

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

May 2010

Volume 53 Number 5



When my Horse is running good,
I don't stop to give him sugar.

~William Faulkner

Kindling Mountain – North Ridge
Yosemite Spanked
Outdoor Adventurers' Legacy
POM – Termination Peak

Monthly Meeting
Wed, May 19th @ 6:30 PM

Program: Presentation by Dick Griffith,
First Descent of Barranca del Cobre. Details Inside.

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 3rd Wednesday of the month at the BP Energy Center, 900 E. Benson Blvd., Anchorage, AK

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

Cover Photo: Matt Faust on Kindling Mountain

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. Cover photo selections are based on portraits of human endeavor in the outdoors.

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For best viewing of the Scree on a monitor using Adobe Reader, click on 'View' and 'Full Screen'

Hiking and Climbing Schedule

July 16 – July 30 Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

Class B/C. The trip may include elevation gains over 2,000 feet on day hikes. The destination will be drop off And pickup at an airstrip on the Sheenjek River on the south side of the Brooks Range in ANWR . Set up food cache at the airstrip from there do two one-week trips along the Sheenjek and tributaries (climbers are welcome if you include a reliable partner). Leader: Don Hansen, donjoehansen@msn.com.

Monthly MCA Meeting Presentation

Adventurer Dick Griffith will present images and colorful discussion from the first descent of Barranca del Cobre (Canyon of Copper) in Mexico. Having lost all of the boats, other members of the expedition turned back while Dick and his wife continued on by raft through a canyon over 6,000 feet deep. Encountering insurmountable obstacles, they were forced to walk 300 miles back to civilization. A few weeks later they returned with a packraft and with the assistance of three Tarahumara Indians, they completed the journey.

The meeting will be held Wednesday, May 19, 6:30 pm at the BP Energy Center located at 1014 Energy Court. Admission is free and open to everyone.

Kindling Mountain - North Ridge

by Harold Faust



The Godwin Glacier area east of Seward has provided local adventure-seekers with many fine trips. Several of us have been eyeballing Kindling Mountain on the north edge of the Godwin. Kindling Mountain was named by Vin Hoeman as a piece of the fireplace theme he proposed for designating the peaks and glaciers around the South Fork of the Snow River, and was featured as the Peak of the Month in the October 2009 *Scree*. East of Mount Alice, and some 300 feet higher at approximately 5550 feet as mapped, Kindling Mountain is only readily visible from the Fourth of July Creek area or from across Resurrection Bay at Lowell Point or points south. It had apparently never been summited.

George Peck, my son Matt, and I got a good look at a route up Kindling Mountain from the north when we were sightseeing on Mount Godwin in 2007. We also learned the access keys to getting onto the upper Kindling Glacier, which dumps into the South Fork of the Snow River. In the spirit of exploration, Matt proposed we try an alternate route from the south, via Fourth of July Creek and the Godwin Glacier. Four of us gave that a good effort in March 2009, but encountered deep, soft snow on very steep ground and turned around about 1,500 feet below the top. There could be a fun and challenging route on the south face when the snow is consolidated, perhaps by early summer.



Kindling Mountain from the Summit of Mount Godwin

This spring, Dano Michaud, Matt, and I resolved to get to the top from the north. We planned for the last weekend in March to take advantage of the full moon, but the weather was wet and thick while we waited several weeks for a decent prediction. Finally, the weather window we had been waiting for arrived. The skies cleared on April 7, the new snow layer froze up, and we were ready to hit the trail just before 7 a.m. on April 8. We left my truck at Mile 13 of the Seward Highway and headed up the South Fork of the Snow River on skis.

We each had a full pack load, and we took turns pulling one sled, which carried our rope, glacier gear, snowshoes and shovels. It was chilly, probably about 15 degrees, and there were no fresh snowmachine tracks. We encountered the first of many open water crossings of the South Fork of the Snow River within the first half mile. In anticipation, I had constructed three pairs of lightweight over-boot waders. Each crossing involved dropping the pack, taking off the skis, carefully pulling the visqueen waders over the double boots and strapping them tight, climbing into the pack and grabbing the skis and then making the rather short crossing without slipping on the rocks or snow bank. Usually, someone

would carry two sets of skis while another would lug the sled across. One design factor I had not adequately considered was the effect of cold temperatures on the 6-mil plastic. Matt quickly exploited that flaw and blew out the back of a wader while pulling it over his boot. At that temperature more tape was not the answer, so Matt resorted to using trash compactor bags under his outer plastic boots and lashing his gaiters tight. No crossing was even knee-deep, but the open water was a factor we had to deal with to get ourselves up this river valley. Interestingly, when we used this same route to approach Mount Godwin in late March of 2007, we were able to make every crossing on solid ice and never had to deal with wading. I used my waders on every crossing that did not have stepping stones, and managed to stay dry the entire trip. Dano's set developed a few leaks, and on the way out, he finally just boot-waded. Matt's trash bag liners also leaked after just several crossings. It was a worry, but Matt decided he could deal with traveling in wet socks, and later sleep with his inner boots to keep them useable. We soldiered on.



There were more than a dozen wet crossings on the way up the river; most of those we

encountered in the first 3 miles. Farther up, there was a mile or more of continuous skiing between wades, and we made better time. The last crossing was just opposite the drainage of the Fireside Glacier, about 5 miles up. Several miles farther, we went through a short section of trees and approached the base of the Kindling Glacier on a nice open route up a drainage channel. We switched to snowshoes to make the steep, twisting ascent of a boulder-strewn creek bed, our link to the swale behind the west lateral moraine. The route between the moraine and the mountainside hemlocks was in fine shape, with new soft snow.



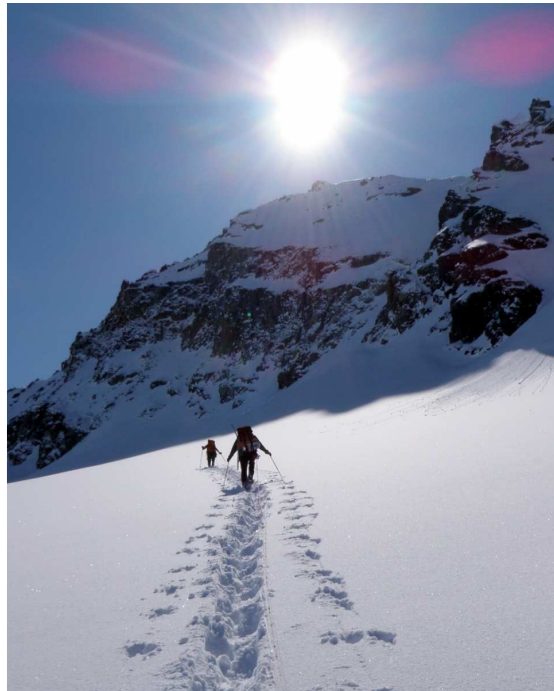
When we were able to get onto the crest of the moraine, views of the upper Kindling Glacier opened up. The snow cover was obviously deep, smoothing out most of the icefall sections. Across the glacier, the fantastic northwest face of North Godwin reflected the late afternoon light. We had planned to make camp somewhere near the top of the glacier, but breaking trail all day in the new snow had slowed us considerably. We began looking for a campsite as the shadows got longer. It was after 6 p.m., and we had been moving for over 11 hours. At about 2,200 feet, Dano spotted a snow-drifted hollow under a huge

boulder which projects from the glacier side of the moraine. The hollow was out of the breeze, and the views were fine. It was easy to dig a tent platform and make a kitchen overlooking the glacier.



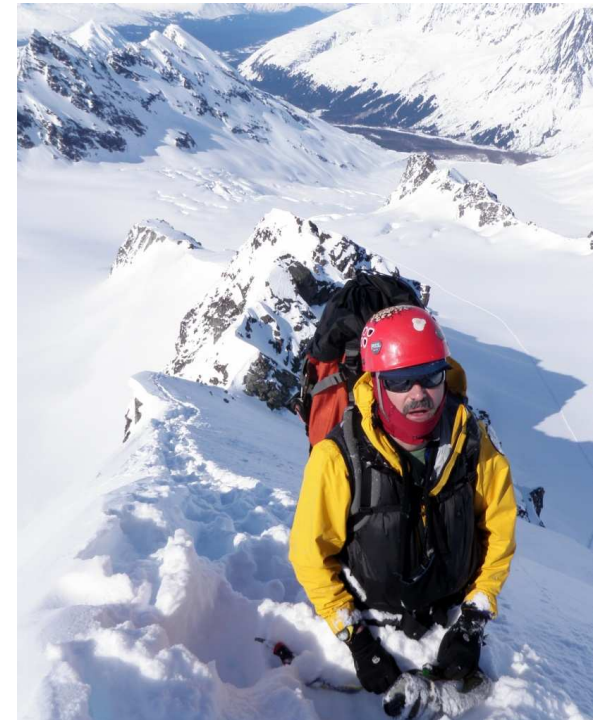
The next morning, we began our hike up the glacier on snowshoes about 8 a.m. under gorgeous blue skies. There were banners of windblown snow off the surrounding high peaks and ridges, but very little breeze down on the glacier. We side-hilled above the glacier itself for the first mile or so, gaining a bit of altitude, then

stopped to gear up for glacier travel when we reached the first area of sunshine. Dano led out; there was deep snow cover, and we had no problems finding a safe route. The new snow was over a foot deep, and made for tiring travel uphill with the short snowshoes. Skis would probably have helped on these easy slopes; however, we had decided that we were not ready to ski down the glacier while roped, and left the skis in camp. We moved steadily and kept the rope stretched out. There was only one area where we moved between exposed ice towers, with plenty of snow to cover the holes. Near the top of the glacier we passed the west side of the rock tower we called The Fin in 2007. A snow route up the last several hundred feet of The Fin looked much easier than the exposed east face which Matt and I rappelled off of in failing light on that previous trip.



At the base of the last decent couloir that rose to the north ridge of Kindling Mountain, we dropped

all the glacier gear, including the rope, and fired up our avalanche beacons. Once the route was too steep for snowshoes, we went to crampons. The sunshine beckoned at the top of the slope, just 300 feet above. At the ridge we hit the sun and the views to the south and west were incredible. Matt began the wallow up the final several hundred yards of the ridge. Although it was not corniced, the ridge dropped off very steeply on both sides. The wind had stopped completely, but the thigh-deep snow was a surprise. We had expected that the wind would have blown the ridge snow away or hardened it, but that was not the case. There were several rocky steps, but most of the ridge was simply unconsolidated snow. I relieved Matt for a steep section, where I had to sweep the snow away with my arms in order to take a step forward. When we hit the top, it was a sweet feeling! It was 4 p.m.; it had taken eight hours from camp to the summit.



The summit was quite small, but we managed to get a ski pole set for a self-timer shot. Then we checked out the views and took photos in every direction. The weather conditions out over the Harding Gateway remained excellent, although the prediction was for thickening the next afternoon. The Godwin Glacier was visible from head to snout, with the prison, ship lift, and Resurrection Bay beyond. Portions of the

Sargent Icefield to the east and the Harding Icefield to the west were easy to see. Also to the west, we spotted a bit of Cook Inlet and some mountains in the area of Mount Spurr. As Dano dug down a few feet and buried our summit log in a Nalgene bottle, I checked the GPSr. It showed an elevation of 5,630 feet, but I had not been able to calibrate it to any known benchmark, so the true elevation remains to be determined.



The Team: Harold Faust, Matt Faust, and Dano Michaud

We followed our packed trail back down the glacier to camp, and were making supper by 7 p.m. It was another nice night and we slept warm. In the morning, the skiing down behind the moraine was better than we had expected and was a true blast. We let the sled go to follow the fall line on its own, and that was also fun to watch. Snowshoes were used one more time to descend the boulders to river level, and then we skied down the valley with a rising tailwind. Clouds were already covering the peaks and passes at the top of our glacier route. The water at the crossings was lower than before, likely due to the clear, cold nights, and that helped us save some time. We were back at the truck by 4 p.m. in fine shape, with another great adventure completed, and a first ascent to claim.



Yosemite Spanked

by Dave Lynch

Years ago, when I first started climbing I had read about Yosemite and the golden age of rock climbing there. About Camp 4, El Capitan, Half Dome, the exploits of the Stonemasters; John Long, John Bachar, Gib Lewis, Bill Antel, Jim Hoagland, and Tobin Sorenson to name a few. How these dirt-bag climbers changed the way people climbed throughout the world with the new routes they put up, the new gear they invented, the aid routes they freed and even the California surfer language they brought to the game. I remember climbing at a little known crag in southwestern Minnesota back in 1995 at a place called Blue Mounds State Park and talking with a guy and his girlfriend about a route and he was spewing the Yosemite lingo even then - “dude” this and “dude” that and his girlfriend called him on it. “Dude?” she repeated, “Dude? Really? You never say dude. Where’d that come from?” I knew exactly where it came from.

Fifteen years later Tim Silvers, a friend from the Mountaineering Club of Alaska emails me he’s going to Yosemite and, “would I like to come along and climb some rock and, weather permitting, climb Half Dome via the Snake Dike route?” I’m fully aware I’m 46 years old and 20 years past my prime and 30 pounds over my ideal climbing weight, but damn, this is Yosemite



Yosemite Valley, Photo by Dave Lynch

Tim Silvers Rappelling down Royal Arches, Yosemite National Park, Photo by Dave Lynch



he’s talking about and can I really pass up an opportunity to make my first journey to climber’s Mecca? Of course not.

Besides, only a month ago Craig Hastings and I had spent a week and a half rock climbing in southeastern Arizona where we sent some really hard and really scary 5.5, 5.6, and 5.7 trad and sport routes. And no, I’m really NOT kidding. They actually were scary. But I had a couple months to train for Yosemite and maybe drop 15 or 20 pounds. So I emailed him back after running it by (translation – getting approval from)

my wife Jeri. “Hell yeah, I want to go,” was my answer.

So, I actually do train for a couple months. Hit the weights three times a week. Climb with Tim at the rock gym once a week. Hike up Mount Baldy once a week. Sneak out for an occasional ice climb on the weekends. Prior to Yosemite, we get one day of warm weather in Alaska. Warm enough to climb outside along Turnagain Arm and Tim, his wife Yarrow, and I spend a day down there being humbled by actual rock after a winter of ice climbing and pulling plastic inside. But I’m not discouraged, even when time has

slipped away and suddenly it's the day before the flight down to California and I've only dropped 5 pounds.

We pull into our campsite in Yosemite Valley around midnight and set up our tents by car and headlamp light in the drizzling rain and sleet. Tim and I wake early to a slight rain and head over to Camp 4 to reserve the next two nights there. By the time Yarrow joins us and we set up at Camp 4 the sun is breaking through the clouds. I picked out the closest spot with line of sight to the boulder problem Midnight Lightning and over the next three days I watch as group after group try and fail to climb it. A nice sideline when we weren't climbing ourselves.

It's a little cold that first day and Yarrow opts to spend the day taking pictures of the incredible-looking valley. Tim and I are anxious to get on a route so we gear up and head up to Five Open Books hoping to find an easy route on which to warm up. We're at the bottom of what we think is a two-pitch, 5.6 crack climb called Munginella.

Dave Lynch Getting in his First Piece



Photo by Tim Silvers

Why does every climb look so easy from the bottom? Tim leads the pitch and he's a little sketched out when the crack turns into an off-width. He looks down at me, "This is a 5.6?" he yells down. "It's a Yosemite 5.6" I yell back. Then he's up at the belay station and I'm climbing it. Perspective changes unbelievably fast on a climb. Thirty five feet below, when I was anchored in and belaying Tim this climb looked easy. Now, struggling to get through this off-width crack stuck in the middle of this blank slippery rock face – not so easy. I fall halfway through the crux. Even with Tim's belay from above I feel that little adrenaline rush course through my blood. Somewhere, a couple hundred feet down in the valley someone yells, "Yeeahhh, get some!" I get back on and finish the climb. At the belay anchors when I clip in Tim pulls out the topo from inside his shirt. With a big smile he says, "Well the good news is, we're on the wrong route. This one's a 5.8." "Yeah," he adds, "I was thinking, it sucks that I have to pray on my first climb in Yosemite."

Up above, a 15-foot roof threatens our progress. We decide to rap down and move left to look for our 5.6 route. We find it; I lead it, try to link pitches, get off route, down climb, clean two cams on the way back and set up the belay station. Tim comes up, leads the next pitch, and pulls over a small roof, then the route heads in to a wet, right-facing dihedral. Snowmelt from above has formed a stream running smack down the middle of the route. Tim tries to find a different



Yarrow Silvers mantles a small crack on a 5.10 sport route. Photo by Tim Silvers

route up a small crack to the right, but the crack runs out and the face blanks out and he's climbed into a tough down climb. "Watch me." I'm watching." "Take." I take. "Lower." I'm lowering. "Slower." I'm slowing. Sun's going down. He's at a small tree up above the small roof up above

me about 30 feet. There's a sling around it and he clips in. We were climbing with doubles and after backing up the slings with new webbing, Tim unties, threads a rope, ties them together and sets up the rappel. He raps down to me. "Shit, I had to leave a piece." Tim had me lower him off a single, well-placed nut.

Tim Silvers with Upper Yosemite Falls in the Background



This was typical of the days to come. Difficult route finding. Early spring equaled wet routes. Awesome views everywhere we climbed. Constant adrenaline rushes. Tim was an animal, leading trad routes I wanted nothing to do with and could barely follow. Fear set up camp in the back of my brain and wouldn't leave on even the easiest routes. There are times on a climb when I'm scared shitless and loving every minute of it.

Then there are times on a climb when I'm just scared shitless. To be honest, Yosemite leaned toward the latter for most of the climbs for me. The way I see it, you have to put yourself in that position or you're never going to improve. Anyway, isn't that the rush we're all looking for – the scared shitless rush?

Three days into Yosemite Tom Pierce, a friend of Tim's and Yarrow's shows up from Colorado. Tom has been climbing for about 20 years and has climbed all over the world. He had some really great climbing stories, and I regret not getting the chance to climb with him. He also had rented a house inside Yosemite Park and invited us to stay with him for the next four days. We left our dirt-bag life at Camp 4 and moved into the good life. It was nice to shower after four days - we were starting to stink pretty good by then.

The next day Yarrow and Tom climbed some pretty stiff 5.9 and 5.10 sport routes together in the morning and Tim was stuck with me on the easier trad routes. I had taken a 10-foot ground fall earlier in the trip and I was starting to feel it my back a little.

Tim joined them in the afternoon when I headed back to the house for a little R & R.

I was a little bummed we were unable to attempt the Snake Dike Route on Half Dome due to the snow earlier in the week. Water from the melt off held us to smaller, two- or three-pitch climbs in the valley. No matter; it still was the trip of a lifetime. Just to experience the place with all that history and enjoy the postcard scenery made the

trip worthwhile. The experience of climbing hand cracks, finger cracks, off-widths, and a brutally painful, knee-bloodying chimney was just an added bonus. On the way home in one of the airports, I read a sign somewhere that summed it all up pretty good – "The destination IS the journey."



The Author Setting up for Their First Climb in Yosemite



Outdoor Adventurers Leave Legacy of Experiences, Memories

by Frank Baker

I had the privilege recently of attending a slide presentation by one of Alaska's premier outdoor adventurers, Jim Sayler, who over the past 35 years has climbed all of the big peaks in the Western Chugach Mountains. It reminded me of what a rich heritage we have here in Alaska. On blogs and websites and in backcountry cabin logbooks, you'll find accounts of people's unique experiences — experiences that span decades and leave a historical legacy for future generations. Here's a passage from Marcin Ksok, a member of the Mountaineering Club of Alaska (MCA) from a March 2008 trip:

"When you approach Eagle Peak from South Fork of Eagle River on a clear day you are in for a magical experience, rounding the corner midway through the lake all of a sudden you find yourself facing an enormous pyramid. It steeply rises above the lake, enticing you with its aesthetic beauty and at the same time warning you with its formidable looking slopes."

Back in the 1940s and 1950s, my father spent a lot of time tromping the Kenai Peninsula's mountains, mainly in search of gold. But unlike today's adventurers, with their internet websites, blogs, and other forums, he didn't have a means to widely share his experiences. People like my dad kept journals and sometimes wrote books, but for the most part, their stories and accounts resided within their memories and those of family and friends.

When I'm not out trekking the backcountry, one of my favorite pastimes is perusing trip reports from others. One of the best sources is the MCA's *Scree* magazine, which dates back more than 50 years to the club's founding. Within *Scree* are astounding mountaineering and backcountry

trekking feats that take you from one side of Alaska to another, including the immediate Eagle River area.

You can glance up at just about any peak in the Chugach Mountains, for example, and be confident that someone like Jim Sayler or others affiliated with the MCA have climbed it, along with many of the mountains in the Talkeetna, Alaska, and Brooks ranges.

Here's a typical passage from a trip report by Tom Meacham on 5,070-foot Vista Peak, which is visible from Eagle River. It is dated February 1973: *"Part way up the northeast ridge of Vista, a band of four Dall Sheep is spotted, though they move out of sight before Warren can assemble his 400 mm lens and tripod for a photo."*

For non-MCA members, back copies of *Scree* are available at the Z.J. Loussac Library. Logbooks in backcountry huts and cabins also contain a veritable gold mine of accounts by visitors. Here's a typical entry in a log book at the Serenity Falls Hut at Mile 12 on the Eklutna Lakeside Trail:

"We feel so privileged to spend the night here in this beautiful setting. This morning while having breakfast we watched a black bear and cub wander along Eklutna River up toward the glacier."

I'm fascinated by the fact we have thousands of people around us with vast storehouses of memories from a wide range of backcountry adventures. To me, this outdoor culture that we share, this collection of memories that lives within us, is priceless. I once tried to calculate a price tag for all of the adventures my friends and I have had in Alaska's wilderness. In other words, how

much it would cost a tourist to catch a 24-inch rainbow trout, see grizzly bears up close and personal (but not too close!), observe bald eagles fighting sea gulls and ravens over spawning salmon, watch a wolverine sliding down a snowy hill on his back or Dall sheep scrambling back and forth across the slopes, training the young lambs. The memories go on and on.

But oftentimes our most precious memories are more basic. They might be a single moment shared with a friend or loved one — the soft glow of setting sun, a gentle summer breeze that brings the sweet scent of wildflowers; an unexpected joke that gets everyone laughing, or lying on a grassy mountain slope finding pictures in the clouds. While fleeting, these moments stay with us because in every way they are timeless.

Alaskans have written books that capture some of these experiences, but probably not nearly enough. However, today we also have blogs and websites. I have sent e-mails to absolute strangers, complimenting them on their sites, their trip descriptions, and stunning photos. A lot of the time, I am more impressed by their passion and zeal for their adventures than the difficulty of their quests.

Most of us don't own yachts or villas on the Mediterranean. But we do possess a rare wealth — the experiences and memories that we've gathered in this wondrous land. Whenever possible, however possible, we should share those experiences with others. It makes us all richer.

Frank E. Baker is a lifelong Alaskan and a new MCA member.

Peak of the Month: Termination Peak

by Steve Gruhn

Mountain Range: Coast Mountains

Borough: Haines Borough

Drainage: Meade Glacier

Latitude/Longitude: 59° 10' 6" North, 135° 7' 6" West

Elevation: 6150 feet

Prominence: 2800 feet from Peak 6650 in the Meade Glacier drainage

Adjacent Peaks: The Trickster (5950) and Peak 5350 in the Meade Glacier drainage

Distinctness: 800 feet from The Trickster

USGS Map: Skagway (A-1)

First Recorded Ascent: January 1982 by Charles R. "Dick" Ellsworth and John Svenson, Jr.

Route of First Recorded Ascent: Southwest face to the northwest ridge

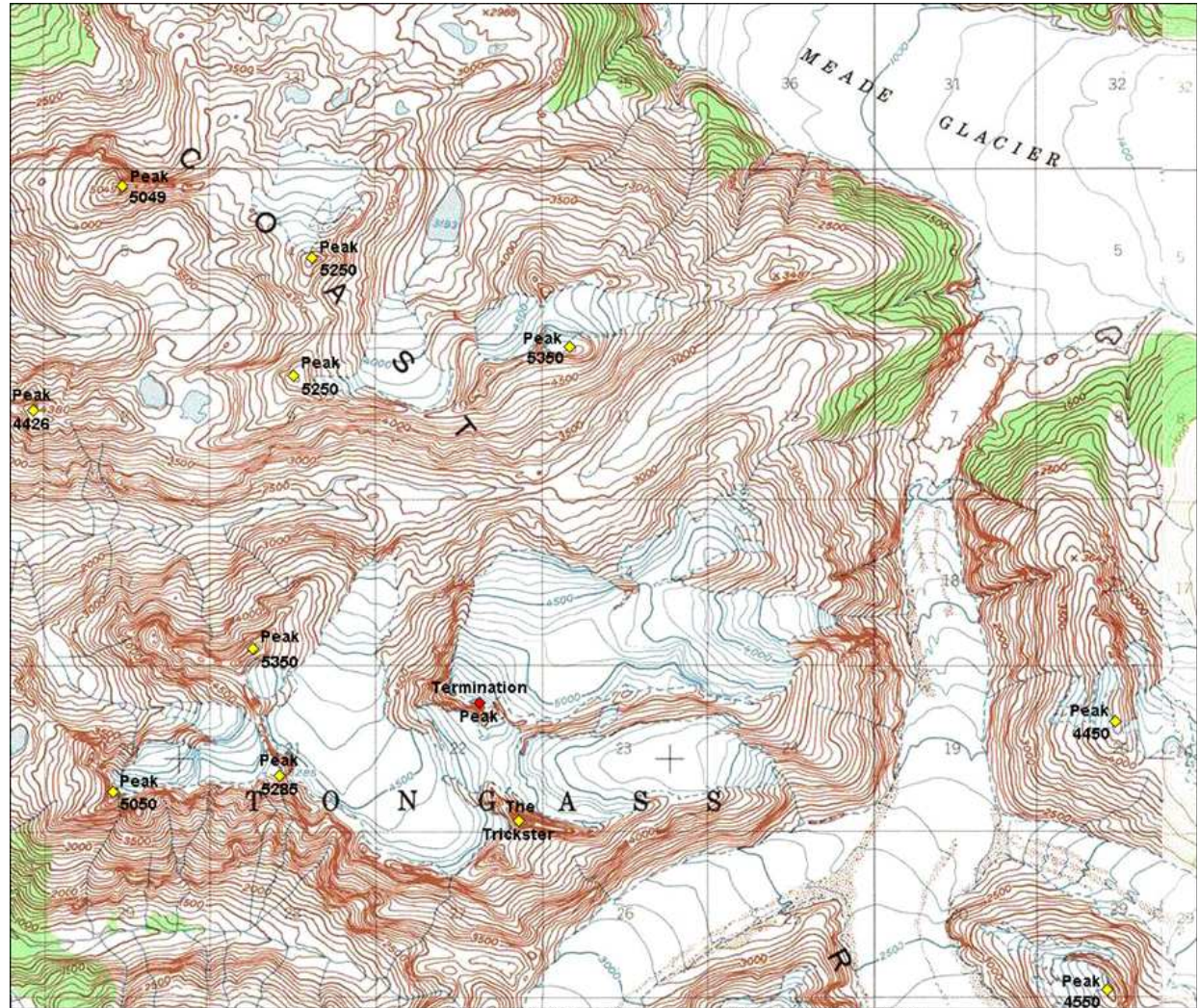
Access Point: Chilkoot Inlet about 4.5 miles southwest of Termination Peak

Despite having many attractive climbing opportunities, the rugged coastline between Juneau and Skagway has not seen much attention from mountaineers. Tough access and generally unfavorable weather have directed most climbers elsewhere. However, a select few climbers have braved these conditions and made some lasting memories in this virtually untouched land.

In January 1982 Dick Ellsworth and John Svenson took a boat from Haines to a point about 4.5 miles southwest of Termination Peak. Ferrying loads after leaving the boat, they zigzagged and postholed up the 45-degree slope for 2,000 feet to reach a high basin with three lakes in it on the second day. From there the two attained 5150-foot Frogleg Pass on their third day. From the pass they descended to the right and turned left upon reaching the flat of the glacier below. They hiked northeast about 2.5 miles down the glacier and climbed to the crest of the southwest ridge of The Trickster. From their bivy site at about 5100 feet on the southwest ridge of The Trickster, they descended to the unnamed glacier to the north and climbed the southwest slopes of Termination Peak to its northwest ridge and from there to the summit. Upon reaching the summit, the duo figured they had terminated their resources, named the peak accordingly, and

returned to the coast for a boat pick-up, climbing the west face of The Trickster and descending its southeast slopes while en route. They subsequently named Frogleg Pass for the unusual cuisine eaten during their bivy.

I don't know of any other ascents of Termination Peak. The previously unpublished information on this ascent came from my correspondence with Dick Ellsworth and John Svenson.



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

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

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

Dues can be paid at any meeting or mailed to the Treasurer at the MCA address at 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. 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.

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