

the SCREE

Mountaineering Club of Alaska

June 2010

Volume 53 Number 6



Fortune befriends the bold.
~Emily Dickinson

Monthly Meeting
Wed., June 16th @ 6:30 PM
Program: Keith Sanfacon will present 'Lessons Learned
from an Expedition to the Neacola Mountains.'
www.skierboyz.blogspot.com

Keystone Greensteps Solo x 5
Archangel to Moose
Avalanche on Mount Shasta
POM – Fifty Years of Alaskan Statehood
Proposed MCA Bylaw Changes

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 East Benson Blvd., Anchorage, Alaska.

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

Cover Photo: Steven Frisch on Bridal Veil Falls

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.

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

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June 19-20 – Flattop Summer Solstice Sleepover.

The club President will be out of town this weekend, so a leader is needed to continue this MCA tradition. For now, contact Tim Silvers at MountaineeringClubofAlaska@gmail.com to sign-up or volunteer to lead or co-lead the trip.

June 30 – Near Point. 7 miles, 2000 feet elevation gain.

After work hike on Class 1 trail. Meeting time and place TBA. To sign-up or volunteer to lead or co-lead the trip contact Tim Silvers: MountaineeringClubofAlaska@gmail.com or 250-3374.

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.

Rock Climbing Training

The Training Committee is putting together rock climbing training for this summer. We are planning evening clinics covering different climbing skills and hope to have a weekend of climbing training in Hatcher Pass. Training topics may include: Climbing Safety Basics, Climbing Techniques and Movement on Rock, Rappelling, Basic Anchors, Advanced Anchors, Sport Climbing, Traditional and Multi-Pitch Climbing, and Self Rescue.

The first clinic is scheduled for Tuesday 6/29 and will cover Climbing Safety Basics. This clinic isn't just for brand new climbers. Experienced climbers will also benefit by reviewing skills that could make the difference between a safe, enjoyable outing or an accident. The latter clinics will also build on the basics taught at this first class. Cost of the clinic is \$15. To register or volunteer to instruct, contact Tim Silvers at MountaineeringClubofAlaska@gmail.com or 250-3374. Check the MCA website for the updated training schedule.

Keystone Greensteps Solo x 5

by Steven Frisch

Keystone Greensteps is a beautiful 600-foot climb of WI5, and was considered unique enough by Jeff Lowe to be listed as a *world* classic in his book *Ice World*. I've seen some impressive free-solos in Keystone Canyon: a climber finishing two pitches of WI5 with a broken pick, and another climber who, by holding onto branches, had managed to arrive at the top of Bridal Veil Falls with *one* ice axe and at *night*! But, I was most impressed when I heard about Steve Garvey's free-solo of both Bridal Veil Falls and Keystone Greensteps on the same day! I began to wonder what was humanly possible given good conditions.

In general, ice climbs are always easier to climb in the spring, and in particular, April 2010 turned out to be an especially good time to climb Keystone Greensteps because the first pitch had formed up easier than it normally does. Also, surprisingly, there were none of the usual springtime hazards such as large horizontal cracks, rockfall, or large falling icicles. On April 3rd, 2010, I soloed to the top and verified that this would in fact be the right year to try doing a free-solo marathon – as many climbs of Keystone Greensteps as possible in one day.

So, on April 8th, I returned to do a preliminary climb to set up a rope from the canyon rim down to the bottom of the climb so that during my marathon attempt, I could rappel down quickly after each climb. But, by the time I was half way up, I was feeling much less confident. As I stood on a large snowy

ledge that had no exposed ice to sink my ice axe into, I felt slightly off balance for some unknown reason and was already tired from having pulled 200 meters of rope up behind me. I imagined falling. Suddenly, the climb seemed longer, steeper and more



dangerous, and the idea of coming back another day and repeatedly climbing free-solo to the top again and again seemed way too daunting a task. It was hard enough to just get the 200 meters of rope up there, so how could I possibly actually *climb* that

length of rope again, and again, free-soloing all day long? That was so much climbing I wouldn't want to do it *even using ascenders*! I considered giving up and rappelling down right then, but I thought, "No," to myself. I would at least set the rope up, without

expectations, so that I could come back in two days and have the possibility of attaining my goal. "Let's just do this one step at a time and not get too overwhelmed," I thought to myself.

But when I reached the canyon rim at the top of the climb, I discovered that a gap had formed between the ice and the rock behind it, and also the ice did not reach the fat alder bush at the very top that I needed to set up my rappel. I climbed carefully upward, but discovered that the last bit of ice was rotten and irregularly shaped, so the bush was even farther out of reach. But I didn't want to down-climb, and I had the weight of the ropes nagging me to press onward to the safety of the alder bush only 6 feet beyond the tip of my ice axe. In the past when I've been in tight situations, I've learned to put my feet *exactly* where I wanted them to be, even if the foot placement seemed precarious. Relying on my own intuition, I was able to climb higher and hook the last bit of rotten ice at the top. I pulled carefully along its surface, not outward, also moving in a manner so that if a foot popped off, it would not result in my exerting an outward pull on the ice axe. Finally, I hooked the alder bush and began setting up the ropes for rappelling.

Two days later, at 7:30 am, still sleepy, I started to climb. I was thrilled; despite being late in the season, the temperature was a wonderfully low 20°F, so the ice was excellent! The first pitch went by fast enough, but the second pitch maintained its near-verticalness for a long time. On less steep parts, I would tap my mono-pointed crampon against the ice, carving out a slight ledge, then turn my foot sideways and stand on my heel so I could completely rest. As I rested, I looked around and was surprised to find myself up so high on a seemingly vertical ice wall; I had been so engaged in climbing and utilizing the ice features that I

had felt very safe and very connected to the wall.

I reached the beginning of the third pitch and rested because I was about to start the only part of the climb that really was dead vertical. I noticed a bulge one-third of the way up that would allow me to rest, and above which the ice began to lean back from vertical. I climbed toward the bulge and found a couple of places to stem.

(Stemming is incredible! If you are climbing on truly vertical ice there is often nowhere to rest and so your arms are always working--either to hold on or to swing the ice axe. But if there is even a mild crease, like the indentation of a "half pipe" running vertically, by spreading your legs wide apart, not only are you very stable, but more importantly, your body now has a slight lean towards the wall so all your weight can be placed on your legs. This is called *stemming* and it is a crucial technique for free-soloing because it allows the climber to rest and then climb onward carefully and with full strength. Otherwise, urgency would force him to climb on despite tiredness. I could now take the weight off my arms and get a couple of places to rest before I even got to the bulge. I felt anchored to the wall, rested, and nicely braced. It almost felt like cheating and being given an illegal respite. However, the leverage is against you when you stem, so I climb with the very stiffest boots I can buy. Otherwise, there would be little point in stemming; I would quickly burn out my calves.)

I rested on top of the bulge and knew that the rest of the climb would be pretty easy. I

decided to avoid climbing the rotten ice at the very top and to rappel instead from near a commonly-used belay tree that is about 30 feet below the canyon rim. I reached the tree, rappelled down, ate, rested and started up again two hours after I had started the first climb.

But now I was no longer sleepy and was well warmed up for climbing. I climbed the first two pitches and reached the bulge so easily that I felt confused. I didn't feel as if I had even done any climbing. Was this the same climb I had practically panicked on during my first attempt years ago? (At that time I was lead-climbing and was partway up the second pitch when I looked down and decided that if I fell, it would be very unlikely that any of my screws would hold. The terror was horrible. Uncontrollably, I slammed my ice axes into the ice with all my might and held on so tight that my belayer wouldn't have been able to pull me off. Again and again, I slammed them into the ice and held on with all my might for what I thought was a life-or-death situation. Eventually, I reached the security of the belay cave two pitches up, but all my strength had been drained out. I discovered that I was desperately thirsty and couldn't stop my knees from shaking. I wanted to go down immediately.)

I reached the top of Keystone Greensteps a second time, rappelled down, ate, rested, and started up again. I was just below the bulge on the third pitch when I heard a huge cracking sound. In that instant I wondered if this would be the first time a wall would really collapse while I was on it. My instinct would be to hold on to my axes and try to ride the collapsing ice 300 feet down to the bottom of

the climb! Not much of a chance I would really survive, but at least my instinct wasn't to stupidly jump off the wall! Despite the cracking sound I saw no crack cut through the ice and so I continued upward.

I reached the top a third time and began to rappel. As I neared the bulge I found myself spooked, imagining what the last few weightless seconds would feel like if my rappel bush pulled out. I realized that I wouldn't just die right away, I would likely survive the initial impact in the deep snow on the ledge 40 feet below me, and then go spinning, possibly head over heels, down until I hit the next ledge a full pitch below that. I would certainly be killed by hitting the second ledge, but I realized how horrific it would be, to be driven to scream and to try to save my life by swinging my axe to stop a fall that couldn't be stopped.

Although starting to tire, the fourth ascent took me only an hour and five minutes because many of my previous pick holes remained in the ice. I rappelled down, ate, drank, and fell asleep on my pack. Exactly eight hours after I had first started to climb, I started up a fifth time. Unfortunately, I hadn't recovered enough and was straining to do the same climbing. One pitch up, I began to wonder if it was time to quit. I looked at the second pitch, which now seemed longer and steeper, and wondered if it was going to defeat me again, as it had years ago on my first three free-solo attempts on Keystone Greensteps. The first time a crampon broke, the second time a pick broke, and on my third attempt, I climbed only a few feet up, swung my ice axe, and a piece of ice hit me

hard directly in my open eye! Would it now claim another victory?

Despite all this, I wanted to triumph over Pitch Number Two one last time. Slowly, I started upward. I climbed cautiously, suspicious that my judgment might be off. I reached a spot to rest 30 feet up, but then a chilling thought crossed my mind. Would this pitch succeed in defeating me again, but this time by having me fall to my death? I thought about it, but realized that of three good solo climbers that are not alive today, surprisingly, none of them died while free-soloing. But I had to be *really* careful. I climbed hard, drove my picks in deep, and held on tight. I stemmed in many places to rest and also rested on a flat heel wherever I could. I sweated hard and felt deeply exhausted.

Finally, I reached the snow ledge two pitches up and rested. I could give up and rappel now, and then come back tomorrow to get my ropes. I crouched over in the snow and rested, but I wasn't recovering. I wanted to just lie down and sleep. I had done way too much climbing on too little sleep. Being on a slope like this at all while unbelayed is not safe, let alone now that I was so tired. As I stood there half crouched over, I smelled a unique light sweat smell that only comes out after a long day of climbing. A girlfriend had once told me that she could know for sure what I had been doing all day by just sniffing me, because the scent was so unique.

But the bulge, only 30 feet above my head, beckoned me to climb onward. I knew that if I reached it, I would be able to finish the climb. Of course I could reach it when I was

fresh, but could I reach it now while exhausted? In some strange way, this might prove to be my "ultimate" ice challenge. And surely, it would be fitting to come against such a challenge on the steepest pitch of Keystone Greensteps.

It was tempting to sink my ice axes into the ice at the base and see how it felt, so I started up. Unfortunately, I discovered that the old pick holes were no longer in comfortable range because I was now weaker. I looked around and found some ice features I could use by stemming way out farther than I had before. It worked. I soon reached the bulge, turned my foot sideways and rested on my heel. I would soon reach the top a fifth time that day, completing almost 3,000 feet of WI5, free-solo.

I had done it! I could now allow myself to be lured into attempting famous routes on huge majestic walls in the Himalaya Mountains.



The Training Wall

MCA Archangel to Moose, March 21-28, 2010

by Greg Bragiel

After skiing and hiking the Bomber Traverse a number of times, I have pondered what could be done to increase the challenge while snow traveling this area. After a number of trips into the Archangel Creek drainage and traveling through the pass to the Snowbird Glacier and beyond, I thought about connecting all five huts in the area. Why not?



On March 21st Neil Murphy, Seth Weingarten, and I began an adventure at the Archangel Trailhead. We skied to the Lane Hut under beautiful skies and a firmly packed trail from the many snowmachiners. This road is frequently used as a day ski and is often groomed. We spoke with a few of the day trippers who inquired about our large packs. An eight day trip meant a lot of weight. I was too scared to weigh my pack prior to the trip; however, I estimated the total to be about 68 pounds at the start. Fortunately, the weight decreased as the trip

went. Stan Olsen and Sally Balchin met us at the Lane Hut about 6 p.m. On longer trips such as this, we cook group dinners. This means real food. No freeze dried. Among the requirements are: hot drink, appetizer, entrée, and dessert. In the past we have had wonderful meals such as spaghetti, fillet mignon, fajitas, and the like. On this day, at the 'dinner show' we heard all sorts of dinner descriptions, verbiage, embellishing, and talk that pushed the limits of truth. This night the group voted to have Seth Weingarten cook his meal. His experience as a waiter with the accompanying verbal skills certainly helped to stretch the description of the content and volume of his meal. Everyone enjoyed soup, au gratin potatoes with bacon bits, and cheesecake for dessert. Everything tastes good when you are hungry!!



We were moving up the trail by 10:00 a.m. on Monday, following a prior up-track toward the Lane Glacier. The skis came off in a

short time as we experienced difficulties with crust and postholes. They went back on again at a second bench and remained on for most of the way up the glacier. Stan led the final 200 feet of vertical snow, crust, and Class 4 moves over rock to the pass. By this time it was snowing moderately and views of the Snowbird Hut came and went. We regrouped after walking the initial 200 feet down and then skied the flat-lit glacier to the Snowbird Hut. This was another typical nervous ski descent. I can't see anything! Is it up or down? What's ahead? Later, Stan Olsen cooked a fantastic dinner with stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, pork tenderloins, blue and green jello with dream-whip topping while the rest of us went for a tour on the Snowbird Glacier.



Tuesday skies were mostly sunny as we began the journey down Snowbird Falls to Bartholf Creek and the Bomber Hut. All of us were challenged by the snow conditions. Measurements of the snowpack showed

about half the typical amount of snow and many boulders still visible. We also found some buried boulders with our skis and knees. So much for sharp skis!! The trip to the Bomber Hut was slowed by trail breaking, negotiating around all the boulders and the depth hoar of the snowpack that allowed us to drop through to calf depth much of the time. Our young and strong skier, Seth, led out for a while and made a nice wide trail for the rest to follow. Sally and I raced to lead for the last 1.5 miles to the hut and we arrived there under mostly sunny skies. Sally is always so full of energy!! We noticed no snowmachine tracks in the area and speculated this was likely due to the lack of snow coverage. Low snow years do have their benefits! Sally's dinner was voted for and she cooked chicken sweet curry with peanut sauce, smoked salmon in cream cheese dip, crackers. Everyone relaxed and enjoyed the warm accommodations and fantastic views from this location. The Bomber Hut is THE favorite hut for most of us.



Wednesday was a rest day. Stan took advantage of the quiet while the rest of us

carried some gear up to cache, made some turns on the Penny Royal Glacier, and enjoyed the wonderful warmth of the sun, nice snow conditions and great views. My meal this evening consisted of tea, steak fajitas, peanut M&Ms, and Mary Beth's brownies. Another satisfying dinner!!



Thursday was a moving day. We left the Bomber Hut about 10:00 a.m., climbed to the gear cache, and were at Back Door Gap by 12:43 p.m. Sunshine and calm were the order of weather for the day along with great views of the Alaska Range, Grizzly Pass, and Mount Marcus Baker. We took some VERY interesting photos and headed downhill. With the many boulders still exposed and lack of significant snowfall for about three weeks, Stan and I felt the slope was very stable. We needed to be cautious not to poke a leg into a hole by a boulder and twist an ankle. Once past the boulders we were able to glissade the rest of the way to the hut from the cliffs. Randy Howell and Travis Taylor arrived about 5:30 p.m. in the full

sunshine. I was anxious to see the condition of the Mint Hut and the toilet. Surprisingly, I found no additional graffiti on the walls, other than the two that existed from when we did the roof last summer. There were a few entries about the new toilet in the logbook. Apparently it has been named the "Darth Vader." An inspection found the second catch barrel is already in use. So we will see if our plan to compost really happens. Neil cooked a fantastic dinner with soup, fillet mignon, tea, and chocolate.



Friday was another travel day. We left at 10:05 a.m., ascended the Mint Glacier and on to Grizzly Pass by 12:45 p.m. It was a great ski down into the Moose Creek drainage for the first mile or so in wonderful powder. Then the work started. With the lack of snow we needed to choose our route carefully through the boulders and steep terrain. As we descended, the depth hoar conditions in the snowpack made us really work at breaking trail. As typical, Sally was in the lead most of the way to the hut. This was

a full, 8+ hour day with the trail breaking and route finding. Everyone was sufficiently challenged and happy to be at the Dnigi Hut. The hut was in good condition. We counted the entries in the logbook – 138 total; 92 by snowmachiners and 46 by skiers/hikers. One snowmachiner, Brian Fischer, had 23 entries and was taking great care of the place. Brian's entries describe numerous supplies brought in, rubbish carried out, and scolding those that left the place unkempt. Thanks, Brian!!



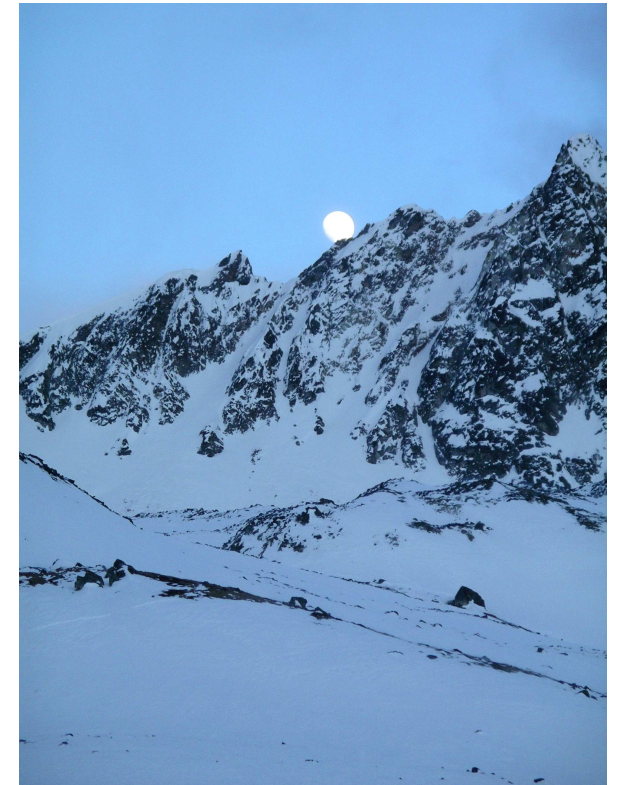
Saturday was a well-deserved rest day. We did some repairs on the door, placed a handrail for getting into the loft easier, fixed the toilet door and innards, and placed a roll guard in the loft. The weather this day was a mix of sun and clouds. In the afternoon we were visited by a group of about 10 snowmachiners. They were all very nice and expressed appreciation for use of the hut.



Sunday was our exit day. We awoke to overcast skies, flat light, and snowfall. This made the ski down to Moose Creek quite challenging and almost everyone crashed and burned during the descent. It was nice to have snowmachine tracks to follow out, stay on top of the snow, and not have to break trail. There is a rather steep climb toward the south end of Moose Creek wherein the trail ascends the east side of the valley rather steeply to avoid a gorge. Some walked and some skied this section. As we finished our ski out, the sunshine warmed the day. Travis noted the temperature was 50 degrees. Can you believe it?? As we exited onto a plowed road, two young boys on snowmachines came over to visit from a nearby house. A parent sent some beers out to help us finish the last ½ mile to the road where Randy's vehicle was parked. A few telephone calls were made to check in with family and a ride back to the Archangel Trailhead. Rob Kaye appeared in a short time and helped with the transportation.

Everyone converged on the Pizza Man Restaurant in Eagle River for pizza, beer, and conversation about the traverse. Sally proudly announced that she, "...did the whole trip with one underwear. But I had a spare..." Definitely off the trip, Sally!!!!

In all, this was a very challenging trip. Visiting all five huts means about 37 miles of skiing, going over three passes, and a vertical ascent of about 12,000 feet. For those of you that have done the Eklutna Traverse, I suggest it for your next challenge.



Avalanche on Mount Shasta

by Steven Frisch

It was in the middle of the winter and a storm seemed to be moving in over California's Mount Shasta, but I was absolutely determined to climb it. For years I had wanted to climb the northeast side of the mountain via the Hotlum Glacier, and I finally had the opportunity.

After two days of hiking and some glacier climbing, I was within reach of the summit. Unfortunately, I found myself on a steep slope, and in a whiteout with terrific winds. But, on a 45° slope, snow is almost impassable if it is up to one's waist, so I used both arms and knocked snow out of my way before even trying to move through it. A hundred feet up it became so slippery I kept sliding backward and couldn't make any forward progress at all. I took my other ice axe out, but even with crampons and two 90-cm ice axes, I kept sliding backward. It had been hard enough moving through it at all; having become as slippery as it now was made it impassable. In the past, when I had come to certain conditions that had seemed impassable, I frequently discovered that even only 10 feet up it was much more manageable. So, I decided to persevere, despite the seemingly insurmountable barrier the snow was creating.

Then the snow in the immediate vicinity about me started sliding downhill.

At first, it made a nice swishing sound. But, a few seconds later there was a loud noise from seemingly everywhere and the entire

slope began to slide. Then, suddenly, I was hit by an airborne blast of snow from above that was descending at tremendous speed. It threw me about violently, knocking me head over heels, and, when it stopped, buried me layer beneath layer of snow.

Evidence of the Power Generated by an Airborne Avalanche



There had been no question of even attempting to try to "swim" or to do anything else. It was so dark underneath that it was completely black, and there was an enormous amount of weight on my entire body. I couldn't even begin to breathe; it was as though a large metal plate covered my mouth. I tried to move my arms and legs but couldn't get them to budge more than a few inches. Despite the obvious logical conclusions that could have been drawn from the situation, for some reason I felt fairly calm and relaxed and thought to myself, "I'm supposed to die now."

Then I heard a distant roar and the sound of snow moving above the surface. Apparently the first avalanche had triggered a second and much larger one. Very slowly the snow about me started shifting in different directions. I started feeling myself being inched off to my left. As I approached some arbitrary unknown point, my speed continually increased. Suddenly, I reached "the edge" and went over.

At first I thought, "This is good; it will give me another chance to get to the surface." But when the avalanche started to descend at an absolutely unbelievable speed, I changed my mind. The smallest bumps and variations of slope created an enormous instantaneous feeling of acceleration upward, making me realize that I was *really* going to die. Almost crying, I tried to think of something I could do, but there was nothing. At least before I would have died a peaceful death under the snow, but now I would undoubtedly be mercilessly smashed to pieces on boulders or on the numerous jagged icy shapes that existed in the glacier below. I pictured the tremendous force of my body impacting the first serac and, as it would go spinning off into space again, how endless those few seconds in the air would seem... before finally impacting the next one. Then, having finally come to rest at the bottom of a crevasse, I might in my severely mangled form unfortunately *live* for a few days before finally dying.



Camp on a Revisit to the Hotlum Glacier

As the avalanche descended thousands of feet, it kept moving me from the bottom layer to the surface, and then back down to the bottom. There was no point in even attempting to do anything as the surrounding snow rose and submerged with me. Even though it was moving very fast, at times there was an enormous amount of pressure underneath. It made me suddenly realize something. If the avalanche ended by filling a crevasse, I could easily survive the initial fall and find myself momentarily alive, buried under 60 feet of snow. I thought to myself, "Steven, you're going to die."

Then I was airborne. Hoping desperately to get just one breath of air, I inhaled quickly. Snow packed together inside my mouth forming a snowball that even extended partially down into my throat. It perfectly contoured to the inside of my mouth and completely filled it, blocking any air from

getting inside. Choking and feeling even more suffocated, I had to then spit out the snowball that had formed. I was astounded that snow could be so suffocating. Still airborne, I feared the incredibly violent quick impact that would undoubtedly take place at the bottom. It never came. Surprisingly, the transition from air to ground went by almost unnoticed. A few seconds later I was completely disoriented and there was a sensation of incredible pressure. Then, again I was in the air, and again I came back down.

Finally it happened. The avalanche was slowing down. I was actually still alive! It was during this critical point in time that it became fairly stable and I was able to swim closer to the surface. I also began vigorously shaking my head and succeeded in making a sizable air pocket. However, as more snow piled above me, it collapsed under the increased weight and my body moved further from the surface. The increased pressure restricted my head to being able to move back and forth no more than a few inches. Nevertheless, I shook my head as hard as I could and was able to form a very minute air pocket.

The avalanche had now completely stopped. Extremely out of breath, I tried to move but couldn't. My whole body was so tightly encased in snow that it was exactly like being inside a cast with only an inch to wobble before pressing against a hard icy wall. I then noticed that I had another

snowball in my mouth and could not breathe at all. I tried to spit it out, but there wasn't enough room between my face and the wall to get it out of my mouth. I continued struggling, hoping desperately to get it out by pushing with my tongue and shaking my head. Again, I was shocked that snow could be so suffocating. I tried again, harder, realizing that if I didn't succeed I would obviously die. This time I managed to get it out. I could now breathe a small amount but not nearly enough. What could I possibly do?

I seemed to be lying partially on my back and partially on my right side, with my head pointed downhill. My left arm extended partially above the surface and was the only limb I could move. I began digging toward my face with my bare hand, both gloves, mittens, and ice axes having been lost in the first avalanche. I was hyperventilating uncontrollably, inhaling the same air I was exhaling. I had lost most of my strength and only as I would be about to pass out would I be able to relax and feel less out of breath. It was horrifying. The digging was taking too long. Then, only a foot from my face, I hit a hard layer of snow my hand could not penetrate.

Indeed, after such a prolonged struggle, I was going to die anyway. Theoretically, I had always known there was a chance that I would die; people *do* die unexpectedly in avalanches. But now that the actuality of death had become imminent, it didn't seem right that I should die here, now, like this. It suddenly struck me as an incredibly unjustified waste.

But there was nothing that could be done.

Okay, I would die; but I had to tell my mother just one sentence. "Goodbye," and something so that she would know, know for sure, exactly what had happened and not be wondering year after year if I might possibly still be alive. I had to tell her "Goodbye, I died in an avalanche on the back side of Mount Shasta." Then everything would be okay.

But I couldn't. It was impossible. There was no way I could talk to her. Perhaps there was a chance. Although I had never believed in a personal God, I cried out, "Oh, God! Save me!" Nothing happened. I waited. Still nothing happened. Would some person mysteriously appear out of nowhere and save me? Even on the remote chance that someone had seen me swept away in the first avalanche, they would have had to have been incredibly optimistic to go out and look for me when I was no longer in sight, especially after a second larger one had come sweeping clear down the mountain.

There was nobody on that slope, there was no one on that side of the mountain, and there would not be anyone within miles of the base. Nothing but trees and wilderness; no one to hear my voice....

If I were going to get out, it would have to be by my own effort alone and nothing else. I thought to myself, "*Relax, relax*. Do what must be done. *Dig*, stupid, *dig*. Move your hand toward your face, keep on scratching."

Everything was far away. It was someone else's struggle. Something distant hit my face and I began to see light. My hand had reached my face! I had a few breaths of fresh air before the surrounding snow quickly refilled the hole. I inhaled the unexpected snow and, while trying to cough it out, tried to reopen the hole the snow was now continually falling back into. This was tragic; would I really come this far and not succeed in the end? Again, I thought to myself, "Relax. Ignore the feeling of the inhaled snow. Ignore the feeling of extreme lack of air. Keep on digging."

Finally the hole remained clear and I was able to breathe freely. However, I was still unable to catch my breath. Fearing another avalanche, I decided to act immediately and attempt to set myself free at once. As I kicked out my left leg, the loose snow flowed downhill and filled my breathing hole yet another time! Still scared but less out of breath, I quickly redug the hole. I just lay there and continued breathing until I regained some of my strength. I tried to break entirely loose of the snow, but even with an arm and a leg out I still couldn't do it. I twisted and pushed and struggled. Then I dug out part of my midsection, tried again with all my might... and just barely broke loose. I was out! I stood up!

I looked down at my left hand. It didn't look real at all – more like something you would see in a horror film. It was gray and badly shriveled, with deep lines running the length of the fingers. A few parts were completely black. Obviously I would lose it. I had

almost died and it had saved my life; it seemed like an insignificant price to pay. I looked down at my other hand. It was also obviously frostbitten, but was mostly flesh colored and so didn't look nearly as bad.

As I looked down at my frostbitten hands, I realized that I would have to descend the mountain somehow, some way, even though I had only one crampon and one short ice axe that would be useless in finding any hidden crevasses. With one hand wedged under my hood, and the other pressed against my chest under my shirt, I began descending the mountain through the whiteout, the full blast of the storm blowing directly against my exposed stomach and up my shirt.

Frostbite



Peak of the Month: Fifty Years of Alaskan Statehood

By Steve Gruhn



North and East Faces of Fifty Years of Alaskan Statehood
Photo by Paul Knott

Mountain Range: Saint Elias Mountains; Fairweather Range
Borough: Unorganized Borough
Drainage: Johns Hopkins Glacier
Latitude/Longitude: 58° 43' 41" North, 137° 10' 51" West
Elevation: 8599 feet
Prominence: 1449 feet from Peak 8863 in the Johns Hopkins Glacier and North Crillon Glacier drainages
Adjacent Peak: Peak 8316 in the Johns Hopkins Glacier drainage
Distinctness: 949 feet from Peak 8316
USGS Map: Mount Fairweather (C-4)
First Recorded Ascent: May 2, 2009, by Paul Knott and Guy McKinnon
Route of First Recorded Ascent: Southeast rib to the south face
Access Point: 3750-foot level of the west shoulder of Peak 7260 in the Johns Hopkins Glacier drainage

On April 22, 2009, pilot Paul Swanstrom deposited New Zealand residents Paul Knott and Guy McKinnon at the 3750-foot level of a tributary glacier of the Johns Hopkins Glacier. From this base camp the duo climbed the northwest ridge of Mount Bertha (10204).

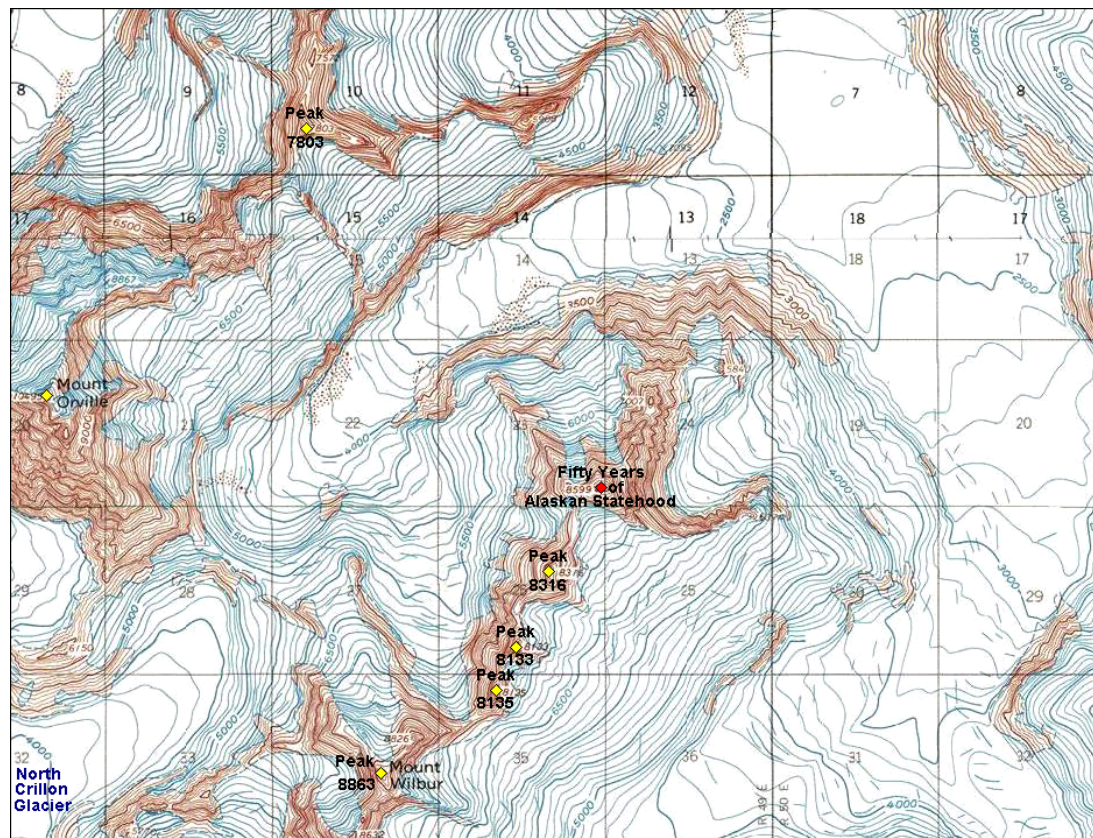
On May 1, having rested several days in camp after their Mount Bertha ascent and with favorable weather continuing, the two set out for a striking 8599-foot peak 4 miles south-southwest of their base camp. The ascended the southeast rib, quitting early for the day and establishing a

second camp at 7560 feet in the bowl below the upper south face. Early on May 2 they crossed the bergschrund and continued up the south face via a couloir and snowed-up rock rib to reach the summit before dawn. They descended on wet snow slopes that were close to avalanching and returned to their base camp early the following day.

Following an old Russian naming tradition, they proposed the name Fifty Years of Alaskan Statehood in honor of Alaska's admittance to the Union as the 49th state in 1959.

I don't know of any subsequent ascents of Fifty Years of Alaskan Statehood. The information in this article was obtained from page 149 of a proof of the upcoming 2010 *American Alpine Journal*, Climbing.com and my correspondence with Paul Knott.

http://www.climbing.com/news/hotflashes/new_routes_above_unexplored_alaskan_glacier/



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

Proposed Changes to MCA Bylaws for General Member Vote June 16

The MCA bylaws (available on the MCA website at <http://www.mcak.org/MCABylaws.pdf>) were last revised in 2001. The MCA Officers and Directors recognized that some of the bylaws are out of date, inaccurate, or limit the way the club can serve the members. As required by the bylaws, Wayne announced in previous meetings that there will be a vote to amend the bylaws and the proposed changes are also published here for member review prior to the general membership vote at the June 16 monthly meeting. Some of the proposed changes probably don't require any explanation, but a few of them are explained below in more detail.

Section V. Dues, B. Due Date: The October 1st cutoff to receive a membership for the remainder of the year and the full following year was chosen because the Ice Fest generates a lot of memberships prior to October 1st. Sometimes, the Ice Fest occurs in October and those who join the MCA only for that event end up with a membership for the following year as well. Changing the date to November 1st will correct that issue.

Section VI. Order of Business: The rigid order of business defined by the bylaws contributes to a general boring and tedious atmosphere in the monthly business meeting. Amending this would allow the board to make changes to the order of business while still covering all the important topics.

Section VII. Finances, D. Checks: Only the President and Treasurer are authorized signers on the checking account, so the bylaw as written is not practical to follow. By requiring two signatures on checks over \$200, unnecessary delays are introduced in paying some of our bills. Ten or fewer checks each year exceed \$500 and the proposed modification to the bylaw would ensure that at least one other officer besides the Treasurer knows that these higher value checks have been written.

Section XI. Sanctioned Trips: Currently there are very few trips on the schedule and the board is looking at ways to increase the number of trips offered. Trip leaders often complain that they have to plan trips too far in advance. The current bylaws restrict sanctioned club trips only to those that have been published in the Scree. By allowing trips published on the website to qualify as sanctioned club trips, leaders might be encouraged to schedule more trips on short notice.

If you have more questions about the proposed bylaw amendments prior to the June meeting, please send an email to mountaineeringclubofalaska@gmail.com

The proposed amendments to the existing bylaws are listed below:

Zip code is wrong in the letterhead. Should be 99510 not 99507

II. Membership

B. Classification - rename Single Member to **Individual** Member. Remove reference to obsolete **Junior Member**. Add **Complimentary Member** - A business or organization approved by the Executive Committee that gets a free copy of the Scree.

IV. Executive Committee

D. Nomination and Election - change last sentence to add missing word "All nominations made **prior** to date of publication...."

V. Dues

A. Amount - modify to read "Annual dues shall be paid by all members with the exception of Honorary **and Complimentary** Members as follows; there is no initiation fee." Also, update to reflect new rates (**\$15 Individual**, **\$20 Family**) and no Junior membership.

B. Due Date - change October 1 to **November 1**.

VI. ORDER OF BUSINESS. Instead of "Each regular meeting shall be conducted in the following order:" it will read "Each regular meeting should include the following business items:"

VII. Finances

D. Checks - change to read "Checks over the amount of **\$500** **require verbal or written authorization** of two (2) of the following four (4) officers:...."

XI. Sanctioned Trips

A. Definition - modify end of first sentence to read "...and advertised in the club publication **or on the club website** in the **Trips** or Training Schedules."

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 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.

Mailing list/database entry: Yukiko Hayano and Randy Plant - 243-1438
Hiking and Climbing Committee: MountaineeringClubofAlaska@gmail.com
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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