reading. The wind lets up the following morning, so our climbing ensues.

We hike to Transcendence Pass, and then scramble down the gully one at a time. The east side of the pass looks like winter with expansive snow-covered glacier and cloudy skies. We take a fairly direct route up Moonlight Mountain's snow-covered northwest face. Clouds backdrop nearby peaks. Perusing the register, we notice Greg Higgins really likes this peak, having summited four times.

To climb Transcendence Peak, one third of the way along the base, we ascend snow up the north face to the ridge, bypassing extraneous scrambling. The boulders from there to the summit are quite stable for the Chugach, so Josh and I enjoy the moves to the summit. Carrie follows and Cima waits below. The weather is still partly sunny on the Peters Creek side. We leave a Ziploc register.

Peters Peak is on the agenda for the next day. We have great snow lines, first alongside, then over a stream on the lower flanks on the west face (visible from the standard camping area). A snow line continues up the west face after a short bowl hike,

until tapering into typical Chugach crud a few hundred feet below the northwest ridge. Classic Chugach scrambling ensues from there.



Moonlight Mountain

Gaining the ridge, the clouds intensify. Josh and I hike the ridge to the steeper section, but thoughtfully decide on retreat with fresh snow (about 200 feet below the summit). As we descend the northwest ridge we enjoy a brief hailing. The mostly continuous snow slopes on the west side of the northwest ridge offer excellent descending (and probable ascending with moderate scrambling). We note human tracks on the Mount Rumble scree field.

The next morning we return to Transcendence Pass with full packs (taunted by Peters Peak), en route to Blue Eyed Lake. Wolverine tracks, south of Moonlight Mountain, pique our imaginations. We drop packs at the base of



Sunlight Mountain for a fine snow line led by Carrie. The guys didn't think crampons necessary and had to descend after changing our minds. Appropriately, we have the least-obscured views from this summit and can see Mount Beelzebub, Devil's Mistress (DM), Vertigo Peak, Soggy Peak, Icicle Peak, Mount Rumble, Peters Peak, Bellicose Peak, Transcendence Peak, Moonlight Mountain, Bold Peak, Bashful Peak, Baleful Peak, The Mitre, Ovis Peak, Peril Peak, and more! We leave a register.

At the packs we are suckered into removing clothes in one of the few really warm moments of the trip. Minutes later, roped-up heading for Inferno Pass (IP), we are chilled by cloudy skies and wind. The northwest face of DM paints an enlarging and sobering canvas en route.

The hard talus and then snow descent to Blue Eyed Lake is an easy way to warm up (that, and

wearing more clothes). Along the way, I notice a number of gullies access the southwest ridge of DM. The cold beauty of Blue Eyed Lake is contrasted by the numerous "historical" rusting tin cans.

With fair weather in the morning, Carrie and I head for DM while Josh and Cima plan a later start for Vertigo Peak. We make excellent progress toward IP, up a 700-foot snow gully* to the southwest ridge, then a snow traverse up the south bowl to Class III scrambling.

*(The gully was direct with firm snow, ideal for kicking steps with crampons, and using an axe and a Whippet. However, we had no pickets and the angle topped out about 70°, so we decided to find an alternate way down).

When I think we'll summit within three hours of leaving camp, the clouds thicken and the

scrambling steepens (a few hundred feet from the top). We slow, making more deliberate moves, ensure the route down is recognizable, and belay a couple short sections.

As we approach the summit, (noting it is about 20 feet higher than the east summit [*Ed. Note: The June 1992 Scree reported that the east summit was the highest.*]), light hail further diminishes our view. On top, we are disappointed there is no register. A safe descent is high on our minds, so we soon depart, leaving a register.



Retracing our route becomes more difficult as the hail intensifies, both from a visibility and hand/foothold standpoint. At a couple places we track our boot prints or locate rock cairns (both ours and previous parties') to confirm our route.

Though relieved to reach the south bowl, the steep snow gully awaits and has us concerned. Now in 50-yard visibility and heavy hail, we dismiss any unknown alternate routes.



Carrie on Devil's Mistress



Vertigo Descent
Photo by Josh Mulkey

Our up-tracks are filled with hail and snow, so I kick hard new steps for the descent. Though efficient, this is not a speedy descent. Relieved to be off the steep snow, we have a hail of a break. By the end of our short break, the hail stops and the clouds lift.

We enjoy warmth and sunshine (albeit brief) back at Blue Eyed Lake. Josh and Cima are there, having dropped their Vertigo Peak plan because of the weather. Exodus is the consensus for the following day.

As Vertigo Peak is conveniently close, we follow Josh's steps up softening snow on the northwest face. We enjoy another rare warm moment on top with glimpses of Mount Yukla and the Eklutna Traverse.

Shouldering packs again at the base, the week's-less-food packs are now reasonable loads. The gentle south slopes below Mount Yukla are studded with yellow flowers. Josh scrambles up the 'Rock.' The Twin Falls Creek trail is found after a bit of searching, a very efficient and direct trail, but hard on the knees while descending.

We encounter an ascending Tom Dolan, and exchange pleasantries and mosquitoes. Overly warm by the Eagle River Trail intersection, I repeatedly rinse in the cold stream (despite many mosquitoes). We power hike out the Eagle River to close our seven-day loop.



Carrie Wang, Wayne Todd, Cima Pillsbury, and Josh Mulkey, June 21-27, 2009



Eagle River Ski Trip

by Amy Murphy

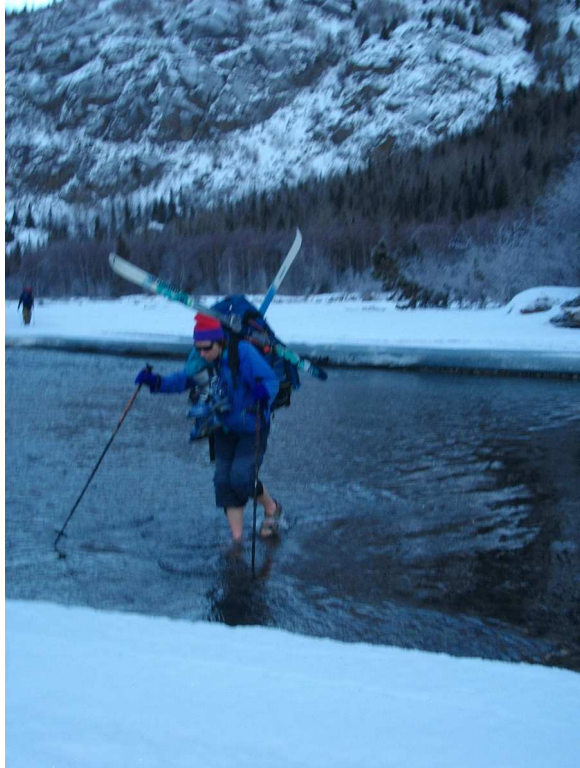
A phrase my friends hear quite often during winter is, "Hey, let's go skiing!" That's how a fun, overnight backcountry ski trip up Eagle River occurred January 9-10, 2010. Tom Dolan, Vicky Lytle, Dwight Iverson, and I decided to ski about 10 miles up the mostly-frozen Eagle River and spend the night. Ray Nabinger joined us for a day ski trip. We met at Richard Baranow's house where we parked the cars and headed out from there.

The temperature was in the low teens with minimal, hard-packed snow cover. We skied up the Crow Pass Trail and dropped down on to the river at Rapids Camp. Luckily, the river was a lot more frozen than two weekends prior when Lee Whitten and I skied there. We barely made it past The Perch before lots of open water turned us around. On this trip the ice was definitely thicker, with less open water.

Unfortunately, in between The Perch and Heritage Falls, we had to wade across the river three times. Talk about a painfully cold experience! It's rather mind-numbing to sit down in the snow, take off nice warm ski boots off and put your bare feet into



sandals. I dreaded having to wade through ice-cold water; not once, but three times. After the first crossing we kept our sandals on and ran about 200 yards to the second crossing, which was even wider than the first crossing. Yikes!



After putting our ski boots back on, we skied up to the third river crossing spot, which was even wider than the other two locations. Argh! I decided I had lost my sanity and considered how warm and cozy I could be sitting in my recliner at home instead of being out enjoying the stunning serenity of the Chugach Mountains, braving cold water on my bare feet and calves. Ray even talked about turning around, as he didn't want to have to wade again. We didn't have a choice so we all "grinned and bared it" and survived the third water crossing, possibly with some of us

exclaiming unprintable words. Dwight had the foresight to bring some lightweight waders that he could slip on right over his boots and he crossed with no problems and smiles instead of grimaces.



We continued skiing up the river, wishing the sun would rise high enough over the mountains to shine down on us and bring some warmth, but no such luck. Ray decided to turn around and head back down the river, getting on to the main trail to avoid the river crossings. The rest of us skied to a spot near Thunder Gorge where we spent the night. These frozen waterfalls are a beautiful sight to see, and hear, in winter! A nice fire kept us toasty warm and Tom read some delightful bedtime stories. We enjoyed clear skies, bright stars, and pleasant camaraderie.

In the morning we heard some wolves howling. That was cool! We ate breakfast, packed up, and headed back down the river under mostly clear skies with some fog patches. Vicky and I made it clear we did not want to wade three times again and I said I was going to take the main trail near Heritage Falls to try to avoid open water. Tom agreed to take that route and, even though the ski conditions were rather rough, thankfully we were able to get back on the river without any wading.

Yeah! There was a temperature inversion and it grew colder as we skied down the river so we maintained a fast pace back to Tom's truck to generate body heat.

This was another outstanding trip with a great group of people. It was Vicky's first "real" backcountry ski trip with us and she learned that backcountry skiing with Tom and me can encompass a variety of other activities, like running, wading, bushwhacking, laughter, storytelling, and gingerly walking across rocks with our skis on. Hopefully, she'll join us for future adventures, and boy, do we have a fun adventure story about winter wading to share with friends and family!



Indian to Arctic, January 16-17, 2010

by Greg Bragiel

New snow. New possibilities!

Mary Beth drops Sam Pepper and me at the Indian trailhead on Saturday Jan. 16. It is 9:30 AM and snowing lightly. Excellent, I think, there has been someone on the trail. "This should be a fast trip," I mention to Sam. "Only two of us and no hassles like keeping a big group together." I could not have been further from reality during the next 20+ miles.



Sam Pepper with the 'Lightweight' GPS

We ascend through the forest following the footsteps of someone that likely had been on the trail early that morning. The footprints stop and turn around after about 2 miles. We are on fresh snow. The skins on the skis are biting and climbing wonderfully. Sam is lamenting that he

has no glide with full length skins and expresses some jealousy that my kicker skins are "...lighter, faster and have more glide..." We cross the last bridge and see where someone put in a line down the first steep hill. Cool! It is snowing heavier now and we are in the clouds. The trail disappears about a mile from the pass. We make our way through the openings in the brush and spruce trees and then follow the footprints of a wolf to the pass. They know where the snow is firm underneath from the passing of prior people.

We stop at the pass and Sam shows off his new 'lightweight' GPS unit. Lately the talk with us old folk is all about weight. I then hear about John and his '...new 7 oz. sleeping pad.' We remove the climbing skins in anticipation of the cruise down from the pass toward Arctic Valley. I fight to break trail downhill, no glide. "**Dang!**" This is more work than I anticipated. Nevertheless, we continue north toward the skiing man sign. It continues to snow and daylight is decreasing. OK, we pass the sign. Only 1.3 miles to where we drop down to the clearing close to the river. I lament about the deadfall we have to ski over and around. "**Dang,** I don't remember this much deadfall the last time we went through here, Sam." "Yes, Greg, you are right, but remember there is usually a lot more snow here at the end of February and we typically ski right over this stuff."



Greg on the Trail

Right, right. We stay high to avoid the perils of dropping down to the river too early---open water and multiple crossings. We find ourselves in a patch of alder and cliffed out. We descend through the forest and reestablish that we are back on route. The snow continues and darkness descends. We push for the clearing near the river. "Four-tenths mile more, Sam..." We continue to struggle through the forest and then down a ramp to the clearing. It is 6 PM when we decide it is not worth the struggle to continue in the dark and set up camp in the clearing. Sleep, wonderful sleep. Tired, so tired. We feel sufficiently challenged during the last 8 ½ hours.

We are up and at it again on Sunday by 9:30 AM and looking forward to a nice ski out from here. The struggle north in the Ship Creek Valley continues. Additional snow has fallen overnight.

Depth hoar and unconsolidated snow make the struggle heading north very tough. I drop in to my knees in many places and struggle to stay on top. **"Dang,"** I grunt and force myself to keep moving. We anticipate finding a track to follow beyond the ford. There is one old ski track and an old snowshoe track visible here and there. We follow one then another. "Where is he going? Maybe over the pass into the South Fork of the Eagle River?" We abandon that track and head north on a compass bearing to a clearing. "That should be easier going," I think to myself as I continue to drop through to my knees with almost every step. Cross this beaver pond, cross another, climb over that tree. Drop through in the brushy areas for a mile at a time. Struggle, grunt, **"Dang,"** sweat. Sam tells me "We are about a mile from the beaver pond and the corridor is just beyond that." Great, I think, it should be a cruise from there on. We find the beaver pond and I attempt to cross one of the multiple streams that exit from it. The bridge collapses and I throw myself to the opposite side to avoid going in. **"Dang!"** Skis have to be scraped to remove the building snow and ice on the underside. "Hey, Sam, there are those snowshoe tracks again. But he is heading uphill again?" We decide to locate the opening to the trail corridor without following the track. Sam informs me that "...If we don't find the corridor, it could be a struggle to get out by dark...Maybe we could ski the river?"

Several very old flaggings that we placed years earlier lead us to the opening of the somewhat maintained corridor for the last 5 miles to Arctic Valley. We mark this with our GPS. I get out my satellite phone to call Mary Beth to tell her that we are behind schedule and to let Rick Hagen know. No signal. **"Dang!"** I hear voices behind me. Two skiers appear. Hello!

They are day skiing from Arctic Valley and tout the benefits and speed of the river route. One of them tells us about his ski trip last year and claims to have skied Arctic to Indian to Arctic in 8 hours 51 minutes. Wow! We agree to follow them, for a while. We ski on the river then up the bank to avoid open water. Back on the river and up the bank again. This is not what we anticipated. We struggle with our packs and dropping through the snow in the brushy areas. **"Dang!"** OK, let's get back to the corridor. Just head east for a short while. Easier said than done. Duck the trees, dodge the deadfall, and climb out of the holes. Finally back on the corridor trail. OK, this isn't so difficult. We progress to the base of the steep hill out of the Ship Creek Valley. Chocolate, need chocolate for the climb out. Sam asks for food. "Anything you have, I'll take..." I hand him a Skor bar. We are late and Rick is waiting. We climb at a steady pace on the nicely packed trail. Turn west off the main trail onto the Hypotenuse Trail. "No one has been on this 'cept the moose," Sam informs me. Break trail, fall into moose holes. **"Dang!"**

I am wishing for the end. Just a mile or so to go. Rick is waiting. We are late. Don't stop. Climb, climb. We hear my name being called. Rick is patiently waiting for more than two hours past our



designated 2 PM pick up time. Wow! It's over. Both of us feel spent as we describe the trip and its challenges to Rick on the ride home. We are tired, so tired. Challenged by the two-day effort.

New snow, unconsolidated snow, not enough snow cover - all added up to a very challenging January trip. Both Sam and I agreed that this Indian to Arctic trip was the most difficult and challenging one to date for both of us. This trip ranks in the top five of my most challenging trips. So, if you want challenge, go, go now!

If you want to ski Indian to Arctic without saying **"Dang"** a few thousand times, then wait until the snowpack covers all those challenges and go, go when someone else has packed out a trail.



Peak of the Month: Minya Peak

by Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Alaska Range; Delta Range

Borough: Unorganized Borough

Drainages: Canwell Glacier and Gulkana Glacier

Latitude/Longitude: 63° 17' 42" North, 145° 28' 9" West

Elevation: 7750 feet

Prominence: 500 feet from Institute Peak (8050)

Adjacent Peaks: Institute Peak and Icefall Peak (8050)

Distinctness: 500 feet from Institute Peak

USGS Map: Mount Hayes (B-3)

First Recorded Ascent: March 1968 by John Davies, Kathleen Davies, James F. Miller, Jim Pray, Dona Jane Snow, and Ed Wilkin

Route of First Recorded Ascent: East ridge

Access Point: Richardson Highway at Isabel Pass



Minya and Institute Peaks



West Face of Minya Peak

Photos by Christie Hauptert

During the summer of 1950, Gottfried Ehrenburg, Don MacAskill, Lawrence Nielsen, and Austin Post named a 7750 foot peak at the head of the Gulkana Glacier "Mount Min." In 1955 Troy Péwé of the USGS changed the name to Minya Peak, the name now accepted by the USGS Board on Geographic Names.

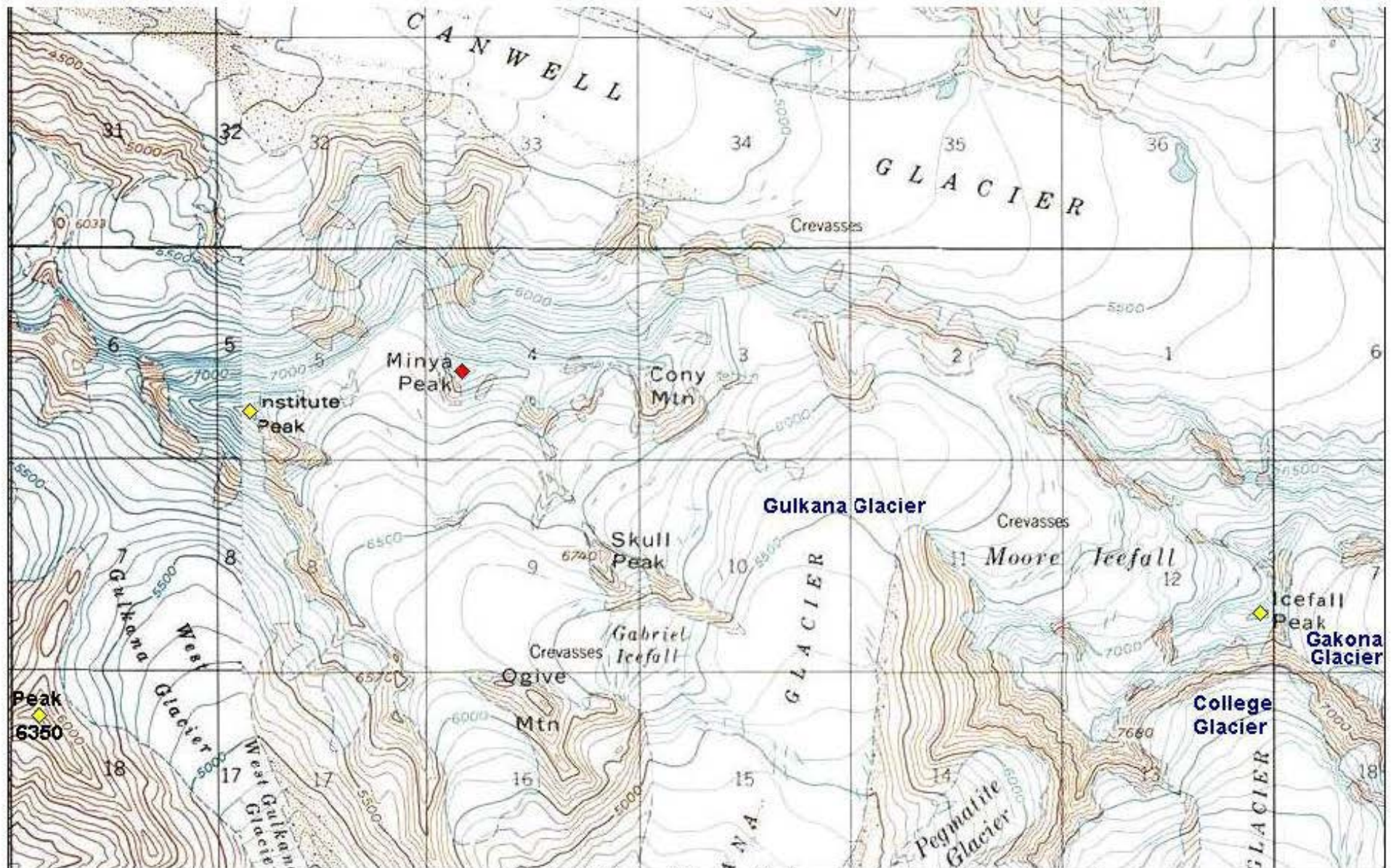
The first recorded ascent was mentioned in a February 8, 1969, letter from Jim Miller to Vin Hoeman. Miller's letter is now part of the Grace and John Vincent Hoeman Collection, which is housed at the Archives and Special Collections Section on the third floor of the Consortium Library on the University of Alaska Anchorage campus. In March 1968 Miller and his party skied up the Gulkana Glacier to a USGS research hut near the head of the glacier. The next day they traveled between Cony Mountain (7250) and Skull Peak (6740) to ascend Minya Peak. They climbed Cony Mountain on their return, arriving at the hut seven hours after they had left.

Miller mentioned a possible earlier ascent of Minya Peak by Larry Mayo. While a graduate student in 1961, Mayo and an assistant performed extensive glaciological research on

the Gulkana Glacier. However, I have not been able to confirm whether Mayo ascended Minya Peak.

Nielsen's naming of the peak appeared on page 362 of the 1952 *American Alpine Journal*. The first known published account of an ascent of Minya Peak

was a trip report by Marilyn West that appeared on page 3 of the spring 1971 issue of *Descent*, the newsletter of the Alaska Alpine Club. The first mention of Minya Peak in *the Scree* was Karen Cafmeyer's trip report entitled, "Gulkana Glacier Climbs," which appeared on page 3 of the April 1991 issue.



Mount Susitna New Year's Fun

by Stu Grenier

The long nights of midwinter started to seem extra long this year, so I got it in my head to head on back over to Mount Susitna and try to break this long dark winter funk I found myself in. I ran a note on the MCA Listserv and recruited at the December MCA meeting. I managed to snag Roger Clifford and Yuriko Yano. When I realized who was toeing the line I recognized the Japanese tradition of greeting the new year's sunrise on sacred spots. Both Rog and I have lived in Japan and have become Nipponphiles and, of course, Yuriko is from there. Nobody else was going, so I guess it was a cultural thing.

We arrived in Alexander after Mike Mason and Kenny Hightower snowmachined us in. It became clear that Alexander is a festive place at New Year's and we being the "returning mountaineers" were invited to take part in the festivities. After warming up at Nancy's, we decided to spend our first night there rather than hit the mountain right away. It was after dark and who could turn down such an invitation to party, for a cold, dark, alder-choked creek on December 31?

We left our gear at Nancy's and then stopped at the Hightowers' for tasty soup and conversation. I brought a tokkuri, or Japanese sake flask, which was designed to be heated in water to make hot sake. After sharing our sake we went to the main event at a lodge called Nni Xes Laro. I guessed by the name that it was owned by some Scandinavians or something.

At Nni Xes Laro there was a lot of people, maybe 25 or so, in a beautiful log cabin with a large fire in the back and a bunch of people around it. In the middle of the main room of the cabin was a large spliner or log column. As I sat on the couch enjoying the Christmas lights and great eats and

drinks, I could not help but notice that the main spliner was an unmistakable phallus made from a natural burl. I pointed it out to Rog and Yuriko, who agreed but reminded me not to point it out at the risk of being rude. But after more spirits I had to make the joke that somebody looked long and hard for that spliner.



After a while, I found myself out back at the fire, enjoying stories and conversation. As the light danced on folks' faces, we talked of the mountain and different routes. Two young guys were there trying to machine up it, but had no luck. Others suggested we fly to the summit in a plane. One fellow volunteered to go with us on our next attempt, possibly in March if there is interest. I recognized many folks from my previous climbs up the mountain. I often hitched across Alexander Creek on summer climbs, so we had a positive history. At least for the one that stopped.

This was turning out to be a great New Year's. We came to climb a mountain and found a community. How often does that happen? Also people confided to me that the mountain had special meaning to them. One woman used it as

a mausoleum for her cremated loved ones. I was asked to remember them when we were up there. It was interesting to see how the mountain influenced these people who have chosen to live in its shadow. As a multiple returnee, this common thread was noted. There was an understanding.

Around 11 p.m. the party started to wind down and we wanted to get up early so as to be able to make high camp on the 1st. As we were leaving our host Chrise and Marie quizzed me on their lodge's name – Nni Xes Laro. They asked me if I knew what it meant. I said it is Norwegian isn't it? Everybody laughed heartily. For the life of me I could not understand it and then they told me to read it backwards. After having a good number of drinks, I still had a problem and then everybody laughed again.

The next morning the team was dropped off at where Alexander and Pierce Creek meet. It was bitterly cold and about 7:30 a.m. My glasses fogged as I bent over trying to put on my snowshoes. I could feel my extra abdominal mass from a long winter of inactivity cutting my breath short. This is a long overdue trip, I was thinking to myself. This mountain is going to pull me out of my funk.

Rog was already way ahead breaking trail and then Yuriko. I, the supposed team leader, was bringing up the rear. The conditions were far easier than what we had in February 2009. The snow was only about 1/4 as deep, so we moved much faster. After about 45 minutes, we caught Rog and I led the way. As the sunlight got brighter everywhere but where we were, it seemed unacceptably dark in the creek valley and quite cold. Yuriko was popping hand warmers in and our faces were covered with frost. No direct sunlight here, and almost

discouragingly dismal. Temperatures were around zero and a strong wind could be heard in the treetops.



Finally we passed the private property and climbed out of the creek valley when it started to canyon out. It was the exact same route from the February 2009 trip. As soon as we got out of the drainage, the temperature jumped way up and the wind that we could hear above our heads turned out to be less than cold. With direct sunlight shining in our faces and now a pleasant wind, my spirit rose. First 10 then 20 and then 25 degrees. Back on Mount Susitna with a good-natured team and comfortable conditions. My funk was broken by a New Year's sunrise!



The low bushes were a bit more of a problem for the sleds now than in February because of the reduced snow, but the going was still way easier. Yuriko and I made it to the bench below the high-camp knoll as the light started to go. We had been following the marker tape I left in February, and now with the light going, I was afraid we would not be able to make high camp if we could not see the tape to take advantage of the cleared trail we did in February, so we dumped our packs and sleds and upped the pace. Yuriko had a knack for spotting the now-weathered tape in the reduced light. Through the thickest of alders, we found the trail and made our high camp from the February trip. As we went back down, we stomped the trail in good so as to be able to follow it the next morning, hours before sunrise, so we could have a shot at the summit ridge in daylight.

We camped at the bench right below the usual high camp. This saved us from having to drag sleds up to the top of the knoll, which was too windy anyhow. I thought if the wind would let up, we might just have a shot.

That night we got a fire going and enjoyed steak and quesadillas. The tokkuri also came out and added the right touch to our New Year's Day fire.



The gusting wind made the embers burn bright and sent sparks shooting across the snow into the night. Like salmon fry in a pike-filled stream they all, without exception, returned to darkness. The wind sounded like ocean waves smashing on rocks in the treetops above.



The next morning the person with the alarm clock overslept. I think if the alarm clock is worn in your balaclava you can hear it, but on a windy night if it is around your wrist in your sleeping bag, forget it. Rog got everybody up near first light and judging by the wind we were not getting the break we needed to go for the summit. As we moved up to the high camp knoll from 2009, I pulled my bow

saw out and started working on the trail. I told Yuriko to catch up to Rog and let him know I'll be doing some clearing. I was killing time hoping the wind would die and then maybe with the near-full moon we could have a shot at the ridge and the summit. I knew the timeline was now compromised. Yuriko wanted to be back to work the day after next. Rog came down and photographed me clearing trail and I suggested they go up and set a trail to Granite Creek while I worked on wasting alders. No sense in going high now. Too windy and getting worse.



After about an hour of clearing, I caught up to the others who had set a fair amount of trail and we

headed over toward Granite Creek and tied into the field system that takes you there. We looked at the mountain and the wind. Before us was the second massive alder tsunami that you need to make it through to get to the summit ridge. If you take the right route, it isn't as bad as the first alder tsunami. Now with the trail through the first one, only the second one remains an issue. Rog suggested we might stay one more day for a chance at it. We decided to turn around.



That night Rog built a large fire and we all hung out. Rog perfected the art of quesadillas. The wind gusted away.



We all left for a ride back to Nancy's from Pierce and Alexander the next morning. It began to snow lightly at first, and then snow and blow heavily. The cottonwood forest along Pierce Creek was really special in the heavy blowing snow.



Our cell phone did not work and the number I was using was not correct anyway. My bad. We ended up talking to a fish cop named Trent who we met at Pierce and Alexander. He was patrolling a winter moose hunt. He called the wrong number I gave him. In short, Mike came up to see why we had not called in near dusk to find us skiing out Alexander Creek. Yuriko motored back to the parking lot and Rog and I followed the next day after eating moosemeat tacos with Nancy and Mike. A big thank you to Mike and Nancy for putting up with us "mountaineers" again. My inability to call made Nancy waste a whole day waiting for our call.

Once again, thanks to the folks of Alexander Creek for a great trip.

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	Wayne Todd	522-6354	Board member	Jayme Dixon	382-0212
Vice-President	Ross Noffsinger	336-2233	Board member	Mark Kimerer	360-5935
Secretary	Brian Aho	223-4758	Board member	Travis Taylor	382-4823
Treasurer	Tim Silvers	250-3374	Board member	Mark Smith	868-3155
			Board member	Tony Lutes	242-3559

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

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address on the right. 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 e-mailed to the Scree Editor or submitted on the web at www.mcak.org Articles can be submitted anytime.

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 the monthly meeting to pick one 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: Jayme Dixon - 382-0212, Richard Baranow – 694-1500
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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